

Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon and the Effects on Its Position in International Politics

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Brazil is home to the largest portion of the Amazon Rainforest, one of the world's largest biomes. Interestingly, Brazil's portion of the Amazon carries geopolitical influence. As a part of what is considered the world's "Global South", Brazil is a high-middle-income nation with the largest economy and population in Latin America. Because of this, Brazil is and will likely continue to be a player on the international stage. Brasilia has established strong relations with several nations including the United States, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. As the twenty-first century has become an age of technology, communication, and international connectivity, Brazil is seeking to increase its international influence; however, deforestation in the Amazon could play a make-or-break role.

Brazil's International Aspirations

Diplomacy and soft power are at the heart of Brazilian foreign policy,¹ and its policy of "non-alignment"² amid great power competition has led Brazil to seek international clout in the form of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). Brazil is currently a member of many IGOs including, but not limited to: BRICS, the Group of 20 (G20), Mercosur (or Mercosul in Portuguese), and the United Nations. Its importance in each of these organizations varies but remains consistent with the potential for influence to grow.

BRICS

BRICS is an organization whose name is an acronym representing its member nations: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The informal group was created in 2009 for economic engagement and cooperation among member nations and to challenge the international world order led by nations of the West including the United States and Europe³. Interestingly, all five member nations are also members of the G20. Brazil was a founding member of the group and has played an important role. In August 2023, BRICS announced that six new member nations would begin the process of accession in January 2024: Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia⁴. BRICS is important in Brazil's foreign policy as it represents a straddling of the line between East and West. On one side, Brazil is seeking a more prominent role in the United Nations and the G20 (discussed more in-depth later), institutions founded on Western ideals, but it also has strong diplomatic and economic ties with Eastern nations such as Russia and China. BRICS membership makes Brazil seem like a bipolar ally in the eyes of the United States as the U.S. continues to see China and Russia as its greatest security threats.

G20

The G20 is an organization composed of the European Union, the African Union, and nineteen nations with the largest economies in the world. Excluding the two economic unions, member nations include Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkiye, the

¹ Mathilde Chatin, "Brazil: Analysis of a Rising Soft Power," *Journal of Political Power*, Issue 3: The BRICS and Soft Power, Volume 9, 2016, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2158379X.2016.1232286>

² Christopher S. Chivvis and Beatrix Geaghan-Breiner, "Brazil in the Emerging World Order," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 18, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/12/18/brazil-in-emerging-world-order-pub-91285>.

³ Bhargav Acharya, "What is BRICS, Which Countries Want to Join and Why?" Reuters, August 21, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/what-is-brics-who-are-its-members-2023-08-21/>.

⁴ Camila Alcini, "BRICS Announce Major Expansion with 6 Countries Joining in 2024," ABC News, August 24, 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/brics-announce-major-expansion-6-countries-joining-2024/story?id=102525200>.

United Kingdom, and the United States of America⁵. The G20 is an influential organization as it makes up 80% of the world's economic output, 75% of all global exports, and 60% of the global population⁶. The group holds an annual summit to discuss a range of issues that are mainly centered around economic and financial policy and cooperation with topics such as climate change also being discussed.

In 2024, Brazil will hold the presidency of the G20, and the 2024 summit is scheduled to be held in November in Rio de Janeiro. Brazil's president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (commonly referred to as Lula), has outlined three primary objectives for his G20 presidency: "social inclusion and the fight against hunger, phasing out fossil fuels in favor of renewable energy and reforming global economic governance"⁷. The first of these goals is personal for Brazil as they struggle with income inequality and extreme poverty in many areas of the country. When it comes to renewable energy, the Brazilians are ahead of the curve with renewable energy sources making up almost 45% of its total energy supply⁸ and a 4.5% reduction in carbon emissions from the energy sector in 2020⁹.

Mercosur

Speaking more on economics, Brazil is a leading member of Mercosur, a South American trading bloc similar in some respects to the European Union. The group was founded in 1991 and it is currently comprised of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela (suspended indefinitely). Associate members include Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Suriname. The group was established to foster regional trade and political stability and to simmer tense relations between Argentina and Brazil¹⁰. The bloc has signed several free trade agreements (FTAs) with nations such as Egypt and Singapore, but they have failed to secure any large deals as talks have been stagnant with both the European Union and the United States¹¹.

Brazil is a leader in Mercosur, making up 60% of the group's total GDP¹², Brasilia must take on a leadership role within the group. To different people, this may look different, but President Lula will need to unite the group and sign a large deal with an economy like the United States or the European Union if it is to be a success. Furthermore, a healthy, stable, and growing Mercosur could better position Brazil to achieve its goals in the United Nations.

