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Brazil ups and downs in global environmental governance in the 21st century

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Brazil's share of global carbon emissions, mega biodiversity, vast fresh water resources, large territory, large population, and significant economy characterize it as relevant actor in Global Environmental Governance (GEG), either alone or participating in groups such as the G-77, BASIC and the G20 (Viola and Franchini 2018; Hochstetler and Viola 2012; Hochstetler 2012; Viola et al. 2012). The country has the power to harm the Earth System, but may also be an important catalyst for innovative answers to the challenges posed by the Anthropocene. Since the 1990's, GEG has become a relevant issue in the dynamic of the International System and in the academic studies of International Relations. More than the multilateral state negotiations process (that has offered inconsistent answers considering the progressive degradation of planetary boundaries (Rockström et al. 2009; Steffen 2015), GEG refers to political processes involving different kinds of actors at different levels, often decentralized and self-organized, related to environmental agendas (Biermann 2014). These agendas are not restricted to the ones formalized in environmental agreements, and take account of other negotiation processes that occur in arenas focused on discussing issues such as trade, finance, security and human rights, as well as interconnected environmental agendas (Le Prestre 2017).

This special issue seeks to present a panorama of the heterogeneous role of Brazil in GEG in the 21st century. The articles presented in this special issue may offer reflections on the following questions:

- How have the Brazilian domestic policies evolved within the issue? Have they been robust, intermediate, or weak?
- How has the Brazilian environmental foreign policy evolved in relation to the issue? Has Brazil been a leader, a follower, a reluctant actor, or a blocker?
- What has been the impact of Brazilian NGOs, corporations, and scientific community on the Brazilian environmental foreign policies?
- Is there correspondence or dissonance between the discourse of the Brazilian government on the issue, and the effectively implemented policies?
- What has been the relationship between the evolution of the environmental policy and the broader Brazilian foreign policy?

In order to answer these questions, different theoretical approaches in the GEG literature are applied, as the polycentric governance (Ostrom 2009), the transnational and multilevel environmental governance (Andonova et al. 2009), the governours in global governance (Avant et al. 2010), the climate commitment (Viola et al. 2012, Viola and Franchini 2018) as well as different methodological frameworks and tools. The articles all face the challenge of presenting arguments based on strong empirical elements, in order to avoid taking official narratives or norms as evidences of effective implementation actions. Climate change is one of the main challenges of humanity, together with nuclear war, disruptive technologies, asymmetric globalization, and confrontation between democratic and autocratic regimes. There is a predominance of articles related to climate change, which is consistent with the fact that it is the most relevant global environmental problem.

The discussion over leadership and commitment permeates this special issue. Leadership refers to a relationship between actors in a negotiation process (to define the agenda or to implement it), in which one of the actors wants to take the lead in negotiations (aspiration), and is able to act and transform reality in a way that the other actor(s) in the relation follow(s) (Young 1991; Underdal 1994). Therefore, there are two moments of the leadership analysis: firstly, the organization and the internal processes that indicate the intention to act and lead, and secondly, the external effects of the action (outcomes). According to Underdal (1994), leadership is a relation that involves the exercise of power, but it differs from others as the leader acts in order to achieve some positive action (at least from the aspiring leader's point of view), in the sense that it is good for a collectivity. To lead, the actor must be able not to use force, but to act using ideational factors and example by action (commitment). The role of Brazil and its eventual leadership could be analyzed by its national and subnational domestic environmental politics, and non-state actors' (NGOs, corporations, social movements, local communities, scientific community) mobilization and implementation role within specific issues. Besides, it requires an analysis of the Brazilian environmental foreign policy in specific arenas, and of whether the foreign policy reflects the domestic debate.

The nine articles point to a varying role of Brazil in GEG, according to the period of analysis, the specific agenda, the level of analysis, and the actors involved. Despite these variations, and

notwithstanding the different (national, subnational, and non-state) actors engaged in promoting decarbonizing and innovative policies and experiences on different levels, the articles indicate that Brazil may have missed the opportunity to act, to innovate, and to engage other actors in actions of mitigation and adaptation.

