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FEATURED Q&A

Will Brazil's Foreign Policy Change Under Nunes?



Aloysio Nunes, a member of Brazil's Senate and a former justice minister, was named the country's foreign minister last week. // File Photo: Brazilian Government.

Q Brazilian President Michel Temer this month tapped pro-business Senator Aloysio Nunes as his foreign minister, succeeding José Serra, who stepped down, citing health problems. What does Nunes bring to the job, and what does his appointment mean for Brazil's foreign policy? What should be at the top of his agenda as foreign minister? How will Nunes' goals differ from Serra's?

A Rubens Barbosa, former ambassador of Brazil to the United States: "Aloysio Nunes Ferreira has been head of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in the Senate for the last two years. In this capacity, he closely followed the main issues of Brazilian foreign policy. He is a very seasoned and experienced politician of the Social Democracy Party from São Paulo. Succeeding José Serra, Aloysio represents continuity in all aspects of Brazilian foreign policy. He has a good understanding of the major trends in the international scene. He is well respected in Congress and will be able to secure an improved 2017-18 budget for the Foreign Ministry. Observers will find relationships in the hemisphere at the top of his agenda as foreign minister. Political, economic and trade relations with Brazil's neighbors in South America, North America, Central America and the Caribbean will be at the center of Itamaraty's activities. As for trade, he supports deep changes in Mercosur in order to return to its original agenda of liberalization and opening markets. Negotiations between Mercosur and the European Union, the new restrictive U.S. trade policies, China and the BRICS, as well as the impact of Brexit on Brazil will also be at the top of his agenda. In his limited pe-

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Cemex Won't Participate in Border Wall Project

The Mexican cement maker said it will not provide materials for U.S. President Donald Trump's proposed border wall between the United States and Mexico.

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ECONOMIC

Argentina's Jobless Rate Falls to 7.6%

The country's Labor Ministry showed that the private sector has been adding jobs since last July. However, one economist said fewer people are actively looking for work.

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POLITICAL

Dozens of Rights Defenders Killed in Colombia Last Year: UN

Armed groups are fighting for control of areas vacated by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, rebels, said the United Nations' Todd Howland.

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Howland // File Photo: Colombian Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Dozens of Rights Defenders Killed Last Year in Colombia: UN

Dozens of human rights defenders were killed last year in Colombia, the United Nations said in a report released Thursday, Reuters reported. Armed groups have been moving into areas that had been controlled the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, rebels, which signed a peace agreement last year

“The state has an obligation to guarantee the protection of everyone.”

— Todd Howland

with Colombia's government, the U.N. agency said in the report. At least 59 defenders of human rights were killed last year in the South American country, as compared to 45 in 2014, the report added. It also said armed groups that are involved in drug trafficking and illegal gold mining see activists as a threat and have targeted those who speak out against human rights abuses. “The FARC leaving is complicating the lives of leaders,” Todd Howland, head of the United Nations' human rights office in Colombia, told reporters Thursday, Reuters reported. “The state has an obligation to guarantee the protection of everyone.” Howland added that violence against human rights defenders has been most frequent in rural areas, particularly along the country's northern borders and along the Pacific coastline. “There's a fight to occupy these areas,” he said. In 2016, a total of 14 human rights defenders were killed in the western province of Cauca, which was a stronghold of the FARC and is a drug-producing area, according to the U.N. report. Colombian Interior Minister Juan Fernando Cristo said

such violence against human rights leaders could hinder the success of the government's peace deal with the FARC. “We're all interested in facing these threats and these murders because we know that it seriously affects the chances of consolidating peace in Colombia,” said Cristo.

Solís Declines to Back Suspending Venezuela From OAS

Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solís on Thursday held back from endorsing a statement made the day before by the Organization of American States' secretary-general, Luis Almagro, in which Almagro said Venezuela faces possible suspension from the OAS if it does not soon hold general elections. “We have to be very careful, because I do not want the OAS



Solís spoke Thursday at the Inter-American Dialogue. // Photo: Inter-American Dialogue.

to become void of its possibilities to have a positive impact on the humanitarian crisis,” Solís said in an [appearance](#) at the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington. “Recommending specific measures without allowing the mechanisms that are in place, formal and informal, to take hold and to develop and to unravel and to have an impact, I don't think is a good idea.” Solís said the Costa Rican government's stance is that Venezuela should hold elections and that the process should move forward with guarantees that it will be free and fair. “Any solution in Venezuela [is progress, except] an undesirable, violent solution. Go through the electoral process,” he said. [Editor's note: See [Q&A](#) on Venezuela in the March 2 issue of the Advisor.]