United Nations

The United Nations (U.N.) is the premier intergovernmental organization in which nearly every nation participates. Brazil's influence has grown within the U.N. having been made a temporary member of the Security Council on several occasions and leading various initiatives.

⁵ "About the G20: Group is the Main Forum for International Economic Cooperation," G20 Brazil 2024, <https://www.g20.org/en/about-the-g20>.

⁶ James McBride, Anshu Siripurapu, and Noah Berman, "What Does the G20 Do?" Council on Foreign Relations, last modified October 11, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-does-g20-do>.

⁷ Alexander Kozul-Wright, "Lula Faces Numerous Challenges as Brazil Assumes G20 Presidency." Al Jazeera, December 1, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2023/12/1/lula-faces-numerous-challenges-as-brazil-assumes-g20-presidency>.

⁸ "Brazil – Countries & Regions," International Energy Agency, 2019, <https://www.iea.org/countries/brazil>.

⁹ Peter J. Meyer, "Brazil: Background and U.S. Relations," Congressional Research Service, last modified May 10, 2022, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46236>.

¹⁰ "Mercosur: South America's Fractious Trade Bloc," Council on Foreign Relations, last modified December 18, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/background/mercocur-south-americas-fractious-trade-bloc>.

¹¹ "Mercosur."

¹² Ibid.

Under President Lula, the Brazilian government is strongly committed to the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals and multilateral cooperation. In October 2023, the Brazilian delegation led a Security Council resolution for immediate peace in Israel, condemning its invasion of Gaza. The proposal, however, was vetoed by the United States¹³. From 2019-2022, Brazil's participation in the United Nations decreased under the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro as he believed the U.N. infringed upon the nation's sovereignty¹⁴. However, under President Lula, participation has risen. Some initiatives include a donation to Palestine of 150 solar-powered water purifiers¹⁵ and supporting refugees from around the globe through the U.N. Agency for Refugees in Brazil¹⁶.

Perhaps Brazil's foremost priority in the United Nations is the Security Council; Matias Spektor, a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said, "The goal has become one of the most ingrained pillars of Brazilian grand strategy"¹⁷. The Security Council is the most influential group within the U.N. It consists of five permanent members (United States, China, Russia, United Kingdom, and France) and ten non-permanent members that rotate in two-year terms. Brazil recently held a temporary place on the Council in 2022-2023, but its ambitions are higher. President Lula's administration believes that the Security Council must be more representative of the Global South.¹⁸ The two likely choices to represent the Global South in this position are Brazil, Germany, Japan, and India.¹⁹ At a U.N. discussion about Security Council reform in November 2022, France and Russia endorsed Brazil and India as candidates for permanent membership (France also endorsed Germany and Japan).²⁰ Permanent membership continues to be a stagnant possibility for Brazil.

Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon

The Amazon Rainforest spans an area of 2.5 million square miles (40% of South America) and reaches into eight South American countries, it is home to the most biodiverse ecosystem on earth and over four hundred indigenous people groups,²¹ and it produces an estimated 6-9% of the world's atmospheric oxygen.²² It also stores 150-200 billion carbon²³ and 20% of the world's liquid freshwater,²⁴ making it significant for climate change, water supply, and river transportation.

¹³ Christopher S. Chivvis and Beatrix Geaghan-Breiner, "Brazil in the Emerging World Order."

¹⁴ Diana Roy, "Deforestation of Brazil's Amazon Has Reached a Record High. What's Being Done?" Council on Foreign Relations, last modified August 24, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/deforestation-brazils-amazon-has-reached-record-high-whats-being-done>.

¹⁵ "UNOPS Supports Brazil's Humanitarian Donation to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip," United Nations Brazil, December 22, 2023, <https://brasil.un.org/pt-br/256567-unops-apoia-doação-humanitária-do-brasil-fam%C3%ADias-palestinas-na-faixa-de-gaza>.

¹⁶ "UNOPS Supports".

¹⁷ Matias Spektor, "Brazil," excerpt from, "UN Security Council Reform: What the World Thinks," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 28, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/06/28/un-security-council-reform-what-world-thinks-pub-90032#brazil>.

¹⁸ Spektor, "Brazil."

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "Concluding Debate on Security Council Reform, Speakers in General Assembly Urge More Representation for Developing Countries, Ending of Permanent Members' Veto Power," United Nations General Assembly, November 18, 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/ga12473.doc.htm>.

