

MIDDLE POWERS IN THE FRAME OF GLOBAL CLIMATE ARCHITECTURE: THE HYBRIDIZATION OF THE NORTH-SOUTH GAP

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Introduction

The distribution of power among nations has been one of the most characteristic debates of International Relations. Unipolarity, multipolarity, bipolarity and non-polarity are just some of the concepts that promote an analysis of the International System and the links between state actors, in particular the nation states. Since the end of the 20th Century, after the last breath of the Cold War and, therefore, the end of bipolarity, the endless academic disagreements related to the existence of one or many centers of power in the global scene became apparent. Nonetheless, the relative power crisis in which the hegemonic power – United States – is the protagonist, followed by the difficulties Europe is passing through, has put the middle powers in a privileged sphere.

BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – were named as such by Jim O’Neill, economist of Goldman Sachs. His essay argued that the

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economic potential of these countries – excluding South Africa, which was incorporated in 2011 – catapulted them into converting themselves in dominant economies by the middle of the 21st Century. The idea not only accepted economic data, but also demographic and some other aspects. Therefore, it was argued that these countries would represent 40% of the world population in the aforementioned period.

The BRICS thesis is not the only one to recognize the increasing relevance of a group of actors apart from the traditional powers or superpowers. In this sense, the middle powers have inaugurated particular arenas, as well as they have taken part in forums as a result of the external recognition or the initiative of the traditional powers. Within the first group, the IBSA Forum – formed by India, Brazil and South Africa –, created in 2003 at the light of the failed negotiations of Cancun, can be mentioned. Furthermore, BASIC, which groups countries like Brazil, South Africa, India and China in a dialog related to the climate change, is a valid example of the first group. BASIC converted itself into a relevant climatic actor since the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC), held in 2009 in the city of Copenhagen.

As an example of the second group, that is to say, forums that have been created by actors apart from the middle powers as a recognition of their growing profile within the International System, it is possible to mention the Group of 20. Since the economic and financial crisis, G20 became a broader space – and therefore replacing the G8 – to debate the world economy. Countries like Brazil, India, South Africa, China, Argentina, South Korea, Indonesia, Mexico and Turkey were summoned.

The debates on world power distribution are not limited to the relation between superpowers and middle powers, but are also related to the traditional global division between more and less developed countries or what is considered the gap between North and South. This cleavage has characterized the International System since the decolonization process from which the international arena found itself stunned by the numerical increase of states. This process had profound repercussions within international forums, like the UN, once such increase meant the success of majorities in spaces where each state – regardless of status – has one vote, like the General Assembly.

The emergence and rising of the debate concerning the world division between industrialized and developing countries coincided with the insertion of environmental themes into the global agenda. Consequently, the emergence of such themes was entirely linked to such division. The climate issue has not escaped this affirmation. One of the most relevant elements when characterizing the climate issue is the South's achievement, obtaining the North's agreement to the *Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities*, in the Rio de Janeiro Summit of 1992. This principle became a symbol of a developing world and was concreted through the Kyoto Protocol and the division between countries of Annex 1 and 2.

One of the main spaces in which the South has become united in order to sustain positions concerning the climate issue was the Group of 77, which has been aiming to detain backward steps in historical achievements. Even if G77 has been divided in subgroups of negotiation – oil exporter countries, little insular countries and the African group, among others –, in part it has sustained common structural positions, like the principle of responsibilities.

From this brief description of contextual elements that characterize the object of study, it is relevant to express the purpose of this paper, as well as the hypothesis from which we start. The objective of this contribution is to analyze in which sense the BASIC group can modify the global climate architecture, focusing on the North-South gap in terms of climate change and its persistence as an analytical category. In that sense, we hypothesize that the BASIC group tends to hybridize the climate gap between North and South because of the disagreements generated by its postures, opposite to the South positions, centered on G77.

In order to cope with the aforementioned purpose, this work is divided into two parts. The first segment makes a quick theoretical development in relation to the conceptual differences between expressions as *middle power*, *emerging power* and *regional power*, among others. The second segment proposes to analyze the role of middle powers in the global architecture of climate change, taking BASIC as the central space of representation for such states. At its end, it starts a reflection about the South as a category.

