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A Conversation with Brazil's Deputy Foreign Minister Marcos Galvão

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In his most recent visit to Washington, Ambassador Marcos Galvão, Secretary General of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations, argued that Brazilian foreign policy remains active despite the international focus on the country's domestic tribulations. Under the current administration, Brazil has sought more strategic relations with traditional trade partners while seeking out new partnerships in Europe and Asia. Galvão asserted that as Brazil modernizes its engagement with the global economy and strengthens diplomatic ties around the world, it will become a highly influential player in global affairs.

Speaker: **Ambassador Marcos Galvão**, Secretary-General of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations

Moderator: **Paulo Sotero**, Director, Brazil Institute

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Wednesday, November 19, 2017, 3:00pm – 5:00pm

6th Floor, Woodrow Wilson Center

In his opening remarks, **Paulo Sotero**, director of the Brazil Institute, stated that Brazil has historically been a country closed to trade. He called attention to the broad consensus, among even the most traditional and nationalist interests, that strong participation in the global economy is necessary for Brazil to recover what has been the deepest economic crisis in its history.

Ambassador Marcos Galvão, Brazil's Deputy Foreign Minister, affirmed that he strongly supports trade and Brazil's integration in the world economy. He noted that Brazil's recent economic recovery is closely related to Brazil's foreign policy objectives: foreign policy plays a principal role in facilitating and strengthening Brazil's path towards sustained development and poverty reduction.

Galvão underscored Brazil's long and active foreign policy tradition, which has played a significant role in the construction of the Brazilian nation, both in terms of its institutions and geography as well as its national identity. Brazil achieved independence and defined its borders primarily through diplomatic negotiation—a rarity in the region—and resolved the last border dispute with its neighbors in 1870. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is one of the largest diplomatic corps in the world. It is also home to the third oldest diplomatic academy in the world, after those of Austria and the Vatican: the widely-respected Rio Branco Institute in Brasília has recruited foreign service officers since 1946. This strong diplomatic tradition is carried out today through the more than 200 Brazilian diplomatic embassies and consular posts across the globe.

Galvão also emphasized that Brazil is not prone to major U-turns in foreign policy. Brazilian foreign policy focuses on long-term objectives and goals, and its international interests tend to remain constant even as governments come and go. As a result, Brazilian foreign policy is relatively stable, and evolves in predictable ways.

Nonetheless, there have been a number of foreign policy and trade developments in the last year. Galvão argued that Brazil is already making progress toward increased trade liberalization, particularly with its Latin American neighbors. Galvão spoke first of Brazil's involvement with the Mercosur trade bloc, and noted Venezuela's suspension due to its

violation of the organization's democratic clause. He also noted that Mercosur has already eliminated 70 percent of the barriers to trade identified by the four founding countries at the bloc's inception. Galvão reiterated the Brazilian government's goal of strengthening Mercosur's ties to the Pacific Alliance, potentially through a new trade agreement between the two blocs, as part of the government's overall commitment to furthering regional trade integration. Galvão stated that Mercosur also needs to open trade with Mexico, which Galvão contended is the missing link needed to build a free trade framework among the major economies in Latin America.

Galvão noted that Brazil's nascent economic recovery will give the country the means to rebuild (and accelerate) its cooperation programs in Central America, the Caribbean, and Africa. Brazil remained engaged in Central America and the Caribbean despite budget constraints, and there is still a strong demand for cooperation there and in Africa. Contrary to the widely-held belief that Brazil would turn its back on Africa when the new administration began in 2016, Minister of Foreign Relations Aloysio Nunes visited eleven countries in Africa over the course of four months in an effort to restore cooperation programs, and Galvão expressed his hope that this cooperation will continue developing as Brazil's economic recovery gains steam.

Galvão stated that Brazil is also at a mature stage of negotiations to establish free trade agreements with Europe. Brazil is currently in negotiations with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and Brazil and the United Kingdom have agreed to resume trade talks once the Brexit negotiations are complete.

Brazil is also seeking to build relationships beyond Latin American and Europe. Brazil is establishing closer diplomatic ties in regions where it has not had a strong presence in the past, such as the Caucus region. In November 2017, Minister Nunes was the first Brazilian foreign minister to visit Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Both President Temer and Minister Nunes visited Russia in June 2017. Galvão claimed that Brazil will continue to maintain its traditional relations with the Middle East, a region relevant to Brazil due to its strong immigration links with Lebanon and Syria, and revealed that Temer would likely visit the Arab states of the Persian Gulf in February 2018.

Galvão affirmed that Brazil's diplomatic and trade relationships in Asia remain relevant and continue to expand. Brazil has had relations with Japan since 1895 and is home to the largest community of Japanese descendants in the world. China is Brazil's primary trading partner and Chinese foreign investment in Brazil has increased exponentially. Galvão acknowledged that there is also mutual interest among Brazil, South Korea, and Japan to engage in trade talks. Moreover, India's relevance in trade has only increased, and Brazil is working to expand a modest trade agreement with India. Galvão also claimed that Brazil seeks to strengthen its relationship with nations in Southeast Asia. In September



From left-right: Ambassador Sergio Amara, Ambassador Marcos Galvão, Ambassador Anthony Harrington, and Paulo Sotero

2017, Minister Nunes visited and spoke with foreign affairs ministers throughout Southeast Asia to assess possible interest in strengthening ties between Mercosur and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In January 2018, President Temer will be the first Brazilian President to visit Indonesia, and will also make diplomatic visits to Singapore and Vietnam.