Matias Franchini and Eduardo Viola introduce the conceptualization of “climate myth” in order to highlight the distance between the Brazilian self-image in GEG and its real commitments, power, and leadership. Brazil has consolidated a narrative of commitment with the international environmental agenda, and been a reformist power in the governance of climate change (Viola et al. 2012). According to the authors, however, there is a strong dissonance between the discourse of the Brazilian government on environmental issues and the effectively implemented policies in the period 1989-2018. This dissonance would represent a strong obstacle for Brazil to become a leader.

The authors present the dimensions of this “self-image”: a) the country is a major agent in the global carbon cycle; b) the country is a fundamental actor in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) regime (especially due to its defense of a radical interpretation (obligations of reducing emissions only for developed countries, non-obligations for developing countries) of the common but different responsibilities (CBDR) principle; and c) the country takes actions to (more than it was obliged to) tackle climate change. Although not entirely based on reality, this self-image rests on the following material basis: the Amazon deforestation control (in the period 2005-2012) and the incipient structuring of a climate policy in the late 2000s. However, this self-image ignored, among others; the fact that in the period 1989 to 2004, Brazilian emissions were the most irrational in the world because they produced massive destruction of the Amazonian forest without producing economic growth as a counterpart; the new increase in emissions from deforestation in the Amazon since 2013 (modest from 2013-14, very strong from 2015-18); and the country’s radical defense of CBDR at most UNFCCC negotiations and the increase in the share of fossil fuels in the energy matrix and the massive subsidies to fossil fuels (detailed in Basso’s article). In this sense, the Brazilian self-image between 1989 and 2018 as a reformist player was “nothing more than a myth,” as it was based on the exaggeration of the characteristics of the country within its three dimensions (power, commitment, and leadership) with no connection to reality. In 2019, the climate myth has been abandoned by the Bolsonaro administration because the aspirations have changed: Brazil does not aim to present itself as a climate leader anymore. Actually, the government is trying to erode environmental standards across the board, and it is allied with the most conservative countries in international negotiations.

The focus on domestic policy and on different actors at the local and national levels allows investigating the eventual consonance of the discourse of the Brazilian government regarding the issue, and the effectively implemented policies, which allows qualifying the role of the country in GEG. In this sense, Larissa Basso directs attention towards the Brazilian trajectory in the context of the urgently needed deep decarbonization, by focusing on the national energy policies. The methodological approach involves investigating the main agents and their interests, using

process tracing and interviews with central actors. According to Basso, Brazil has been moving backwards, despite the decrease of total emissions between 2005 and 2012 due to control of Amazon deforestation, because *all* the other economic sectors' emissions have increased (especially agriculture/livestock and energy-related emissions). Considering the country's international commitments related to energy, the pledges allow the country to increase the fossil fuels share in the energy matrix. Her conclusions converge with Franchini and Viola's analysis concerning a distorted self-image, implying a strong diagnosis of the Brazilian distance to a deep decarbonization horizon.

The Brazilian eventual leadership in GEG is related to the discussion over the "emerging powers" considering environmental issues (Barros-Platiau 2010), because in the second half of 2000s, Brazil had stronger environmental (domestic and international) policies compared with the other big developing countries (China, India, Indonesia, South Africa). In the beginning of the XXI century, Brazil engaged with other countries in the so-called "South-South" cooperation initiatives, which generated the expectation that countries like Brazil, India, and China could redefine the terms of GEG. Kathryn Hochstetler and Cristina Inoue's starting point is a reflection on the meaning of naming a country as an "emerging power," and the possible Brazilian constructive leadership in global environmental governance between 2003 and 2018. Despite the economic focus of these South-South initiatives, they contained a significant environmental dimension. The authors approach these potential environmental effects of the cooperation initiatives, whether positive or negative, focusing on two categories of South-South initiatives: Brazilian programs of international development assistance and the Brazilian National Development Bank's (BNDES) internationally-linked lending.

