

The Brazilian Amazon Forest Restoration under The Leadership of President Lula da Silva

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Abstract

The implementation of anti-environmental policies during the conservative government under President Jair Bolsonaro has resulted in the destruction of the Brazilian Amazon forest region. The deforestation rate, which had previously decreased, started to climb significantly in 2019. The devastating forest fires that hit the Amazon at the end of this year is indivisible from the government's neglect. The re-election of Lula da Silva as President of Brazil in 2023 sparked great optimism among the Brazilians and international public for restoring Brazilian Amazon forest because Lula, as Brazil president for two previous periods, had succeeded in reducing the deforestation and destruction of the Brazilian Amazon forest to its lowest point in 2003-2011. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the vision of restoring the Brazilian Amazon forest under the new government of Lula da Silva. This study uses a qualitative method that relies on various information originating from government documents, related books and journals, online news reports, and several other types of secondary data. Based on the initial research, Lula has carried out multiple programs related to Amazon Forest restoration, from initiating sustainable economic development to strengthening law enforcement, protecting indigenous communities, and strengthening cooperation with the international community. As a result, the level of deforestation and forest fires in the Amazon has now followed a significant downward trend.

Keywords: Amazon, Brazil, Lula da Silva

Abstrak

Penerapan kebijakan anti lingkungan pada masa pemerintahan konservatif Presiden Jair Bolsonaro mengakibatkan rusaknya Kawasan Hutan Amazon Brazil. Laju deforestasi yang sebelumnya mengalami penurunan kini kembali meningkat signifikan sejak tahun 2019, begitu pula dengan kebakaran hutan hebat yang melanda Amazon pada tahun tersebut. Terpilihnya kembali Lula da Silva sebagai Presiden Brazil pada tahun 2023 telah menimbulkan optimisme besar baik di kalangan masyarakat Brazil maupun internasional terhadap adanya upaya perbaikan kondisi Hutan Amazon Brazil. Sempat memimpin Brazil pada dua periode sebelumnya, Pemerintahan Lula terbukti berhasil menurunkan angka deforestasi dan kerusakan Hutan Amazon Brazil hingga ke titik terendah pada tahun 2003-2011. Oleh karena itu, tulisan ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji visi restorasi Hutan Amazon Brazil pada periode ketiga pemerintahan Lula da Silva. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif yang mengandalkan berbagai informasi yang berasal dari dokumen pemerintah, buku dan jurnal terkait, pemberitaan online, dan beberapa jenis data sekunder lainnya. Berdasarkan penelitian awal, banyak program terkait restorasi Hutan Amazon yang telah dilancarkan pemerintahan Lula. Mulai dari pembangunan ekonomi berkelanjutan, penguatan penegakan hukum, perlindungan masyarakat adat, dan penguatan kerja sama dengan komunitas internasional. Alhasil, saat ini tingkat deforestasi dan kebakaran hutan di Amazon menunjukkan sudah tren penurunan yang signifikan.

Kata kunci: Amazon, Brazil, Lula da Silva

INTRODUCTION

The Amazon region is the largest tropical forest in the world which plays an important role in maintaining ecological stability and the earth's climatic conditions. Billions of trees in the Amazon region are important in controlling the amount of carbon emissions produced by human activities. The biodiversity contained in the Amazon forest is the main element of life support for around three million Brazilian indigenous people in the Amazon region. However, the Amazon's central role in supporting the survival of mankind is not comparable to measures to protect it. Recently, the natural resources of the Amazon region are massively exploited, resulting in increasingly uncontrolled destruction of the forest areas. Data show a drastic increase in the annual rate of Amazon deforestation until its highest point of 28,000 km² in 2003-2004. Despite a significant decline in the early 2010s, Amazon deforestation is slowly increasing again up to 13,000 km² in 2021 (Alves, 2023; Barlow et al., 2022; Da Cruz et al., 2021).

