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# South–South Transnational Advocacy: Mobilizing Against Brazilian Dams in the Peruvian Amazon

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## Abstract

South–South transnational advocacy networks (SSTANs) targeting emerging states, Southern companies, and their supporting institutions warrant nuanced distinctions from traditional transnational advocacy networks that are heavily reliant on Northern actors and targets, particularly in terms of the strategies and arguments they employ. This article analyzes the dynamics of SSTANs through the case of an environmental campaign against Brazilian hydropower projects proposed in the Peruvian Amazon. It demonstrates how Southern actors are mobilizing against new and emerging patterns of South–South cooperation, which, despite occurring on unfamiliar institutional terrain, reproduces familiar asymmetrical power relations and socioenvironmental burdens.

In January 2010, Ruth Buendía Mestoquiari, director of the Asháninka Organization of the Ene River (CARE) from the Peruvian Amazon, visited Washington, DC, to present a report to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights regarding the socioenvironmental impacts of hydroelectric dams on indigenous communities in the Amazon basin. Summarizing her people's position, she stated, "For us the river does not generate money, the river gives us food, [it] gives us life. The dam builders and oil, mining, and lumber companies want our resources, but we want development in concert with our culture. Dams are not a

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part of our development” (International Rivers Network 2011, 3). Buendía delivered her speech at a time when Peru’s Amazonian communities were increasingly facing encroachments by extractive projects, which were being granted concession rights on traditional territories by the Peruvian state without prior consultation.

Earlier that year, the Brazilian and Peruvian governments had signed a treaty authorizing the construction of a dam network stretching from the foothills of the Peruvian Andes to the Amazon basin. This complex would consist of five projects—the Inambari, Pakitzapango, Tambo 40, Tambo 60, and Mainique dams—and produce upwards of 6,500 megawatts of electricity, most of which would be exported to Brazil via the Madre de Dios–Acre border. However, several Asháninka communities who lived within the Pakitzapango and Tambo 40 concession areas would be displaced from their lands to construct the dams, while those downstream feared their livelihoods would be impacted by the projects.<sup>1</sup> In response, Buendía mobilized community members, feeding into a larger transnational campaign opposed to Brazilian hydroelectric development in Peru. Reacting to the campaign’s pressure, Peru’s Ministry of Energy and Mines (MINEM) canceled the Pakitzapango concession in December 2010. The following year, the main shareholder in Tambo 40, Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht, withdrew before construction could commence. And on May 23, 2014, the Foreign Relations Committee of Peru’s Congress struck down a draft resolution required to pass the bilateral energy treaty into law, imperiling the three remaining projects. For her efforts, Buendía received the International Goldman Environmental Prize.<sup>2</sup>

While the blunt end of this socioenvironmental campaign transpired in Peru, this is nevertheless a case of a South–South transnational advocacy network (SSTAN): the Amazonian Hydroelectric Collective (CAH). It demonstrates the agency of historically marginalized communities in transnational environmental governance, who are mobilizing against the backdrop of growing global demand for raw commodities and renewable energy and within a geopolitical milieu in which emerging economies are rewriting the territorial and environmental politics of the Amazon. We analyze the structure and strategies of this SSTAN, whose anti-dam campaign targeted two resource-dependent states, transnational enterprises, and a national development bank.

By proceeding inductively, we aim to supplement existing frameworks and add more precision to encompass new cases of transnational environmental advocacy in the global South considering the rise of the BRICS. In recent decades, these economies have intensified their investment activities abroad, particularly

1. The Asháninka’s lands straddle the Peru–Brazil border. In Brazil, most live within the westernmost state of Acre; in Peru, the population is spread across the regions of Junín, Pasco, Huánuco, and Ucayali, with many living along the basins of the rivers Urubamba, Ene, Tambo, Alto Perene, Pachitea, Pichis, and Alto Ucayali.
2. The Goldman Environmental Prize is awarded annually to grassroots environmental activists for their work in protecting the natural environmental and vulnerable populations from destructive activities, often at great risk to their personal safety.

in the primary sectors of their Southern neighbors. But this is creating new challenges for socioenvironmental campaigns, as the BRICS circumvent multilateral institutions and organizations by utilizing their own national development banks and private enterprises to finance and construct controversial mega-projects. These agents of South–South development cannot easily be leveraged by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multilateral organizations, or developed country governments. Still, this has not prevented some campaigns from pushing against strategic national interests, as transnational environmental advocacy adapts to the accompanying opportunity structures.