²¹ "Top Facts About the Amazon," World Wildlife Fund, last modified August 21, 2023, <https://www.wwf.org.uk/learn/fascinating-facts/amazon>.

²² Diana Roy, "Deforestation."

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Amazon," World Wildlife Fund, <https://www.worldwildlife.org/places/amazon>.



The ecological importance of the Amazon Rainforest cannot be stressed enough making deforestation an important issue for the Brazilian government, other South American countries sharing a piece of the Amazon, and the world (as shown by the map above).²⁵ As shown by the map above, the Amazon Rainforest sits in the territory of nine South American nations. 60% of the Amazon basin sits in Brazil²⁶ living it a larger responsibility over the Amazon than the other eight nations. To get an accurate understanding of the problem of deforestation, it is necessary to know the history of large-scale deforestation in Brazil.

Deforestation in the 20th Century

According to the Council on Foreign Relations, “large-scale deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon began in the 1960s when government incentives to clear land for production coincided with more effective tools such as chainsaws and bulldozers.”²⁷ Large-scale agriculture typically receives the brunt of the blame for deforestation in Brazil’s Amazon, and to some extent, this claim is justified. The 1960s was a time of change for Brazil. In 1960 the capital was moved from Rio de Janeiro to Brasilia in the Center West region, the military dictatorship came to power in 1964, and agricultural lands (the long-time staple of the Brazilian economy) were

²⁵ Camilla Costa, “Amazon Rainforest,” BBC International, 2019, <https://news.files.bbc.co.uk/include/newsspec/26373-amazon-threats/english/app/embed>.

²⁶ “Brazil and the Amazon Forest,” Greenpeace, 2019, <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/issues/brazil-and-the-amazon-forest/>.

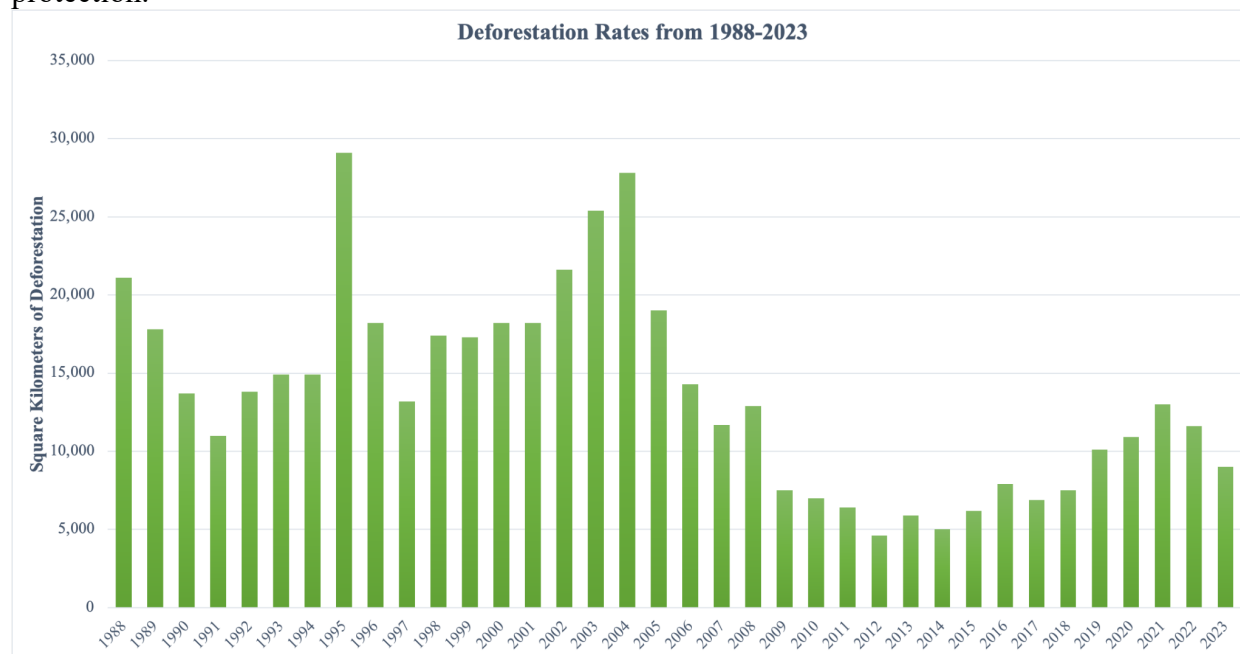
²⁷ Danielle Renwick, “Amazon Deforestation,” Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/amazon-deforestation/#/e>

seeing a decrease in fertility, prompting a migration north and west to untapped lands.²⁸ Furthermore, at the time the Amazon was sparsely populated, and because infrastructure connecting the rural forest areas to the urbanized coast was lacking, the new military dictatorship saw the unpopulated frontier as a space vulnerable to foreign invasion.²⁹ The logic of the leadership regarding this issue was faulty as Brazil has rarely faced foreign threats of any real severity barring a few scuffles with Argentina and Paraguay, both to the South in the opposite direction of the Amazon.

