

1. Hopes after the change of government in 2023: Lula da Silva as game changer?

1.1. Uncertainty and violence during run-off elections and change of government

With 49.1% of the valid votes, Bolsonaro lost very narrowly against the former President Lula da Silva⁴⁶⁸ (50.9%) from the left workers' party and won far more votes (58.3 million) than had been predicted. In addition to the strong evangelical, fundamentally Christian electorate, the majority of which is devoted to Bolsonaro, people from the middle of society gave him their votes. In the rural South and Southeast and in southern Amazonia, the economically successful landowners, often descendants of former European immigrants, and the urban elite voted for Bolsonaro,⁴⁶⁹ who was strongly supported by the military and police forces. In the narrow-minded mental map of the extended South, Bolsonaro represents the successful, manufacturing Brazil against Lula da Silva's "underdeveloped" Northeast, which depends on support from the rest of Brazil. A "third way" with other candidates, hoped for by many, proved unsuccessful.

The rainbow press described the election campaign of the two controversial main candidates as "plague against cholera." Thousands of radicalised supporters of the deselected President Bolsonaro demonstrated since the election against the result of the run-off election of October 30, 2022. Road blockades and truck drivers' strikes hampered long-distance traffic. In front of the military facilities, Bolsonaro's followers set up veritable camps in the vain hope of military intervention in their favour. As a former military officer, Bolsonaro as President had always praised the military dictatorship and filled many positions, even in the cabinet, with military personnel. The triple alliance of his followers of military, evangelical churches and neoliberal technocrats had a high mobilising capacity (Maihold 2022).

His supporters believed – and still believe – it was a stolen election without being able to present any evidence. They felt they were victims of a conspiracy since the release of Lula da Silva, who was originally convicted of corruption, and the annulment

468 The 77-year-old Lula da Silva, who was president from 2003 to 2010, also wanted to run against Bolsonaro in 2018, but was barred from the 2018 campaign by his conviction on corruption charges.

469 Presidential election results of October 30, 2022: Bolsonaro: South Brazil (58.9%; Santa Catarina 69.3%, Paraná 62.4%); Mid-West (60.2%; Mato Grosso 65.1%); Amazônia Legal: Rondônia 70.7%; Special situation in Roraima: 76.1% (Venezuelan immigration problems; gold boom).

of the trials against him by the Supreme Court. The judge Sérgio Moro in the Lula da Silva trial, who had become Bolsonaro's justice minister, was declared biased.

Bolsonaro had systematically undermined confidence in the electoral process. Now he questioned his election defeat but there was no evidence of manipulation of the electronic voting system (Heuser 2022). The myth of electoral fraud persisted above all in the digital networks with fake news, conspiracy theories and taboo breaks. Mudslinging and vulgar insults characterised the election campaign. Bolsonaro refused to be present at the official change of office of the presidents on January 1, 2023, and travelled to Florida early. Since the change of government at the beginning of January, Bolsonaro no longer has political immunity.

After the official assumption of office by President Lula da Silva, radical and violent right-wing extremists among Bolsonaro's supporters devastated the Congress and the Supreme Court in Brasília on January 8, 2023. The security forces, whose chiefs stood by Bolsonaro, were conspicuously restrained.

Brazil's Supreme Electoral Court has barred Bolsonaro from holding public office until 2030 for his attacks on the electoral system. This means that he will not be able to run in the next presidential election in 2026.

Bolsonaro's government has caused an epochal break in Brazil's domestic and foreign policy, which will complicate the initial situation of President Lula da Silva (Maihold 2022; Winter 2022).

1.2. Lula da Silva's restart: Establishment of new ministries, environmental and Indigenous agencies, and reorganisation of Amazonian issues

For Lula da Silva, the renewed assumption of the presidency basically offers a favourable starting point: all decisions that are now taken, especially the revitalisation in the environmental policy and in the Amazonian issue, will now differ positively from the irresponsible policy of his predecessor. After four years of presidency under right-wing populist Bolsonaro, Lula da Silva promised a fundamental turnaround. Bolsonaro had dismantled environmental regulations and Indigenous rights during his term of office.

The new decisions, decrees, direct measures, and laws in preparation were welcomed not only by Lula da Silva's followers in Brazil but also by the international press and many governments worldwide. Some of these governments offered financial support for carrying out the new tasks. At the UN biodiversity conference in Montreal in December 2022, the governments agreed on ambitious new targets to protect nature. The European Union approved its strongest regulations on deforestation-free trade (Watts 2022).

However, it also immediately became clear that Lula da Silva would find a very difficult political situation in the Chamber of Deputies and especially in the Senate, with a strong faction of the agribusiness lobby trying to torpedo his plans. Hostility in Congress and from extractive industries will be permanent problems, as well as the very difficult budgetary situation. At the state level, only 10 of the 27 governors belong to the Lula camp. Even the governor of São Paulo, by far the most important state economically, is a former minister from Bolsonaro's cabinet. In addition, the splitting up of the Brazilian society is extremely problematic for the objectives of the new govern-

ment, as a significant part of the Brazilian population continues to associate the current president with earlier allegations of corruption and, above all, with reservations about former high-ranking staff members of Lula da Silva.

The first weeks of his presidency show that Lula da Silva made some well-considered and politically extremely clever decisions. This applies in particular to the environment policy and the Amazon region, where he was able to rely on former ministers, advisors and NGOs experienced in the Amazonian issue, who did essential preparatory work for future decisions.

He devoted himself in particular to the strengthening of socio-environmental public policies and decided changes in the structure of government, the creation or recreation of new ministries, internal reorganisations, and redistribution of competences. It was his commitment to strengthen the protection of traditional peoples and combat deforestation and climate change.⁴⁷⁰

In forming a government, Lula da Silva is dependent on a many-party coalition and an alliance with parties of the centre. The 37 ministries of the new government (11 female ministers), 14 more than the government of his predecessor Bolsonaro, will further increase the existing budget deficit and limit the financial room for manoeuvre of the various departments.

As in his first two terms, Lula da Silva relies on his former Environment Minister Marina Silva, a Pentecostal evangelical. She had resigned during his government in 2008,⁴⁷¹ had later even put herself up as a presidential candidate of the Green Party, but – for some people surprisingly – she then was ready to take over this office again. She accepted the appointment as a minister, as the president stressed that he considers environmental and climate policy to be one of the most important priorities of his government. Together with Marina Silva, he participated in the Climate Change Conference COP 27 in Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt in November 2022, shortly after his victory in the run-off election.

Marina Silva is not only experienced in office and one of the internationally respected voices in the fight for environmental protection but has always represented her concerns with great perseverance and is well networked, especially in the NGO sector. However, as can be seen from the Brazilian press, she obviously has secured numerous promises from the president for her ministry. Just as between 2003 and 2008, she appointed João Paulo Capobianco, a renowned biologist and environmentalist, experienced in many environmental policy functions, as executive secretary of the Ministry.