The Amazon forest, mainly situated in Brazilian territory, worsened in the era of Jair Bolsonaro's government. As Bolsonaro reigned in 2019, Amazon deforestation rose above 10,000 km²/year for the first time since 2007. A year later, this rate was estimated to reach 12,000 km²/year and on to 13,000 km²/year (Junior et al., 2021). Deforestation of the Amazon region was accompanied by increasing intensity of forest fires that reached its peak in 2019 when 33.6 million hectares of the Amazon was burnt, resulting in major disasters for local communities from the middle to the end of the year. This figure was far higher

than the previous year's 8.8 million hectares and, as reported by the European Commission (2020), exceeded the 2010's forest fires which claimed 21.7 million hectares (European Commission et al., 2020). This concerning condition of the Amazon could not be separated from Bolsonaro's policies that leaned more towards forest capitalization and anti-environmental conservation.

The re-election of Lula Da Silva as the President of Brazil in 2023 sparked optimism for revitalizing the Amazon region. Reigning for two periods from 2003 to 2011, Lula strived to have a significant reduction in Amazon deforestation rates. In the beginning of 2000s, deforestation in the Amazon forest reached 18,000-28,000 km²/year, then steadily declined to its lowest point of barely 4,700 km²/year in the end of 2012. Together with the Ministry of Environment, Lula succeeded in designing and implementing The Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Legal Amazon (PPCDAm) which stipulates a series of possible efforts carried out by the government and communities to control the use of legal areas of the Amazon forest (Hernandez, 2023; Jackson, 2015).

Brazil during Lula's time was also actively involved in the international agenda related to global environmental issues through bilateralism and multilateralism. It seemed to position itself as a leader in the regional and international environmental agenda, urging developed and developing countries to play an active role in realizing the vision of sustainable development (Visentini and Silva, 2010).

Reflecting on the success of his two previous government periods, Lula da Silva prioritized improving conditions in

the Amazon Region in his new Brazilian Government. Since the campaign period, Lula and his party coalition have loudly accentuated their promise to repair and protect the Amazon region. This article focuses on analyzing the protection policy around the condition of Amazon forest under Lula's new reign. In contrast with his predecessors, Lula has taken a series of initiatives to improve the governance of Amazon since the beginning of his reign. The new Brazilian government is re-implementing protection and restoration programs that used to efficiently reduce the high-level damage to the Amazon. Compared to the Bolsonaro era, Lula's government is also more open to participatory involvement from international circles, including governments of other countries, international and regional organizations, and community communities. Collective and collaborative policy responses were established to address Amazon forest problems. The series of changes implemented brought quite significant implications. In six months, the government claimed to have succeeded in reducing the deforestation rate of the Amazon forest by 40% compared to the deforestation rate in the same period the previous year. In the international realm, Brazil now also appears to be increasingly active in promoting the importance of global steps in dealing with environmental issues, especially climate change. This seems to sign the beginning of Brazil's return as an environmental leader on the international stage.

Conceptual Framework

Considering the complexity of environmental issues nowadays that include illegal acts of forest destruction, it is crucial to implement appropriate and strategic governance policies. Transformative governance today is one of the conceptual ideas that has emerged in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) targets, such as overcoming environmental damage. This concept refers to stakeholders' commitment in initiating fundamental and systemic change in socio-politics, economics, culture and technology to improve environmental conditions. According to Hamakers et al. (2021), transformative governance can be defined as the steps to produce policies, a set of rule systems, and a network of actors, both formal and informal, public or private, to produce transformative change towards a sustainable environment. Referring to this understanding, the aspect of inclusivity becomes very essential; improving environmental conditions requires active participation from all parties. Likewise, the government of each country should exercise openness in providing opportunities for global and local entities to participate in environmental programs.

There are four elements in transformative governance: integrative, inclusive, adaptive, and pluralist governance. Integrative governance refers to the integration or continuity between the systems and regulatory instruments for protecting and improving the environment. The integration effort includes three stages, namely combination (efforts to develop smart governance), coordination (engage relevant parties in

the environmental governance process), and integration (engage all sectors into a sustainable environmental policy framework). The second element, inclusive governance, can be interpreted as the government's openness to the involvement of all parties (public and private) to participate in creating and implementing policies related to environmental issues. It is expected that openness, especially to international circles, can help the government achieve the expected sustainable development targets. Transformative governance requires a policy adaptation process to align with the complex dynamics of environmental problems. Adaptive governance is defined as the ability of policy makers, or other parties involved in environmental governance, to carry out learning, improvement, and change to some extent in response to the dynamics of the current problems. Finally, the implementation of transformative environmental governance must be pluralistic. It means that environmental problems like climate change may seem as the realm of natural sciences but they have considerable implications to social, political and economic aspects; therefore, efficient handling of environmental problems should consider all information and studies from other scientific fields (Hamakers et al, 2021).