Considering the characteristics of the cooperation policies led by Brazil in the period that included the absence of policy conditions or safeguards, Brazil did not condition the assistance measures or the loans on domestic environmental criteria. Besides, the country has provided modest technical cooperation for environmental purposes. Considering the BNDES loans for Brazilian companies to operate in other countries, the majority of the projects did not offer direct environmental benefits. In this sense, the empirical findings indicate that Brazil, despite the opportunity, did not play a leading role in promoting environmental solutions, having lost the opportunity of transforming the South-South cooperation initiatives, in order to diminish its environmental and social impacts.

The image of Brazil as a relevant player in GEG during the past ten years is supported, at least in part, by the country's influence in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). According to Leandra Gonçalves, Brazil has been an active voice in ICCAT, but its leadership has been declining over the last years. The author explains the variation of the role of Brazil in the regime, from a leader that set the agenda and pushed negotiations, offering solutions, chairing the Commission, to a more timid role. To explain the change in the Brazilian position, Gonçalves focuses on the domestic industrial fishery groups. During the period of Brazilian leadership, these groups were organized, pressuring the government to act at the ICCAT. The country's participation declined as the sector faced economic instability and weakness

of its institutions and politics related to the sea. In this sense, “if Brazil wants to preserve its leadership, it must demonstrate commitment to its own waters while strengthening governmental institutions.” The article points to a notable lack of transparency of the decision-making process, which is a central element within other environmental agendas (as for example, the international civil aviation emissions).

On a similar methodological path, Veronica Gonçalves and Marcela Anselmi focus on the Brazilian foreign policy at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and on the domestic debate over aviation emissions in order to define the Brazilian policy profile in relation to international aviation emissions and the international response to it (the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation - CORSIA). During the negotiations at the ICAO, Brazil did not push for the strengthening of the environmental integrity of CORSIA, and it has insisted on the CBDR principle. In this sense, the authors classify Brazil as a reactive conservative state, as Brazil did not lead or push the negotiations towards achieving a stronger and environmentally significant agreement. Considering the debate about CORSIA in Brazil, the government’s position at the ICAO was not legitimized by an open public debate over the economic instrument negotiated at the ICAO and its potential impacts, as CORSIA may encourage the expansion of offsetting projects. In this regard, Brazil is a conservative actor in international aviation emissions negotiations, as it has “prioritized to prevent changes in the status quo and to seek the so-called national interests – or, in the specific context of aviation negotiations – the sectorial interests.”

The argument of Brazil as a key player in GEG is also challenged by Ana Flavia Barros-Plataiu, Niels Søndergaard, and Jochen Prantl, in an article that focuses on the country’s negotiation position at the Antarctica and the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) agendas, and on how both are related to the “Blue Amazon” paradigm. The authors focus on the relationships between the domestic actors and the Brazilian diplomacy, applying the policy network approach to outline the main actors that define the government’s position at the negotiations. According to Barros-Plataiu et al., Brazil is not a leader in Antarctica and the BBNJ negotiations, and the Navy, one central actor in the domestic context, has “no capacity of managing Antarctica alone and has limited capacity to meet the demands for ocean governance when it comes to BBNJ.” In short, the authors affirm that in Brazil, marine living resources management is not politically or diplomatically relevant.

The analysis of the Brazilian domestic policies involving environmental issues is strongly related to action taken at the local level, especially in the cities. Solutions to climate adaptation, for example, are dependent on the involvement of cities in Brazil, taking into account the federative administration organization. Focusing on urban cities, Ana Mauad and Michele Betsill reflect on the role of cities in cooperating and providing responses to global climate change, especially for the last two decades (Betsill and Bulkeley 2006). Mauad and Betsill argue for the necessity of looking to these transnational actors in order to gain a broader picture of the role of Brazil in climate governance, as the country’s urban emissions are very significant, especially due to the

transportation sector. The article presents the case study of the city of São Paulo in global climate governance, in which they analyze the city's climate and international agenda between 2005 and 2017. The central argument is that São Paulo's climate responses are international relations politics combined or not with climate policies (design and adoption and implementation), as the city engaged in transnational municipal networks (as C40 and ICLEI), with a prominent role of the local international secretariat. Because of its transnational involvement, São Paulo has implemented punctual climate policies during Kassab's administration (2006-2012), but afterwards they were discontinued and put on hold - while the narrative of the city as a "climate leader" has persisted. Their conclusion is similar to other analyses gathered in the special issue: despite an inconsistent trajectory, the city has projected a self-image of commitment and leadership.