NEWS BRIEFS

At Least a Dozen Killed in Peru Floods, Mudslides

Flooding and mudslides from heavy rains killed at least a dozen people in Peru on Thursday, the Associated Press reported. The rains are threatening to flood Lima, the country's capital and a city where it rarely rains. Authorities have blamed the heavy rain on the El Niño weather phenomenon, in which a warming of surface waters in the Pacific Ocean can lead to dramatic weather patterns. Officials say 62 people have died and 12,000 homes have been destroyed by storms this year.

Argentina's Jobless Rate Falls to 7.6% in Fourth Quarter

Argentina's unemployment rate declined to 7.6 percent in last year's fourth quarter, as compared to 8.5 percent in the third quarter and 9.3 percent in the second quarter, the country's statistics agency said Thursday, The Wall Street Journal reported. Data from the Labor Ministry showed the private sector has been adding jobs since last July. Another reason for the decreasing jobless rate, however, is that fewer people are actively looking for work, Fausto Spotorno, an economist at research firm Orlando J. Ferreres & Asociados in Buenos Aires, told the newspaper.

PDVSA Offers Russia's Rosneft Joint Venture Stake in Orinoco Belt

Venezuelan state-run oil company PDVSA has offered Russian state-run oil company Rosneft a stake in a joint venture in Venezuela's Orinoco Belt extra-heavy crude area, five industry sources said, Reuters reported Thursday. Rosneft has been offered in a 10 percent stake in the venture. PDVSA has a 70 percent share, and U.S. oil company Chevron owns a 30 percent stake in the venture, which includes an oil field and a 210,000 barrel-per-day oil upgrader.

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riod in office up to the end of 2018, Minister Nunes Ferreira will also try to help to define Brazil's place in a rapidly changing world."

A Melvyn Levitsky, professor of international policy and practice at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy and former U.S. ambassador to Brazil: "This is not a surprising appointment. Nunes has considerable experience in foreign affairs and domestic politics, having been chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and before that chief

“ [Nunes] emphasized the need for Brazil to be more competitive internationally with the goal of increasing both exports and foreign direct investment...”

– Melvyn Levitsky

of staff to President Cardoso, and later minister of justice. During the military regime, he was a member of a radical faction that engaged in acts of violence and was exiled to France from 1968 to 1979. A lawyer from São Paulo, Nunes is a member of the Social Democracy Party (PSDB), a party that is key to President Temer's coalition. I do not believe there will be much change in Brazil's international involvement during his tenure in office. In Nunes' remarks as he assumed office, he emphasized the need for Brazil to be more competitive internationally with the goal of increasing both exports and foreign direct investment—"to open Brazil for the world and to open markets for Brazil." He also noted that Brazil should 'watch over' the environment. He has made negative comments about President Trump, tweeting after the election that Trump 'is the worst,

the most uncontrolled, the most exacerbating' of his party. That may not bode well if Trump's fact checkers do their work, but the Trump administration has thus far shown little interest in hemispheric affairs except for issues involving Mexico. Brazil and the United States have had significant trade and investment relationships; this could bring Brazil to a more prominent place in U.S. foreign policy. Given the uncertainty in the direction of U.S. trade policies, however, it is not clear whether trade will become a positive or a negative factor in U.S.-Brazil bilateral relations."