The concept of transformative governance also emerges in an article (Aguiar et al., 2021) that highlights the problems in implementing the Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) approach in Latin American region. The implementation of four strategic activities in the FLR (stakeholder participation, adaptive management, strengthened

supervision, and capacity building) is perceived feasible to resolve complex environmental problems, especially forest destruction experienced by Latin American countries, like Brazil. However, the actual realization of FLR approach faces various challenges that significantly hamper the progress of forest protection initiatives. These challenges include, firstly, high economic dependence of Latin American countries on forestry resources. Secondly, weak government land control followed by high-level conflicts over ownership and access to land persist among communities around forest areas. Divergent values and perceptions among social elements in Latin America about human-nature relationship are the third challenges. Likewise, a principal conflict in Amazon region exists between local communities who prioritize forest preservation and businessmen and multinational companies who condone capitalism. Finally, the failure of forest protection initiatives is associated with weak and fragile public institutions implementing long-term, sustainable economic policies consistently at central and regional levels in Latin American countries.

Reflecting on this situation, Aguiar assessed that transformative governance was a viable addition to improving FLR implementation in Latin America. In contrast to other approaches developed in a political vacuum, this concept explicitly considers values, interests, and power as the most fundamental aspects in encouraging socio-ecological transformation that is not only effective, but also legitimate and equitable. Further, Aguiar et al. (2021) stated the opportunities to implement four trans-

formative governance principles to integrate and strengthen FLR program in Latin America. In the context of integrative governance, collaborative policies and regulatory systems involving multiple instruments is expected to create more efficient initiatives to address environmental problems in Latin America. The pluralist principles are not to be overlooked; the more involved the natural and social studies, the more information can be gathered to produce appropriate policy responses to environmental problems. The application of transformative governance principles also requires that FLR and various other environmental protection initiatives be adaptive. This means that program implementation is carried out by the socio-economic and political dynamics. Adaptive governance includes the courage to experiment and learn to produce improved responses to social and ecological conditions that are full of uncertainty. Finally, the fact that environmental protection and empowerment measures are a shared responsibility must be highlighted. Therefore, FLR and all initiatives in mitigating environmental issues should be inclusive and open to multistakeholder participation to produce constructive and collaborative steps (Aguiar et al., 2021).

According to Pereira and Terrenas (2021), the concept of transformative governance refers to structural reconfiguration covering social, economic, value, norm, goal and paradigm aspects in overcoming ecological problems. There are three stages of governance transformation; first, exposing the reality of environmental crisis to encourage radical

and ideological changes in social, economic and political relations. The second stage is undertaking interventions in socio-ecological systems and strengthening ecosystem resilience through efforts to promote norms and technical innovation and strengthen management systems. The last stage is fostering inclusive community participation in the management process. This means that the government must welcome agencies, organizations, and social communities to participate and contribute to producing the desired transformation of environmental conditions (Pereirra and Terrenas, 2021).

Protecting strategic environmental areas such as the Amazon can no longer rely on conventional approaches centered on state policy. It is vital to embody shared responsibility mechanisms involving cooperation between countries, organizations and communities at local and international levels. In this case, Pereirra and Terrenas (2021) claim that joint efforts to create connectivity between ecological considerations and social and economic development policies are crucial for preserving the environment on earth. Therefore, mitigating environmental issues in the Amazon areas call for an integrative forum that emphasizes building mechanisms for protecting forests and their indigenous habitats in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

Research Methods

This article generally adopted a qualitative approach with a literature study to probe and explore previous investigations of Amazon environmental

