

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES, NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND INTERNATIONAL FORCES IN DEALING WITH ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN LATIN AMERICA

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I. THE ARGUMENT

In Latin America as in most parts of the world, environmental and resource management have traditionally been the responsibility of national governments. Crucial environmental issues such as the use of rivers and watersheds remain largely within the regulatory ambit of states. However, nowadays it can be argued that the internationalization of environmental problems and its impacts on national structures are having a profound effect on how such resources are managed, and therefore how national sovereignty is understood and operationalized. In Latin America this internationalization in most cases is the product of four factors: first, there is a new understanding of the international effect of the process of environmental change; second, environmental problems have become more international because the internationalization of the Latin American economy has intensified pressures on national ecological systems; third the internationalization of environmental politics also reflects the effort of international actors such as the World Bank, Greenpeace etc, to reach down into the state to influence domestic policy agendas; fourth the existence of natural ecosystems shared by two or more states, and the transborder externalities produced by the exploitation of such resources have contributed to the internationalization of problems.

The above internationalization of environmental and resource management have important implications for national environmental policies. Therefore, it is argued that domestic structures and international forces currently interact in such a way that they bring about important national policy changes, among them changes in the operationalization of national sovereignty. Two cases from Latin America (they are the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor and the Plata Basin Treaty) are presented here in order to demonstrate how the more environmental matters are regulated by international norms of cooperation, the more permeable state boundaries become for transnational activities. It is argued that international environmental commitments such as the Plata Basin Treaty and the Mesoamerican Corridor are reshaping a crucial element of sovereignty, which is the idea of territoriality. In fact, if territory is a crucial element for state sovereignty, then transnational environmental problems and efforts to address them seem to be reshaping that crucial element. Both the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor and the Plata Basin Treaty appear to support Keohane's (1995) thesis which states that sovereignty, rather than connoting the exercise of supremacy within a given territory, provides the state with a legal grip on an aspect of a transnational process.

II. THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THEIR RELATION TO DOMESTIC STRUCTURES

It has been said that the internationalization of environmental problems in Latin America can be understood as the result of four factors, so I will try to give a brief description of how such processes work in Latin America. In the first case, Latin American countries are directly involved both as source and as recipient in what is considered the international effect of the process of environmental change. Good examples in the issue of climate change are the cases of el Niño and la Niña as well as the often quoted contribution of Amazonian deforestation as the largest source of carbon emission in some of the Amazon countries.

In the second case the internationalization of the economy has intensified pressures on local ecological systems. The ongoing globalization of economic activities has led to an awareness about the challenges it poses to the international environment. Indeed, economic globalization affects environmental protection in two ways. On the one hand there is a direct relationship between the two phenomena: this is the increase of economic activity linked to economic globalization (the increase in the volume of trade and production), directly produces environmental problems such as pollution, waste production, and the depletion of non-renewable natural resources.

On the other hand the relationship is also indirect. Globalization and the subsequent adoption of the neoliberal model have narrowed the range of policy choice available, with clear implications for environmental protection. A good example is structural adjustment policies, which have been imposed in Central America by multilateral institutions, with important effects on the situation of the environment. In fact, in Central America such adjustment programs have promoted an export-oriented model and reduced aggregate demand with implication on the environment.

Two good examples of globalization activities and the internationalization of problems in Latin America are found in the Amazon countries. The first example is provided by the Soybean expansion in the Amazon that has been encouraged due to high international prices. The second example is logging activities in the Amazon. There, Asian logging companies are now moving into the Peruvian and Brazilian Amazon in search of new timber resources after the exhaustion of raw material in countries like Malaysia.

What are the impacts of the globalization process? The globalization and internationalization of problems have exercised a considerable influence on what can be called the re-definition of sovereignty. This is because both the globalization and internationalization of problems have been

major factors in decreasing the autonomy and control over environmental issues by developing countries. In addition, the increased globalization of environmental problems has made even more important for nations to act collectively to address environmental problems.

The third aspect of the internationalization process is the effort by international actors and institutions to reach down into the state to influence domestic policy agendas. This situation has to do with the role that international forces are playing in the formulation and implementation of environmental policies. Indeed, the fact that many environmental problems are considered international in nature has precipitated the participation of several actors that in many cases operate from outside the national border, but that are able to influence the domestic structures. For example in Costa Rica the programs debt-for nature swaps allowed several international NGOs to influence domestic environmental policies.

