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FEATURED Q&A

Will Marina Silva's Message Resonate With Brazilians?



A former Brazilian environment minister, Marina Silva announced this month that she would make her third run for Brazil's presidency. // File Photo: Silva Campaign.

Q Marina Silva, a former Brazilian senator and environmental minister, on Dec. 2 announced she would seek her party's nomination to run for president in next year's election. Silva did not make it past the first round in two previous presidential elections, but recent polls show her placing second, if former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is barred from running following his conviction on corruption charges. What are Silva's chances of having a more successful run at the presidency next year, given the complicated political climate? What issues will be most important to Silva's platform, and will they resonate with voters? What is the outlook for Brazil's top contenders in the presidential election?

A Fábio Kerche, tenured researcher at Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa: "Less than a year from now, Brazilians will choose their next president. Even with so little time left, the level of indetermination is very high. The reason for this uncertainty is the enduring possibility that former President Lula da Silva, who is currently leading in all electoral polls, could be legally blocked from running for president in a judicial process that many Brazilians believe is politically motivated. The political parties have been seeking their candidates and making political calculus with and without taking Lula's candidacy into consideration. Marina Silva, who is a professional politician but tries to sell herself as an outsider, has assumed the strategy of hiding from the political arena, perhaps with the hope that the wave against politicians in Brazil will not reach her. Silva's numbers in the electoral polls seem to be a repeat of past elections, rather than being the result of her presence in

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Colombia's Golfo Clan Declares Cease-Fire

The criminal gang, among Colombia's most violent, is accused of operating drug-trafficking routes in association with Mexican cartels.

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Ford to Shift Some Production From Mexico to China

The U.S.-based automaker reportedly told suppliers that it will move some of its midsized vehicle production to China from its plant in Hermosillo, Mexico in 2020.

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POLITICAL

Ecuadorean VP Glas Sentenced to Six Years in Corruption Case

Ecuadorean Vice President Jorge Glas was sentenced to six years in prison after being convicted in connection with the massive corruption case involving Brazilian construction conglomerate Odebrecht.

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Glas // File Photo: Ecuadorean Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Ecuadorean VP Glas Sentenced to Six Years in Graft Case

Ecuadorean Vice President Jorge Glas was sentenced Wednesday to six years in prison after being convicted of illicit association charges in connection with the multi-country corruption scheme involving Brazilian construction conglomerate Odebrecht, the Associated

“This is an historic sentence.”

— Carlos Montufar

Press reported. A three-judge panel of the National Court ruled that Glas used his position as a cabinet member and later vice president to allow subordinates to collect bribes from the Brazilian company in exchange for major government contracts for public works and construction projects, Bloomberg News reported. Judge Edgar Flores said Glas and his uncle, Ricardo Rivera, were among five perpetrators who orchestrated a scheme to favor Odebrecht for contracts in exchange for millions of dollars worth of bribes, the AP reported. In addition to the jail time, the defendants were ordered to pay \$33.5 million, the amount that Odebrecht has acknowledged paying to Ecuadorean officials. A lawyer for Glas said his client plans to appeal. “We will continue in the fight today more than ever to triumph against injustice,” Glas’ attorney, Eduardo Franco, said in a tweet. “There was no evidence against him.” However, others applauded the court’s decision. “This is an historic sentence,” said Ecuadorean politician Carlos Montufar. “It should serve as the start of an important opening to strengthen institutions and restore democracy.” Glas has been Ecuador’s vice president since 2013. Ecuador’s Supreme Court ordered him to be jailed in October amid the corruption inves-

tigation against him. That month, President Lenín Moreno named an interim vice president to fill in for Glas, but Glas technically remains vice president. He can only lose that position through resignation, a three-quarters vote by lawmakers or after three months of abandoning the position, which would occur in January. [See related [Q&A](#) in the July 14 issue of the Advisor.]