Focusing on the Amazon localities, Fronika de Wit and Paula Freitas call attention to the importance of also studying non-central urban localities in Brazil, as the Amazon region is usually neglected in the Brazilian climate politics. The deforestation of the Amazon threatens local climate stability, affects local communities, and increases their vulnerability, besides its well documented contributions to global climate change. This article presents a relevant systematization of the literature on polycentric adaptation governance theory and reviews the emergence of adaptation governance between 2008 and 2018 in Brazil. Brazil has presented its National Adaptation Plan in 2016, in accordance with its INDC presented at the Paris Agreement, stressing the importance of the involvement of subnational actors in a multi-level adaptation governance. The article presents a case study of Acre, based on subnational policy documents and interviews with stakeholders in Acre's climate governance, showing that the climate projects in the region lack the effective prominent role of local actors and do not focus primarily on mitigation or adaptation, as for example, the GCF taskforce and the REM-program. They work on reducing deforestation, lacking the involvement of local actors in the project design.

Veronika Chase also approaches the Amazon actors, but focuses on consultation protocols created by the indigenous populations as a case of norm diffusion. The International Labor Organization's 169 Convention established the norm of free, prior, and informed consultation, and the right of indigenous populations to participate in environmental governance decisions. The analysis applies the theoretical framework of norm diffusion and norm entrepreneurs in order to investigate the transversal process of norm diffusion carried out by transnational networks of "indigenous and traditional populations, grassroots groups, civil society organizations, religious initiatives, public entities, and international institutions." Chase affirms that these actors have engaged in transversal and transnational cooperation initiatives that helped to force the implementation of the ILO 169 Convention norm over prior consent in Brazil, with the diffusion of the consultation protocols elaborated by the indigenous communities (like the Wajápi consultation protocol and the Munduruku consultation protocol). According to Chase, the protocols played an important role in the case of the São Luiz do Tapajós (SLT) dam, enabling local communities to exercise their role of legitimate governors in the Amazon.

The articles gathered in the special issue approach the role of Brazil in Global Environmental Governance by focusing on different aspects and issues of the environmental agenda, and by tracing actions of different types of actors on different levels. In the period 2004-2013, Brazil experienced significant economic growth (an annual rate of 3.5%, well above the average of the period 1979-2018) and reduction of income inequality (the Gini Index moving from 0.58 to 0.53). This growth was generated by the pro-market economic reforms of 1994-2005 and by the global commodities super-boom of 2004-2013. However, a major vulnerability remained: the low growth of worker productivity (significantly lower than OECD countries and much lower than other large emerging economies) and a very dysfunctional and low-quality educational system. In the period 2006-2014, economic policies that generated serious macroeconomic unbalances were implemented (hidden from the mass public during the commodities superboom). Among these economic policies, we highlight the growing subsidies to fossil fuels; the big loans to major Brazilian corporations at subsidized rates; the customs protection and the tax exemptions to noncompetitive firms; and the promotion of a naval industry that produced at cost around 50% above the international market. Besides, the attempt of a giant expansion of Petrobras, combined with documented evidences of corruption, led to a five-fold increase of the corporation's indebtedness in the period 2011-2016.

On the positive side, during the period 2005-2012, Brazil invested and allocated funds for promoting sustainable development of the Amazon and increased environmental protection, investing in restructuring and equipping the environmental agencies, strengthening some participation channels. What the articles show is that this has had positive impacts, for example, on the effective combat of deforestation, led by more efficient monitoring and enforcement, but not on other very important environmental and climate change agendas.

Even if we take structural constraints into account, in the last decade Brazil has lost a chance to create new answers to the challenges posed by the Anthropocene. During the recent decade, Brazil has had capacity of following other actors' initiatives (for example implementing multilateral environmental agreements) or creating its own, even leading other countries to act. In order to surpass the domestic and international constraints, Brazil - comprising not only of the federal government, but also of state governments, major cities, and economic sectors, like the agribusiness and industries, and the Brazilian society -, could have undertaken actions in order to invest in innovative, imaginative, and creative solutions to its development. The articles indicate that, at least considering the themes covered here, it did not pursue this course of action.