Marina Silva's getting back to Lula da Silva in the last election was due to her strong opposition to the Bolsonaro government. As new Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Marina Silva revoked acts of the previous government that placed obstacles in the judgement of environmental infractions assessed by IBAMA. She determined that the infraction notices must be public and made available on the internet. 50% of the amounts collected in fines must be reverted to the National Environmental Fund (FNMA).⁴⁷²

She returned to the Ministry of the Environment with the mission of guaranteeing zero illegal deforestation in the Amazon by 2030 and recovering Brazil's leading role

470 <https://www.socioambiental.org>, February 1, 2023 (accessed March 4, 2023).

471 Cf. chapter II.5.1.

472 <https://www.socioambiental.org>, February 1, 2023 (accessed March 4, 2023).

in the environmental agenda. It is a challenge for her, recovering and reorganising IBAMA and ICMBio. “The reality is much worse than we expected, because we had a blackout,” said Marina Silva in an interview with AFP⁴⁷³ and stressed that the state was weakened and criminal groups had taken control in many places. It will thus be necessary to invest in sustainable public activities such as low-carbon agriculture, reforestation, the creation of protected areas, Indigenous lands and the establishment of a national climate risk authority.

Illegal deforestation must be punished more quickly and more severely. Marina Silva had already carried out punishments with business embargoes, credit withdrawal, blacklisting and fines during her first term of office.⁴⁷⁴ The detection of illegal logging activities is much easier now because high-tech satellite monitoring can accurately identify where land is being cleared and who is the owner. There is less need to field visits on the ground. It is particularly important today to punish environmental offences quickly and without exceptions and to really collect the penalties.

The Brazilian Forestry Service is structurally reinserted and assumes the management of the Rural Environmental Registry (CAR), an adequate instrument for environmental planning and combating deforestation in rural properties. In addition, the ministry will deal with key agendas for the environmental issue, such as bioeconomy and sustainable use of ecosystems.

With the multitude of tasks facing Marina Silva and the pressure of the agricultural lobby being hostile to her, it is to be hoped that she will be able to reorganise this office with her earlier determination and implement her goals politically and in practice. She can be sure of international support. COP 30 in 2025 will be held in the Amazon region, in Belém.

With the creation of a new Ministry for Indigenous Peoples, President Lula da Silva has landed another surprise coup. He sent a special signal to the national and international public and, of course, especially to the Indigenous population of Brazil with the creation of the ministry led by an Indigenous woman, the federal deputy Sônia Guajajara (PSOL-SP),⁴⁷⁵ an environmentalist and human rights activist. The milestone in national politics is Indigenous policy, instead of Indigenist policy. The appointment of Indigenous people to lead the policies of their interest demonstrates that “interests in the territories and other Indigenous rights will have to be dealt with directly, and not through agents or supposed guardians” (Santilli 2023, n.p.).

The ministry will resume the implementation of policies paralysed in the last four years by the Bolsonaro administration, such as the demarcation and protection of Indigenous lands and the National Policy for Territorial and Environmental Management of Indigenous Lands (PNGATI).⁴⁷⁶ It was established in 2012, with the objective of ensuring and promoting the protection, recovery, conservation, and sustainable use of

473 *Agence France-Presse*, January 24, 2023.

474 See chapter II.5.1.; Nepstad *et al.* (2014); Nepstad and Shimada (2018).

475 She is a leader of the Guajajara Indigenous people in Maranhão, one of the largest Indigenous groups in Brazil. With the support of FUNAI she attended an agricultural boarding school, obtained a degree in literature, followed by postgraduate studies in special education. She is the coordinator of APIB (Articulation of the Indigenous peoples of Brazil), the national reference of the Indigenous movement in Brazil.

476 “PNGATI is one of the greatest advances in the autonomous and sustainable management of Indigenous territories” (Santilli 2023, n.p.).

natural resources in Indigenous territories to ensure the integrity of Indigenous assets and respecting their socio-cultural autonomy.

However, the new competences of the ministry are already being questioned in the majority conservative National Congress. For example, the designation of Indigenous territories will again be carried out by the Ministry of Justice. A bill that has now been resubmitted stipulates that the designation of new Indigenous territories will only take into account those areas that were demonstrably inhabited by Indigenous peoples when the new Constitution came into force in October 1988.⁴⁷⁷ The law, formulated in 2007, is about the time framework (*marco temporal*) of territorial allocations to Indigenous peoples. The vehement protests of Indigenous peoples in May 2023 reject this, arguing that many Indigenous groups were driven from their ancestral lands and that the Constitution guarantees them the right to their ancestral territories. The law does not affect the territories currently recognised by law, but it does affect many territories still awaiting registration.

In September 2023, Brazil's Supreme Court voted against agribusiness-backed "marco temporal" (time marker) thesis, an attempt to prevent Indigenous communities from claiming land they did not physically occupy in 1988. The Court has rejected efforts to restrict native peoples' rights to reservations on their ancestral lands. In a specific case, the Brazilian Supreme Court ruled in favour of restoring territory to the Xokleng people in Santa Catarina/South Brazil, from which they were evicted. The ruling sets a precedent for hundreds of Indigenous land claims especially in the Amazon region and is expected to have widespread consequences for Indigenous land rights.⁴⁷⁸

Lula da Silva and the new Minister for Indigenous Peoples Guajajara already made an emergency visit to the Yanomami territory in the state of Roraima, to lead the government's response to the violence and the high level of Indigenous malnutrition. At the same time, it was urgently necessary to give a clear signal to the powerful miners' mafia that the current government will ensure the security of the Yanomami. The violent events in Roraima during Bolsonaro's presidency, which also had been observed in recent decades, were described by Lula da Silva as "genocide." The Brazilian government has launched – with the environmental protection agency IBAMA, the newly created Ministry for Indigenous Peoples and FUNAI – the long-awaited operation to drive tens of thousands of illegal miners from the country's largest Indigenous reserve, with special-forces, destroying machinery, small aircraft, generators and seizing weapons and boats, establishing a base along the Uraricoera river.

Illegal mining had been encouraged by the Bolsonaro government, even in Indigenous and other protected areas. Lula da Silva revoked the pro-mining decree of the previous government which had enabled connections of gold mining with organised crime.

The initial raids, arrests, and expulsions of *garimpeiros* sent a strong signal, but a long-term solution of these fundamental problems be necessary. This will take years and is much more complex because hundreds of illegal mining camps are scattered all over Amazonia and sometimes include co-opted Indigenous people (Watts 2022). Thousands of poor, unskilled people who were driven out of these lands now will need

477 Cf. chapters I.6.1. and III.4.

478 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/21/brazil-supreme-court-Indigenous-land-rights-win> (accessed September 23, 2023).

relocation and organised substantial support for starting a different life (Phillips 2023). But the main problem is that the *garimpeiros* expelled by the federal police and the military often return after a relatively short period of time.