Finally, in Latin America the transborder environmental activities have been greatly influenced by border disputes in which natural resources have been involved. The complex processes by which some Latin American states were shaped and the long history of armed and political conflicts that produced their present political boundaries took no account of conservation and environmental management considerations. Paradoxically, natural resources have frequently been used by states to draw the lines that separate them. This has typically been the case with rivers, which have historically been used for demarcating frontiers, the case of Costa Rica and Nicaragua and the dispute for the navigation in the San Juan River is a good example (MacArthur proposal, 2000). The transborder issues make necessary the adoption of new regulatory frameworks that in most cases reduce the internal territorial power of the sovereign state, but at the same time guarantee to the state an important role in the management of such shared ecosystem at regional level.

In sum, most Latin American countries have increasingly recognized this environmental interdependency and have responded by developing a wide range of international environmental agreements such as the ones assessed here, they are the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor and the Plata basin agreement. In entering them, these countries have made international commitments, that in both cases have meant that these countries must translate these obligations into action at home.

This section can be concluded by arguing that the links between domestic and international level do not operate in only one way, this is only from the international level to the national one, but they do operate in a reciprocal way. I have argued how the international system influence and to a certain extent shapes the domestic environment. However, in not few cases the domestic structure exercise a powerful influence in

how the state behaves in the international sphere. Here for example, national governments may represent their countries in international environmental negotiations, however, they are unlikely to take positions as they please. Thus, in most cases national governments need majorities in the parliament to ratify international agreements. Furthermore, ratification of international environmental agreements (IEAs) is not an assurance of their successful implementation, since industries, and interest groups often delay and potentially, avoid implementation of international obligations.

Thus, domestic structures are likely to determine both the availability of channels for transnational actors into the political system and the requirement for winning coalitions to change policies. Domestic structures and international institutionalization are likely to interact in determining the ability of transnational actors to bring about policy changes. The more the respective issue-area is regulated by international norms of cooperation, the more permeable should state boundaries become for transnational activities.

Brazil constitutes a good example on the above situation. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Brazil has changed its policy substantially towards the Amazon partly as a response to international pressure. Indeed, as pointed out by Hurrell (1992), the discrimination that Brazil was facing for the Amazon issue was starting to have an impact on Brazil's broader foreign policy goals, but also reflected new political demands for environmental protection expressed at the domestic level since the return of the country to democracy in 1984. With the return to democracy, the ecological movement established itself as a permanent political actor and environmental issues became a locus for the exercise of citizen rights. The new Constitution in 1988 dedicates a whole chapter to environment, creating specific laws for public action in the case of environmental damage. It also declares the Amazon forest as part of the national heritage.

III. TRANSBORDER ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

Considering that the two case studies presented here are basically related to transborder environmental issues I will discuss in some detail the implications of the management of transborder natural resources on the notion of national sovereignty. The starting point is that transboundary problems often contain the seed for both conflict and cooperation, at the same time such problems can be perceived as threatening the well-being, the security, and even the sovereignty of a nation.

Within the field of international environmental politics, sovereignty, which is taken to denote the state's exclusive authority within its territorial boundaries, is often assumed to be "eroded" by efforts to address transboundary environmental

problems. At a general level sovereignty can be understood at two levels. Internal sovereignty which implies the supreme control of an identifiable geographical space by the state. Internationally, formal sovereignty can be defined as Hans J. Morgenthau did, as "the supreme legal authority of the nation to give and enforce the law within a certain territory and, in consequence, independence from the authority of any other nation and equality within it international law. This doctrine is traditionally seen as an outcome of the Peace of Westphalia.

The relationships between national-international environmental policies and national sovereignty have been understood from two different perspectives. The most well-known thesis argues that since sovereignty, the constitutive principle of the nation-state system, is premised upon territorial exclusivity, it is assumed that transboundary environmental problems necessarily undermine state sovereignty. While states may claim sovereignty over the resources and activities within their territories, they have come under mounting pressure to manage their resources according to international norms. As Litfin (1998) argues the state is unlikely to be placed on the endangered species list anytime soon; yet sovereignty nonetheless seems to be undergoing a transformation in response to a host of functional problems and interdependencies, including ecological ones. In sum, national sovereignty, or at least the claiming of it, is therefore interpreted as a barrier to global environmental cooperation and the achievement of the kinds of agreements that are required to address environmental degradation successfully.

