

Brazil Faces a Choice With Soaring Pandemic Death Toll

Yu Qingxin, June 15, 2020, Commentary

The pandemic has taken a toll on Brazil since the Health Ministry confirmed the first case of CCP virus infection on Feb. 26. What is the reason behind this phenomenon? A recurring pattern shows that countries with close ties to the Chinese regime experience high CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus infection rates and deaths. What is the relationship between Brazil and China?

More than 13,000 graves were being dug in the city of São Paulo, according to media reports on May 1. Over 10,000 daily new cases have been reported in the city since May 13. As of June 11, the number of confirmed cases have gone up to 772,416, with 39,680 deaths—making Brazil second place in severity, behind the United States (the concealment of data by both China and Iran has made it impossible to compare both countries in the data).

Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro has rallied against a lockdown policy. He said, "There are many governors, in

my view, who are taking measures that will harm our economy a lot.” However, his campaign to reopen the economy was met with resistance.

João Doria, the governor of São Paulo, started the quarantine in the city nearly two months ago—businesses, schools, and public spaces were closed and people were asked to stay at home.

“We are taking this measure out of respect for medicine and science,” Doria stated.

São Paulo has a population of about 12 million.

Since early April, São Paulo has become the CCP virus epicenter in Brazil. As of June 10, the confirmed death toll was 9,862. The already burdened local hospital system suffered from lack of facilities, with more than 3,000 hospital workers placed under quarantine, and 700 confirmed to be infected with the virus. From aerial photos, one can see the enormity of the mass graves for people who died of the virus.

Brazil and China Solidify Ties

Diplomatic relations between the Chinese regime and Brazil officially began in 1974. The China-Brazil High Level Coordination and Cooperation Commission (COSBAN) was formed in 2003. COSBAN has functioned as a strategic partnership development tool between both countries, bringing forth concrete actions such as the 2010-2014 action plan, the 2015-2021 action plan, as well as the 10-year plan 2012 to 2021. Years of collaboration has allowed the Chinese regime to infiltrate and spread its communist ideology in Brazil.

In 2018, Bolsonaro, as a conservative presidential candidate, warned that China was a predator looking to dominate key sectors of Brazil's economy.

The Belt and Road Initiative Trap

For years, the Communist regime has tried to lure investment from Brazil through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also known as One Belt, One Road). The project involves building infrastructure projects throughout Latin America, Africa, eastern Europe, and southeast Asia.

China is Brazil's largest trading partner. From 2003 to June 2018, Chinese firms have invested almost \$54 billion in

about 100 projects in Brazil, according to figures from Brazil's planning ministry.

In 2017 alone, investments nearly hit \$11 billion.

According to Chinese state media, before 2010, Chinese funds flowing into Brazil were primarily focused on assuring food and energy supplies for the Asian giant. But in recent years, that strategy has expanded to include the telecommunications, automotive, renewable energy, and the financial services sectors.

In the field of infrastructure and communication, China completed its acquisition of one of Brazil's most profitable container terminals. It's the biggest port investment ever made in Brazil or Latin America in 2018.

In capital investment, China has become a major foreign capital source for Brazil. From 2005 through 2017, Brazil has been the recipient of 55 per cent of all investments made by Chinese businesses in Latin America, according to the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

São Paulo's Water Treatment Facility Controlled by Chinese Firm

China Gezhouba Group Overseas Investment Co., Ltd. (CGGC), through its Brazilian subsidiary, has acquired 100 percent equity interest of Sistema Produtor São Lourenço S.A., which is owned by Camargo Correa Group and Andrade Gutierrez Group of Brazil, and has obtained related water supply concessions.

The deal is funded by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and its total investment amounts to approximately \$860 million.

Upon completion, the water treatment facility will be able to provide 410,000 tons of daily water supply to meet the needs of 1.5 million people.

A 2017 study published by the Chinese Academy of Sciences concluded that “water resource scarcity issues will become the core issue of the development of countries along the Belt and Road.” Nonetheless, as this article details, the water-related impacts of the Belt and Road are likely to have a significant effect on local and regional politics in BRI countries.

It is worth noting that the company CGGC is headquartered in Wuhan, the epicenter of the CCP virus outbreak in

China. It has overseas outlets in 99 countries, 33 of them in countries participating in BRI.

Brazil Welcomes Confucius Institutes

The Chinese regime has also infiltrated Brazil's education system. The first Confucius Institute (CI) in Brazil was established through an agreement between São Paulo State University (UNESP) and the Confucius Institute headquarters in Beijing, with the support of Hubei University in Wuhan. The Confucius Institute at UNESP is part of a network of more than 600 CI's distributed in more than 140 countries.

The CI at UNESP began operating in the first half of 2009. Since then, more than 12,000 Brazilians attended its regular Chinese-language courses, including UNESP students, elementary and junior high school students, and community members in the 13 cities of São Paulo State, on UNESP campuses.

Brazil has the highest number of CI's in Latin America. Brazilian think tanks and universities have established a number of Chinese research centers and project teams to promote Brazil's understanding of China through publicity campaigns. The number of Brazilian students and tourists

to China has also increased rapidly, and more than 30 Chinese universities offer majors in the Portuguese language.

The Chinese Communist regime has deeply penetrated Brazil with years of strategic partnership. As Brazil is hit-hard by the pandemic, will its leadership recognize the true face of the predator and exit the Brazil-China bilateral trap?

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