Authorities extinct by the Bolsonaro government will be recreated, such as the National Council for Indigenous Policy (CNPI), a collegiate body that guarantees social participation in the formulation of public policies for Indigenous peoples (Pereira and Mortari 2022).

FUNAI, subordinated to the new Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, will now be called the National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples, a request from native peoples leaders (Mendes 2023), and will be chaired for the first time by an Indigenous woman, former federal deputy of Roraima and lawyer Joênia Wapichana.⁴⁷⁹ This is a major change in Brazilian indigenist policy. The last four years of FUNAI – led by military personnel and managers with no experience in public policies for Indigenous peoples – have been marked by setbacks for the Indigenous peoples and their territories. FUNAI had faced lacking resources, disorganization, and the complete absence of demarcations of Indigenous lands. In addition, FUNAI employees were often threatened with death by *pistoleiros* of large landowners.

Ordinances for the creation of work groups for the demarcation of territories, a work group to monitor the situation of the Yanomami people and restriction ordinances of two Indigenous lands with the presence of isolated peoples have already been signed (Pereira and Mortari 2022). The director of the Indigenous Health Secretariat of the Ministry of Health will be the Indigenous leader Weibe Tapeba.

The Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in Amazônia Legal (PPCDAm), created in 2004, was primarily responsible for reducing deforestation in this biome by more than 80% between 2004 and 2012. The new government is planning to expand deforestation control policy even to other Brazilian biomes such as the *cerrado*. In the Permanent Interministerial Commission for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation, 17 ministries – under the command of the Civil House – will participate in the implementation of the action plans.⁴⁸⁰

The president determined the reestablishment of the National Council for the Environment (CONAMA). Created in 1981 and dismantled during the Bolsonaro government, CONAMA is responsible for advising and proposing environmental priority policies to the government, with the participation of federal, state, and municipal agencies, the private sector and civil society.

The creation of the Directorate for the Amazon and Environment at the Federal Police is responsible for directing, controlling, and executing activities for the prevention and repression of criminal offenses against the environment, the Indigenous peoples, and traditional communities, as well as the public safety in Amazônia Legal.

The new Ministry of Racial Equality will be responsible for dealing with policies related to *quilombolas* and other traditional peoples, with the National Institute of Col-

479 She is a member of the Wapixana tribe in Roraima, was the first ever Indigenous woman elected to Brazil's Congress and became the first Indigenous lawyer to argue before the Supreme Court. Wapichana is the current president of the National Commission for the Defence of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

480 <https://acervo.socioambiental.org/acervo/noticias/no-primeiro-dia-do-ano-governo-lula-garante-novo-folego-ao-meio-ambiente> (accessed March 6, 2023).

onisation and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) reorganising the recognition of *quilombos* and other traditional territories.⁴⁸¹

The National Attorney for the Defence of Climate and Environment at the Advocacy-General of the Union is created to enable the transformations necessary for an effective ecological transition. As with other newly established functions, here we have to wait and see whether this function will be equipped with the appropriate prerequisites to be successful in the implementation of the tasks.

1.3. Revitalization of the Amazon Fund, the free trade agreement EU-Mercosur and BRICS geopolitics

When the main donors of the Amazon Fund, Norway and Germany, signalled that they intend to continue financing it, President Lula da Silva reestablished the Amazon Fund. Created in 2008 to finance projects reducing deforestation, the Fund had been paralysed since April 2019, when the Bolsonaro government extinguished collegiate bodies that were part of the Amazon Fund. Now the groups have been reestablished with the participation of representatives from ten ministries and state governments in Amazônia Legal, which have plans to prevent and combat deforestation. The Fund's steering committee will also include civil society entities, such as the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB) and the National Confederation of Industry.⁴⁸² The money sent by European countries will be raised by the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES).

The Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment informed that Brazil can already apply about R\$ 3 billion donated by the country to the Amazon Fund and still available. Scandinavian asset managers attach great importance to avoiding the suspicion of greenwashing.⁴⁸³ The BNDES announced an agreement with the German Development Bank KfW for a donation of € 35 million to the Fund.

With the political decision of the Lula da Silva government to primarily fight deforestation and to manage lower deforestation rates quickly, the Amazon Fund will again be the right place for the international community to remunerate the country for services to reduce deforestation and emissions. In the opinion of Adriana Ramos, advisor to the Instituto SocioAmbiental (ISA), without the Fund's resources, the government is unable to adequately finance projects aimed at preserving the forest and the sustainable development of the region.⁴⁸⁴ After Norway and Germany, which previously financed the Amazon Fund, now also the European Union, France and the United Kingdom are planning to participate in the financing.

481 A *quilombo* is a settlement founded by people of African origin who resisted the slavery regime in Brazil, abolished in 1888. Most of the inhabitants of *quilombos*, called *quilombolas*, were maroons, a term for escaped slaves. According to IBGE (2023), 1.3 million *quilombola* people live in Brazil. In Amazônia Legal, the 2022 Census found 426 449 *quilombola* persons (1.6% of the population in this area and almost one third of the *quilombolas* in Brazil).

482 <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2023/01/01/lula-assina-decreto-que-retoma-fundo-amazonia-e-outras-medidas-ambientais.ghtml> (accessed March 6, 2023).

483 "Greenwashing" is a term for public relation methods that aim to give a company an environmentally friendly and responsible image in public without a sufficient basis for proving this.

484 See footnote 480.

In the case of the National Environmental Fund, social participation was contemplated again with the return of representatives of civil society to the deliberative council of this fund since it had been eliminated by the Bolsonaro government.

Another major challenge for all parties involved will be the European Union (EU)-Mercosur free trade agreement. In January 2023, during the visit of the German Chancellor Scholz to Brasília, President Lula da Silva said he hoped to conclude the trade agreement by mid-2023 (Fontes 2023).⁴⁸⁵ The agreement would create the largest free trade area in the world. The treaty, proposed more than 20 years ago, was only signed in June 2019, during the Bolsonaro government, but it was never ratified, due to a series of obstacles, in particular Brazil's setbacks in the socio-environmental agenda and a strong EU opposition against the lacking environmental policy of the Brazilian government.

The EU legislation has the potential to deny exports – meat, leather, soybean, wood pulp, timber, rubber, cocoa, palm oil and biofuel – from Brazilian areas that have been deforested, even with legal permission, after December 31, 2020. Particular attention will be paid to beef imports from Mercosur, which are subject to a quota system, also applied to poultry and sugar (Maihold 2019b). The European Parliament agreed to the project of sustainability-related binding reciprocal accompanying measures. EU member states will not rely on voluntary actions and had adopted new regulations “to impose strict traceability-requirements on forest products, and punishments for companies and countries that fail to halt unsustainable deforestation or degradation” (Watts 2022).⁴⁸⁶

According to the EU Parliament, about 10% of deforestation between 1990 and 2020 was caused by consumers in the EU. The EU would like to address the issue of embodied deforestation consumption by placing deforestation-free supply chains at the centre of negotiations surrounding the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement (Müller 2020) as a safety net against deforestation. The EU adopted a regulation on supply chains and will prohibit imports of goods from deforested areas in Amazonia, however, without distinguishing between legal and illegal deforestation. In the future, companies will have to make a due diligence declaration that the product has not caused damage to the forest anywhere. However, from an economic point of view, there are concerns as to whether this effort, which has a strong financial impact, will also be possible for medium-sized enterprises. In any case, the regulation of supply chains in Amazonia is an extremely complex process. If the entire supply chain is properly checked, the suppliers of the suppliers and their suppliers would also have to be recorded and checked. As already mentioned, this can be circumvented relatively easily by fraudulent false reports and therefore casts doubt on the success of practical implementation in certain regions and conditions that are difficult to control.