In closing, Galvão asserted that Brazilian foreign policy has not gone into hibernation. Despite Brazil's domestic challenges, its foreign policy remains dynamic and Brazil is actively seeking greater integration into the world economy. Citing the contributions of diverse cultures and peoples around the world to Brazil's national identity, Galvão contended that Brazil is far too global for its role and influence to be circumscribed solely to Latin America. He argued that Brazil is an emerging global power, and urged Brazil's diplomatic partners to recognize it as such as the country recovers from political turmoil and its deep economic recession,

Q&A Session

Q: The Brazilian government has requested accession to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Where do you see this going?

A: Brazil has been working with and within the OECD for over two decades and is the non-member with the greatest commitment and engagement to the OECD. Our request demonstrates that Brazil's economy is recovering and is on the right trajectory. We hope that the OECD appreciates our long-standing contributions and that we receive the support of OECD members for our request.

Q: What do you think the international community should do to solve the humanitarian and political crisis in Venezuela? Should Brazil play a leading role?

A: Brazil's response to the crisis in Venezuela has been one of the most visible adjustments in Brazilian foreign policy since the beginning of President Temer's administration. The Venezuelan crisis is a priority issue for Brazil, given that we share a 2,000 km border and have a strong business center in Venezuela. Brazil has taken various measures to help restore democracy in Venezuela, which include its leadership in suspending Venezuela from Mercosur, its decision to double the staff at the Brazilian embassy in Caracas in order to be stay informed of developments, and its continued discussion with partners in the region, such as Mercosur, the Lima group, and the Organization of American States (OAS).

Brazil is also concerned about Venezuela's humanitarian crisis. One such issue that directly affects Venezuelan citizens is the lack of medicine. Last year, Brazil offered to send medications produced by Brazilian public laboratories to Venezuela. The Venezuelan government rejected this gesture because it was conducted through relief organizations such as Caritas Internationalis, rather than directly through the government. The humanitarian crisis is also on our border. Between 20,000 and 30,000 Venezuelan refugees have crossed the border into the State of Roraima and are spreading to other parts of Brazil. This mass migration has taken a toll on public systems, particularly the health system, in Roraima due to the state's small population. The potential of facing an even greater inflow of refugees would overwhelm the public infrastructure in Roraima.

Q: Should Brazil adopt sanctions targeting specific individuals in Venezuela's government?

A: Brazil has traditionally not supported unilateral sanctions. We recognize, however, that sanctions such as those adopted by the United States have had an effect. There is a fine line between sanctions that indiscriminately hurt the Venezuelan population and sanctions that contribute to restoring democracy in Venezuela.

Q: How do you see the relationship between Brazil and China continuing to evolve, especially in terms of bilateral trade?

A: The increasingly complex relationship between Brazil and China is strategic for both countries involved. Bilateral trade has gradually developed between our nations, as China is our number one export market. China is one of the top three trading partners for almost every country in the world, so this phenomenon is not singular to Brazil. What has been changing more recently is rapid Chinese investment in Brazil. Both Brazilian and Chinese diplomacy are oriented around long-term guidelines and objectives, and our agenda is expanding and diversifying. Brazil's objective is to meet the goals of this agenda through making dialogue more efficient. More efficient and consistent dialogue will improve how our governments cooperate and how both sides simulate their private sectors to engage with each other.

Q: Has corruption in Brazil affected the country's ability to forward its foreign policy objectives?

A: Corruption in Brazil has drawn attention both domestically and internationally. On the one hand, the news that is circulating is not about corruption, but rather about corruption being fought successfully. The world is witnessing an anti-corruption operation of unprecedented scale in Brazil. Recent anti-corruption initiatives also demonstrate the strength of Brazil's democratic institutions and especially the success of the Brazilian judiciary, prosecutors, and federal police. Corruption scandals have affected our relationship with countries where Operação Lava Jato has reverberated, but in broader terms corruption has not affected Brazil's credibility nor its ability to make progress on its foreign policy objectives.

Q: Since President Temer began his mandate, have there been any changes in Brazil's foreign policy with Cuba?

A: Our relations with Cuba have not changed. For some time, Cuba has not had an ambassador in Brasília, although it was not a formal withdrawal. Cuba now has a chargé d'affaires in Brasília and Brazil has a chargé d'affaires in Havana. Business is conducted in this form.

Q: What is the current state of defense cooperation between Brazil and the United States?

A: Security and defense issues are on our short list of priority areas. In Brazil, the Ministry of Defense and the Foreign Ministry are working together. This degree of mutual coordination and consultation is unprecedented. The Department of Security and Defense Affairs was established only last year during a restructuring process in the Foreign Ministry.

Cooperation between the United States and Brazil on these issues began during the World Cup and continued during the Olympics. This initial moment of cooperation created momentum, and this momentum has not gone away. We wish to collaborate further in the areas of defense and security and hope that cooperation persists and continues to develop.



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