Accordingly, we argue CAH’s anti-Brazilian hydroelectric campaign in Peru can provide fruitful insights into the ways environmental advocacy in the South is responding to the rising influence of the BRICS. While this campaign was aided by some favorable exogenous factors, the network was instrumental in pressuring targets transnationally and “from below” to abandon projects on Peruvian territory. Rather than strategizing around a boomerang pattern, CAH hedged its bets by executing a triple-target strategy, simultaneously pointing its sights at the Peruvian and Brazilian governments, Brazilian transnational enterprises, and Brazil’s national development bank.

### **South–South Transnational Advocacy: Shifting Opportunity Structures**

A well-established literature on transnational advocacy networks (TANs) has demonstrated the dynamic and multifaceted nature of international activism.<sup>3</sup> TANs maneuver within political opportunity structures,<sup>4</sup> employ multiple framing strategies (Snow 2007; Tarrow 2005), and help activists to shift scales (Haarstad and Fløysand 2007; Tarrow and McAdam 2005). Several campaigns have influenced the policies of national governments (Keck and Sikkink 1998), international financial institutions (Park 2005), and the private sector (Macleod and Park 2011; McAteer and Pulver 2009) through the “boomerang” pattern.<sup>5</sup>

3. TANs are organizational forms that “plead the causes of others or defend a cause or proposition” through principled campaigns. They are characterized by “voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange,” with “fluid and open relations occurring among committed and knowledgeable actors working in specialized issue areas” (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 8).
4. Political opportunity structures are factors both exogenous and endogenous to social movements that either enhance or inhibit the prospects for mobilization. They may consist of external factors, such as international and domestic institutions, constellations of power, and historical precedents, and internal ones, including material resources and social capital. While opportunity structures may not have deterministic effects on the success or failure of a campaign, they nevertheless shape the strategies and tactics adopted by actors (Tarrow 2011; Tilly and Tarrow 2015).
5. Unable to directly influence the policies of national governments “from below,” domestic civil society actors may enlist the help of international NGOs to pressure targets indirectly from “outside” and “above,” typically via multilateral fora (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 12–13, 24). A “shareholder boomerang” has also been observed in campaigns targeting the local subsidiaries of transnational corporations. Local groups may build alliances with international NGOs, who use their access to pressure institutional investors and executives in the foreign headquarters of the parent company (McAteer and Pulver 2009).

This pattern has been observed, notably, in human rights campaigns but also in indigenous rights and environmental campaigns (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 12).

However, many geopolitical and technological changes have occurred since the seminal TAN conceptual framework was developed, requiring nuanced supplementation when applying it to contemporary cases. For one, cross-border investment flows in the primary sectors are no longer predominantly North–South, nor do they occur within the environmental controls of multilateral institutions and organizations. Since the mid-2000s, these flows have become increasingly South–South and structured around the institutional infrastructure and agents of the BRICS. At the same time, many civil society actors in the global South no longer confront the same dearth of material resources that once compelled them to enlist Northern intermediaries. For instance, communications technologies (e.g., internet, cell phones, social media) have become more accessible to even some of the most remote and marginalized of communities, alleviating some of the historical dependencies on international NGOs for information exchange and exposure. Combined, these developments suggest that advocacy campaigns triggered by South–South development initiatives are likely to confront novel opportunity structures compared to seminal North–South cases (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

Importantly, contemporary case instances also entail apt conditions for analyzing Southern agency within the transnational advocacy space—a subject that has not been especially visible within the study of global environmental politics.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, we describe the South–South transnational advocacy network (SSTAN). SSTANs are subcategories of TANs whose information, symbolic, leverage, and accountability politics derive primarily from the cross-border activities and interactions of Southern actors, including grassroots social movements, research and advocacy organizations, and local and national NGOs. Our focus on Southern actors is not to suggest that international NGOs do not operate within advocacy campaigns responding to South–South investment flows and development initiatives. Northern allies are indeed likely to remain present, providing some finance to support day-to-day activities, and to help facilitate international media exposure. But they do not lead or act as the drivers or gatekeepers of campaigns – doing so can be incredibly risky for local activists as states hosting extractive investments have increasingly accused them of operating as “agents of foreign influence” to delegitimize their grievances, and to justify harsh repression and the severing of funding ties (Matejova et al. 2018). Rather, the locus of agency in areas such as strategy selection, information exchange, and day-to-day campaigning revolves around these networks’ Southern nodes, with mobilizations from “below” providing the crux of campaign pressure.