However, other thesis hold that sovereignty does confer on states under conditions of complex interdependence is legal authority that can either be exercised to the detriment of other state's interests or be bargained away in return for influence over others' policies and therefore obtain greater gains from exchange. This is Keohane (1995) thesis which argues that rather than connoting the exercise of supremacy within a given territory, sovereignty provides the state with a legal grip on an aspect of a transnational process, whether involving multinational investment, or the world's ecology. Thus, sovereignty is less a territorially defined barrier than a bargaining resources for a politic characterized by complex transnational networks (Keohane, 1995: pp. 176-177).

In summary, as argue by Litfin (1989) the relationship is not unidirectional, on one hand the scope of state autonomy may be narrowed by pressures from above and below, as the erosion-of-sovereignty thesis claim, even as the problem-solving capacity of states increased. However, on the other hand the opposite can be argued. This is that the state's control and authority can be enhanced at home, even as its autonomy to act in the global common is constrained. Thus, according to liberal institutionalists, states cooperate to cope with environmental problems by creating new international regimes

and organizations. These new institutions may decrease state's autonomy of action, but they always reinforce their legal sovereignty and very often enhance their problem-solving capacity as well.

IV. INTERNATIONAL FORCES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON NATIONAL POLITICS AND NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

This section attempts to present briefly how behaviors of the main international forces represented by actors can influence the formulation and implementation of national environmental policies as well as the notion of national sovereignty.

The state. The state as an actor provides the first clear link between national environmental policies and international forces. A state's definition of interest and choice of role on global environmental issues turn largely on domestic economic and political interest and domestic ideological currents. Whether a state actor opposes, supports, or leads an issue depends first on the relative strength and influence of powerful economic and bureaucratic forces and of domestic environmental constituencies (Porter & Brown, 1996: p. 34). For instance as the case of Costa Rica shows, the existence of a strong environmental movement can be a decisive factor in a state's definition of its interest on one given issue.

A second group of variables related to the state that shapes the definition of national interest in the international politics of the environment is the cost and risk that the environmental threat poses to a country as well as the costs and opportunities associated with a proposed regime or agreement. Exceptional vulnerabilities to the consequences of environmental problems have driven countries to support or even take the lead on strong global action (Porter & Brown, 1996: p. 37). As Porter & Brown (1996) point out a state's definition of its interest is sometimes influenced as well by anticipated benefits or costs to the state's international relations. A state may hope to gain international prestige by assuming a lead role. Or it may decide against a veto role in order to avoid international opprobrium or damage to its relations with other countries for whom the issue is of significant greater concern.

International organizations. A second type of international force with great influence on national environmental policies is International Organization. They can influence in the following ways: As the case of the World Bank has demonstrated in Latin America, they provide financing for development projects, as well as advice and technical assistance that help to shape the country's development strategy. Second, as the Mesoamerican biological corridor shows they undertake research aimed at persuading state officials to adopt certain policies.

Even though state and international organizations play a core role, one of the hallmarks of the global politics of the environment has been the growth in number, scope and activity of a range of non-state actors with great influence on the formulation, implementation and to a certain extent compliance of national environmental policies.

In the issue-area of the environment, non-governmental organizations are key players. The growth in the number and influence of non-governmental organizations have been one of the notable features of international and global environmental politics since the Stockholm conference in 1972. Most environmental NGOs are local or national organizations, there are few truly international. One of the hallmarks of contemporary NGO activity is the extent of coalition activity not just within the country but at a transnational level. These coalitions help to strengthen national grassroots movements. Princen (1994) suggests that the potential influence of NGOs is strengthened because of their ability to position themselves within both top-down and bottom-up approaches to international environmental policy, linking the global and the local.

Developing-country NGOs often form national-level coalitions, such as the Brazilian NGO Forum, which had over 1,000 organizations affiliated at the moment of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Another good example is that indigenous groups in the Amazon have started to organize national-level coalition in the Amazon countries, which in turn have formed COICA to lobby for a voice in all Amazon development projects that affect them (Porter & Brown, 1996: p. 55).