1. Conceptual Elements

Likewise other theoretical perspectives, there is no agreement regarding the use of a single idea to classify middle powers, emerging countries or states with increasing attributes of power in the International System. Perhaps the work of Cartens Holbraad, who is behind the definition printed in a statement by the United Nations, is one of the most representatives. In such sense, it affirms: “The middle powers are those which, by reason of their size, their material resources, their willingness and ability to accept responsibility, their influence and their stability are close to being great powers”. The author included within this category both what he called “upper middle powers” and the rest of them, which by their turn comprehend subdivisions where lay the regional powers (Holbraad 1989).

This is a notable definition once it not only shows material resources of power, but also presents elements like the will and the capacity to deal with responsibilities, which has been an object of criticism towards countries like China, a country perceived as not likely to accept such compromises, especially concerning climate issues. On the other hand, the definition presents the logic of potentiality, once it assumes that these countries are in the path of becoming great powers, converting the concept of “middle power” into a changeable or transitory characteristic.

Despite the conceptual differences between authors, there seems to be a relative consensus concerning the fact that middle powers are a group of states structurally positioned under developed or more industrialized countries, while the regional powers can represent peripheral or semiperipheral countries that stand out among states located in a developing world due to their geographical positioning. On the other side, the concept of regional power figures more associated to historical moments, particularly to the Cold War, as well as the process of decolonization and the détente.

For his part, Robert Cox affirms that middle powers might be in a middle-ranking of material capacities and use to sustain an intermediate position in case of conflict. Nonetheless, he considers that middle powers, differently from the regional powers, have a secondary role in military alliances and, in general, are not relevant in regional blocs (Cox 1996).

Other authors that conceptually approach this discussion create their own categories, like Jordi Palou, who developed ranged concepts, such as

superpowers or world powers, great powers, middle powers, small or weak states and microstates (Palou 1993). Other cases that worth the mention are the works of José Miguel Insulza, who named the middle powers as “intermediate powers” (Insulza 1986), and Esther Barbé, who divided powers between superpowers, hegemonic powers, great powers, middle powers and regional powers. Barbé affirms that middle powers are countries with large or intermediate area and an active diplomacy concerning areas that associate them to a degree of prestige, like Spain, Brazil, Argentina, India, Mexico and Nigeria. On the other hand, regional and middle powers might overlap as categories applied to states that, due to their demographic, economic or military weight, as well as their politics in the regional environment, play the role of a great power in determined geographic space, establishing the rules of the game (Barbé 1995).

Finally, we remark the conception of Clarisa Giaccaglia, who defined a middle power as: “the political unity that, based on certain material capacities, perceives itself and is also perceived by other states as different both from the small states and the great powers” (Giaccaglia 2006, 65).

2. The middle powers and the global climate architecture

It is not the first time that a group of countries of the so-called Third World, presenting sustainable economic development, tries to undermine the pillars of the Bretton Woods regime. The 1960s and 1970s were privileged testimonies of how the process of decolonization was the starting point for peripheral countries, or the Third World – the “South” –, enabling them to explore their numerical majority in spaces of relative equity, like the UN General Assembly. This allowed them to take advantage of forums of debate, like the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and to create groups of negotiation and pressure, like the Group of 77 (G77) and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (MNA). All of them subsumed to the reality imposed by bipolarity and the Cold War.

Effectively, including moments of relative decline of the hegemonic power (United States), like the 1970s or the present time, the South-South Cooperation has faced internal and external limits. In the first case, as a result of the South inability to reduce differences and to work together in a broader front itself. In the second case, it must be recognized that hegemonic powers

were effective in disarticulating the strategies of the South, like the Club of Debtors in the 1980s. Both elements, internal and external, had a harmful effect on the initiatives of collective negotiation.

Some scholars sustain that the conception of “South” – or of developing countries – itself derives from a self-marginalizing logic since it represents, more than a discursive element, a collective identity not denied by the assigned group or the superpowers. Adil Najam (2005) argues that the concept of “South” emerges as a category of self-exclusion, underpinned by the characterization of periphery. That is to say, a notion related to marginalization, privation of power and economic rights to make business, which resulted in an illegitimate international system.