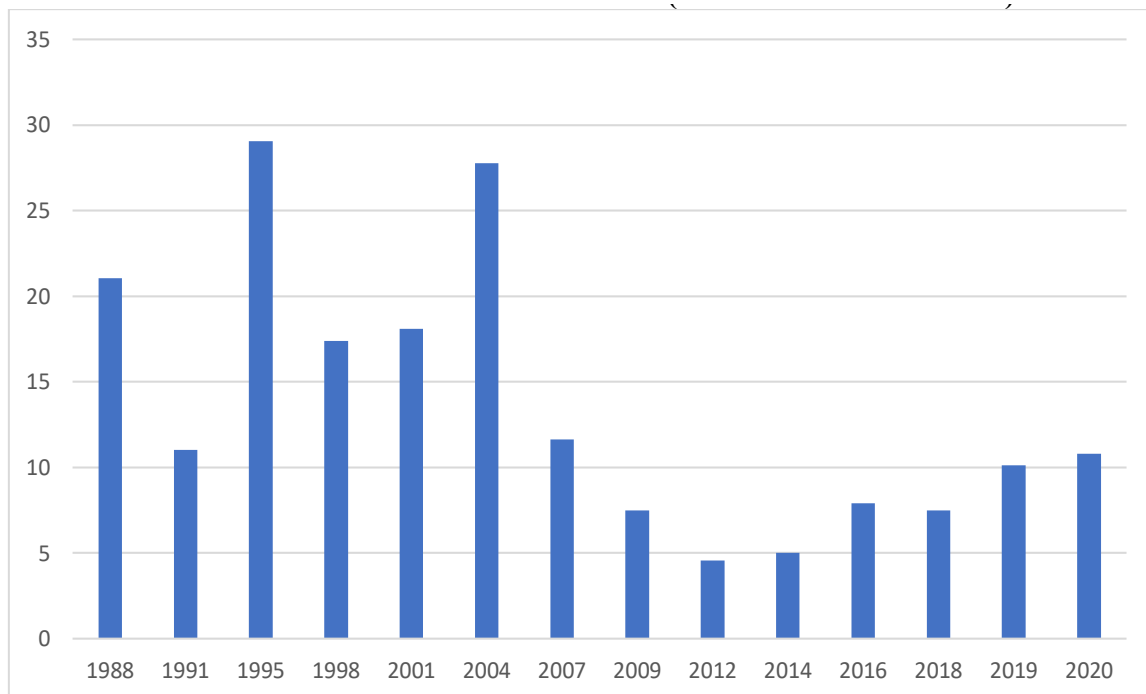
crisis and the policy responses initiated by Brazil government under Lula da Silva's administration. Further, an in-depth analysis was performed to all secondary data extracetd from books, articles, journals, and online news channels pertaining to the discussion. All data were then analyzed and processed to provide the best explanation about the ambition and policy implementation of the current Brazilian Government to mitigate Amazon defirestation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Success of Brazilian Amazon Governance under Lula da Silva in 2003-2011

Amazon deforestation in Brazil has been a persistent issue with alarming exploitation practices. The commercial use of the region's rich natural resources

began during the colonial period. The Europeans, especially Portuguese and Spanish, came to Latin America in the 16th century and saw the magnitude of economic potentials of the Amazon forest. Then, large-scale forest exploitation activities that include logging, extracting mineral resources, and clearing agricultural land ensued with a single goal to maximize economic profits from the colonized country (Castillo, 2021). Unfortunately, this exploitation continued despite the end of colonialism and imperialism in Latin America. In fact, the new government collaborated with large economic industries controlled by "white people" to magnify the capitalization of forest resources. As a result, deforestation of the Amazon forest escalated at an uncontrollable rate.



Source: PRODES, in Silva Junior et al., 2020.

Figure 1.
Brazilian Amazon Deforestation Rate (in Thousand Km²/Year)

Figure 1 shows that the deforestation rate of the Amazon forest decreased between 2009 and 2018. At that time, the average deforestation in Amazon forest was around 4,500-7,800 km²/ year, only a half of the last decade's. In 2012, the deforestation rate reached its lowest point at 4,500 km²/year, but only to rise again. A significant increase in deforestation rate of Amazon forest occurred between 2016-2018 and 2019-2020 from 6,000 km²/year to >10,000 km²/year.

The significant reduction in Brazil deforestation in the beginning of 2010s was resulted from the successful implementation of environmental restoration policies under the administration of President Lula da Silva. The Brazilian government was greatly committed to transformative governance model to optimize the output of the Amazon region restoration policy. This commitment was initiated as Mariana Silva, an Amazon activist, was elected the Minister of Environment. As her first move, Mariana Silva mandated discretion in forcing other institutions and ministries in Brazil to conform with their shared commitment to reducing the high-level deforestation. President Lula also demands each Brazilian institutions and ministries to realize their policies and participate in forest protection and preservation. Aware of the importance of support from various elements, Lula has held regular meetings with experts and environmental observers in Brazil to specifically discuss prospects for improving the Amazon region since the early days of his government (Jackson, 2020).