The European Parliament's Delegation for relations with Brazil stressed that the Brazilian government must reinstate all the environmental laws and institutions that were dismantled by Bolsonaro. It will need a revision that guarantees stricter commit-

485 In an interview, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Vieira stressed that the agreement will be treated as a priority by Brazil (Veja 6, January 15, 2023).

486 However, producers in Brazil have many well-known tricks to get around the regulations. An example is “cattle laundering” (see chapter III.2).

ments with the environmental actions aligned with the reduction of deforestation.⁴⁸⁷ The EU will put sustainability and the fight against deforestation in the core of the agreement (Fontes 2023). It is hoped that China and the United States will adopt similar measures.

In the EU, a coalition of opponents against the agreement had formed from the agricultural lobby, the centre-right as well as green parties, anti-globalisation and environmental activists. In particular, the French government had opposed the agreement to protect domestic agriculture, which was facilitated by the inadequate environmental policies of the Bolsonaro government. “Certain key actors within the EU pursued a morally dressed up protectionism” (Nolte 2023).

The EU had neglected relations with Latin America for almost a decade. With the victory of Lula da Silva, the member states of the EU will now have to be clear about a future strategy in trade relations with the Mercosur. In June 2023, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, during her visit in Brazil underlined the ambition to conclude the EU-Mercosur agreement, the latest by the end of the year. The agreement will also support the reindustrialisation of Brazil. The Mercosur states must also agree on a strategic line. The La Plata states will not let Brazil’s Amazonian problems spoil their trade interests with European partners. The run-off elections in Argentina in November 2023 with the clear victory of the eccentric ultra-right-wing Javier Milei will lead to maximum incompatibilities between Brazil’s and Argentina’s strategies. Milei has already labelled Brazilian President Lula da Silva as “corrupt and communist,” making cooperation between the two difficult to imagine, even though Brazil is Argentina’s main trading partner. The new political situation in Argentina with an elected president who, like Bolsonaro in Brazil in the past, denies climate change, detests China – Argentina’s second largest trading partner – and wants to reduce state funding for science and culture will make negotiations with the EU already on the Mercosur side extremely difficult, if not altogether almost impossible.

On the other hand, Brazil will play a decisive role in the Mercosur and at the same time show the Europeans that it will now build its own agenda of international relations as a global player in the interest of the Global South. Lula da Silva had made it clear immediately after his election: “We are not interested in trade agreements that condemn our country to the eternal role of exporter of commodities and raw materials.”⁴⁸⁸ He could probably have added that this also applies – from the point of view of many Brazilians – to the “exaggerated problematisation” of the Amazonian deforestation among the European countries in negotiating the trade agreement. However, since this issue is the source of support payments from European states and the United

487 This also applies to Brazil’s admission to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In June 2022, the OECD emphasised that “Brazil must adopt and fully implement policies in line with its climate goals, including combating forest loss, before considering the country’s accession to the organisation”. This request includes “strengthening environmental agencies, protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities, and addressing impunity of violence and intimidation against environmental defenders” (<https://www.hrw.org/the-day-in-human-rights/2022/11/04>) (accessed March 6, 2023).

488 <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2023/01/01/lula-assina-decreto-que-retoma-fundo-amazonia-e-outras-medidas-ambientais.ghtml> (accessed March 6, 2023). Lula da Silva: “The additional instrument presented by the European Union in March of this year is unacceptable” (<https://www.gov.br/planalto/en/follow-the-government/speeches-statements/2023/speech-by-president-lula-on-the-occasion-of-the-62nd-mercosur-summit> [accessed October 20, 2023]).

States to Brazil, this criticism will be strictly omitted. For Lula da Silva, according to the high economic potential of the country – in 2021, Brazil concentrated 74.1% of the total export value of the Mercosur states⁴⁸⁹ – the agreement must go far beyond the Amazonian environmental issues. Brazil's hope is to provide good export opportunities not only for a wide range of agricultural products but also for the country's mineral and industrial production as well as the renewable energies for producing green hydrogen.

In the opinion of many Brazilian and international observers, “the fate of the rain forest is not decided in the Amazon, but in the overseas markets that buy its beef, wood, soybean, and iron ore. In this regard, the European Union, which is the world's biggest consumer of forest products, is indirectly, the world's biggest deforester” (Watts 2022).

At the international level, President Lula da Silva, like other leaders of emerging economies, has his own global political agenda, as was demonstrated in his recent dubious assessment of the war in Ukraine, for whose emergence he holds not only Russia but also Ukraine equally responsible. Brazil is a member of the BRICS group⁴⁹⁰ and therefore Lula da Silva is not willing to oppose Russia, with which it holds intensive trade relations, in particular regarding Russian fertiliser imports urgently needed in Brazil. Sanctions of the western coalition against Moscow because of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine are strictly rejected by the Lula da Silva government, just as the supply of ammunition for Ukraine, as the president stated during the visit of German Chancellor Scholz.

In Latin American left parties, the anti-American narrative sees the United States as an imperialist and Russia always on the side of the revolutionaries. There is still a solidarity with the Cuban revolution. This is underlined by the success of Russian propaganda channels that can be received everywhere on cable TV in Latin America.⁴⁹¹

Brazil wants to deliver its exports to Russia and China as well as to the US and Europe. Lula da Silva is not interested in taking sides in the conflict between the great powers. According to the Brazilian tradition, Lula da Silva wants to adopt a non-aligned position. He had spoken of a “peace club” of interested states and indicated in the case of the war in Ukraine, that he could act as a mediator. This is probably an overestimation of his influence. However, Brazil will host the G20 summit in 2024. Western countries desperately want to avoid the BRICS group becoming an anti-western trading bloc. China and the New Development Bank (NDB) of the BRICS states, which is headed by the former Brazilian President and successor to Lula da Silva, Dilma Rousseff, profile themselves as important donors.

Even before the BRICS summit in Johannesburg in August 2023, it became known that about two dozen countries had formally applied to join the BRICS grouping, which accounts for 26% of the world economy. China, which today generates about 70% of the GDP of the BRICS states, had been advocating BRICS membership expansion for years (Maihold and Müller 2023, 2). Brazil, like India and South Africa, had been rather

489 Mercosur: Total export value in 2021: US\$ 378.7 billion; Argentina: 20.6%; Paraguay 2.8%; Uruguay 2.5% (data from de.statista.com, 2022).