The scientific community could be considered as an international force that has become increasingly important to environmental politics as the climate change issue has demonstrated. The influence is basically due to the fact that science and scientists have helped to mobilize debate and action by governments on environmental problems. On many environmental issues scientific expertise is necessary to assist policy-makers in the elaboration of environmental agreements. Haas (1997) has pointed to the importance in environmental politics of scientist as epistemic communities. This transnational networks of knowledge based communities that are both politically empowered through their claims to exercise authorities knowledge and motivated by shared causal and principled beliefs. Epistemic communities are most crucial in the initial stages of negotiation when agendas are being established, which has been the case in Central America where the environmental competitiveness discourse have been shaped by two groups of scientists working together. This is the Program on Sustainable Development for Central American Competitiveness at the Instituto Centroamericano de Administración de Empresas (INCAE) and the Center for International Development of the Harvard University.

Finally, the importance of international corporations as an international force has to be considered. In fact, international corporations have been and continue to be a major direct and indirect cause of environmental decline both through their substantial control and decisions over resource use, and through their control over global wealth. Hence their influential role in the world economy. The relationship between this international force and national environmental policies can be perceived in the fact that multinational corporations have lobbied domestically to influence governments' negotiating positions and have often had representatives on national delegations.

V. LATIN AMERICAN REGIONS AND THE NATIONAL-INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF THE ENVIRONMENT: TWO CASE STUDIES

A region in ecological terms normally includes several states nation as defined by a common sea, watershed, forest, etc. Therefore, nowadays it is accepted that the governance of these regional resources require the participation of those who use it. Here I will use the Plata River basin and the Mesoamerican Corridor as regional examples that allow to discuss some of the implications of what has been pointed out.

The peace of Westphalia in 1648 marked an important chapter in world history; it formally institutionalized the notion of sovereignty over territory. In the modern-day context, numerous bilateral and multilateral treaties have been signed regarding transborder environmental problems such as pollution. The 1987 Montreal Protocol for the protection of the Ozone Layer is a successful example of a multilateral treaty involving transboundary air pollution. However, transborder cooperation regarding terrestrial resources has always been much complicated, primarily due to issues related to sovereignty. That is why the cases of the Mesoamerican biological Corridor and the Plata basin are intriguing examples.

In Latin America as pointed out by Schrijver (1993) the notion of permanent sovereignty over natural resources has developed as a new principle of international economic law that has its roots in two main concerns of the United Nations: 1) economic development of underdeveloped countries and 2) self-determination of people and human-rights. In the 1950s and 1960s the United Nations General Assembly at the initiative of the Latin American countries asserted that developing nations should be able to dispose freely of their natural resources. A number of resolution to this effect were passed dealing with sovereignty, and among them resolution No. 1803 from December 14th, 1962 on permanent sovereignty over natural resources.

5.1 The internationalization of the protected areas in Central America: The Mesoamerican Biological Corridor

The background

In 1989 the Central American governments created the Central American Commission on Environment and Development, designed initially to lead the preparation of a unified regional presentation for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In August 1994 the Central American presidents, gathered at Guácimo in Costa Rica, issued a joint declaration calling for the creation of an "Alliance for Sustainable Development," as a "comprehensive Central American initiative that addresses political, economic, social, and environmental issues" which they hoped would become a model for other regions.

On October 12, 1994, the region's presidents (and a representative of Belize's Prime Minister) met in Nicaragua to sign the fundamental document of the Alliance for Sustainable Development (ALIDES). Former U.S vice President Al Gore witnessed the signing and promised wide-ranging US support for the effort. In December 1994 the ALIDES became the focal point for a public agreement between the US and the Central American governments. The Agreement pledged the United States to partnership with Central America in the pursuit of sustainable development in the region.

Then, the question is what do the Central American countries gain from signing the ALIDES? The signing of the agreement, has created a modest amount of international political space for the development of social and economic policy alternatives that may be other than those required by stabilization and adjustment packages, just as the peace agreements of 1987 created domestic political space for closing down the contra camps in Honduras and Costa Rica, over the objections of the US administration at that time. Thus, ALIDES has to be understood in light of the internationalization of environmental problems, basically related to natural resources shared by several states and the negative externalities originated by their exploitation. Moreover, ALIDES is seen as providing potential bases for strengthening environmental protection, which international support over the continued objections of the domestic business sector. This is particularly relevant in term of the discussion of the role of the domestic structure.