Colombia’s Golfo Clan Declares Cease-Fire

Colombia’s Golfo Clan criminal gang, known for being one of the country’s most violent, declared a unilateral cease-fire on Wednesday, Reuters reported. The gang, which is also known as the Usuga Clan and the Autodefensas Guerrillas, said in September it would be willing to surrender to the government of President Juan Manuel Santos. The government responded that it would not negotiate with the group, because it is a criminal gang and not a politically motivated rebel group like the now de-militarized Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, with which the government signed a peace deal last year. The gang is accused of operating drug trafficking routes in collaboration with Mexican cartels, and has also participated in illegal gold mining. Despite the government’s decision to not negotiate with the group, the Golfo Clan in a statement Wednesday said “we remain committed to efforts which will permit us to contribute to a full peace.” The cease-fire is to begin immediately.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Brazil Launches New Compliance Program for Farmers

Brazil’s Ministry of Agriculture and farm lobby CNA on Tuesday announced a program that will ensure farmers comply with anti-corruption,

NEWS BRIEFS

Odebrecht Paid \$4.8 Mn to Companies Linked to Peru’s President

Odebrecht transferred \$4.8 million to companies linked to Pedro Pablo Kuczynski between 2004 and 2012, before he became Peru’s president but while he held senior government positions, according to a document the Brazilian construction company sent to Peru’s Congress, Reuters reported. Kuczynski denied wrongdoing, but did not dispute that the transfers occurred. Odebrecht is embroiled in a massive graft scandal in which it has admitted to paying bribes to officials in several countries.

Mexican Senators Advance Controversial Security Legislation

Mexican Senate committees on Wednesday approved a security bill to regulate the armed forces’ role in combating drug cartels, sending it to the full Senate, Reuters reported Wednesday. Opponents say the controversial measure will grant excessive power to the military instead of working on improving the police forces. Lawmakers who support the bill say it would set out clear rules that would limit the use of the military to fight drug-related crime. The lower house of Congress has already approved a version of the bill.

Venezuela Settles Lawsuit With Sinopec Subsidiary

Venezuela has settled a lawsuit with Chinese state-run oil company Sinopec over an unpaid bill, making amends with an important ally as the South American nation scrambles to pay its debts and stay afloat amid a partial default. State-owned oil company PDVSA has agreed to pay \$21.5 million to a U.S. subsidiary of Chinese company Sinopec for a 45,000-ton shipment of steel rebar that was delivered to Venezuela in 2013. The two countries reached the settlement on Monday.

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the current Brazilian public debate. Her political party is not very vocal, and the number of seats it has in Congress is very low, which will not give her many television ads during the campaign and will not offer a robust infrastructure to try to win over the more than 100 million Brazilian voters. Moreover, her ideological vagueness did not help her to be the preferred candidate of those who supported former President Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, nor will it help her as the candidate of the non-workers' party left wing as alternative to Lula. At the moment, Silva seems less competitive than she was in the other two campaign cycles in which she sought the presidency."

A **Gilberto M.A. Rodrigues, professor of international relations at the Federal University of ABC in Brazil and member of Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales in Buenos Aires:** "Marina Silva brings two important assets to the political scenario. One is her environmental and sustainable development identity. No other potential or actual candidate holds the same credibility and legitimacy that she does in that matter. The other issue is integrity and honesty. Marina is well known as a very correct, almost untouchable politician, guided by moral and religious principles. Both assets have great value for a large part of the middle and lower classes in Brazil. But she also has problems to address: her lack of charisma, her conservative opinions regarding women and LGBTQ rights, and her political isolation. It is not clear that Marina will receive support from the sectors the other candidates already represent. Opinion polls show that there is a window of opportunity for new and young faces in politics, but Marina is not new on the scene. Her party, the Rede Sustentabilidade, is barely known and relatively small in comparison to others, but may grow if her candidacy could gain wide support. If former President Lula da Silva remains the Workers'

Party candidate, the political scenario would be divided between him and the others. But without Lula running in the election, Marina could have a better chance to go to the second round of voting. The dilemma for her is whether to negotiate political support from traditional parties—and take the risk of being seen as a pivoting candidacy—or to keep her immaculate image without having a minimum level of governability."

A **Riordan Roett, director of the Latin American Studies program at the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies:** "Marina Silva is an individual of integrity and commitment to critical policy issues such as the environment. She has been a candidate for president twice and received 19-20 percent of the vote in the first round of both presidential elections. Her base is the evangelical and environmental

“It is difficult to see [Silva] as a major contender in 2018.”