490 BRICS is an acronym for the emerging nations of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (member since 2010). They believe to be the dominant suppliers of manufactured goods, services (China, India), and raw materials (Brazil, Russia) by 2050.

491 Tjerk Brühwiller, FAZ, February 7, 2023.

reluctant to expand the number of members, as this would weaken their influence in the alliance. Since all decisions have to be unanimous, the question of selecting new candidates for membership is not easy. During the BRICS summit in South Africa, it was decided that Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates would first be invited as permanent members.

The selection of these six states may be considered quite surprising. The long-standing political tensions between China and India, which is opposed to ever greater Chinese influence in the Asian region, will also play a role in the future enlargement issue. With three oil-exporting states – despite the previous political conflicts between Iran and Saudi Arabia – this economic sector in the Middle East marked by political tensions is strongly emphasised. In Argentina, the new president Javier Milei – after the change of government in the run-off election in November 2023 – already declared that he will not join the BRICS group. Before the BRICS summit and the Argentinian elections, Brazil had recommended Argentina as a candidate for admission.

For China and Russia, which will take over the BRICS presidency in 2024, the creation of a counterweight to the hitherto Western-dominated global order is of particular importance. On the other hand, Brazil, India and South Africa are still interested in good trade relations on both sides.

China sees the BRICS group as creation of a new multipolar world order and – with the New Development Bank – as an alternative to the World Bank and the IMF. Chinese investment in this context will be a decisive factor for further Chinese influence in Brazil. It is not yet possible to predict how the role of China and the BRICS development bank will affect the EU-Mercosur negotiations. After the EU-Mercosur agreement, Brazil will try to start free trade negotiations with China, the most important export destination for its products. During his state visit to China in April 2023, Lula da Silva was accompanied by a large group of Brazilian entrepreneurs. Chinese leader Xi Jinping stressed that relations with Brazil are a “high priority” for China. Numerous bilateral agreements were signed, some refer to infrastructural investments and could be of major importance for projects in Amazonia.

There is a growing realisation in the Global South that de-dollarisation is an important step towards a multipolar world and that a multi-currency trading system will gradually emerge. Against the backdrop of the current tensions between the major powers and membership in BRICS, Brazil wants to be the independent voice of the Global South. However, this position is very much sought by India, which hosted the G20 summit in September 2023 and whose economic power is growing very strongly. India will be supported by the Global Gateway Initiative of the EU, Gulf States and the USA, which are striving for an alternative to China’s new “Belt and Road” initiative.

For Brazil, de-dollarisation is part of its foreign policy strategy to challenge the dominance of the dollar in international trade and finance. Transactions with China are to be conducted directly in Chinese *renminbi* and Brazilian *reais* within the framework of the New Development Bank of the BRICS countries. Brazil’s trade volume with China reached the record value of US\$ 150.5 billion in 2022 (Hirst and Tokatlian 2023). However, at the same time, Brazil has the presidency of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) since December 2022, so it remains present in both systems.

In the negotiations on the EU-Mercosur agreement, it will be of decisive importance for Brazil whether China, by far the most important trading partner, will continue to be an environmentally less critical importer and thus an “attractive” alterna-

tive to Europe and the United States, which insist on socio-ecological sustainability. If China were to switch to the global line of climate and forest protection, however, this possibility would no longer exist.

Lula da Silva is in an ideal position to push his agenda and persuade wealthy nations to pay more for stewardship of rain forest protection and mitigation of climate change. Through his stance on the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, this support could be seriously jeopardised. The hope that he will keep his promise to get deforestation under control quickly is still high in Europe and the United States. However, it must be stated that the environmental policy of Lula da Silva in his first term was mixed and economic growth at all costs had absolute priority. The environmental success at that time was very much due to the Minister of the Environment Marina Silva whose resignation in 2008 was justified by the giving in of the president to the economic lobbies. From the point of view of his critics, Lula da Silva “used his previous presidency to promote a 20th century national development programme of roads, dams, increased consumption, higher credit and massive state subsidies for the oil, beef, soy, mining, and construction industries” (Watts 2022, n. p.).

It is to be hoped that this time it will be different. In view of the numerous announcements of the new government in the environmental sector, the domestic political situation – no majority of environmentally conscious politicians in Congress and financial scarcity – and the lack of Brazil’s export boom today raise doubts about its feasibility, especially considering the political and social tensions in the country. For the vast majority of the Brazilian population, climate protection and deforestation in the Amazonian region are only marginal phenomena against the background of social disparities and the need to create jobs to save parts of the population from extreme poverty.

Strong support from Europe and the United States will be particularly important for Brazil. Germany has a strategic partnership with Brazil on environment, climate, and energy issues since 2008. After the elections in Brazil, the German government believed that the window has opened for the protection of the Amazon rain forest. Above all, the German Social Democratic governing party (SPD) has a long special connection to Lula da Silva. The German government provided a large amount of emergency aid to give Lula da Silva the best possible start. Germany was supporting the new Brazilian government with € 200 million in the first 100 days of its term of office.

After the presence of Germany’s President Steinmeier at the inauguration of Lula da Silva in Brasília,⁴⁹² the visit of the German Chancellor Scholz followed in January 2023 – with the Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development. The desire to finally conclude the EU-Mercosur trade agreement, which is underlined by the negotiations planned with the president of the European Commission, was also a topic of the visit of the German minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Protection and the minister of Agriculture in March 2023.⁴⁹³ However, German expectations in the Lula da Silva government may be too optimistic.

492 On the occasion of his trip to Brazil, the German president visited the German-Brazilian research project ATTO (cf. chapter II.8.2) in Amazonia together with the German Minister of Environment.

493 Above all, however, this visit was about the possibilities of using Brazil’s huge potential in wind and solar energy for the production of green hydrogen as a future replacement for Russian natural gas in Germany.

When Lula da Silva took office, he was given great advance praise internationally. However, the President is under a great deal of domestic and foreign environmental pressure. NGOs in Europe and Brazil reject the EU-Mercosur agreement as totally inadequate in terms of content. International NGOs such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), Survival International, WWF and Greenpeace urged the rapid implementation of promised environmental measures.

HRW asked the Lula da Silva government to develop a plan for the protection of the Amazonian region, which aims at a joint action by federal bodies, police forces, public ministries, and state governments “for the prevention and accountability for environmental crimes and violence, including dismantling the criminal networks” operating in the region. HRW also referred to the promise of Lula da Silva

strengthening the capacity of agencies that protect the environment and Indigenous rights, and institute mechanisms for controlling and monitoring the productive chain of gold, meat and other agricultural products in order to guarantee that it is not linked to deforestation.⁴⁹⁴

The plan includes the resumption of the demarcation of Indigenous lands and the fight against land grabbing. All this is urgently needed, but it is not feasible to this extent in the near future and under the current political circumstances in the Brazilian Congress.