Consequently, answering the question of whether the South, or the gap between North and South itself, can still be considered an analytical category valid to describe a group of actors of the International System, scholars have positioned themselves alternatively in favor or against this viewpoint (Miller 1992; 1995; 1998; 2000; Williams 2005; Berger 2004; Bayar 1991; Kamrava 1993; 1995; Krasner 1989). Najam (2005) affirms that the resilience of the South has destroyed the hypothesis about its conceptual dysfunction. This paper is based on this perspective. We consider that the simple existence of a discussion about its reality denotes that it is just as functional as five decades ago, which does not mean that it is unchangeable in its margins or boundaries.

The self-compassion perspective has a particular rationale if one agrees with Alberto van Klaveren (2012, 132) that the main approach to the International Relations made by Latin American countries had been the focus on dependency and is not a coincidence. To the Dependency Theory one can add other theories related to the South, like the Development Theory, the Autonomy Theory of Juan Carlos Puig (1971; 1980; 1984) and the National Viability Theory of Hélio Jaguaribe (1964; 1969; 1972a; 1972b; 1977; 1982; 1992).

Though recognizing the self-perception of the developing countries from an excluding perspective, it is interesting to analyze how the environmental issues have performed during this process. Albeit in the 1960s and 1970s, when the subject entered the global agenda as an imposition from the North to the South (Estrada Oyuela 2007; Bueno 2010), since the effective inclusion of concept of development – the main concern of the Southern countries – the

South's position regarding the environment took place. The full incorporation of the sustainable development since the Rio Earth Summit showed, on the one hand, good effectiveness in articulating joint initiatives and solving differences, which was symbolized by many documents². On the other hand, it consequently showed how the Southern countries, when articulated, can manage to obtain North's concessions. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain the incorporation of a principle like the Common but Differentiated Responsibilities, which soon achieved materiality within UNFCCC through the Kyoto Protocol.

Respect to that, Najam (2005) qualifies the environmental action of Southern countries as a contesting one, previously and during the Conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, participative between that date and the Rio Earth Summit, and engaged ever since.

At this point we ask ourselves how this stage of recognition of middle powers is different from previous times. We could reformulate the question by saying: how are middle powers of the 21st Century different from the middle powers of the previous century? The great majority of analysts report the ephemeral character of thesis related to emerging powers and their capacities to undermine superpowers. Some examples may be found during the course of History, considering countries like Japan or the so-called "Asian Tigers", besides some Latin American countries. Japan used to be, until the end of the 20th Century, one of the most stable candidates to convert into a superpower; however, factors like the stagnation of the Japanese economy during the 1990s hindered such prognostic. A similar thing happened to the Asian Tigers, which

² The five documents signed in Rio were the starting point of the deepening of topics and search for posterior measures of implementation that in many cases were not completed, as subsequent failures of the regime. The Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity gave place to the periodical holding of meetings or conferences between the parties that sustain the regime – with their pluses and minuses; the Rio Statement elevated a set of juridical tools to the status of International Environmental Law, with the recognition of essential aspects as achievements of the South, such as the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and the Principle of Precaution. Furthermore, the Agenda 21 was the first – and for some scholars the only one – plan with concrete and focused measures concerning the decisional incorporation of the denominated Groups of Rio. Finally, the Bosques Declaration could not be converted into a regime similar to the climate or the diversity regimes thanks to the bid of developing countries, like Brazil, itself, which restricted them to sign an agreement that undermined their own sovereignties, like themselves understood.

achieved high levels of economic growth, industrialization and direct foreign investment until the crisis of 1997.

Regarding these events, it is worth asking what makes the BRICS countries capable of generating permanent structural changes in the global power of countries that were already labeled as middle powers before. Though the very BRICS capabilities are still to be confirmed during the making of this paper, we ask to what extent the climate changes might validate or shatter this hypothesis, as well as how it can be linked to the traditional gap between North and South in terms of environment and climate. The G77 may be a valid example. It was one of the pillars of the emergence and development of the South as an international entity searching for joint negotiations during the 1970s. Nonetheless, it is necessary to analyze how it behaved in terms of the climate issue.

