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Promoting Convergence in U.S.-Brazilian Relations

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Introduction

The United States, a giant of the industrialized world, and Brazil, a leader of the developing world, marked 200 years of bilateral relations in 2024. The two governments celebrated what should be among the most consequential relationships in an increasingly fragmented international arena as two large Western democracies that operate on a global level and have societies with similar world views.

Brazil and the United States are dynamic, young, and multicultural countries whose identities have been shaped by the settlement of vast interiors and internal mass migrations. They each have vast human capital and boast world class agricultural sectors that feed much of the world. They are cultural superpowers whose artists and athletes are admired around the world. They are, in different ways, indispensable actors on the defining challenges of our time: climate change, the energy transition, international food security, the future of democracy, and the evolving architecture of global governance.

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For these and other reasons, the two countries are formidable actors on the global stage when they work together. For much of the 200 years of their history, however, the U.S. and Brazilian governments have largely moved in parallel, intersecting only sporadically and at times pulling in different directions for reasons that often seem more circumstantial than strategic. The result is not a history of conflict, but rather a pattern of missed opportunities, mistrust, and a relationship that has rarely reached its full potential.

To an extent, this gulf between potential and reality reflects genuine differences in national interests and identities, at least regarding relations between the respective governments. For much of the past 80 years, the United States pursued its core geopolitical objectives through an alliance-based approach. The long competition with the Soviet Union and corresponding containment strategy shaped the world view of America's political class and national security structure during this period. While the United States faced a multitude of complex diplomatic and strategic choices during the Cold War, the underlying nature of the conflict made it easy to view the world as binary and weigh every international development through the lens of whether it favored the United States or the Soviet Union. This accustomed U.S. policy makers to view involvement in far-flung conflicts as necessary and consistent with national security interests. It is easy to forget that this global posture broke sharply with a much longer U.S. tradition of avoiding such strategic "entanglements" in the more fragmented world predating the outbreak of World War II.

In contrast, Brazil's experiences in the post-war period as part of a region that was a battleground for influence and that saw its sovereignty infringed at times made non-alignment a strategic imperative and neutrality one of its greatest assets. Brazil's physical distance from conflict zones and traditional focus on multilateralism, combined with its considerable ability to project soft power, enabled the country to navigate international affairs as an actor open to constructive relations with all. From the perspective of generations of Brazilian diplomats, Brazil's neutrality and commitment to global engagement enhanced its strategic maneuvering space and its claim to global protagonism. The country has long prioritized having a seat at the table in world affairs

consistent with Brazil's size and level of engagement – particularly as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council – and claims a mantle of leadership on behalf of the Global South. Brazilian diplomats often emphasize their country's ability to serve as a bridge and a peacemaker and burnish that identity as a core strength. The different strategic outlooks of the two countries regularly generates friction in the relationship, frequently to the detriment of the strategic interests of both nations.

Brazil's non-alignment should be a strength at a time of rapid geopolitical evolution toward greater multipolarity. As the United States tilts away from an alliance system it once anchored and long-standing assumptions about the U.S. role in the world come under examination, this is an important moment to review where U.S. and Brazilian national interests might intersect. Although Brazil and the United States are still in the early stages of adapting to this more fluid global environment that will likely characterize international relations over at least the next two decades, we can identify some areas where close collaboration between the two countries will benefit both, and the international community as a whole.

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Security Cooperation

One area that urgently requires greater cooperation relates to public safety. Largely outside the view of the two societies, sophisticated organized crime organizations have grown in scale and influence across the Americas and now impact more lives than ever before. In the case of the United States, the effects are mainly seen via the fentanyl epidemic and in the historic levels of irregular migration reaching the U.S. southwest border as communities increasingly flee under-governed spaces in which violence flourishes due to the presence of gangs and cartels. Brazil, meanwhile, may be witnessing the emergence of its first nationwide criminal cartel with a transnational footprint in the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) at the same time that PCC rivals such as the Comando Vermelho (CV) also grow in sophistication and geographic reach. The PCC has evolved from a diffuse prison-based gang into a major force in the international cocaine trade. In the process, it has set down deep roots across much of Brazil (itself a major market for cocaine), as well as Bolivia, and Paraguay, and Peru. It has also become a vital supplier

of cocaine to Italy's 'Ndrangheta and is increasingly connected to the same web of international criminal organizations afflicting the United States and many other nations in the region, particularly neighboring countries in the Amazon Basin. We look at ways the United States and Brazil can increase bilateral information sharing to strengthen judicial efforts to combat organized crime, cut off their funding, and promote a more coordinated multilateral response against that threat.