SSTANs emerge from the opportunity structures encircling exclusively South–South modes of market and/or state-based interactions, which do not

6. Notable exceptions include Martin (2011) and Kauffman and Martin (2014).

easily facilitate boomerang patterns of advocacy. Such patterns critically depend upon international NGOs and/or developed country governments to plead on behalf of aggrieved groups from outside and above. However, the bilateral character of regional South–South infrastructure projects precludes networks from activating traditional global institutions and organizations to bring pressure to bear on their targets. Importantly, the BRICS’ use of national financial institutions and corporations domiciled within these states has prohibited activists from leveraging global socioenvironmental standards against the agents of South–South development projects. For instance, multilateral development banks (e.g., World Bank) can act as crucial levers for socioenvironmental campaigners in the South (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Park 2005), as their internal organizational structure enables activists to influence their lending mandates (Sierra and Hochstetler 2017), which can be used to ensure that actors adhere to dominant global standards, such as prior consultation. This capacity to leverage targets indirectly from outside and above rests fundamentally on the structural power multilateral lenders exert over the recipients of development finance. Moreover, as visible international fora ostensibly committed to sustainable development, these banks can more easily be “named and shamed” if the projects they finance violate global standards.

However, a notable feature of South–South development cooperation involving the BRICS has been their use of “globalized” national development banks to supply finance for megaprojects abroad. These banks uphold markedly lower socioenvironmental standards than their multilateral counterparts (Sierra and Hochstetler 2017). Their primary loan conditionality is that recipients source the goods and services for proposed projects from lending country operators. Unlike multilateral lenders, socioenvironmental safeguards are not a key component of the loans. Instead, projects financed by these banks are governed by the social and environmental regulations of host countries, which may vary in their robustness and degree of enforcement.

In sum, the institutional and organizational physiology of exclusively South–South modes of development suggests a short-circuiting of the boomerang pattern of transnational advocacy. One implication of this is a reduction in the centrality of international NGOs to those campaigns targeting the BRICS. Thus the conceptual distinction between TAN and SSTAN is a relevant one to make when analyzing instances of environmental advocacy triggered by South–South development initiatives. Contextualized case study analysis can help uncover the conditions under which they are likely to succeed.

## **Method**

To parse the factors responsible for SSTAN efficacy, we employ a deviant case selection strategy (Gerring 2007). All things equal, we would expect CAH’s anti-dam campaign to have been unsuccessful in halting the two hydroelectric projects planned on Asháninka lands, much less forcing Peru’s congress to strike down the bilateral energy treaty with Brazil. First, environmental opposition

to megaprojects in Peru confronts existential and institutional barriers to success. For one, the state has maintained a long-standing extractivist economic development model, which has seen national authorities regularly criminalize protest and employ racist rhetoric to discredit locals, especially indigenous groups (Perez 2007). What is more, the relationships of power structuring the environmental governance of megaprojects have privileged investors' interests. Notably, MINEM, the very agency responsible for promoting Peru's resource endowments to the world, exercises final authority over the review of environmental impact assessments for hydroelectric projects, not the Ministry of Environment, as a horizontal system of environmental regulation would necessitate. Moreover, the General Directorate of Environmental Affairs—the office within MINEM responsible for reviewing impact assessments—has been chronically underresourced, leading many environmental impact assessments to be approved without adequate review.<sup>7</sup>

Second, during the mandate of former president “Lula” da Silva (2003–2010), and the first two years of the presidency of his successor, Dilma Rousseff (2011–2012), Brazil would have been an unlikely target of grassroots opposition to South–South development initiatives in Latin America. Under their leadership, socioeconomic development was a cornerstone of Brazil's international policy agenda; through South–South cooperation, projects were guided by an ethos of “solidarity” and a policy of regional integration. Their rhetoric was for poverty and inequality reduction and for growth with inclusion (Dauvergne and Farias 2012; Inoue and Costa Vaz 2012). Compared to Northern or Chinese investors, Brazil could present itself as a relatively benign alternative. Moreover, as Latin American neighbors, these two countries could draw upon shared interests, identities, and histories. Accordingly, Brazilian entities operating in Peru would be least likely to confront the political “liability of foreignness,” as they would be viewed with higher levels of trust (Zaheer 1995).

When considered with the challenges of collective action,<sup>8</sup> these factors should have undermined CAH's campaign. However, it not only terminated the Pakitzapango and Tambo 40 dams but forced the congress to reject the bilateral energy treaty.