As the twentieth century continued, the deforestation problem continued to grow. The military dictatorship – which largely failed to enforce any of the conservationist laws of the time – fell in 1985. Except for a spike in 1995, deforestation in the twentieth century slowly declined after the dictatorship was dethroned and eased into a low average of 17,000 square kilometers per year from 1988-1999.³⁰ Under President Cardoso, several measures were taken to protect the environment including a law that stated all property must retain 80% of the original vegetation, but similar to the years of the dictatorship, results were lacking due to a lack of enforcement.³¹

Transition into the 21st Century

Fernando Enrique Cardoso was president from January 1995 to December 2002, and under his direction, Amazonian deforestation in Brazil increased by 18%.³² The problem of the Amazon would not significantly increase until the election of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva who began his term on the first day of 2003. He stayed in office until the end of 2010, and during this time deforestation significant improvements were made in the area of environmental protection.



²⁸ Jeff Garmany and Anthony W. Pereira, *Understanding Contemporary Brazil* (London, England: Routledge, 2018), 29.

²⁹ Danielle Renwick, "Amazon Deforestation."

³⁰ "Taxas de desmatamento – Amazonia Legal – Estados," TerraBrasilis, September 11, 2023, http://terrabrasilis.dpi.inpe.br/app/dashboard/deforestation/biomes/legal_amazon/rates.

³¹ Danielle Renwick, "Amazon Deforestation."

³² "Taxas de desmatamento."

The above statistics³³ total 491,000 square kilometers of the Amazon Rainforest destroyed over the past thirty-five years. To give some perspective, This is slightly greater than the area of California. In other words, this is no small chunk of land. Around 17% of the Amazon has been deforested.³⁴ The geographic area affected is shown by the map below (1988-2013).³⁵



President Lula appointed Marina Silva as his Minister of Environment. She was born in the Amazon to parents who made their living tapping rubber trees for their natural resources.³⁶ Minister Silva put many measures into place and the backbone of her strategy was to increase enforcement efforts.³⁷ One of her tactics was to publicly blacklist individuals and corporations

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Danielle Renwick, "Amazon Deforestation."

³⁵ "Deforestation in the Amazon," Brazil's National Institute of Space Research, May 22, 2016, via <http://www.ecoclimax.com/2016/05/deforestation-in-amazon.html>.

³⁶ Danielle Renwick, "Amazon Deforestation."

³⁷ Ibid.

responsible for the highest rates of deforestation.³⁸ Public blacklisting is a debated method in the United States, but as shown by the statistics shown in Figure 2, it worked as part of an effective grand strategy for environmental protection. Military troops were also deployed to the region to protect the forest and environmental activists.³⁹ Also, President Lula established the Amazon Fund (to be discussed later), to help finance conservation efforts. To a large extent, the eight years under President Lula saw the greatest reduction in deforestation rates in Brazil's Amazon since large-scale deforestation began in the 1960s largely due to his appointment of Marina Silva as the Minister of Environment.

At the end of Lula's second term, his hand-picked successor – Dilma Rousseff – was elected as president. It seemed natural that she would continue Lula's environmental policies. However, according to the Council on Foreign Relations, Dilma Rousseff signed into law “an overhaul of the Forest Code that relaxe[d] conservation requirements.”⁴⁰ The Forest Code is a section of Brazilian law that encompasses a large part of environmental law. In reaction to the Forest Code overhaul, Marina Silva said, “What is happening in Brazil is the biggest backsliding that we could ever imagine concerning environmental policies.”⁴¹ Under Rousseff, deforestation in the Amazon increased by 23%.⁴² Dilma Rousseff was impeached and removed from office in 2016, leaving the rest of her second term to her vice president, Michel Temer.