Building Prosperity

The economic relationship between the United States and Brazil is important to both countries, with bilateral commerce reaching up to \$100 billion in annual trade in goods and services in recent years, major U.S. investment in Brazil, and growing Brazilian investment in the United States. However, it is a relationship that is still performing far below its potential. The absence of a free trade agreement and sustained efforts at non-tariff trade facilitation are structural impediments, but so too is insufficient awareness of the possibilities in each market. The U.S. market represents Brazil's best option for moving up the value chain and diversifying its economy to avoid overdependence on commodity exports. The United States is a valuable market for sectors where Brazil innovates and excels, such as fintech.

Brazil also represents an important market for the United States; the economy of São Paulo state alone is larger than that of Argentina and the country's technology-savvy and highly-skilled labor force presents rich expansion opportunities for U.S. firms. For a United States focused on de-risking from China and building resilient supply chains, Brazil represents the largest and most sophisticated industrial base in the Hemisphere outside of North America. It is a source of critical minerals vital to the global energy transition, as well as to the success of efforts to boost manufacturing in the United States. Both countries could benefit from greater collaboration related to industrial standards, particularly in the tech and agricultural sectors. We examine how deeper economic connectivity can benefit both countries and how the private sector in both countries can help keep the broader U.S.-Brazil relationship on a positive track.

People to People Ties

The United States is home to the largest Brazilian diaspora in the world, with 1.9 million Brazilian Americans living in the United States, including at least 500,000 first-generation immigrants. This successful and growing community is a vital bridge between the two countries and likely to gain greater political and economic relevance in the coming decades. Beyond family connections, the countries are bound by important cultural linkages, relationships between civil society groups, organized labor partnerships, and links between religious communities, among other connections. Both societies also confront shared challenges, such as the legacy of racism and slavery and serious challenges to democratic institutions that sometimes overlap between the two countries.

Brazil has immense human talent at a scale that should make Brazil competitive in the knowledge economy, especially if it addresses shortfalls in its education system. We examine how cooperation on education can deepen ties between the United States and Brazil, not only through investments in higher education along the lines of Brazil's "Science Without Borders" program, but by fostering exchanges and other connections at the primary level as well.

This paper and the longer project with which it is affiliated examine each of these three themes - public security, economic relations, and people to people connections - in greater detail, arguing for a focus on commonalities that supersede differences between governments that inevitably arise.

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Making the Case - Why the U.S. Brazil Relationship Matters

This project takes place against the backdrop of extraordinary changes in the geopolitical environment, with the Trump administration's shift away from the alliance system that defined U.S. interests since the end of World War II and the accommodation of other powers to an evolving dynamic. Regardless of whether a future U.S. administration reverses course on policies such as relations with NATO, the international alignments and alliances that were already under

strain for the last decade are unlikely to be restored. It is already a multipolar world, but perhaps also a more fragmented world than the one envisioned by Brazil or its BRICS partners. Undoubtedly, the massive realignments underway in U.S. relations with the world will have second order implications not just for Europe, but for emerging powers around the globe. Brazil will be no exception and could benefit from aspects of a transactional United States focused more on discrete opportunities to advance its own domestic interests than adhering to a more rigid and ideologically-oriented alliance structure.