Data for this case were collected by the first and second authors through fieldwork trips to Peru and Brazil between 2012 and 2016. They consisted of semistructured Spanish- and Portuguese-language interviews with key informants and decision makers; content analysis; and participant observation.

## Background

Since 2009, Brazil has increasingly turned to its neighbors to enhance energy security. The competing pressures of rising national demand and domestic

7. Second author's interview with former deputy minister of the environment, Lima, Peru, May 2014.

8. Mobilizations against megaprojects in Peru often remain isolated and fragmented, rarely influencing national policies (Paredes 2016).

opposition to hydroelectric projects have forced authorities to shift their gaze abroad. Accordingly, Brazil began to negotiate with Peru in 2006 to cooperate on energy production. These negotiations culminated on June 16, 2010, with the signing of an accord by the then governments of Lula (Brazil) and Alan García (Peru). The treaty articulated official support for bilateral energy cooperation and laid the basic investment groundwork for the infrastructure needed to meet the production goal of seventy-two hundred megawatts (Ministerio de Energía y Minas 2010). Financial capital for the required infrastructure would be provided by Brazil's Economic and Social Development Bank (BNDES),<sup>9</sup> which would provide loans to Brazil's "national champion" enterprises, such as the construction firms Odebrecht, Construtora OAS, and Andrade Gutierrez; the electrical utility providers Eletrobrás and Furnas; and the engineering firm Engevix (Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social 2004; Castro et al. 2011). Several of these firms would operate as a consortium when conducting feasibility studies.

Both Peruvian and Brazilian civil societies had scant opportunities to influence the treaty negotiations, despite Brazilian companies having direct access to decision makers.<sup>10</sup> Authorities also disclosed minimal information to the public, with most of the information that was available lauding the treaty's benefits (Bermann et al. 2016; Dourojeanni et al. 2009; Rodrigues et al. 2011). However, few details were disclosed about how many projects would be required to meet the treaty's energy production goal, much less their proposed locations. These details would only emerge because of the CAH campaign (see Figure 1).

The proposed projects were also a matter of strategic value to Brazil, which planned to dam the Inambari, Urubamba, Junín, Ene, and Tambo rivers, which feed into Brazil's Madeira River in the heart of the Amazon basin. Brazil has long sought to exert greater control over Madeira's upstream flows, as the river supplies energy to the Santo Antonio and Jirau hydropower plants in the state of Rondônia. However, they entailed significant risks for many vulnerable communities on the Peruvian side of the border, with concession rights being granted by MINEM without the state consulting locals first (*Mundo* 2010). Accordingly, for many on the Peruvian side, mobilizing against the treaty and its proposed projects was an existential necessity.

## Characteristics of the Network

### *Nodes*

The origins of CAH can be traced to an alliance between two grassroots groups—CARE and the *rondas campesinas*—and several NGOs based in the

9. Between 2004 and 2015, BNDES loans doubled as it stepped in to fund many socially and environmentally risky projects rejected by the World Bank. Sierra and Hochstetler (2017) argue that BNDES has driven a "race to the bottom."
10. First author's interviews with MINEM and NGO representatives, Peru and Brazil, 2012–2014.





**Figure 1**  
Location of Dams Proposed by Treaty.

Source: First author's adapted map from CAH documents.

Peruvian capital, Lima. CARE is a federation of seventeen Asháninka communities living in thirty-three settlements from the region of Junín. Formed in the early 1990s to protect against Shining Path guerrillas during Peru's civil conflict, the organization has since transformed to advocate for indigenous self-determination (International Rivers Network 2011, 3). Like CARE, the *ronidas campesinas* were also formed during Peru's internal conflict as autonomous self-defense groups. However, they enjoy formal legal protections under the state and have been granted authority to implement customary law. While historically most active in the Andean highlands, they have also been a potent mobilizing force among peasant farmers, *cocaleros*, and artisanal

miners in the jungle region of Madre de Dios—the proposed transit point for energy exportation to Brazil.

