Toward a Brazil–U.S. Binational Institution

By Daniel Runde and Arianna Kohan

Introduction

Brazil and the United States have enjoyed a strong, longstanding diplomatic relationship that presently includes cooperation on issues such as trade and investment, security, defense technology, space exploration, 5G infrastructure, the environment, and education. However, the current level of exchange in these areas does not accurately reflect the strategic importance of the relationship for the two largest democracies and economies in the Western Hemisphere. Brazil and the United States need an institution on the scale and impact of the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) or the Luso-American Development Foundation (FLAD) to deepen, catalyze, and sustain strategic partnerships among their civil societies, public sectors, and private sectors. The creation of a binational institution to advance the Brazil–U.S. relationship would demonstrate each country’s importance to the other and allow for additional avenues of cooperation and collaboration beyond those already established. Moreover, the Brazil–U.S. binational institution would be the first entity to cover such themes as sustainable development, entrepreneurship and innovation, social business, impact investing, and corporate social investment as part of its strategic focus to promote economic growth, create jobs, and encourage sustainable development for both countries.

The creation of a binational organization would advance and institutionalize the Brazil–U.S. relationship by promoting innovative ways of thinking and inviting a new, collaborative, and transformational approach to partnership development.

A binational institution for Brazil and the United States would foster stronger ties at the micro and macro levels, from local organizations and primary schools to universities and federal governments. The exchange of expertise and best practices in various areas—including academia, philanthropic organizations, and civil society—would be invaluable in furthering effective economic development and increasing each population’s knowledge in relevant sectors. Additionally, as two regional powerhouses, Brazil and the United States have a unique ability to effect policies and implement programs that have national, regional, and global impacts. Such an institution would reinforce diplomatic ties between the two countries, allowing for stronger positioning on regional issues.

A state-of-the-art binational organization, created in partnership with both the Brazilian and U.S. governments and their philanthropic and private sectors, would deepen the two countries’ relationship and foster a more collaborative and fruitful association. It would aim to deliver value-added results to its members and partners by working with local communities who have expertise and knowledge of the region and tapping into new areas such as the bioeconomy and sustainable development to create jobs and modernize the work being done by both countries. Such an institution would offer opportunities for universities, investment firms, private-sector entities, and local organizations in Brazil and the United States to co-create, co-design, and co-invest in common identified programs and projects while inventing creative solutions for each country’s main development challenges.

This brief will provide an overview of the Brazil–U.S. relationship, identifying areas of current bilateral cooperation. It will then justify the need for a binational institution and highlight examples of similar organizations. The authors will outline what such an institution would look like, examining possible areas of collaboration, governance and leadership structures, and fundraising strategies.

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