There are fundamental social, political, and cultural elements that bind the United States and Brazil together and argue for greater collaboration in the years ahead. Even more urgently, the two countries have shared challenges stemming from the impact of organized crime on their populations as the United States and Brazil are among the largest consumers of cocaine in the world. They also have clear overlapping economic interests. For example, the United States stands to benefit from Brazil's mineral wealth as it seeks to de-risk from China and Beijing tightens its grip on the supply of critical minerals and derivative products. Brazil, in turn, would gain from diversifying its export markets in the sector to maintain strategic autonomy in a more fragmented world and avoid overly relying on commodities exports to China to sustain its economic growth. We discuss this further below.

It is too early to know the long-term ramifications of the changes underway in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, but they will certainly generate a new dynamic for Brazilian interests. Within the BRICS for example, there is a risk that U.S. estrangement from traditional allies and closer ties between the United States and Russia could undermine the logic or mission of the BRICS from Russia or China's perspective. Such dynamics could ultimately reduce Brazil's relative influence within that grouping as Moscow and Beijing find themselves able to more easily engage the United States and other G7 countries (especially in the case of China) on bilateral terms. Under any scenario, Brazil will seek to maintain as many options and partners as possible and a constructive relationship with the United States preserves significant room for geopolitical and economic maneuver.

Beyond practical considerations, the democratic traditions of both countries, even under strain, bring the two societies together. The contradictions, setbacks, and incomplete nature of democracy in Brazil and the United States should not obscure the vital fact that most citizens in both countries value open, liberal, representative political systems and protections for fundamental freedoms. That common link may be more important than ever as democratic institutions come under intense pressure across much of the West.

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Improving Public Security

Latin America is the most violent region in the world. The growing power, wealth, and sophistication of organized crime groups threatens entire societies in the Americas. One-third of the world's homicides occur in Latin America and the Caribbean despite the region representing only eight percent of global population. Fear of crime is now a top concern for publics across Latin America and the Caribbean, with 50 percent of citizens reporting feeling unsafe. It has also become a major cause of mass migration. According to regional banks, insecurity subtracts at least 3.5 percent from the region's GDP. Much of this is fueled by criminal organizations that have become integrated multinational corporations adept at evading law enforcement.

The United States feels transnational crime in the form of high overdose rates related to fentanyl, human trafficking, and burdensome measures to protect the U.S. financial system from exploitation for money laundering. Brazil had never previously had a nationwide criminal organization with transnational reach, but the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) now boasts networks throughout Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, and as far as Europe, as well as growing influence in local and state politics. The security of both Brazil and the United States - not to mention Europe and Asia - would be negatively affected by the PCC's consolidation of influence in Brazil. U.S.-sourced weapons are important sources of power and revenue for Brazilian organized crime groups. However, U.S. law enforcement has largely ignored the PCC as a distant problem with few connections to the United States compared to other major criminal groups in the Americas. That lack of coordination must change to keep up with developments on the

ground, particularly as the PCC increasingly partners with criminal groups in Colombia and Venezuela, for example, that are very much on U.S. law enforcement's radar.

One area that offers ample opportunities for cooperation is resource crimes in the Amazon basin. Illegal mining, particularly in gold, has become an important revenue stream for [criminal organizations like](#) the PCC in Brazil, Los Comandos de la Frontera (Border Command) in Colombia, the ELN and ex-FARC Acacio Medina Front along the Colombian-Venezuelan border, and Los Choneros and Los Lobos in Ecuador.

In recognition of how illegal mining is funding the growth of these criminal organizations and how the United States is a vital export market for these goods, U.S. Congressional Republicans and Democrats [requested](#) in December 2024 that the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a study into illicit mining in the Western Hemisphere to analyze its adverse effects on U.S. national interests and identify gaps in U.S. programming and statutory authorities to do more to counter this threat. Meanwhile, Brazil has been looking into how it can increase federal coordination against national criminal organizations like the PCC via [constitutional reform](#). Similarly, Brazil has led efforts to reinvigorate the Amazon Treaty Cooperation Organization by convening its first summit meeting in 14 years in 2023.