Jair Bolsonaro was elected in 2018 and began his term in January 2019. The protection of the Amazon under President Jair Bolsonaro suffered greatly as deforestation again rose to its highest rate in fifteen years.⁴³ Bolsonaro is often compared politically to President Donald J. Trump of the United States. He valued Brazilian sovereignty, industrial growth, and neo-isolationism. Bolsonaro took Rousseff's relaxation a step further and mirrored the views of the military dictatorship seeing the Amazon as a resource for economic growth rather than a habitat that factors into the global climate and regional rain patterns. During this time of industrialization and agricultural expansion in the Amazon, wildfires spread¹ as clearing crews used fire to quickly clear the forest. When offered \$22 million at a G7 summit, Bolsonaro rejected the money¹. Enforcement of environmental law was relaxed under President Bolsonaro, and whether or not his economic policies were effective, his environmental policies were not.

Ecological Impacts

Deforestation of the Amazon has several long-term effects. To start, it affects the global climate. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and emit oxygen into the atmosphere which in turn can reduce the effects of global warming. Similarly, the Amazon is capable of clearing out air pollutants leading to better air quality.⁴⁴ Air quality is essential to human flourishing and can improve a population's physical and mental health. According to the Nature Conservancy, the pollution reduction that trees are capable of can reduce health conditions like asthma and heart disease.⁴⁵ In theory, industry and the environment can go hand in hand. For example, if President Bolsonaro's policy of industrialization continued, but also included the restoration of the

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Marina Silva via Danielle Renwick, “Amazon Deforestation.”

⁴² “Taxas de desmatamento.”

⁴³ Diana Roy, “Deforestation.”

⁴⁴ “6 Ways Trees Benefit All of Us,” The Nature Conservancy, October 9, 2020,

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-priorities/build-healthy-cities/cities-stories/benefits-of-trees-forests/>.

⁴⁵ “6 Ways.”

Amazon, factories could be built in other parts of Brazil while the Amazon absorbs the air pollution caused by industrial development.

Also, deforestation in the Amazon can affect agriculture. Because the trees of the Amazon have a significant impact on the surrounding atmosphere, they can influence and change seasonal rain patterns. Seasonal rain patterns affect agriculture,⁴⁶ the number one culprit of Amazonian deforestation so interestingly, the sector of the economy that is most responsible for deforestation is the sector most negatively affected. Brazil is a predominantly agricultural dominant economy as they are one of the largest exporters of beef, soy, coffee, and other agricultural products.⁴⁷ Because their economy flourishes on agriculture, and deforestation impacts their foreign policy – to be examined shortly – then the two are closely integrated in Brazil, a concept largely incomprehensible to many Americans.

Finally, there is the question of indigenous rights. There are over four hundred indigenous people groups that call the Amazon home and many of the groups are fighting for their historic and ancestral right⁴⁸ to the land similar to Native Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The indigenous question in the Amazon is, *will the Brazilian government allow the same oppression of indigenous people in their country?* The answer depends on the administration as each presidential administration in Brazil has taken a different approach to dealing with indigenous people groups. While the constitution that Brazil adopted in 1988 guarantees indigenous people the right to inhabit the land they have historically occupied, that right has not always been protected. Some locals are taking matters of enforcement into their own hands by patrolling their lands¹ and if the federal government fails to protect the rights of the indigenous people, it may face international backlash.

In short, unless halted, deforestation in the Amazon has many long-term ecological and socio-economic impacts on Brazil. Such impacts can also affect their ambitious goals in international politics that have previously been discussed.

How Does Deforestation Impact International Politics?

Time has been spent discussing both Brazil's international ambitions and its problems with deforestation in the Amazon, now it is time to examine how the two are connected.

Relations with Europe

Perhaps the most obvious way deforestation has impacted Brazil's global standing is with its relations with the European Union. Many European nations lean leftward on the political spectrum and the E.U. has been a champion for environmental protection and climate change awareness. Moreover, European agricultural practices are held to strict environmental restrictions and regulations.⁴⁹ As previously mentioned, a large majority of the deforestation in Brazil is to make room for agricultural expansion. In France, farmers have protested establishing a free trade deal with Mercosur as they fear their products could be replaced by cheaper South American food products that are not restricted by the same environmental regulations.⁵⁰ Needless to say, a free trade agreement with the European Union is a great opportunity for all Mercosur members; however, this is an instance where Brazil needs to show it can take the lead and handle its deforestation problems. If the deforestation issue can be addressed and rates significantly reduced, a Mercosur trade deal with the E.U. will seem more probable.

⁴⁶ Danielle Renwick, "Amazon Deforestation."

⁴⁷ Garmany and Pereira, *Understanding Contemporary Brazil*, 58.

⁴⁸ Danielle Renwick, "Amazon Deforestation."