In the first weeks of his new term, the president tried sending a strong signal to the public, especially to the international press, that he immediately addresses the fundamental problems caused during the Bolsonaro period. However, one thing must be clear: it will take much more time than the government admits and critics think to reorganise ministries, agencies, etc. and implement appropriate sustainable measures. This requires not only a highly unlikely budget increase for the different ministries that were starved under Bolsonaro, but also many vacancies have to be filled, which means difficult selection criteria and training time. The government must realise a reliable selection of experts, which has been depressed in recent years. Some NGOs have done a lot of preparatory work for the individual measures announced by Lula da Silva. Now, the president must decide what is of priority for the well-being of Amazonia without getting lost in regional and local details or in NGOs’ competitive actions.

It came as a shock when the figures for deforestation in the first quarter of 2023 exceeded even those of the Bolsonaro period, amounting to 867 km², the second highest figure for this period since 2008. In February/March at the peak of the rainy season, high levels of deforestation are unusual. One explanation for this, however, could be that logging activities were quickly increased for fear of tightening controls under the new government immediately before and directly after President Lula da Silva took office. That means: before the reorganisation of IBAMA is working. A similar situation arose before and immediately after President Cardoso took office in 1995, when record levels of deforestation were reached.⁴⁹⁵

494 <https://www.hrw.org/pt/content/383849>; <https://www.dw.com/pt-br/um-pa-pa%C3%ADs-de-muitas-urg%C3%AAsncias/a-64518010> (accessed March 8, 2023).

495 Cf. chapter II.2.2.2.

After a deforestation of 13 038 km² (August 1, 2020–July 31, 2021) and 11 594 km² (August 2021–July 2022), a deforestation of 9001 km² was recorded in the observation period 2022–2023 with 7 months under the Lula da Silva government. This represents an overall decrease of deforestation of 22 % compared to 2021–2022. The highest deforestation in the period 2022–2023 occurred in Pará (36 %) and Mato Grosso (23 %). Compared to the previous year, there was a slight absolute increase (5–8 %) in deforestation in Mato Grosso, Roraima and Maranhão.

According to the new preliminary INPE data, deforestation in Amazônia Legal decreased by 50 % in the calendar year 2023 compared to the previous year and reached its lowest level since 2018, albeit still at 5153 km².⁴⁹⁶ The comparison with the Bolsonaro government is favourable, although deforestation in 2023 continued into November due to an unusual drought. Deforestation in Indigenous Territories decreased by 27 % between 2022 and 2023 (RAD 2024).

However, it must be emphasised that deforestation in the cerrado increased by 68 % to 11 103 km² in 2023 compared to 2022 (RAD 2024) and was thus greater than forest destruction in Amazônia Legal for the first time in 2023. This occurred primarily in MATOPIBA (2022–2023: + 59 %).

All those who are in favour of measures against deforestation and finance corresponding activities will take a close look at the results of new INPE evaluations.

As for the new government's tasks for Amazonia, there are a number of pressing and long-standing issues that need to be addressed and resolved. Some of these tasks have already been determined by the president as follows:

- the National Policy for the Territorial and Ecological Management of Indigenous Lands (designed),
- a Directorate for the Amazon and the environment within the Federal Police to control activities to prevent and repress crimes against the environment, Indigenous peoples and traditional communities, and public security in Amazônia Legal (designed),
- environmental institutions closed under Bolsonaro were reactivated (designed),
- IBAMA and FUNAI resume their original tasks in a restructured form (designed),
- establishment of a national authority for climate risks (planned).

At this point, only some of the most important points that still need to be carried out or improved in Amazônia Legal may be mentioned:

- the state monopoly on the use of force in Amazônia Legal must be imposed or restored,
- the judiciary needs to be present on the ground,
- environmental justice has to be ensured,
- corruption must be fought and punished at all levels,

496 https://www.gov.br/inpe/pt-br/assuntos/ultimas-noticias/estimativa-de-desmatamento-na-amazonia-legal-para-2023-e-de-9-001-km2/2023_1020_Nota_tecnica_Estimativa_Taxa_2023_SEI.pdf (accessed September 4, 2024). See also Butler (2024), cf. RAD (2024).

- activities of criminal organisations must be identified, prevented and severely punished,
- environmental violations have to be punished quickly and without exceptions, and the fines collected,
- environmental impact assessment and environmental licensing must be placed under special supervision to avoid any collusion, influence or other irregularities. Well-organised public hearings must be held before the real decisions are made,
- good local forest governance and legal presence on the ground have to be realised,
- borders of Indigenous territories, conservation units and protected areas must be better secured. Projects in progress should be completed more quickly,
- land titles in Amazonia must be granted on the basis of secure documentation by the Rural Environmental Registry,
- peasants without land title (*posseiros*) need a clear perspective on obtaining a title of ownership,
- the needs of the majority of the poor rural population should be taken into account to a greater extent,
- illegal occupation of land (*grilagem*) must be identified and the unlawfully acquired land expropriated,
- landscape-destroying activities and contamination of water courses with mercury by gold prospectors (*garimpeiros*) will have to be severely restricted and strictly controlled,
- illegal forest clearing can be safely recorded and punished with high-tech satellite monitoring. Punishment can be fines, blacklisting, and credit withdrawal, as has been done in the past,
- illegal clearing of primary forest for the production of charcoal must be prevented,
- tax relief could be offered to avoid legal clearing on the basis of the Forest Code,
- mega-projects, especially hydroelectric power plants with large reservoirs, must be avoided at all costs due to past experience with negative socio-ecological and environmental impacts and excessive financial burdens,
- renewable solar and wind energy generation or small-scale run-of-river power stations are ecologically efficient alternatives,
- promotion of innovations in agricultural management and developing a local forest economy
- small projects of the riverine and Indigenous population for sustainable development should be particularly promoted (e.g., agroforestry, cooperative management),
- intensification of scientific research in Brazil on Amazonia and its biological potential is essential as well as further promotion of regional scientists and research institutions,
- ecologically and economically sustainable alternatives in agroforestry are urgently needed to strengthen regional social actors and promote the empowerment of local communities and Indigenous groups,
- incentives for ecologically oriented actions must be promoted and sustainability has to be the long-term economic and social goal,
- low-carbon agriculture and reforestation are sustainable goals that deserve extraordinary support,

- in view of globalisation, rapid urbanisation and increasing urban-rural interactions, special programmes for sustainable urban development in the Amazon are urgently needed.

All this must be realised in Amazonia beyond party political considerations and covert government propaganda. It is only possible through the fair participation of the local and regional population in environmental assessment and democratic decision-making on government plans and strategies (Science Panel for the Amazon 2021). Environmental justice is one of the key elements for peaceful coexistence (Fearnside 2020).