A Guilherme Casarões, lecturer in international relations at Fundação Getulio Vargas and the Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing: "Nunes' appointment as Brazil's new foreign minister means, first off, that diplomacy is again in the hands of political parties. In the last 25 years, Brazil had a long streak of career diplomats as the highest representatives of Brazilian foreign policy. For those who imagined that José Serra would be a necessary post-impeachment exception, Nunes confirms that the PSDB, the Brazilian Social Democracy Party, will command the Temer administration's foreign policy for the next couple of years. Most important, though, is the fact that Nunes, who served as the chairman of the Senate's Foreign Relations Commission, will speak on Serra's behalf at Itamaraty. He belongs to the political group that still works toward Serra's nomination as the PSDB's presidential candidate in 2018, which faces massive opposition from fellow party members such as Aécio Neves and Geraldo Alckmin. So Nunes will probably strengthen the same lines Serra had already adopted, such as keeping Venezuela at bay, trying to reform Mercosur, boosting trade with Latin American countries, reaching out to Israel and fostering positive ties with the United States. The new foreign minister has three challenges ahead of him. First,

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BUSINESS NEWS

Mexico's Cemex Says it Won't Participate in Border Wall Project

Mexican cement provider Cemex on Thursday said it will not provide construction materials for U.S. President Donald Trump's proposed border wall between the United States and Mexico, The Los Angeles Times reported. The statement comes after the president of the company, Rogelio Zambrano, said on March 1 that the company would give a quote for providing cement for the wall, if asked. Many in Mexico view Trump's wall as an anti-Mexican



Bartlett // File Photo: Mexican Government.

symbol and have said that participating in its construction in any way would be equivalent to treason. "It seems dishonorable for Mexican companies to participate," Manuel Bartlett, a senator from Mexico's Labor Party, said in January. Even if Cemex does not participate in the border wall, company executives have said that the wall would be good for their business. In a presentation to shareholders on Thursday, Cemex leaders said a "potential border wall" would increase demand for cement overall. Cemex has not registered as a potential government contractor for the border wall, according to the U.S. General Services Administration's Federal Business Opportunities Web site. Analysts have estimated that approximately \$1 billion worth of concrete and cement would be needed to build the wall. [Editor's note See [Q&A](#) on U.S.-Mexico relations in the Feb. 6 issue of the Advisor.]

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he is known to lose his temper and to run off at the mouth, which can be dangerous if you are the country's top diplomat. He has just declared that he hopes U.S. President Trump comes 'down off his high horse' on immigration policies. Second, he cannot let partisanship spoil policymaking, thinking about Brazil's future on pragmatic grounds. Third, as he is being investigated in the Supreme Court in connection with electoral crimes, he will have to prove himself honest, not just competent."

A **Gilberto M. A. Rodrigues, visiting research fellow at the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies at American University and professor of international relations at the Federal University of ABC in Brazil:** "Aloysio Nunes brings a narrow vision of what Brazil could be as a regional and international player. His quotation that Venezuela is 'a dictatorship' does not help a regional negotiated solution. Due to that, Brazil becomes disqualified as a possible key player in that process, which is the most important political situation today in South America. At the same time, burning a bridge with Venezuela could mean a blank check for Brazil with a still unknown and unpredictable White House and State Department policy regarding Latin America. The most important diplomatic capital Brazil built

during the last 20 years—beginning in the Cardoso period, deepening and redesigned during Lula's government, and maintained in Rousseff's term—was a strong relationship that evolved with Unasur. This political

“Aloysio Nunes brings a narrow vision of what Brazil could be as a regional and international player.”

— Gilberto M.A. Rodrigues

asset eroded under José Serra and will be even more at risk with Nunes, despite the apparently good relationship with Argentine President Mauricio Macri's government. A possible negotiation to strengthen ties between the Pacific Alliance and Mercosur will not bring the previous expected economic advantages as a regional trade platform, due to U.S. protectionist policy under President Trump. It seems that Nunes' main goal will be continuing to remove the so-called 'ideological diplomacy' from the Workers' Party mandates, which was in fact responsible—and widely recognized—for setting a higher international political standard in Brazil."

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Advisor Video

Brazil's Political Malaise

An Inter-American Dialogue Discussion with Claudia Trevisan of O Estado de S.Paulo, João Augusto de Castro Neves of the Eurasia Group and Peter Hakim of the Inter-American Dialogue

View the February 27 webcast of the discussion

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