A major breakthrough was achieved when Lula succeeded in implementing a presidential decree. Six points of policy instruments designated to solve Amazon deforestation was stipulated: 1) bestow the obligation to plan land management to the district/ city level; 2) implement tax and credit incentives to increase economic efficiency and sustainability of deforested areas; 3) establish infrastructure governance procedures based on environmental sustainability; 4) provide new job opportunities for restored forest areas; 5) incorporate surrounding abandoned areas into the forest management process and management system; 6) involve the government and federal level agencies to supervise all activities related to Amazon management at the regional government level (Jackson, 2020). In 2004, Lula's government launched the Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Amazon (PPCDAm), a concrete embodiment of their commitment to reduce the unruly deforestation. PPCDAm contained at least three strategic pillars: plan the use of land and territorial areas in the Amazon region; tighten environmental monitoring and controls in the Amazon region; and encourage production activities in the Amazon environment based on natural sustainability. These strategic pillars serve as a reference for determining all government development policies within the scope of the Ministry of Environment as well as all relevant ministries and regional governments (UNDP, 2018).

The action plans for Amazon deforestation were implemented in two phases. The first phase took place in

2004-2008 under four policy themes. The first policy was land planning related to the expansion of protected areas in the Amazon Region. The second policy focused on monitoring and control that included the addition of deforestation observation satellites, implementation of licensing regulations and environmental fines, and increasing law enforcement for perpetrators of environmental destruction of the Amazon. The third policy, the promotion of sustainable land-use activities, consisted of major government support for sustainable economic activities in the community, the addition of environmental agencies, and increased contribution of environmental experts to protecting the Amazon. Lastly, development of sustainable infrastructure in the Brazilian Amazon environment, especially in transportation and energy (West and Fearnside, 2021). In addition, the Decree 6527 in 2008 stipulated that the government initiated the Amazon Funds program which aimed at increasing the value of donations and investments from private parties at domestic and foreign level for all activities of reforestation, conservation, and forest monitoring. These government committed initiatives proved successful to reduce deforestation rates in the Amazon Region which, according to PRODES-INPE data (2022), declined from >25,000 km²/year in 2004 to around 12,000 km²/year at the end of 2008.

The second phase of PPCDam (2009-2011) was proven to efficiently reduce the level of Amazon deforestation by more than 50% compared to the previous year's. This period of PPCDam featured seven agendas, namely establishing macro exclusive ecological

zones, expanding protection areas, establishing the Interministerial Commission to Combat Environmental Crisis (CICCIA), strengthening environmental protection agencies, promoting CAR registration in critical areas, decentralizing forest management, promoting sustainable strategic agriculture, and increasing conservation, reforestation and regional restoration measures (UNDP, 2018). As a result, various new initiatives in the form of technical assistance, community empowerment, scientific research and technological innovation took place involving public and private sectors. One of the initiatives was the Community and Family Forest Management Program which aimed at improving the living standard of local Amazonian communities while combating illegal timber mining (West and Fearnside, 2021). The multiple programs implemented aligned with the significant increase of the Amazon Funds. Three main donors—the Norwegian Government, Petrobras, and the German Government—through KfW contributed more than 57 million USD to finance various conservation and reforestation programs in Brazilian Amazon forest between 2009 and 2011 (Amazon Funds, 2023).

Brazilian Amazon Forest Restoration in the Third Term of Lula da Silva's Reign

Lula's great achievement in reducing deforestation rates was reversed significantly during Jair Bolsonaro's administration (2019-2022). Instead of creating policies that efficiently strengthen protection to Amazon forest, Bolsonaro overexploited the Amazon's economic potential while disregarding

the magnitude of environmental implications. According to Menezes & Barbosa (2021), Bolsonaro's anti-environmental agenda imposed on the Amazon region was carried out by centering the environmental governance within the framework of authoritarian and populist central government policies. In other words, the government can efficiently control and degrade the functions and roles of many institutions (government and non-government) advocating environmental protection. Some of these policies included weakening the role of environmental institutions in government decision making. In addition, Bolsonaro delegitimized the power of opposing political groups, environmentalists, activists, indigenous communities and academics. His government spread fake news to undermine public trust in the pro-environment opposition (Menezes and Barbosa, 2021). In 2021, Bolsonaro significantly cutback budget allocations for environmental management up to 25% of the previous year's and undermined the environmental fines system (The Guardian, 2021).