One of the most important outcomes of ALIDES is the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. The Corridor was endorsed by all seven Central American presidents at a 1997 Summit.

As conceived, the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor will stretch from the southeast of Mexico along the Atlantic coast of Belize and Guatemala. It will continue down the

Atlantic Coast of the isthmus and spread into the interiors of Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador. The Corridor will wind down the Atlantic coast of Panama and finish (for now) in the Choco region of Panama and Colombia. Despite its name, the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor is not just a conservation project.

The important element of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor is that it is composed of several national parks located most of them in border areas linking these country-level efforts together. In fact, the construction of such Corridor means the integration of such areas as one unit. In this case, the identifiable ecosystem cuts across the boundary of all the Central American states, then the issue is whether either party is willing to engage in joint or compatible management. The answer has been already positive, however the most important thing that seems to remain is whether the agreed regime will limit sovereignty.

ALIDES and the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor show the interplay between international forces and national environmental policies. In the initial stage, the institutional framework of ALIDES has been the main conditioning factor of success for this project, by creating an adequate space to strengthen the relationships of cooperation between national and international forces. Besides the national commitments to the Corridor, there are also regional actors involved in the implementation. In fact, a core role is played by Central American Environmental Commission, but more important the Corridor has been benefited by the great world interest in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Central America, which has permitted access to resources from the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), and the U.S.AID agency. Finally, part of the recommendation presented by the national coordinators with respect to the protected areas and biological corridors, correspond to the ideas elaborated by the Wildlife Conservation Society, which shows the great influence of the so-called transnational forces into national structures.

5.2 La Plata basin: bridging domestic and regional environmental policy-making

Disputes over shared water resources have contributed to several conflicts in the past and may catalyze others in the near future. Mechanisms are needed to prevent and mediate disputes, foster cooperation in the sustainable management of the resources of river basins, and to resolve transboundary resources issues.

In this context, cooperation taking place between riparian states of the Plata basin constitutes a good example. The Plata River basin comprises the Parana-Paraguay Rivers system and the Uruguay River system; it is shared by Argentina,

Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay and is the second largest waterway in South America and the fifth of the world.

The Plata basin is an important economic artery in the region. Potential impacts arising in the Plata basin extend throughout the Plata System from the Andes to the coastal zone, and these impacts affect many other developmental activities throughout the Mercosur and Plata Systems, including impacts on the proposed Paraguay-Parana Waterway and the Plata estuary. Transborder problems such as erosion is linked to land degradation connected to excessive soil losses from the slopes of the Andes that lead to sedimentation and loss of beneficial uses downstream.

It is important to say that about 70% of the total GNP of the five countries combined is produced within the basin, which is also inhabited by about 50% of their combined population. Some of the main development having environmental impacts that influence the basin have been the following: (i) development of many hydro-power reservoir in the upper Paraná river, in Brazil; (ii) deforestation in the Paraná, Uruguay and Paraguay basin; (iii) introduction of intensive agricultural practice after 1970; (iv) and urban development, which changed the flood regimes. Due to the importance of the basin for South American countries a treaty known as the Plata Basin was signed in Brasilia in 1969, which served as the main reference for the signing of the ambitious Parana-Paraguay Waterway Project in 1992.

What can be learnt from the Plata Basin Treaty and the Paraná-Paraguay Waterway project? The Plata basin shows the important implications of regional transboundary natural resources agreements both for the national development of the countries involved as well as for the operationalization of the principle of sovereignty. It should be remembered that the Plata dams have modified rivers and environmental conditions both upstream and downstream. The main areas with hydropower potential are on the upper Paraná river and on the River Uruguay. Today some hydropower plants are planned. In the international reach, Corpus is the dam which remains to be built by Argentina and Paraguay, which means that parts of the Brazilian territory will be flooded. A good example to see the regional transboundary dimension is the Bermejo River. This river is shared by Argentina and Bolivia, and is a regionally important part of the Plata Basin. Erosion and sedimentation are serious issues: it has been estimated recently that the Bermejo Basin produces about 80% of sediments in the Plata River, which makes the management of the basin a clearly transboundary issue.