— Riordan Roett

communities, and she has strong support among younger/student voters. It is difficult to see her as a major contender in 2018. She lacks a substantial party organization, and her appeal in the current political climate will probably remain limited. She would also compete for the evangelical vote with Jair Bolsonaro, the former military officer and now congressman from Rio de Janeiro with strong poll numbers. It appears as though former President Lula may not be able to run, given his legal problems—the 4th regional appeals court (TRF-4) has scheduled a trial on his appealed conviction on Jan. 24. It is generally believed Lula will lose that appeal. While his legal team can mount further

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environmental and labor laws, after a massive corruption scandal in March that revealed a scheme to allow spoiled meat to enter the market tainted the Brazilian meat sector's reputation, Reuters reported. The program will grant a seal of integrity to companies that comply with the regulations set out by the program. Police investigators earlier this year discovered that several meatpackers, including Brazil's two largest, JBS for meat and BRF for poultry, had been bribing inspection officials to allow expired or tainted food to enter the market. The scandal led some importers to halt shipments of Brazilian meat, and the country's agribusiness sector shrank by 2.6 percent, according to the CNA. The Ministry of Agriculture will set up a committee made up of government officials, business leaders and members of civil society, who will grant the seals of compliance after a six-month review. The ministry also said in June that 1,600 additional inspectors had been hired, a 50 percent increase, in order to strengthen monitoring at meatpacking plants. Brazil has restored relations with most of its importing countries, though the United States has maintained a ban on fresh beef from Brazil since June. The ban came less than a year after the United States had allowed Brazilian beef to be exported to the country.

BUSINESS NEWS

Ford to Shift Some Production From Mexico to China

U.S. automaker Ford has told suppliers that it will move production of its midsize Fusion and Mondeo models out of Mexico and Spain and move the vehicles' production to China, Reuters reported Wednesday, citing three unnamed sources. Ford, which intends to shift the production to China in 2020, said it will not ship those vehicles from the Asian country to the United States and Europe. The Ford plants in Hermosillo, Mexico and Valencia, Spain currently build midsize sedans for sale in North America and Europe, respectively.

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appeals, they will probably be unsuccessful. Any presidential candidate—including Silva—will need to address the critical issues of security, corruption and economic growth. That is a challenging agenda, and Silva does not have a track record in those policy areas.”

A **Monica de Bolle, non-resident senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics:** “Despite her fairly good showing in recent polls, Silva’s chances in 2018 are likely to be slim. The tense and complex political climate in Brazil foreshadows a brutal campaign season—worse than what the country saw in 2014. At that time, when Silva was riding high on her own ‘third way’ vision for Brazil and thus appearing to override the traditional PT-PSDB rivalry, she failed to respond effectively to the savage attacks from both Aécio Neves and Dilma Rousseff. Her soft-spoken manner and resistance to being drawn into an ugly campaign against her opponents ultimately led to the perception that she was a weak candidate. In the current environment, that perception is enhanced by the presence of political firebrands like Jair Bolsonaro and Ciro Gomes. Silva’s failure to clearly position herself during the Lava Jato scandal is also likely to hamper her political aspirations, especially in Brazil’s very polarized environment. Inequality, climate change and macroeconomic stability will probably be the linchpins of her policy proposals, but resonance with voters may be weak. Brazilians seem to be more attuned to outspoken candidates, potentially perceived as political outsiders—even if they’ve been in politics for a long time, like Lula and Bolsonaro—who would be more inclined than Silva to stage aggressive attacks against their opponents. Although the presidential elections are still shrouded in uncertainty, there are many candidates aspiring to occupy the so-called

center, including Silva. An overcrowded political center increases the chances that an extremist candidate like Bolsonaro might make it to the runoff in late October 2018, adding fuel to a fiery mix.”

A **Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva, global fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars:** “Marina Silva is a charismatic leader who in the last two presidential elections has shown a great ability to attract voters with her mostly environmental-oriented platform. However, on both occasions, although she appeared as a front-runner in some moments of the campaign, she always lost steam in the last few weeks and never made her way to the runoff election. In 2018, her mission will be even more difficult, because she is going to run in her newly founded party, Rede Sustentabilidade, which is extremely small and poor in resources throughout Brazil. In the past elections, her party was not among the largest, but was much bigger than it is now. Among the serious handicaps of her party, the most important is that she will have just a few seconds a day in the radio and television free time for advertising, which is allocated accordingly to the number of lawmakers each party has in Congress. It is true that Silva has already demonstrated good capacity to raise voters’ interest through the social media, and undoubtedly this will be an asset in next year’s election. She may also attract voters who are disappointed with the parties that have been involved in corruption schemes and are seeking for fresh faces and ideas. Therefore, despite the serious material obstacles to her campaigning, she could be an important candidate next October.”

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Erik Brand
Publisher
ebrand@thedialogue.org

Gene Kuleta
Editor
gkuleta@thedialogue.org

Nicole Wasson
Reporter, Assistant Editor
nwasson@thedialogue.org



Michael Shifter, President
Genaro Arriagada, Nonresident Senior Fellow
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