Nowadays, the group is represented by approximately 130 nations, among which countries with very different realities can be seen. We refer not only to traditional aspects, like social and economic factors, but also to identities that characterize them as product of a collective history. This is how G77 brings together – besides other examples – oil exporter countries, African nations and small insular states. All of them reveal different positions concerning climate change. While small insular states are seeking for urgent measures able to stop what was predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel of Experts against Climate Change (IPCC), once nations of this group will perish as a product of the increase in sea levels, the oil-rich nations tend to slow down the efforts to modify global and individual energy consumption patterns that decrease the demand for what guarantees their subsistence source: petroleum.

Since there are a myriad of groups of negotiation transverse to G77, it is important to question in which sense the middle powers are capable to change the order/disorder regarding climate change. In order to cope with this objective, the platforms and instruments deployed to exert incidence in the recent global climate structure must be analyzed. Consequently, we focus on the BASIC group.

The BASIC group was transformed into a relevant climate actor after the COP- 15, held in Copenhagen. Doubtlessly, the conference represented the biggest challenge seeking the Road Map traced in Bali (2007) in order to obtain the so desired Kyoto Protocol 2.0. Following the international expectation on

this encounter, COP exhibited the cons setbacks of a withered conference system. Presidents and Prime Ministers overlapping at their arrivals, therefore not directly negotiating, and a host anxious to achieve an agreement that at least should indict the debate on a solution for the deadline of the Kyoto Protocol in 2012 are only two of the many elements that could worth a mention.

The loss of Europe's leadership – traditional bulwark of the climate regime –, and even of the United States' leadership, resulted, as an outcome, in the activism of BASIC countries, which created a document that, according to many analysts, "saved the conference". Copenhagen became a climate stage in terms of middle powers' limelight. Among the features corroborating this affirmation we could mention the adoption of volunteer compromises concerning the reduction of carbon emissions and energy concentration; the leading role played by these actors in place of states like U.S. and European countries; and finally, the G77 embarrassment regarding the self-exclusion of these actors and their consolidation as climate leaders.

This is probably the reason why the BASIC members continually strive in order to clarify that this was not a rupture with G77³, or a related sphere, once it is not a political decision group as the second. It is rightful that the group's most recent positions break away from the ones traditionally sustained by G77, starting from the volunteer compromises concerning the effects of greenhouse gas emissions. However, it is undeniable that the condition of BASIC members is quite different from the situation of the majority of G77 members.

As previously mentioned, within G77 coexist countries like China, on the one hand, and like Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Niger, Center African Republic, Rwanda, Somalia or Uganda, which according to the World Bank represent 0.1 metric tons of carbon dioxide emission per capita, on the other. The Chinese case is notable because, though it holds the first or second place – depending on the source of data – in the global ranking of

³ The reference to G77 is present in every joint statement or report made by BASIC countries since the first-ever meeting of November, 2009 in Beijing, China. There is a particular effort to stress that it represents a zone for cooperation and negotiation within G77, and not parallel to it.

countries emitting carbon dioxide (of the total emissions), it gets a different position in amounts of per capita emission. It happens because of the enormous Chinese population, of more than 1.3 billion of inhabitants within a global population of 7 billion. A similar situation occurs in India, but not in South Africa, where the per capita value is just as highly ranked as the total emission amount.

If G77 is composed of a variety of countries with very different realities, how could be argued that BASIC disrupts the recent climate consensus of the developing world, if there are other groups like the Alliance of Small Insular States (AOSIS), the group of Less-Developed Countries (LDC), the Group of Environmental Integrity or even OPEP, showing the same inner opposite positions? It is possible that the answer lays on the fact that BASIC was transformed into a trampoline that, according to some scholars, notices the climate veto power of its members (Viola, Franchini and Ribeiro 2012).

Anywise, the number of negotiations initiated since COP-13 – held in Bali – has decreased. These negotiations present the difficulty of achieving an agreement after Kyoto. Such debate starts with the wavering U.S. engagement based on the argument that China cannot continue to hide itself behind its condition of developing country, not assuming compulsory compromises. Many countries of the EU came out sympathetic to this argument, once EU is not only formed by countries like Germany and France, but also by other countries like the ones from the former Soviet orbit, which still struggle to achieve their own development, even more in the context of a global financial crisis. In this sense, these nations are not willing to finance global increasing emissions of countries like China and India.