Bilaterally, the U.S. Treasury Department and Brazilian Finance Ministry launched in 2024 the [Amazon Region Initiative](#) Against Illicit Finance to Combat Nature Crimes to enhance regional cooperation to disrupt illicit finance linked to nature crimes in the Amazon Basin. And multilaterally, Brazil and the United States have supported the Inter-American Development Bank's [Amazonia Forever initiative, which seeks to bring sustainable development to bear in the Amazon Basin and has already allocated nearly \\$5 billion to fund economic projects in the region.](#)

These initiatives and others can form the basis for pragmatic bilateral and multilateral cooperation on a critical issue of shared national interest for both countries, from both an economic and public security perspective.

Economic Cooperation - Building Prosperity Together

The United States is the [largest foreign investor in Brazil at \\$228.8 billion and is Brazil's second-largest trading partner, and Brazil's largest export market for manufactured goods](#). Total trade in 2023 was \$74.8 billion. Although the trading relationship grew significantly in the first decade of the century, it has plateaued since 2011 and performed below its potential despite a raft of trade facilitation arrangements such as the creation of the U.S.-Brazil CEO Forum, 2011 Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation (ATEC), and 2015 Memorandum of Intentions on Trade Facilitation.

This is partly for organic reasons as Brazil's commodities-heavy export business finds a readier market in China, but also because of the high cost of doing business in Brazil. With a free trade agreement seemingly out of reach, the two governments and private sector leaders have largely focused on the latter challenge by promoting reforms to Brazil's byzantine tax code and other drivers of the high "Brazil cost." Multiple U.S. administrations supported Brazil's OECD accession as an avenue for incentivizing such reforms.

The United States has a clear interest in continuing to support improved economic relations with Brazil. As strategic competition with China touches ever more sectors and industries in the United States, alternative supply chains become not just an option, but a necessity. Brazil's formidable industrial capacity combined with abundant resources make it a natural partner for U.S. industries concerned by new Chinese export controls on critical minerals and related products.

For Brazil, China's role as an eager consumer of Brazilian commodities may be too much of a good thing. The risk of overreliance on a single partner accentuates the risks Brazil must already live with because of its dependence on a relatively small range of exports. The U.S. market is a good one for value-added Brazilian goods and services, especially for sectors where Brazil is

driving innovation, such as fintech. In this paper, we focus on one area of strength - agricultural production - and one area with great potential - critical minerals.

Feeding the World

Brazil and the United States play crucial roles in global food production, accounting for about a quarter of the world's food supply. As we discuss in greater detail below, this important contribution to global food security is a direct result of collaboration between the United States and Brazil. Both nations, with large territories and high domestic demand, attract significant investments in key agribusiness sectors. While they may compete in some areas, their strengths complement each other in many others.

A quarter-century ago, Brazil and the United States led the way in biotechnology, particularly with transgenic crops for genetic improvement. In recent years, these agricultural powerhouses have made significant strides in making agricultural production more sustainable while also decarbonizing transport. They have focused on research and development to adapt to climate change and have launched initiatives to increase the production and use of biofuels, particularly sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). According to Agroconsult data, transgenics in Brazil have preserved 21 million hectares of land and avoided 70 million tons of carbon emissions by making plants more resilient and reducing pesticide needs. These advances have boosted annual grain production from 80 million to 310 million tons, representing a major contribution to global food stocks during that period.

One promising area for U.S.-Brazil cooperation is replacing chemical fertilizers and pesticides with bio-inputs. This shift promises to enhance soil organic matter, preserve biodiversity, sequester carbon, and improve water management. Both countries are already working to replace nitrogen fertilizers, essential for U.S. crops like corn and cotton, and Brazilian crops like sugarcane, coffee, and corn. The production, transportation, and use of nitrogen fertilizers contribute about 2.5 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Brazil has long been at the forefront of developing biological fertilizers through state-run innovation company Embrapa and private firms. Brazil and the United States are forging technological alliances to reduce chemical fertilizer use. For example, Embrapa, the University of Florida, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture launched the “Research and Efficiency for Fertilizer Production” project in 2024 to leverage bio-inputs, precision agriculture, big data, and AI for better nutrient distribution and soil management.