⁴⁹ Kate Abnett, "EU: Conditions to Complete Mercosur Trade Deal Not Met Yet," Reuters, February 7, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-conditions-complete-mercocur-trade-deal-not-met-yet-2024-02-07/>.

⁵⁰ Kate Abnett, "EU."

European nations have also been the most active donors to the Amazon Fund. The Amazon Fund is a fund set up by President Lula da Silva in 2008 for foreign investment in Amazonian conservation and protection. It helps finance Brazil's enforcement and research operations in the Amazon. In 2019, the fund became effectively inactive under President Bolsonaro.⁵¹ During that time Norway, who had contributed over one billion euros, and Germany both pulled their financial support.⁵² As previously stated, the administration of Jair Bolsonaro held little regard for the conservation of the Amazon, and European nations like Norway and Germany would not see their investments go to waste. Also shown in the previous chart, deforestation rates rose significantly in the four years under Bolsonaro.

With the election of Lula da Silva in 2022, the Amazon Fund has been reinvigorated and European nations like Norway and Germany are reopening investments. Germany contributed a total of two hundred million euros since the beginning of Lula's presidential term. Thirty-five million dollars of this was contributed to the Amazon Fund, an additional thirty-one million to a new fund called the Fundo Floresta, and the rest was distributed amongst various projects.⁵³ While Norway continued heavy investment in Brazil during the Bolsonaro years,⁵⁴ they only recently began investing again in the Amazon Fund. On December 11, 2023, Norway announced its fifty-million-euro donation to the fund.⁵⁵ Other recent donations have come from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Denmark.⁵⁶ If other European nations support the Amazon Fund under President Lula, who has proven his ability to reduce deforestation, the situation in Brazil will become more manageable, perhaps even leading to a successful Mercosur-E.U. free trade agreement. Other European nations considering investing in the Amazon Fund are France and Switzerland.⁵⁷ Further international investment in the Amazon Fund can finance environmental enforcement efforts.

Influence in the United Nations

The United Nations' mission is to work towards seventeen Sustainable Development goals. Enforcement of environmental law in Brazil and bringing deforestation to an end in the region contributes to six of these goals: (1) good health and well-being, (2) clean water and

⁵¹ "Development Ministry Makes 35 Million Euros Available to Protect the Rainforest in Brazil," German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2024, <https://www.bmz.de/en/news/press-releases/germany-makes-35-million-euros-available-for-amazon-fund-136006>.

⁵² Alisa Chang and Jeff Tollefson, "Why Norway and Germany Have Frozen Money Going to the Amazon Fund," National Public Radio, August 23, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/08/23/753836508/why-norway-and-germany-have-frozen-money-going-to-the-amazon-fund>.

⁵³ "200 Million Euros for Emergency Programme With Brazil," German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, January 20, 2023, <https://www.bmz.de/en/news/press-releases/200-million-euros-for-emergency-programme-with-brazil-141394>.

⁵⁴ "Norwegian Investments in Brazil Reach US\$7.3 Billion," Norwegian Embassy in Brasilia, November 3, 2023, [https://www.norway.no/pt/brasil/noruega-brasil/noticias-eventos/brasil/norwegian-investments-in-brazil-reach-us\\$-7.3-billion/](https://www.norway.no/pt/brasil/noruega-brasil/noticias-eventos/brasil/norwegian-investments-in-brazil-reach-us$-7.3-billion/).

⁵⁵ "Norway Donates Another \$50 Million to the Amazon Fund," Norwegian Embassy in Brasilia, December 11, 2023, [https://www.norway.no/pt/brasil/noruega-brasil/noticias-eventos/brasil/noruega-doa-mais-US\\$50-milhoes-fundo-amazonia/](https://www.norway.no/pt/brasil/noruega-brasil/noticias-eventos/brasil/noruega-doa-mais-US$50-milhoes-fundo-amazonia/).

⁵⁶ Lisandra Paraguassu and Anthony Boadle, "Amazon Fund for Rainforest Received \$640 Million in New Pledges in 2023," Reuters, February 1, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/amazon-fund-rainforest-received-640-mln-new-pledges-2023-2024-02-01/>.

⁵⁷ Patricia Figueiredo, "Here's Why European Nations are Considering Joining the Amazon Fund," EuroNews, March 3, 2023, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2023/03/03/heres-why-european-nations-are-considering-joining-the-amazon-fund>.

sanitation, (3) reduced inequalities, (4) climate Action, (5) life on land, and (6) peace, justice, and strong institutions.