Both grassroots actors had preexisting relationships with three Lima-based NGOs that had long maintained ties to local assemblies in Peru's highland and Amazon regions: Rural Education Services (SER), the Peru Solidarity Forum, and the Peruvian Foundation for the Conservation of Nature (ProNaturaleza). These NGOs acted as conduits linking local actors from Junín and Madre de Dios to two national environmental organizations advocating for Amazonian sustainability at the national and international levels: Rights, Environment and Natural Resources (DAR) and the Peruvian Society for Environmental Rights (SPDA). As the network formed, DAR and SPDA would coordinate CAH's in-country activities but, importantly, would help this nascent conglomeration of anti-dam interests to expand transnationally.<sup>11</sup> Through their contacts, DAR and SPDA integrated Brazilian organizations with expertise in that country's hydroelectric sector. Capitalizing on Ruth Buendía Mestoquiari's rising global profile as an anti-dam activist, these Lima-based NGOs enlisted the support of the Brasilia-based arm of the International Rivers Network (IRN), an organization that had long advocated on behalf of dam-affected peoples and, as a result, had a wealth of knowledge on the country's hydroelectric development strategy. With IRN acting as a Brazilian gatekeeper, CAH could enlist the support and resources of other prominent environmental NGOs, including the Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA), the Life Centre Institute (ICV), and Greenpeace Brazil.

Brazilian NGOs assisted grassroots efforts in Peru, not only expressing ideological support for the struggle but, importantly, supplying their allies across the border with finances and intelligence for the campaign. For example, through Brazilian NGOs, grassroots actors involved in opposition to the controversial Belo Monte and São Luis do Tapajós projects in the Brazilian state of Pará expressed solidarity with CAH. Moreover, the Movement of People Affected by Dams provided information on useful pressure tactics through Via Campesina, which had linkages to the rondas in Madre de Dios.<sup>12</sup> The CASA Socio-Environmental Fund helped cover the costs required to hire legal experts for CARE in Peru, such as the Amazon Centre of Anthropology and Practical Application (CAAP) and the Ecumenical Foundation for Development and Peace (FEDEPAZ).<sup>13</sup> Importantly, Brazilian NGOs operated as the network's intelligence arm. At the time of the treaty negotiations (2006–2009), Brazilian environmental NGOs were already challenging their government's national energy plan as well as its plans to expand hydroelectric investment both at home and abroad. Through meetings with members of the Foreign Ministry, the

11. Within CAH, decision-making authority rotated regularly between DAR and SPDA.

12. First author's interviews with representatives of ISA and the Socio-Economic Studies Institute, Manaus, Brazil, February 2013.

13. Financial support for the campaign was also provided by Northern foundations, such as the Rainforest Foundation UK and the Mott, Moore, and Bluemoon foundations, which channeled funds through SPDA, DAR, SER, and ProNaturaleza.

Ministry of Mining and Energy, and the Human Rights Commission of Congress, as well as several of the companies that would be contracted to construct the projects, they gained access to technical information about the treaty and the locations of its proposed projects that, at the time the treaty was signed, was unavailable to grassroots actors in Peru. Through their Lima-based contacts, Brazilian NGOs transmitted information about the dams as well as Brazil's plans to ramp up energy importation from its neighbors. These cross-border exchanges were instrumental to CAH, as they provided a knowledge base from which to structure its campaign activities in Peru.<sup>14</sup>

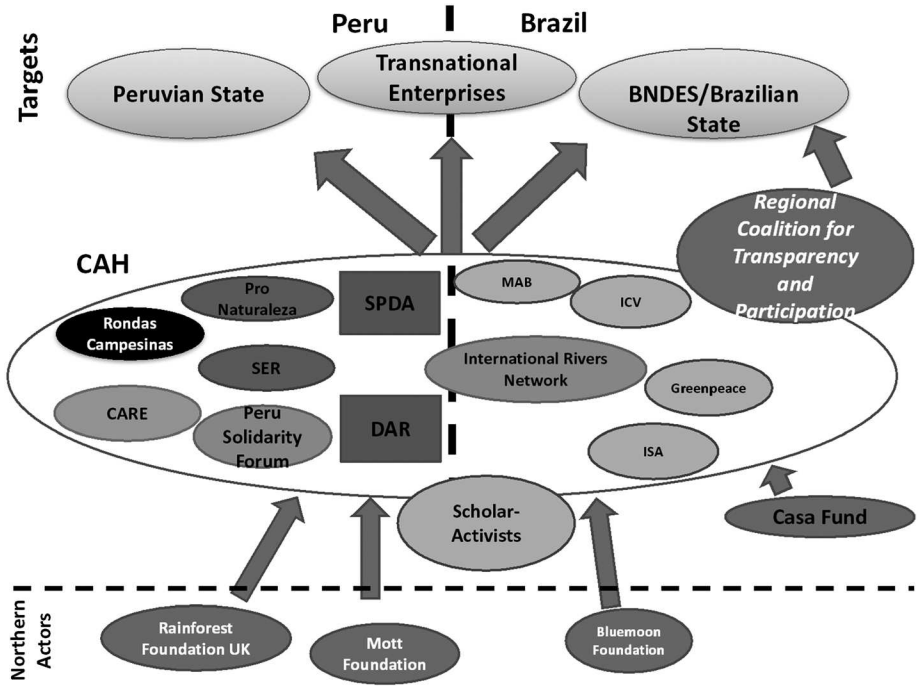
To complement these efforts, CAH also drew on academics from Peru, Brazil, and the United States, several of whom played dual roles as knowledge producers and activists, consulting for IRN and DAR. Scholar-activists from the fields of ecology, economics, and international relations helped to advance the network's scientific and principled claims. For example, ecologists published reports on the socioecological risks posed by the dam network, demonstrating that sudden breaks in the connectivity of the Amazon river systems would trigger severe impacts on species, biodiversity, and deforestation and would adversely impact the livelihoods of riverine communities (Finer and Jenkins 2012; Finer and Orta-Martínez 2010). Ecological economists demonstrated that the long-term payments for ecosystem services outweighed the economic returns (Rodrigues et al. 2011; Vega 2011), while others argued that the treaty itself violated indigenous communities' human right to prior consultation (Moreira 2016; Rosa 2011). Figure 2 illustrates the CAH network, the linkages between actors, and their sites of action.