These apathetic policies towards the importance of environmental pro-

tection directly impacted the Amazon region. The previously declining deforestation rate suddenly increased to more than 10,000 km² in 2019 —the highest since the implementation of Brazilian Government's restoration commitment in 2004. The forest fires in the Amazon region also increased by more than 55%. Data from Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais (INPE, 2023) estimated that the number of fires in Legal Amazon reached 92,500 spots in 2019 and more than 107,000 spots in 2020, while Global Fire Emission (in Borunda, 2019) reported that about more than 140,000 fire spots were detected in Amazon region from January to August 2019. Apart from the devastating fires in 2005, 2007, and 2010, Amazon forest fires in 2019-2021 were the biggest ever happened in the region in the past two decades. Domestic and international public pressure finally forced the Brazilian government to act, deploying thousands of military personnel and firefighters to extinguish hotspots in the Amazon region (NASA Earth Observatory, 2019).



Source: Borunda, 2019.

Figure 2.
Fire Spots in Amazon Region, 2019

The re-election of Lula da Silva as President of Brazil for the third time gives a new hope for revitalizing the Amazon region. The public, especially environmentalists expected that the new government under Lula could reverse the anti-environmental policies of the previous government. Before long, changes in environmental policies relevant with the Amazon situation were evident even before the new government took office. In their campaign, Lula da Silva and his party coalition voiced a rhetoric about their commitment to

protecting the environment and the Amazon population. In his victory speech, Lula specifically called the Brazilian public to work together to fight deforestation of the Amazon Region. He emphasized that the substantial existence of the Amazon forest outweighed the economic profit (Villegas and Kaplan, 2022).

Resuming his position as Brazil's president in early 2023, Lula re-appointed environmental activist Mariana Silva as the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. A special cabinet designated to

manage the lives of indigenous communities was led by Sonia Guajajara, a renowned native of Amazon (Maissonave, 2022). As the initial steps, Mariana Silva revived the Amazon Funds as an essential program that had previously played a key role in significantly reducing Amazon deforestation. This led Norway and Germany—the previous largest donors to the Amazon Funds—to resume their commitment to channeling up to 1 billion USD funds for the protection and management of Amazon forest. Currently, the Brazilian Government is actively communicating with the Ministry of Environment of England, France, and other European countries to discuss their potential as the new donors and partners in the Amazon Funds (Wilson Center, 2023).

The previous success in overcoming Amazon deforestation was the implications of strategic steps taken by Lula and Mariana Silva in re-initiating the Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Amazon (PPCDAm). Estranged in Bolsonaro administration,

PPCDAm was reannounced by President Lula Da Silva in mid-2023 with the re-implementation of the fifth phase of PPCDAm for 2023-2027 period (Paraguassu, 2023). The official website of Brazil Government (2023) wrote four strategies of this fifth phase: sustainable productive activities, environmental monitoring and control, territorial land planning, and normative economic instruments. In Table 1, the first axis consists of several strategic objects regarding the promotion and stimulation of sustainable economic activity in the Amazon. The second axis lists a series of potential efforts to increase supervision and control over all social and economic activities in the Amazon Legal Area. The third axis highlights the importance of strengthening Amazon territorial governance to overcome deforestation problem, and the last axis aims at improving legal instruments and implementations of economic activities in the Amazon region.

Table 1.

The Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Deforestation in Amazon (PPCDAm)
Phase V 2023-2027

Policy Axes	Strategic Objective
Sustainable Productive Activities	Stimulating of sustainable economic activity Promoting sustainable forest management and improvement of devorestation areas Improving coordination between federal and state governments in the Amazon Legal environment
Enviromental Monitoring and Control	Ensuring accountability of criminals related to Amazon deforestation Increasing capacity to monitor deforestation, fires, and forest degradation Prioritizing preventive measures to face the possibility of forest fires Increasing inspection actions at Legal Amazon
Local and Territorial Planning	Ensuring protection of public lands Expanding and strenghtening protection area management Improving enviromental regulations Supervising national and private corporates' development plans
Normative and Economic Instruments	Improving legal instruments and implementation regarding all economic activities in the Legal Amazon

Source: The Government of Brazil, 2023.