On the other hand, it is questionable how the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities will be interpreted in a new global climate agreement. This new interpretation will happen like it did in the 1990s, in a strict way, or rather, it will be adjusted to the present realities in terms of quantity and concentration of emissions.

Analyzing reports and joint statements from 2009 onwards, as well as the links between them and the COP meetings, an average of four meetings were held each year, , setting off spaces of negotiation, consultation and

agreements towards the COPs.

At the II Ministerial Meeting held on January, 2010 in New Delhi⁴, right after Copenhagen, the group defined itself as a forum of cooperative actions for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, which included information exchange. Furthermore, it defended the importance of the *ad hoc* workgroups established within both UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol frameworks. Other element that emerged there, stressed in further reports, was the relevance of the implementation and financing of REDD+, that is to say, the Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries.

After the great negotiator impact of BASIC in Copenhagen (COP-15, 2009), the differences deepened, first in Cancun (COP-16, 2010) and later in Durban (COP-17, 2011). If the provision of equity capital to support the mitigation in less developed countries, a measure that added up to the volunteer compromises of COP-15, was defined in New Delhi, disagreements stepped in. The four countries discoursed towards the legal character of the forthcoming climate agreement. However, while India and China opposed a legally compulsory agreement, South Africa and Brazil tended to accept it. Despite these points, the quartet has always sustained that the base of any agreement must be the equity and the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities.

Before the holding of the COP-16 in Cancun, BASIC has met in many opportunities. The III Ministerial Meeting was held on April, 2010 in Cape Town⁵. Amongst the aspects to be highlighted within the joint statement, it is possible to point out the importance to sustain the Road Map conceived in Bali and the double-path proposed at that moment. It implied a double agreement: one arrangement concerning the quantity of emissions in the framework of a second compromised post-Kyoto period and a long-term compromising agreement. Some of the prioritized areas pointed in the document are: the mechanisms of *fast start*, or quick financing, evaluated in 10 billion dollars; the

⁴ Document available at:

<http://www.chinafaqs.org/files/chinainfo/BASIC%20Joint%20Statement%2024%20January%202010.pdf>

⁵ Document available at: <http://www.moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/BASIC-statement.pdf>

implementation and financing of REDD+; the technological architecture for development and transfer; the creation of a framework for adaptation; and the creation of a work plan related to MRV (measurement, reporting and verification) by the developed countries.

Previously to the COP-16, the IV Ministerial Meeting was held on July, 2010 in Rio de Janeiro⁶. The importance of fast start, equity and the need to achieve a second post-Kyoto stage of compromises were reaffirmed, as well as other aspects, like the consensus on public funds being the origin of financing for developed countries. Slowly the first points have formed the base of every joint statement. In fact, at the V Ministerial Meeting held in the Chinese city of Tianjin on October, 2010⁷, additions to the main aspects of previous reports could not be noticed.

After COP-16, the VI Ministerial Meeting was held in New Delhi⁸ on February, 2011. Aiming at Durban, the results of Cancun were there analyzed. One of the remarkable points was the drafting of the Cancun agreements itself, which in any way should replace the Bali Road Map from BASIC perspective. The novel and outstanding theme of the declaration is the matter of international comparativeness, including the accountability and action of developing countries in relation to the developed world, which must seriously compromise to mitigation and financing of the agreed actions.

There is a significant change at the VII Ministerial Meeting, held in Zimbali, South Africa, on May, 2011⁹. This change responds to the unilateral actions taken by the European Union respect to the inclusion of emissions related to aviation in the regime of emissions commerce. Facing this decision, China asked its airlines not to take part of such business, whilst India discursively opposed. BASIC affirmed in its Zimbali report that such kind of action does not contribute to the construction of a solid multilateral regime and

⁶ Document available at:

<http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/joint-statement-issued-at-the-conclusion-of-the-fourth-meeting-of-ministers-of-the-basic-group-rio-de-janeiro-25-26-july-2010>

⁷ Document available at:

<http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/Fifth-BASIC-Ministerial-Meeting-on-Climate-Change.pdf>