The necessary measures must be combined with the process of insight in industrialised countries that Amazonia is no longer a mere reference area for supply of cheap raw material and agricultural commodities. To this end, this applies to the environmental performance of financial investments and transactions in the international engagement in fighting deforestation in Amazonia (Barroso and Mello 2021).⁴⁹⁷

Carlos Nobre pointed out that the discussion so far on the Amazonian development ranges only between the environmentalist approach of maximisation of protected areas and the conservative economic modernisation approach of intensification of agriculture and livestock farming as well as the expansion of hydropower capacities. He proposes in the short term and with a low-tech approach a third way as a paradigm for sustainable development (Nobre *et al.* 2016; Nobre and Nobre 2019; 2020) that also enables the zero-deforestation strategy to reduce CO₂ emissions and to slow down climate change.

A number of Amazonian products, such as the *babaçu* palm (*Attalea speciosa*), *cupuaçu* (*Theobroma grandiflorum*), and the Brazil nut tree (*Bertholletia excelsa*) have already impacted the local economies. The market for fruits of the *acaí* palm (*Euterpe oleracea*) has developed particularly strongly. Thus, these economic alternatives of biodiversity-based product value chains could also reach the global markets. Amazonia “as a global public good of biological assets and biomimetic designs that can enable the creation of innovative, high-value products [...]” (Nobre *et al.* 2016, 10764) also means, of course, that products, which could be important for the cosmetic and pharmaceutical industry worldwide, must under no circumstances lead to a new process of exploitation. However, the term “global public good”, which was intentionally avoided in the international PPG7 programme, could also be misunderstood in Brazil in a global discussion about the “general valorisation” of these Brazilian products.

The problem of biopiracy, i.e., the unauthorised taking and smuggling of animal and plant species, must be ruled out in Amazonia – not only for historical reasons of the smuggling of *hevea brasiliensis* out of the country. The non-consensual appropriation of traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples for the acquisition of patent rights on biological or chemical substances must also be excluded (Barroso and Mello 2021). In particular, the Indigenous people’s knowledge of how to obtain medicinal plants to treat a wide variety of diseases must be safeguarded for their survival.

In order to show the basic problem of unequal valorisation of natural resources in a comparison, Nobre has contrasted the commodities currently in demand based on deforestation and Amazonian biodiversity. Soybean cultivation and cattle breeding

497 Financial flows that connect “actors engaged in deforestation-related activities to government actors and decisions” must be identified and quantified (Garrett *et al.* 2021, 645).

in Amazonia yielded US\$ 14 billion in 2017 from a deforested area of 240 000 km². In contrast, Brazil nuts, cocoa and *açaí* palm in agroforestry on an area of only 4000 km² without deforestation brought a return of US\$ 2 billion and generated income for over 300 000 people in the region. A comparison of the yield of 1 ha of a well-run agroforestry farm (US\$ 1000–1200/year) with 1 ha of a cattle farm (US\$ 100/year) and 1 ha of a well-organised soybean cultivation (US\$ 200/year) shows the enormous potential of sustainable economy (Nobre and Nobre 2020).⁴⁹⁸ This is the sustainable alternative with low impact on the environment excluding the agribusiness profits and concentrating on regional social actors.

1.4. A new impetus for the Amazon Cooperation Treaty?

Given the importance of Amazonia for biodiversity, rain forest protection, the preservation of the culturally diverse regional population and its decisive role for the global climate, regionally coordinated cross-border policies for sustainable development would be a fundamental strategy to meet the demands of its population and member countries.⁴⁹⁹

With regard to international cooperation in Amazonia, it will be of interest whether the government of Lula da Silva will give new impetus to the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (ACT). The ACT, signed in 1978, gave rise to the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO/OTCA, Organización del Tratado de Cooperación Amazónica) formed by the eight Amazonian countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Surinam, and Venezuela.⁵⁰⁰ The conclusion of the treaty was extremely general, and the development objective was “harmonious and in mutual cooperation,” an agreement on a minimum consensus. Since the beginning, Brazil had tried to dispel the concerns of neighbouring countries about its possible dominance in this region and proposed coordinated development measures in the economic, social, and ecological fields in the same way for all areas. For Brazil, the establishment of the Amazon Pact was not only a counterpoint to the Andean Pact, but also offered an opportunity to encourage the Andean countries to cooperate economically more closely with Brazil in an agreement in which Brazil was a part (Kohlhepp 1983a). Today, apart from a broad vision of south-south cooperation, ACT is still without any specific geopolitical strategy but oriented to “promote the harmonious development of the Amazonian territories in such a way that the joint actions of the Amazonian countries produce equitable and mutually beneficial results in achieving the sustainable development of the Amazon region.”⁵⁰¹

498 In 2020, socio-biodiverse products by Indigenous people and riverine communities from Amazônia Legal totalled R\$ (Brazilian Real) 11 billion (US\$ 2.15 billion), with 50% of the products destined for the local market, 41% for the rest of Brazil and 3% for the global market (Hirota *et al.* 2022). Carlos Nobre in: “Amazônia entre a vida e a morte”, *Jornalismo TV Cultura*, episódio 2, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zlwf8nSXJmo> (accessed September 4, 2024).

499 <http://otca.org/en/> (accessed 16.03.2023).

500 Ferris (1981), among others; cf. Kohlhepp (1983a, footnote 60).

501 <https://otca.org/en/about-us/> (accessed 16.03.2023).

It will only be possible to achieve an economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable policy on natural resources management in the Amazonian region if the relevant actors agree on common goals and new rules. Since the majority of the participating states have left-wing governments, at least for the time being, it may well be possible for Lula da Silva to establish more intensive contacts for a coordinated regional development in Amazonia, even with the Maduro government in Venezuela. This is particularly true, because the Amazon region is of major importance for mitigation of CO₂ emissions and slowdown of global climate change. In addition, cross-border migration, goods trade, and the ubiquitous drug trafficking give rise to greater surveillance of the region and border areas.

All states bordering the Amazon region have control stations to monitor deforestation with the help of satellite images. Since 2002, the eight ACTO member states have had access to a Permanent Technical Secretariat in Brasília with the aim to organise regional development measures and cooperation programmes between the participating countries. Nevertheless, little effort has been made in supranational cooperation in recent decades.

In early August 2023, Lula da Silva has invited the eight ACTO states, which last met 14 years ago, to a summit in Belém. For the Brazilian president, this was an attempt to stimulate new activities among the neighbouring countries regarding the protection of the Amazonian forests and at the same time to underline Brazil's leadership role in environmental issues. This, especially against the background of the World Climate Summit (COP 30) to be held at the same location in 2025.

In the run-up to the event, Indigenous and environmental organisations held large protest demonstrations to highlight what they saw as the major problems of deforestation and the lack of respect for human rights. The main proposals of civil society were formulated for the meeting, including the protection of territories. The internationally known charismatic Kayapó leader Raoni Metuktire ("I will talk to the governments to keep the forest standing") also tried to talk to Lula da Silva about banning the oil drilling planned by the state-run Brazilian oil giant Petrobras in the Amazon estuary (Watso 2023).