Similar to his previous government, Lula's strategic steps to restore the Amazon region might be presumed as the transformative governance principles. The re-implementation of PPCDAm was perceived as integrating various policies specifically aimed at restoring Amazon forest. These action plans were a crucial guidance for both central and local governments in Brazil in issuing government policies and environmental programs. Therefore, every specific regulation related to environmental management, especially in the Amazon region, must not contradict the provisions and principles stated in these strategic action plans. The transformative governance concept also required

the restoration action to be adaptive with the current situation and challenges. In fact, the outline and the implementation of the action plans were fluid according to the dynamics of the problems faced in each period. Mentioned in the latest action plan document issued by the Brazilian government was the vision that all strategic steps to embody mature Amazon region were targeted to zero deforestation in 2030. In realizing this ambition, it is crucial that the organization and implementation fifth phase of PPCDAm learned from the strengths and weaknesses of the previous four phases that were evidently sucessful in reducing Amazon deforestation level by more than 85%.

Inclusivity and pluralism are two other important aspects of transformative governance. This means that to achieve the success of forest restoration policy, the Brazilian government under Lula should give every group—from the highest levels in international world to the lowest elements at the community level—the opportunity to actively participate in the Amazon forest governance. As explained previously, the success of Lula's previous administration in reducing deforestation to its lowest point was not achieved solely by government initiatives. There was multi-party active involvement of governments of other countries, international organizations, community organizations, and experts to create an adequate forest governance system. Lula applied the same strategies in his current administration in hope for positive implications to Amazon region like he had achieved before.

It may seem too early to assess the achievements of Lula's current Amazon restoration policy after only one year of administration. However, various policies implemented to reverse the deforestation have shown positive results. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (Reuters, 2023) claimed that the Brazilian Amazon deforestation rate were reduced by 41% in mid-2023, and more than 66% in August 2024 compared to last term. INPE (2023) data also showed that as of September 2023, forest fires in the Legal Amazon decreased to only 68,000 spots, a relatively low figure compared to above 100,000 spot per year previously. Apart from this positive achievement, it is important to keep in mind that the

ambition to restore the Amazon region with 0% illegal deforestation by 2030 is not easy. The various policy breakthroughs for Amazon deforestation launched by Lula's government could be hampered by massive contradictions from the government opposition, resistance from large-scale business circles, and many other communities of interest.

Active Participation of International Actors in the Brazilian Amazon Forest Governance under Lula da Silva

Active participation from other regional and international parties is essential in the environmental restoration policy of the Brazilian Amazon region. Due to the government's limited material and non-material capacity to face multidimensional problems of the Amazon forest, Lula has involved other state governments and international entities in his forest-related policy. The successful previous action plans in reducing Amazon deforestation were related to the open funding mechanism through Amazon Funds. Amazon Funds enables all parties to donate and invest to environmental empowerment programs in the Amazon region, including the forest areas outside Brazil's sovereign territory. The Brazilian government website claims that since the program implementation in 2008, Amazon Funds has succeeded in raising more than 697 million USD from domestic and international community to fund over a hundred strategic environmental projects in the Amazon region (Amazon Funds, 2023; [Hochstetler & Inoue, 2019](#)).

In addition to community donations, Amazon Funds create opportunities

for foreign governments to contribute to Amazon protection initiatives. Norway has been the largest donor to the Amazon, contributing up to 1.2 billion USD between 2009 and 2018. Second to Norway is Germany; as of 2018, German through KfW donated up to 55 million Euro divided into five stages (Amazon Funds, 2023; Polo, 2020). Having stalled during the Bolsonaro administration, donations from Norway and Germany were recovered by Lula through re-negotiation process. As a result, both countries have expressed their intention to re-engage in Amazon Funds and promised funding up to billions of USD in the long term. It was recorded that by the end of 2023, the German government disbursed 20 million Euros at the initial stage of Amazon Funds. Lula's government continues to expand its diplomatic efforts to attract other countries to participate in the Amazon Funds. Recently, the UK and France were committed to donate 80 million Pounds and 500 million Euros in respective order to Amazon Funds in a five-year period. Meanwhile, the US and Switzerland contributed up to 5 million USD that were directed at funding some Amazon forest conservation agendas in Brazil today (Wilson Center, 2023; Rannard, 2022).