In middle-income countries such as Brazil, the relevance of environmental issues to society is highly determined by economic growth. Since 2015, Brazil has experienced a recession and stagnation that are the product of the macroeconomic unbalances accumulated in the period 2006-2014 (particularly since 2011), but also explained by the country's long history of crony capitalism, public-private corruption, political and economic elites that historically have governed aiming at self-interests and appropriating of the common goods, populism, and a very dysfunctional pension system. The GDP contracted 3.7% in 2015 and 3.6% in 2016, and has grown just 1%

annually since 2017, while forecasts for 2019 are below 1%. Fiscal deficit has been higher than 5% of GDP in the last years, and the public debt has grown from 50% of GDP in 2013 to 80% in 2019. Societal attention to environmental issues has declined dramatically; a good indicator is the fact that the presidential candidate Marina Silva (strongly identified with environmental protection and sustainable development) gained 19% of the votes in the 2010 elections, 21% in 2014, while reaching only 1% in 2018. The situation worsened dramatically with the Bolsonaro administration. The president and his Ministry of Environment are carrying out a project of disruption of the Brazilian Environmental Policy, inscribed in the 1988 Brazilian Republic Constitution. During the first eight months of its mandate, Bolsonaro's government has taken serious measures that directly affect environmental policies, such as:

- a. the extinction of the Secretary of Climate Change and Forestry of the Ministry of Environment (Jan. 2019);
- b. the budget reduction of the Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) (April 2019);
- c. the change in the composition of the National Environmental Council (CONAMA), with the reduction of civil society representation (May 2019);
- d. the commercialization approval of some pesticides already banned in countries of the European Union and in Japan, converging with the relaxation of control of its use (Jun. 2019);
- e. an aggressive discourse in relation to indigenous peoples and their lands (the most preserved ecological reserves in the country) that promotes the increase in illicit activities by land grabbers, petty miners, and criminally organized loggers;
- f. the exoneration of the Director of the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), which is responsible, among other things, for monitoring the Amazonian space by satellite in order to track the deforestation, after INPE's release that April through June had seen increases of 25% compared with the same period last year (August 2019);
- g. the attempted change of destination of the Amazon Fund in order to indemnify land expropriation (May 2019) and the consequent suspension of the contribution to the fund by the donors (Norway and Germany) (August 2019);
- h. the president's suggestion that environmental NGOs were promoting the criminal fires in the Amazon (August 2019). Naturally, this accusation was received with perplexity and indignation by the Brazilian and international public opinion;
- i. the increase of the Amazonian deforestation, according to INPE DETER System in the period June-August 2019 compared with 2018: June 90%, July 278% and August 222%. The DETER System is for immediate alert of deforestation and less precise than the PRODES System - whose final annual data (August 2018-July 2019) will be available in November 2019 – but indicates an extremely negative trend likely fed by the Bolsonaro discourse and policies.

On the opposite direction, the Minister of the Economy, not the Environment, is promoting the only consistent environmental policy – the law of basic sanitation – in Congress. If approved, it will break the monopoly of basic sanitation corporations (owned by state governments) over the expansion of the system and will allow private corporations to offer services to 50% of the population still lacking treated sewage discharge.

The accumulated effects of the measures and discourses of president Bolsonaro in his explicitly anti-environmental agenda are contributing to erode his approval among very influential players that supported him during the electoral campaign of 2018: the agribusiness, the financial markets, and some sectors of the middle class. The Bolsonaro administration's approval ratings went down from 54% in January to 29% in August 2019. The future remains open about how far the Bolsonaro government could advance in eroding the environmental policy, but it seems that it will face significant opposition.

In summary, Brazil is a relevant actor in GEG, but what the articles indicate is that the country has not been as effectively committed as it has proclaimed in the last decade, and most of the time has not contributed according to its capabilities in relation to global environmental governance. Moreover, the scenario for the coming years is not promising, especially considering the menaces concerning the Amazon and the resurgence of an old and irresponsible sovereign rhetoric that denies facts and scientific assessments and conditions economic development in the region to deforestation.

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