### *Demands*

The CAH campaign revolved around two primary goals: cessation of projects that did not meet reasonable standards of prior consultation and rejection of the energy treaty. To achieve these, members articulated a variety of more specified demands. Prominent among them were calls for Peru to develop a long-term national energy plan, which it did not have at the time the treaty was being negotiated. The absence of such a plan, CAH argued, would force Peru to cede control over energy production to Brazil, as its more powerful neighbor was better prepared to dictate the treaty's terms and implement the agreement. Second, and related, was the need for energy sector planning in Peru to facilitate broad civil society input (Rosa 2011). Third, given that several of the proposed investments impacted indigenous lands, both states had to demonstrate respect for indigenous self-determination by complying with existing human rights frameworks. Here CAH sought to draw attention to the gap between both states' legal obligations under ILO Convention 169 and their development practice.<sup>15</sup>

14. First author's interviews with NGO officials, Brasilia, Brazil, July 2012.

15. Peru ratified ILO 169 in 1994, Brazil in 2002.



**Figure 2**  
CAH Network Linkages and Targets.

Finally, to protect free-flowing rivers, CAH demanded that both the Peruvian and Brazilian governments develop an integrated plan for the sustainable management of the Andean–Amazon corridor.<sup>16</sup>

### *Targets and Tactics*

CAH structured its pressure campaign around the Peruvian government, the Brazilian transnational enterprises contracted to construct the dams, and BNDES. As the custodian of the country’s resource base on behalf of citizens, Peru’s national government was the network’s most important target. National authorities had the capacity to approve or reject not only the treaty but also the individual projects through the state’s concession and environmental licensing processes. CAH sought to affect state policy using direct and indirect methods. First, it acted to shift public perception of South–South energy “cooperation” by focusing attention on the self-interests Brazil had in the treaty. To do so, CAH

16. These demands were collated from interviews; copies of letters sent to congress in Brazil and Peru, flyers and reports, and public debates that occurred between 2012 and 2015.

presented a polemical alternative to the Brazilian narrative, claiming that this case embodied a new and pernicious instance of a regional power “exploiting” its neighbor’s resources (see later). Second, as gatekeepers of treaty ratification, CAH engaged Peru’s legislative branch. Specifically, SPDA and DAR met routinely with members of congressional committees, such as the Indigenous Peoples Committee and the Foreign Relations Committee, and organized a letter-writing campaign directed at elected officials.<sup>17</sup> CAH also attempted to levy indirect pressure on MINEM through legislators. For instance, one of the most prominent voices within CAH was the director of SPDA, Mariano Castro, who frequently met with environment ministry officials to discuss the adverse impacts of the treaty.<sup>18</sup> In 2012, Castro was appointed vice-minister of environment, and in October 2013, under his direction, he began to send letters to legislative committees outlining the environmental and social costs that the treaty would generate (Comisión de Relaciones Exteriores 2014). Through these discursive activities, CAH emphasized the need not only to reject the treaty but also for the broader issue of long-term energy planning to be discussed transparently at the national level.