Considering the vast area of the Amazon forest that covers nine countries in South America, it is vital to establish a forum for coordination and cooperation in forest management between governments at the regional level. Taking up the largest ratio of the Amazon region, Brazil has been the main actor in regional collaboration on governance of the Amazon forest. Together with seven other Amazon countries, Brazil under

Lula's administration succeeded in institutionalizing the into the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) in 2003. ACTO emerged into a cooperation forum in Amazon Forest protection and restoration programs involving both the government and community organizations in Amazon Countries (ACTO, 2023a; Maisonnave, 2022). In general, ACTO works on five strategic goals: 1) Foster integrated and integral sustainable forest management and conservation among Amazon countries; 2) Strengthen the institutional and technical capacity in the Amazon countries to manage, monitor, and control the Amazon biodiversities; 3) Strengthen the management of each country's protected area in Amazon region; 4) Promote the sustainable use and conservation through regional actions that favor trade and investments; 5) Strengthen and develop the capacities in science technology, and innovation, incorporating knowledge and traditional practice for the Amazon forest conservation (Polo, 2020).

Entering the third term of Lula's administration, Lula manifested his commitment to solving Amazon problem by restoring Brazil's active participation in regional and international environmental cooperation. When hosting the ACTO Summit in August 2023, President Lula Da Silva explained all government initiatives to restore the Amazon Forest, from expanding supervision and strengthening legal implementation in the domestic realm to restoring Brazil's active participation as a global environmental leader. Furthermore, he had re-stressed that the commitment of government and all elements of society is truly

essential in protecting the existence of biodiversity and the lives of indigenous communities in the Amazon region (Government of Brazil, 2023a). In a special meeting session with the General Secretary of ACTO, Maria Lopez, some regional priority agendas including Amazon community social-economic improvement had been arranged to overcome hunger problem and fight all forms of national and transnational criminal acts centered in the regional Amazon (ACTO, 2023b).

At the end G20 Summit forum in New Delhi in 2023, Lula da Silva stated that Brazilian Presidency in the next G20 forum on 2024 would emphasize the urgency of environmental protection and sustainable development under three policy priorities: social inclusion and fighting hunger, energy transition and sustainable development, and global institutional reform as the main instrument for improving global environmental governance (Government of Brazil, 2023b). In his closing speech at the forum, President Lula emphasized that to realize the vision of sustainable development, Brazil is ready to organize three essential general policy guidelines. The first is related to coordinating the allocation and distribution of resources needed to support pro-environmental policies. Second, the Brazilian government encourages other countries and international organizations to increase community participation in providing appropriate environmental governance reports and recommendations to the government. Third, the Brazilian government is committed to and urges the commitment of other countries to put aside geopolitical interests in order to

realize the vision of sustainable development as a common interest (Government of Brazil, 2023c).

CONCLUSION

The new Brazilian Government under Lula da Silva is committed to restoring the Amazon forest condition. In the early days of his administration, Lula implemented several policy breakthroughs related to the Amazon, initiated by reactivating the Amazon Funds program that previously succeeded in raising funds to finance the Amazon governance. At his current administration, Lula reintroduction of the PPCDAm action plan framework in which the fifth phase of PPCDAm in 2023-2027 focuses on sustainable development, strengthened supervision and control, and strengthened law enforcement in the Amazon region. The ambition to restore the Amazon is actualized by involving stakeholders in in the regional and international realms. In less than a year, Lula's administration has succeeded in increasing Brazil participation among Amazon countries, especially in ACTO as a special forum for regional Amazon governance. In a broader level, the government currently manages to reposition Brazil as a global environmental leader in various international forums. Several policy changes implemented by Lula's administration have been able to reverse the destruction of the Amazon Forest brought the previous government's anti-environmental policies. At the very least, this is evident from the significant decrease in deforestation rates and forest fire intensity in the Amazon region compared to previous years. The Brazilian government is

determinant in targeting zero illegal logging activities and other illegal resource exploitation in the Legal Amazon region. While realizing this ambitious plans for the environment may

seem feasible, it is clear that great commitment and sacrifice are called for from the government and all elements of Brazilian society.

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