Innovations in agricultural bio-inputs offer sustainable alternatives to synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, yet uncertainty remains about which technologies will become commercially available, particularly in developing countries. Moving forward, the United States and Brazil can collaborate to identify, develop, and disseminate these technologies through joint research initiatives and technology transfer programs to make advanced bio-inputs accessible to farmers in these regions. Improving traditional bio-input products, such as nitrogen-fixing inoculants, presents a significant cooperation opportunity. Sharing research findings and best practices can enhance their efficacy and adoption.

Meanwhile, Atlas Agro is setting up eco-friendly fertilizer plants in Minas Gerais, Brazil, and Washington state in the United States, producing ammonium nitrate through water electrolysis powered by wind and solar energy. This effort is part of a broader commitment by both nations to attract investments from companies utilizing biological, non-synthetic raw materials. The plant in Minas Gerais will leverage the know-how and experience gained from the company’s first green nitrogen fertilizer plant in the Pacific Northwest of the United States.

Progress in developing new bio-inputs, such as bio-fertilizers that promote plant growth and bio-pesticides for pest control, shows innovation potential. Joint ventures and partnerships between companies and research institutions can drive the formulation and testing of these new products. This cooperation can include sharing data from field trials, co-developing products, and creating regulatory frameworks that facilitate approval and use. These new plants will help reduce emissions and reliance on imported fertilizers. Brazil uses 8% of the world’s fertilizers, but imports 85% of its supply—a vulnerability exposed by supply disruptions during the

pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Increasing domestic fertilizer production is not only essential for Brazil's national security, but also for stabilizing global food prices.

To effectively work together, the United States and Brazil can establish a collaborative framework that includes funding joint research projects, creating mechanisms for technology transfer, developing harmonized regulatory standards, and investing in capacity-building initiatives to strengthen the capabilities of researchers, farmers, and companies in both countries.

Innovations in biofuels are another arena where Brazil and the United States tackle transportation emissions, accounting for about 25% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Cars are significant contributors, driving a push for decarbonized transport solutions.

Beyond reducing cars' environmental impact, both nations are exploring ways to extend biofuels' efficiency to other modes of transport, such as maritime and aviation. Last year, Brazil and the United States joined India in launching the Global Biofuel Alliance, aiming to boost biofuel production and use, including sustainable aviation fuel. Commercial aviation, responsible for 15% of transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions, finally sees technological options to reduce its carbon footprint with sustainable aviation fuel.

Critical Minerals

Brazil is poised to become a key player in the global clean energy transition given its vast reserves of critical minerals essential for reducing reliance on fossil fuels. The country holds the world's second-largest reserves of nickel and graphite, as well as the third-largest reserves of manganese. It ranks as the third-largest producer of graphite and the world's leading producer of niobium, accounting for approximately 95 percent of global supply. Demand for niobium—used in advanced batteries and for strengthening steel in clean energy applications—is expected to surge. In the case of lithium, Brazil became the fifth-largest exporter in 2023, with projections to quintuple production over the next five years. Notwithstanding these vast resources, mining currently contributes [only 4 percent of Brazil's GDP](#).

Brazil's rapid rise in lithium exports, from negligible levels to a top global ranking, underscores its untapped potential. However, its ambitions extend beyond raw exports: Brazil aims to establish domestic value chains in critical minerals to drive industrialization and solidify its position in green technology on the world stage. To achieve those ambitions, Brazil will have to both streamline the regulatory and permitting processes to reduce costs, attract investors, and maintain high ESG standards to set Brazilian resources apart from competitors and appeal to both investors and consumers in high-value markets.

Critical minerals are becoming a central focus in the bilateral agenda between Brazil and the United States. President Lula's emphasis on industrialization aligns with opportunities for U.S. investment in Brazil's burgeoning critical minerals industries, offering a pathway for the United States to strengthen its supply chains in partnership with a reliable partner. China's vast advantage in critical mineral resources and processing capacity - and China's growing willingness to use access to those resources as leverage - make Brazil an even more important strategic partner for U.S. producers. While President Trump's March 20, 2025 announcement of "Immediate Measures to Increase American Mineral Production" focuses on boosting domestic mineral processing, the Presidential directive also notes the importance of bolstering international supply chains for certain critical minerals.