⁸ Document available at: <http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/BASIC-Stat-6.pdf>

⁹ Document available at:

<http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/Joint%20statement%20BASIC%2029th%20May.pdf>

does not respect the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities or other principles supported by BASIC, such as the equity. Moreover, they strongly emphasized the balance between mitigation and adaptation measures, discussion that has been deepened at the meetings after Zimbali. The VIII Ministerial Meeting, celebrated on August, 2011 in the city of Inhotim, Brazil¹⁰ reaffirmed those aspects, as well as stressed the extension of the Kyoto mandate and the compromise of countries from Annex 1, owing to the deadline established in the aforementioned protocol.

The last meeting organized by BASIC, aiming at COP-17 in Durban, was the IX Ministerial Meeting held in Beijing, on November, 2011¹¹. The equity, the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities, the historical responsibilities, the Bali Road Map and the last's proposal of a two-way agreement were then reassured as fundamental principles of negotiation. Just as previously stated, these four aspects turned into the pillar of every joint statement or report. Furthermore, the need to establish a second term of compromises under Kyoto mandate to have industrialized countries adopting clear commitments to decrease their emissions was also stressed. In this sense, a new element of this statement was that the maintenance of the flexible mechanisms for countries from Annex 1 in a second round of compromises must rely on the establishment of reduction commitments. Moreover, the developed countries must also cater a fund of 30 billion dollars for the so-called fast start. On the other hand, and for the first time, the inexistence of a balance between mitigation and adaptation was not clear, but instead an imbalance in favor of the second factor prevailed because of the vulnerability of less-developed countries. Finally, India proposed the inclusion of subjects like the equal commerce and intellectual property in the agenda of COP-17.

After the conference held in Durban, BASIC countries – as a gesture for one of its members, which was the host – appraised the document named Durban Platform at the X Ministerial Meeting, celebrated in New Delhi on February, 2012¹². This appraisal particularly comprehended: the formation of a

¹⁰ Document available at:

http://www.za.boell.org/downloads/BASIC_Joint_Statement_Inhotim_final_version.pdf

¹¹ Available at: <http://www.indianembassy.org.cn/newsDetails.aspx?NewsId=267>

¹² Document available at:

global green fund; the adaptation committee; the executive committee of technology; and a center for climate technology. Moreover, the countries agreed on the necessity of a second term of negotiations under Kyoto mandate and the presentation until May, 2012 – by Annex 1 countries – of information regarding the emission reduction and the possibility to amend the Annex B of the protocol in such task. The maintenance of the flexible mechanisms, subjected to quantitative commitments concerning reduction by Annex 1 countries, was also remembered. Finally, they deplored the Canadian announcement regarding quitting the agreement.

With respect to the XI Ministerial Meeting of July, 2012, held in Johannesburg¹³, BASIC gave support to the documents drafted at the Rio+20 Summit as a way to express condescension towards its host. There is also, and ever since, a strong emphasis on implementation. Similarly, a concern about the information expressed on the so-called QELRCs (Quantified Emission Limitation or Reduction Commitments) reports regarding the advance in terms of emission reduction of countries from the Annex 1 was mentioned and the urgent need to rely on common rules that allow international comparativeness was expressed. The themes characterized as poorly attained at the conference were: intellectual property, European unilateral actions and the equity question.

Close to the celebration of COP-18 in Doha, the XII Ministerial Meeting was held in Brasilia on September, 2012¹⁴. A distinct element was that the meeting had the participation of other representatives, a space called BASIC Plus. In this case, Barbados, Algeria (as Chair of G77+China), Qatar (as the host of the then-next COP) and Argentina were present in the Brazilian capital city. Aiming at COP-18, the countries stressed the necessity: to approach the beginning of the second round of compromises, starting January, 2013; to make

<http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/10th-BASIC-Meeting-Delhi-Joint-Statement.pdf>

¹³ Document available at:

<http://www.info.gov.za/speech/DynamicAction?pageid=461&sid=29011&tid=76046>

¹⁴ Document available at:

<http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/declaracao-conjunta-proferida-na-conclusao-da-xii-reuniao-ministerial-do-basic-sobre-mudanca-do-clima-brasilia-brasil-20-e-21-de-setembro-2012>

countries of Annex 1 present emphatic information concerning emissions reduction; to highlight the relevance of the implementation – here the long term financing is included –; and, finally, to materialize the Green Climate Fund. They also stated that the base of the 2020 Agreement should be what was convened in Bali, Copenhagen, Cancun and Durban.