Lastly, under the auspices of CARE and represented by Ruth Buendía Mestoquiari, Asháninka communities challenged the legality of hydroelectric development on customary lands. After letters sent to MINEM failed to stop ministry officials from approving the temporary concessions, CARE, with the financial and legal support of CAAP and FEDEPAZ, filed complaints with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the ILO, arguing that the Pakitzapango and Tambo 40 projects violated their human rights (Central Asháninka del Rio Ene and Centro Amazonico de Antropologia y Aplicacion Practica 2010–2011). Though Brazilian NGOs could not mount a legal challenge against Brazil, they argued that it too would be complicit in rights violations (International Rivers Network 2011).

CAH also targeted Brazil’s “national champion” enterprises via their Peruvian subsidiaries. Of the dams proposed by the bilateral energy treaty, Pakitzapango and Tambo 40 were the first to secure temporary concessions from MINEM, allowing them to proceed with initial feasibility studies in the hope of securing formal concessions and transitioning to the environmental licensing stage. Eager to commence with the projects, Energía SAC Pakitzapango and Odebrecht Perú Ingeniería y Construcción SAC began the contentious process of attempting to construct social licenses. However, several community stakeholders refused to attend corporate-led information and dialogue sessions put on by the Peruvian subsidiaries. Such acts were designed to compromise the legitimacy and social viability of the investments. In addition, Asháninka groups in Junín (organized by CARE) and peasant farmers, cocaleros, and artisanal miners in Madre de Dios

17. Documents on file with first author; author’s interview with congressional officials, Lima, Peru, August 2014.

18. First author’s interviews with Environment Ministry officials, Lima, Peru, August 2014.

(organized by the *rondas campesinas*) utilized acts of direct and open contention against the conglomeration of Brazilian enterprises, including efforts to occupy the concession areas and street protests in nearby towns. These activities coincided with similar acts against the Peruvian subsidiary Egasur SAC in the regions of Puno, Cusco, and Madre de Dios, in which rural communities staged a thirty-six-day strike and mass protests to revoke Inambari's concession, and against Andrade Gutierrez in the region of Cusco to revoke Mainique's concession (*Perú21* 2011). While these acts of open contention communicated to MINEM demands to revoke concession rights, they were also designed to signal to the conglomeration of parent enterprises in Brazil the sociopolitical risks that would accompany their investment decisions in Peru. High-visibility mobilizations demonstrated that some grassroots actors were willing to paralyze construction by direct action, if necessary.

Finally, as financier of the proposed projects, BNDES—and, by extension, the Brazilian state—acted as CAH's third target. CAH mounted a two-pronged attack on the bank, attempting to leverage officials at its Rio de Janeiro headquarters and its Lima satellite office. Like the other targets, CAH utilized a combination of direct and indirect tactics, making use of both discursive efforts and visible protest measures. For example, the Brasilia-based arm of IRN, in conjunction with scholar-activists, sent technical reports directly to bank officials in Rio outlining the socioenvironmental impacts of the individual projects (Verdum 2013). Even after MINEM declared Pakitzapango invalid in 2010 and Odebrecht withdrew support for Tambo 40 in 2011, the status of the three other projects remained uncertain. On the Peruvian side of the border, DAR and CARE sent letters to the bank's Lima satellite office, while coordinating a national media campaign to highlight its funding of destructive projects in Peru. At the time, CAH was helping to lay the groundwork for a broader Latin American SSTAN focused exclusively on BNDES lending practices, the Regional Coalition for Transparency and Participation. This emerging conglomeration of civil society actors from Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru would raise concerns about the bank's lack of transparency to draw attention to its socioenvironmental impacts.<sup>19</sup> In 2012, during the Rio+20 world summit, the Coalition staged an occupation of the bank's Rio headquarters (Medina et al. 2014; Regional Coalition for Transparency and Participation 2014; Verdum 2013).

### *Innovative Framing*

To ensure the campaign resonated with civil society audiences on both sides of the border, CAH invoked a novel symbolism, framing Brazilian South–South energy development as a form of neocolonialism. By depicting Brazil as a

19. Since 2016, the Coalition has increasingly liaised with NGOs from China and India seeking to induce similar reforms within globalized national development banks domiciled in those countries.

new “colonial exploiter”<sup>20</sup> of natural resources, the Peruvian government was also recast, not as a partner in energy development, but as a client of its more powerful neighbor. For example, CAH’s campaign flyers consistently highlighted the unequal relationship between the two countries, posing controversial questions such as “Why is Peru ceding its hydro power potential and mistreating its Amazon?”<sup>21</sup> To do this, grassroots groups and Lima-based NGOs drew on the discourses of sovereignty, human and indigenous rights, and environmental protection when challenging the legality of the proposed investments. Furthermore, CAH likened Brazil’s energy importation strategy to the brutal history of subsoil exploitation Peru had endured under Spanish rule. This framing was particularly powerful and resonated well among rural communities in the Andes and Amazon basin who, being at the blunt end of the country’s resource-based development model, were already employing anticolonial rhetoric when mobilizing against Northern investors.<sup>22</sup> This frame also helped convince members of the congress that the treaty was not in the long-term national interest, as it could lock the country into fifty to eighty years of energy exportation, which could undermine economic growth and the country’s ability to meet its own domestic energy needs.