Brazil's abundant resources offer a strong foundation for partnerships with the United States and Europe, especially as these regions seek alternatives to China's dominance in the critical minerals market. Building on this momentum, Brazil has initiated discussions with the United States, Japan, and the European Union (EU), signaling its readiness to play a significant role in global mineral supply chains. Brazil has shown particular interest in forging a Critical Minerals Agreement (CMA) with the United States and is exploring membership in the U.S.-led Minerals Security Partnership (MSP).

Meanwhile, Brazil has also engaged in talks with EU representatives to explore critical mineral agreements outside of the ongoing EU-Mercosur free trade negotiations. This proactive

approach underlines Brazil's strategic intent to expand its role in critical mineral partnerships beyond traditional alliances. By addressing global supply chain needs in a shifting geopolitical landscape, Brazil can promote further industrialization and diversification of its economy while simultaneously making itself an even more essential international player that countries will be wary of alienating.

Despite its promise, Brazil faces structural barriers that hinder the full development of its critical minerals sector. With only a fraction of its territory mapped, Brazil lacks a comprehensive understanding of its own mineral wealth, which complicates investment efforts. Additionally, a complex tax regime and protracted permitting processes create further obstacles for potential investors. Without a cohesive national policy to set production goals, provide incentives, and establish clear socio-environmental guidelines, Brazil risks missing a strategic opportunity to leverage its resources fully in the global energy transition.

For its part, the United States needs reliable suppliers of critical minerals to counter China's potential stranglehold. Brazil should leverage this even as other bilateral trade tensions exist and incorporate it into bilateral negotiations. A Trump administration focused on deal making and transactional relationships has an ideal opportunity to both help expand global supply of critical minerals to its own benefit (and Brazil's) and compete more effectively in a market that exports [\\$23 billion worth of minerals to China and only \\$13 billion to U.S. customers.](#) The United States has the tools to incentivize privileged access to Brazilian mineral resources - especially if the International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) is streamlined and given additional resources in the next reauthorization process to meet the role envisioned for that entity by a bipartisan group of supporters in the U.S. Congress.

Additional Areas for Economic Cooperation

During the course of this project, we will examine sectors and activities that appear to offer valuable opportunities for collaboration between Brazil and the United States. Some of these include:

- **Energy.** The United States is the top oil producer in the world and Brazil is the top oil producer in Latin America. Though the two current governments are far apart with regard to the transition to renewable fuels, their respective private sectors are more aligned regarding the need for strategic investments in that sector. Even allowing for differing perspectives, there is ample room for mutually beneficial collaboration in areas such as Brazil's modernization of its energy grid. Brazil's ethanol tariff is a likely point of tension in the relationship, but the two countries have previously found creative solutions to seemingly intractable trade conflicts.

- **Semiconductors.** It may be counterintuitive to urge collaboration in a sector where Brazil strongly incentivizes local production and the United States is moving in the same direction. However, U.S. considerations are not purely commercial. Growing tensions between China and the United States over access to technology require Washington to seek resilient (perhaps even redundant) supply chains related to essential goods like semiconductors. Outside of North America, Brazil offers the most sophisticated and capable industrial base in the region and represents a viable alternative for portions of the industrial process that may never be cost-effective within the United States. For Brazil, a relationship with the United States that incentivizes greater technological competitiveness and export-led industrial growth should represent an attractive option.

- **Regulatory and Industrial Standards Cooperation.** In the absence of a free trade agreement, cooperation between the United States and Brazil on regulatory issues is among the most important components of trade facilitation between the two countries. Both countries have sophisticated and well-regarded regulatory bodies, and both countries are challenged by sometimes lengthy, complex regulatory bureaucracies. In collaboration with their respective private sectors, the Brazilian and the U.S. governments have worked to smooth the way for bilateral commerce. They should look further and work together in multilateral standards and industrial bodies to ensure the two countries retain a seat at the table in key sectors, such as renewable energy, medical systems and products, agricultural technology, and artificial intelligence.