The results of the "Belém Declaration" were disappointing. The participating states were able to agree on increased cooperation in sustainable development and to strengthen combating deforestation but could not agree jointly on the Brazilian proposal to end illegal deforestation by 2030. Bolivia and Venezuela stood by their refusal to name this date. However, there was agreement on combating organised crime, which is growing very rapidly in the Amazon region. Brazil offered a Centre for International Police Cooperation in Manaus for collaborative efforts between the police forces of the eight countries and the establishment of an Air Traffic Control System to combat illicit air traffic and drug trafficking.⁵⁰²

Large parts of Amazonia have long been in the hands of organised crime. Criminal networks dominate land speculation, gold mining, logging in all parts of Amazonia.

502 [G1.globo.com/meio-ambiente](https://g1.globo.com/meio-ambiente), August 6, 23 (accessed August 8, 2023). In addition, the establishment of a number of entities within the ambit of the ACTO was announced, such as the Forum of Amazonian Cities, among others (Agência Brasil, August 9, 2023, <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/en/geral/noticia/2023-08/presidents-eight-amazon-countries-sign-belem-declaration> [accessed August 8, 2023]).

Coca cultivation in Peru, Colombia, Bolivia and Venezuela also affects tropical forest areas. Smuggling routes for cocaine also use the Amazonian rain forest areas, which are difficult to control.

At the Amazon summit, Lula da Silva criticised “green neo-colonialism”⁵⁰³ and defended facilitated funding for sustainable projects. However, Lula da Silva could not avoid a very critical discussion point. The oil issue became an important topic of this summit. The President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, criticised during the plenary of presidents that the issue of fossil fuels is not treated with due attention by politics. He tried to put pressure on his neighbouring states and asked for an end to oil and gas extraction in Amazonia. This exploration forms the economic basis for some states with lowlands in western Amazonia, such as Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, as well as in Venezuela.

The Brazilian government is divided over oil exploration in the Amazon biome. The Minister of Mines and Energy defends research of Petrobras to assess the viability of oil at the mouth of the Amazon river. On the other hand, the Minister of the Environment, Marina Silva, calls for detailed scientific data for decision-making. In May 2023, the Brazilian environmental authority IBAMA denied the drilling request of Petrobras. Eighty civil society and environmental organisations, WWF Brasil and Greenpeace, protested against a fast-track approval and have called for an in-depth study.⁵⁰⁴ A permit would certainly lead to further drilling in the entire region.

It can be assumed that Lula da Silva is in favour of the economic potential of this project, which would fit in with the president’s positive attitude towards large-scale projects in the Amazon region, however, seriously affect his new image as a defender of the environment if the mega-projects proceed. In view of the interests of the aforementioned oil-producing states and in consideration of the unresolved Brazilian situation, the ban on oil exploration in Amazonia was not included in the document of the ACTO summit.⁵⁰⁵

Lula da Silva’s credibility on environmental protection in Amazonia has been damaged by his continued advocacy for large infrastructure projects. While environmental organisations describe these projects as disastrous for the Amazon region, members of Lula da Silva’s Workers’ Party emphasise their economic importance. The president advocates the reconstruction of the BR-319 (Fig. 3: Porto Velho–Manaus), which was abandoned in the 1980s and is now to be repaved. The construction of the Rio Negro Bridge – a 3.6 km long cable-stayed bridge near Manaus, which crosses the Rio Negro just before it flows into the Amazon and was opened to traffic in 2011 – has led to controversy over the possible repaving of the BR-319, which connects the region with Porto Velho in Rondônia. As this road is on the south side of the Amazon, traffic from Manaus would still have to cross the main branch of the river by ferry despite the bridge. The recommissioning for the transport of commodities would lead to uncontrolled deforestation in the region by increasing land speculation and giving easy access to *grileiros*.

503 <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2023/08/brasil-nao-pode-aceitar-neocolonialismo-verde-diz-lula.shtml> (accessed August 24, 23).

504 Petrobras has reserved almost half of its 5-year exploration budget for this area (Biller 2023).

505 [G1.globo.com/meio-ambiente](https://g1.globo.com/meio-ambiente), August 6, 23 (accessed August 9, 2023).

Another difficult problem is related to the planned *Ferrogrão* railway line in Mato Grosso and Pará (Sinop–Miritituba) (Fig. 34)⁵⁰⁶ – a top priority project for the Minister of Transport – that would move grains from the main soybean producing region towards the Tapajos river for shipping abroad. The construction of the railway depends on a court decision on the permissibility of clearing in the Jamanxim National Park, which would be affected by the route. One of the Kayapó chiefs called it “the railway of Indigenous genocide.”

Belo Monte⁵⁰⁷ is also back on Lula da Silva’s agenda, as the renewal of IBAMA’s operating licence is under review, as the operator Norte Energia is said to have failed to meet many of the conditions of the original licence – issued under heavy pressure from Rousseff’s government – according to a letter from the environmental journalism website *Sumauma* (Biller 2023).

As a result of the Amazon summit, it can be stated that the Amazonian countries are not willing to give up economic progress for measures against climate change, especially since these countries are only responsible for a small part of global greenhouse gas emissions. Brazil had already made clear its reservations about environmental protection requirements during the preliminary talks on the upcoming EU-Mercosur negotiations. These requirements, which are perceived as excessive, such as the example of the EU’s new supply chain law, would mean trade disruptions.

Many of the Amazonian states are facing major domestic political and socio-economic problems, which ultimately push rain forest protection into the background. To prevent this, the Amazonian countries will make financial demands on the industrialised nations to carry out environmentally protective sustainable development projects. Whether this will lead to an overarching cooperation of the ACTO members in the Amazon region remains to be seen.

Since Brazil has so far used the majority of international support for Amazonian issues for its own programmes, the beginning of coordinated regional sustainable development in this area will be a new challenge. In any case, it is certain that in the overall region of Amazonia, rain forest protection will not be available for free. The international community will have to offer suitable compensation mechanisms for all countries involved (Maihold 2019b).

Lula da Silva has repeatedly demanded that the promised US\$ 100 billion be made available to developing countries so that they can use it for climate and forest protection. Marina Silva stressed that Brazil, which during Lula da Silva’s first two terms in office (2003–2010) would have avoided the release of around 5 billion tons of CO₂ by reducing deforestation,⁵⁰⁸ must play a leadership role in international climate and forest protection. . In November 2024, Brazil will chair the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro and host the World Climate Change Conference in Belém in 2025. Brazil will then also have to convince the international public of what the current Lula da Silva government has done for Amazonia in social and ecological terms, especially with regard to the planned oil production in the Amazon river estuary.

506 cf. chapter II.4.4

507 cf. chapter II.6.1; II.6.2.

508 Interview with Marina Silva by Tjerk Brühwiller, FAZ, September 11, 2023. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/regenwald-abholzung-im-amazonas-der-stopp-reicht-nicht-fuer-die-rettung-19164270.html> (accessed September 4, 2024).