Secondly, the assessing of the Plata Basin Treaty and the Paraguay-Paraná Waterway agreement introduce the discussion on the limitation of national sovereignty. It is interesting to point out the fact that the notion of sovereignty is not introduced in the text. In fact, the word sovereignty is not mentioned at all. Instead, the notion of community of interests

is stated and developed in the treaty. The above, in a way, could be the understanding of the actors that sovereignty is less a territorially defined barrier than bargaining resources for a politics characterized by complex transnational networks (Keohane, 1995).

Thirdly, of great relevance in the Plata waterway agreement is its article 7, which states that the five countries should harmonize the national legislation in order to create conditions of equity. This is an example of how international commitments are translated into actions at home that modify domestic structures.

Finally, it is important to understand that the waterway is linked to the internationalization of the economy. As it was stated in the introduction environmental problems have become more international because the internationalization of the economy has intensified pressures on local ecological systems. This is exemplified in the fact that the upper Paraná River, the national matter of concern is the change of land use from natural forest to arable cropping system based on soybean production. This change is based on the demand of the international market for soybean, and projects such as the waterway are thought to increase the competitiveness of such agricultural good.

In short, The Plata Basin Treaty seems to support Douglas Johnston reports stating that international river law has developed away from the principle of unrestricted territorial sovereignty to the emerging principle of limited territorial sovereignty. In this case, ownership and control have been limited in order to foster trade and regional integration.

VI. FINAL REMARKS

A summary of my argument will start by asking first: What could these governments accomplish through joint action at a regional level that they could not accomplish by acting unilaterally or in global concert? At a general level it is clear that they can increase the governance of transboundary regional resources such as the Plata basin and the Central American coral reef. Without effective regional governance, these regional resources can generate a "prisoner's dilemma" paradox, in which "individual actors" rational strategies lead to regional irrational outcomes.

Second the case studies show that the state remains a powerful actor in international politics and continues to play a central role in the establishment and enforcement of domestic environmental laws and international environmental agreements. Thus, one can subscribe to the proposition that national governments are extremely significant in international relations and still claim that transnational actors crucially affect state interest, policies, and inter-state relations (Risse-Kappen, 1995: p. 15).

As a third concluding remark the following question is asked: What are the main effects of the linkages between national environmental policies and international forces in Latin America? Several of the implications have already been mentioned, in order to avoid repeating them I will concentrate on some specific elements: First, such linkages between national environmental policies and international forces in the cases studies are making the Latin American states richer in shared knowledge and more aware of the need for cooperation in environmental protection efforts. Second, through these linkages important economic resources can be transferred from the international to the domestic level as the Mesoamerican corridor shows. These international-national linkages can influence the cost-benefits analyses by introducing significant gains among actors, altering actors' interests or perceptions, which is what has happened in Central America with the creation of the Ruta Maya, a regional tourism project that attempts to use regional attractions as a way to maximize economic profits among participants. Fourth, such links have also altered more fundamental elements of states through the creation of new institutions such as ALIDES and the Comité Intergubernamental Coordinador which is the permanent institution of the Plata Basin Treaty. Fifth, these interactions have also produced the support of traditionally weak societal groups such as the Misquitos Indians in Central America. Sixth, these links have been a channel for Central American states to bring their demands and concerns to the international negotiating table. As the case of ALIDES has illustrated, Central American countries have effectively introduced their concerns about socio-economic development into broader environmental policy debates.

Finally, what about the sovereignty discussion? The situation described in Central America and South America demonstrate the need to accommodate the new requirements for management and conservation of shared natural resources and border ecosystems within a new framework. These new frameworks such as the Plata Basin Treaty and the Mesoamerican Corridor in most cases reduce the internal territorial power of the sovereign state, but at the same time guarantees for the state an important role in the management of shared ecosystem at regional level. This means that ecological interdependencies and state sovereignty do not necessarily stand in opposition to one another. As I have shown in the case of the Plata Basin Treaty, its negotiation and implementation is largely in the hands of five South American States.

To conclude, as we all know, national boundaries do not correspond to natural ones. Historically, the solutions offered to this problem have been either conflict or trade, clearly Latin American has moved from the first option to the second one.

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