Promoting People to People Ties

“People-to-people” engagement between Brazil and the United States refers to direct interactions among citizens, organizations, and non-governmental institutions from both countries. Historically, these relationships have benefited significantly from cultural, academic, and professional exchanges, which promote direct dialogue and foster lasting connections between individuals and communities. Multiple sectors contribute to this engagement, including education, culture, science and technology, public health, and business, creating extensive opportunities to build bridges between Brazilian and American societies.

Key institutions facilitating these dialogues include governmental bodies such as Brazil's Ministry of Education and the U.S. Department of State, funding agencies such as CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) and FAPESP (São Paulo Research Foundation), non-governmental organizations, and private foundations, including important organizations such FAUBAI (Brazilian Association for International Education) and the American Council on Education. Support networks such as EducationUSA, with its 40 advising centers across Brazil, also play an essential role.

Education is a central part of strategic areas for enhancing "people-to-people" relations due to its vital role in developing leaders, disseminating knowledge, and fostering cultural exchange. Important initiatives during the last years include projects such as the STEM TechCamp Brazil program, a partnership between the U.S. Embassy and Brazil's Ministry of Education to train Brazilian teachers in science and technology or the "100,000 Strong in the Americas," led by the U.S. Department of State, which has already benefited numerous Brazilian universities through grants supporting academic exchanges. Furthermore, the Fulbright Program, one of the oldest and most prominent academic exchange programs between the two countries, has provided scholarships to students and researchers since 1957, benefiting over four thousand participants.

Despite these successful initiatives, several challenges hinder further expansion of cooperation, notably the linguistic barrier due to low English proficiency levels among Brazilian students (EF English Proficiency Index); the high costs associated with tuition fees and living expenses in the U.S. (Institute of International Education - Open Doors Report); and complex bureaucratic processes for diploma recognition in both countries.

To address these challenges, there is potential for increased private-sector engagement, especially from multinational companies establishing additional internship and training programs. State and municipal governments could also form direct partnerships with their U.S. counterparts, and professional associations could initiate joint certification and professional development programs.

Future opportunities include expanding hybrid learning through joint online undergraduate and graduate programs, enhanced research cooperation, especially in sustainability, technology, and public health, and stronger vocational and technical education exchanges.

Experts interviewed for this project emphasize the essential role of binational institutions, such as the Fulbright Commission and EducationUSA, which facilitate access to U.S. educational opportunities for Brazilian students, particularly those with economic limitations. American

universities have also increasingly established a presence in Brazil, aiming directly at attracting Brazilian students.

However, structural challenges within Brazil, such as educational inequalities, the need for more explicit federal and local educational responsibilities, and better strategic academic planning, directly impact the country's capacity for robust international cooperation with the U.S. Advances in Brazilian policies, such as the new Fundeb and the Legal Framework for Technical Education, are crucial to improving the national educational landscape and creating more favorable conditions for international partnerships.

Finally, increasing private sector participation and enhancing Brazilian legislation on endowment funds could attract further investments in education, significantly boosting educational cooperation between the two countries.

Tying It Together

One underlying thesis of this project is that the medium and long-term relationship between the citizens of the United States and Brazil is sufficiently important to both societies that it can weather short-term crises that arise periodically between the two governments. But the argument we emphasize is that maintaining a steady state and overcoming occasional points of friction is insufficient. Counting on mere resilience fails to take advantage of overlapping interests and mutually reinforcing capabilities present in both countries.

It is our hope that the work undertaken in connection with this project will help elevate the level of ambition and for this vital relationship, if not between governments then on the part of civil society, the private sector, and ordinary citizens. The majority of U.S. and Brazilian citizens share common values and a common vision for the kind of world that will be good for them and their communities. We will use this project to identify specific initiatives and ideas that clearly work in support of the interests that unite and improve conditions for the people of both countries.