The last meeting before Doha was the XIII Ministerial Meeting on November, 2012 in Beijing¹⁵. Since it has also hosted BASIC Plus, the representatives of Algeria (as Chair of G77+China), Fiji (as a member of AOSIS and future Chair of G77+China) and Qatar (as the host of COP-18) joined as observers. The Beijing statement shows no new issues, except for the effectiveness of the advertence concerning developed countries that do not take part of the second compromise and the consequent absence of the clean development mechanism of Kyoto. The countries also displayed consternation once the mitigation efforts by less-developed countries seem greater than the industrialized countries' attempts. This must not represent transference of compromises or an inversion of the Principle of Responsibilities. Additionally, regarding the European unilateral measures, they repudiated the EU intention to stop their implementation for a year.

The COP-18, held in Doha, showed the most reluctant side of some states respect to a compromise to extend Kyoto right after its announced expiration in 2012. Although Doha established a prorogation until 2020, the present parties of Kyoto do not correspond to 15% of the total emissions once Russia, Japan and Canada decided to quit the agreement. Other countries joined this position, like Belarus and Ukraine, hesitant to extend Kyoto.

The COP document, named Doha Climatic Gateway, not only exhibits the main problem in compromising a few countries and a limited percentage of emitters (EU, Australia, Norway, Croatia), but also postpone the commitment to achieve a new global climate pact for 2015 without possessing an universal objective of reduction or deepening a central aspect like financing, which was decisively delayed for 2013. In this sense, the document tries to push the Green Climate Fund forward and support an agreement at the 2013 Warsaw Climate

¹⁵ Document available at: <http://www.indianembassy.org.cn/newsDetails.aspx?NewsId=381>

Change Conference concerning a cooperation of about 100 billion dollars by industrialized countries.

After the events of Doha, BASIC countries – at their XIV Ministerial Meeting on February, 2013, in the Indian city of Chennai¹⁶ – manifested their disappointment with the lack of commitment by developed countries concerning financing and mitigating, as well as the need that industrialized countries that did not make part of the original Kyoto agreements and Annex 1 acquire mitigation duties in the UNFCCC framework during the second round of compromises. Moreover, and emphasizing their view on the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities, the members established that, due to the historical greenhouse gas emissions, it is imperative to comply what was set by IPCC regarding the need for Annex 1 countries to reduce their emissions at least by 25-40% comparing their 1990 levels to 2020. They also reiterated that developing countries, amongst them BASIC, have been carrying out much bigger efforts than the industrialized countries in order to comply what was established by UNFCCC. Because of this last point, what is, from our point of view, one of the most remarkable aspects of the statement, the countries declared that the objective of the Durban Platform was to reinforce the efforts of all parties, strengthening the multilateral regime based on norms and assuring the complete, effective and sustainable implementation of the Convention for the year of 2020, not being permitted any rereading, renegotiation or reinterpretation. Finally, as presented by every BASIC document, the countries sustained the group's unity and its alignment with G77 + China, as well as its commitment to strengthen itself in the framework of South-South Cooperation.

The results of the last COP meetings are, according to some experts (Hurrell and Sengupta 2012), an example of the incapacity of emerging countries to sustain historical procedures and preferential statuses. For others, the commitments taken by BASIC are part of the structural, dynamic changes of International System, as well as of the inexorability of a forthcoming new economy under low carbon levels (Viola, Franchini and Ribeiro 2012).