As previously mentioned, the forest contributes to air quality thus affecting the health and well and being of people around Brazil especially people living in the Amazon region. Trees are also important because they act as a natural water filter.⁵⁸ Because the Amazon River is a source of potable water for people in the region and a source of hydroelectricity for the whole of Brazil, the cleanliness of the river is important in keeping with the sixth sustainable development goal. As discussed earlier, the indigenous people of the Amazon have faced a violation of their constitutional rights, an inequality that must be addressed. Increased enforcement of environmental law and protection of indigenous lands is necessary in keeping with the U.N. goals. Next, it is quite obvious that bringing an end to deforestation in Brazil's Amazon will contribute to global climate action and it will protect life on land including humans, and the diverse flora and fauna that occupy the forest. Finally, strong institutions of enforcement are necessary to keep the peace and ensure environmental justice in the Amazon.

Brazil seeks to be appointed as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, the most influential council in the organization. If they wish to be considered as a serious candidate, it is in their best interest to show a strong commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. President Lula has shown a commitment to other goals such as Zero Hunger and Affordable and Clean Energy as his objectives for the G20, the Amazon must be another policy concern if Brazil wants to take what it sees as its rightful place on the Security Council.

Relations with the United States

The United States is currently in the early stages of its 2024 elections. It is not certain if the current administration will retain a second term or if either party will win or retain control in the Senate and House of Representatives. What is certain is the current administration's commitment to climate action, making it a center-point of domestic and foreign policy as well as national security strategy.⁵⁹ Brazil has the opportunity, by combatting deforestation, to improve relations with Washington. Because China currently tops all U.S. security and defense threats lists, Washington would certainly like to gain more influence in Brasilia. Only time will tell how the next United States administration and Congress will see the situation in Brazil, but for now, getting serious about environmental efforts is likely to improve bilateral relations.

The Future under President Lula

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva began his third term in January 2023. A year into his term, he has made several environmental reforms. While Bolsonaro entered a multilateral pledge to end deforestation by 2030, Lula has "made it a centerpiece of his environmental policy."⁶⁰ His plans center around strong enforcement of environmental protection laws and the money coming in via the Amazon Fund is being put to use. Six months into President Lula's third term, deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon was reported to be down by 34%.⁶¹ How is this being accomplished?

⁵⁸ "6 Ways"

⁵⁹ "Nation Security Strategy," The White House, October 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/8-November-Combined-PDF-for-Upload.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Lisandra Paraguassu, "Brazil's Lula Unveils Plan to Stop Deforestation in Amazon by 2030," Reuters, June 5, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/brazils-lula-launches-plan-stop-deforestation-amazon-by-2030-2023-06-05/>.

⁶¹ Fabiano Maisonnave, "In Lula's First Six Months, Brazil Amazon Deforestation Dropped 34%, Reversing Trend Under Bolsonaro," AP News, July 6, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/brazil-amazon-deforestation-lula-climate-change-2fe225f71a8f484e8d365ea641acd65e>.

The Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Amazon outlines three areas where Lula's administration seeks to focus their environmental action: (1) land tenure and territorial planning; (2) environmental monitoring and control; and, (3) fostering sustainable production.⁶²

Land Tenure and Territorial Planning

Previously mentioned, laws have been enacted in Brazil that require 80% of the original vegetation on lands in the Amazon to be maintained. Also, the Brazilian constitution protects the right of indigenous peoples to inhabit land that they have historically occupied. To achieve these goals, more land management frameworks are being put into place including the regularization of land titles and the use of registries for effective land management.⁶³ If the government can have a firmer grasp on land ownership, use, and maintenance in the Amazon region, it will be easier to detect illegal land exploitation. Secondly, awarding land ownership titles to indigenous peoples will legally recognize their claim to the land.

Environmental Monitoring and Control

Monitoring and control are two pillars of environmental enforcement. Ibama, Brazil's lead agency for environmental law enforcement was defunded and devalued under the Bolsonaro administration.⁶⁴ Currently, the Amazon Fund has provided more financing for Ibama allowing them to hire more individuals and advance technological capabilities.⁶⁵ People are essential to environmental law enforcement; they represent the 'boots on the ground' that affect change in the region. Because there will never be enough people to monitor and control all of the Amazon, a geographically massive region, technology is needed to fill the gaps. Satellite imagery has become a critical tool in the fight against deforestation. Imagery from satellites provides a bird's-eye view of the problem and allows law enforcement to observe trends and geolocate the most affected areas for efficient deployment of enforcement units. Federal police are also increasing their ability to trace the origin of gold by using radioisotope technology.⁶⁶ Once this process is complete, all that needs to be done is a cross-reference of the above-mentioned land ownership registries to determine if the gold was legally or illegally extracted.