¹⁶ Document available at: http://moef.nic.in/assets/XIV_BASIC_Joint_Statement_FINAL.pdf

Evaluating the structural conditions and its logic of power, we can thus affirm that the division between North and South seem to enjoy a good health from the climate perspective. That is to say, developing countries continue to fundamentally defend a posture in favor of the common but differentiated responsibilities. In terms of International Environmental Law, this principle is derived from the recognition of the principle of sovereign equity that appears in many international instruments, such as, for example, the UN Charter. There is also a juridical recognition by more industrialized countries concerning their larger contribution to environmental degradation and heavier pressure on natural resources; not only this, but it is also clear that in not complying their – greater – responsibilities to protect the environment, they become responsible for disfavoring the possibilities of developing countries to achieve a better living standard¹⁷.

The comparative exercise between declarations and statements of the BASIC countries' ministers and the documents written within COP meetings cast a change in the influence exerted by groups participating of the conferences in favor of the space shared by the four middle powers. This means that their power of influence has increased in detriment of traditional powers like the U.S. – which continue hesitant in respect to the compulsory commitments of reduction – and Europe, as a historical bastion of climate regimes. It should be stressed in favor of our argument the active participation of these four countries at COPs; its conditioning of content of final drafts; the fact that internal disagreements have not broken the group; the joint engagement of problems while being externally threatened, like what happened with the unilateral measures taken by European Union; the commitment to power building within, at least symbolically, G77 + China.

However, and in spite of the presumption and reiteration of BASIC about their belonging to G77 + China, the BASIC countries have tended to shatter the Group of 77, in function of their own interpretation of the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities; to have postures that in many cases are contradictory when compared to the rest of the group; and to present

¹⁷ For more details, see Borrás Pentinat, 2004.

differences that deepen in terms of quantity and concentration of emissions as a product of economic growth, being it distributed – or concentrated – in social terms between the members of the group. Furthermore, besides the aforementioned factors, it happens because of the establishment of own bulwarks as a product of the numerous meetings, which has improved the mechanisms of cooperation and negotiation, that is to say: the Principle of Equity; the second round of commitments of Kyoto; the validation of UNFCCC and its leadership, along with the Kyoto Protocol, as international climate regimes; the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities; and the Principle of Historical Responsibilities.

To the question on how middle powers can change the global climate order, the answer given by us is that climate change displays the hybridization of the traditional gap between North and South. This opened space is for some people an intermediate space, being for others, who highlight the climate veto power of these countries, an ostensible transformation of the structure and dynamics of International System.

Conclusions

This paper has proposed to analyze whether BASIC group changes the global climate architecture or not, emphasizing the gap between North and South and its persistence as an analytical category. Respect to that, we have affirmed that one of the most relevant characteristics of middle climate powers, centered on the BASIC group, is that, differently from other emerging powers, they have showed conditions to push the climate game forward during controversial times, as was the case in Copenhagen. Further, these countries have been recognized by superpowers and traditional powers because of their relevance in negotiation tables. The decision of Brazil, China, India and South Africa to adopt volunteer commitments of reduction can be read through many ways, though two of them seem more relevant in our analysis: that it constitutes a step back in terms of interpretation of the principle of responsibilities and a loss of autonomy for the South; or that it means an inevitable position due to the role that these countries perform in the list of main global emitters.

In any case, this means a cutting point from the more inflexible interpretation that G77 has tended to sustain regarding this principle, in order to defend the historical goals of the South. From our point of view, although

these four countries will continue to negotiate with G77, BASIC constitutes this trampoline to which we have referred. BASIC is a joint platform used like other ones – BRICS, IBSA – as a way to sponsor their individual growth as players of big global leagues or even as core players.

We do not doubt the existence of the gap between North and South, but rather dismiss it is stationary. Just like many other analytical categories, it is changeable. The hybridization of such gap by the middle powers is an example of change, whereas four countries were able to benefit from empty spaces created by traditional powers like the U.S. and Europe, as well as enforce their increasing attributes of material power, going through differences and divisions between others countries of the South and using its association as a middle power to multiply their efforts. To these elements we can add the possibility to demonstrate their commitment, will and capacity to accept responsibilities and their potential to convert into great powers (Holbraad 1989).

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this contribution is to analyze in what sense the BASIC modify global climate change architecture, focusing on the North-South climate division and its persistence as an analytical category. The hypothesis is that the BASIC group tends to hybridize the North-South climate division as a result of the discord generated by their positions in contrast to the G77.

KEYWORDS

Middle Powers; Climate Change; North-South Division.

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