Intelligence plays a vital role as well. Ibama is utilizing financial intelligence to track the purchase and sale of deforestation tools such as chainsaws, excavators, and more.⁶⁷ Also, in August 2023, the eight Amazonian nations met in Belem, Brazil to discuss environmental policy and enforcement.⁶⁸ They reached an agreement called the Belem Declaration that will foster multilateral enforcement cooperation and intelligence sharing.⁶⁹ After all, the responsibility for protecting the Amazon does not fall on Brazil alone. While Brazil is home to 60% of the forest, the other 40% must be protected by the other seven nations that the Amazon occupies. Currently, there is strong cooperation from Colombia. Many Amazonian nations believe that rich Western

⁶² "PPCDAm," Brazilian Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, last modified October 11, 2018, <http://redd.mma.gov.br/en/legal-and-public-policy-framework/ppcdam>.

⁶³ Paraguassu, "Brazil's Lula Unveils."

⁶⁴ Maisonnave, "In Lula's First Six Months."

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Anthony Boadle and Ricardo Brito, "Brazil to Share Intel, Technology with Amazon Nations at Manaus Police Hub," Reuters, January 22, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/brazil-share-intel-technology-with-amazon-nations-manaus-police-hub-2024-01-22/>.

⁶⁷ Paraguassu, "Brazil's Lula Unveils."

⁶⁸ Manuela Andreoni and Max Bearak, "Amazon Countries, Led by Brazil, Sign a Rainforest Pact," New York Times, August 8, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/08/climate/amazon-rainforest-belem-protections.html>.

⁶⁹ Manuela Andreoni and Max Bearak, "Amazon Countries."

countries ought to help pay for environmental protection. An example is the environmental police hub that is being constructed in Manaus, Brazil, funded by the Amazon Fund, and intended for multilateral enforcement cooperation among the Amazonian nations.⁷⁰

Fostering Sustainable Production

Lastly, Brazil's economy remains dependent on agriculture. To ensure economic growth and environmental protection, any conservation efforts must include a way to practice sustainable agriculture. Because agriculture accounts for 67% of the total deforestation in Brazil's Amazon,⁷¹ it is essential to foster a cohesive system in which agriculture and the environment can both flourish. The World Resources Institute argues that Brazil and decarbonize the Amazonian economy and increase GDP simultaneously.⁷² By investing in sustainable agricultural practices, such as soil restoration in degraded fields, agroforestry, and crop rotation, agriculture economies could increase yield and minimize their carbon footprint.⁷³

It is important to consider such ideas because many believe that agricultural and economic growth cannot happen without deforestation. Institutes such as the World Resources Institute are pursuing research to oppose such ideas. The Amazon Fund remains available to finance such projects, and projections show that sustainable agriculture can significantly decrease carbon emissions from the Amazon.⁷⁴ President Lula has until the end of 2027 before his term ends, and it is important to continue to track progress on his environmental protection efforts.

Conclusion

Surely, as evidenced in this paper, deforestation in Brazil's Amazon affects not only the indigenous people groups that call the forest their home, but also the nation of Brazil, its neighbors, and the world. It is an issue that must be addressed if Brazil is ever to achieve its goals in international politics. From the United Nations to Mercosur, E.U. relations to prominence in BRICS, Brazil sees itself as poised for a greater position of soft power on the world stage and the perfect candidate to represent the Global South. If President Lula can address the issues of Amazonian deforestation in his country, European nations and the United States – and its current climate change-conscious administration – will likely be more willing to work with Brazil in intergovernmental organizations. It is necessary to closely monitor developments in Brazilian environmental policy and enforcement in the coming years. Only time will tell if the historic deforestation trends in the region can be reversed.

⁷⁰ Anthony Boadle and Ricardo Brito, "Brazil to Share Intel."

⁷¹ Rafael Feltran-Barbieri, Bruno Felin, and Alex Simpkins, "Ending Deforestation in the Amazon Can Grow Brazil's GDP – But That's Not the Only Reason to Do It," World Resources Institute, June 19, 2023, <https://www.wri.org/insights/zero-amazon-deforestation-can-grow-brazil-gdp>.

⁷² Rafael Feltran-Barbieri, Bruno Felin, and Alex Simpkins, "Ending Deforestation in the Amazon."

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

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