What is more, because BNDES policy required Peru to source services from its “national champion” enterprises, Brazilian companies (and their Peruvian subsidiaries) could be cast as agents of the Brazilian state, who, in the pursuit of its long-term energy security needs, were effectively “exporting” human rights violations and social conflicts. This symbolism was further buttressed by CAH’s rights-based arguments, which saw its Peruvian nodes draw attention to the historic exclusion of peasant and indigenous communities from national decision-making and present data on the contemporary socioeconomic hardships these groups have faced in Peru as result of megaprojects. The energy treaty and its associated projects, members argued, would exacerbate this situation of exclusion. This neocolonial master frame contradicted the conventional wisdom that South–South relations and regional integration were rooted in “solidarity,” which Brazil had been actively promoting as the best alternative to exploitative modes of North–South investment since 2003.

## Effectiveness

The efficacy of CAH’s campaign can be assessed across different fields of activism. In particular, we observe notable achievements in the area of issue creation but also in the area of policy and behavior change (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

20. This was a term key informants commonly uttered.

21. Document on file with first author.

22. Second author’s interviews with local environmental activist, Cusco, Peru, June 2014; local environmental activist, Cajamarca, Peru, September 2014; and local mayor, Ancash, Peru, November 2014.

In terms of issue creation, CAH first offered a new interpretation of South–South energy development that influenced the state’s eventual decision to reject the treaty. By framing the Brazilian state and its champion enterprises as the “new colonizers,” CAH problematized the issue of South–South energy cooperation, likening it to the plunder and exploitation the country had experienced under colonial rule and, more recently, with Northern investors. Moreover, by recasting this policy issue in terms of neocolonialism, CAH could more effectively pressure Lima-based officials to consider how the treaty and its proposed projects affected the country’s ability to exercise sovereign control over its natural resource base. This coincided well with preexisting debates over resource nationalism, which were becoming increasingly salient within the country’s extractive sectors. One high-ranking MINEM official alluded to the influence of this when explaining the ministry’s eventual recommendation to reject the accord, noting that only if the relative gains had weighed better in Peru’s favor, then the treaty may have been viable.<sup>23</sup> In its decision to reject the treaty, the Foreign Relations Committee also alluded to this issue, expressing consternation that the “real reason” behind Brazil’s push for the energy treaty was to meet its own domestic demand, irrespective of what this entailed for Peruvians (Comisión de Relaciones Exteriores 2014).

Second, CAH was instrumental in pressuring Peruvian authorities to initiate the process of long-term energy planning. At the time of the treaty negotiations, Peru lacked a national energy strategy. This was deemed by CAH to have placed the country at a negotiating disadvantage, which it argued enabled Brazil to secure better terms. However, this policy vacuum also created discursive space for CAH to emphasize the importance of long-term energy planning, which occupied a central position in its campaign after the treaty was signed in 2010. Here CAH had notable influence over authorities in Lima, as MINEM formally published the country’s first long-term national energy plan in 2014 with its “Plan Energético Nacional 2014–2025” (see Ministerio de Energía y Minas 2014).

Although policy and behavior change can only be robustly assessed in the long term, our case does suggest some preliminary indicators of efficacy. While we cannot conclude with certainty that Peru will not revert to energy exportation to Brazil over the long term, formal rejection of the bilateral treaty is nevertheless *prima facie* indication of a short-term policy shift that would not likely have occurred without the CAH campaign. Notably, MINEM canceled the temporary concession for Pakitzapango before initial feasibility studies were conducted. Within the context of Peru, this act was significant, as concession rights are rarely revoked prior to environmental impact assessments. While this does not indicate a transformational shift in MINEM policy regarding the granting of temporary concessions, it is noteworthy in that it reflected a rare act to nullify a profitable concession that did not meet prior consultation standards.

23. First author’s interview with vice-minister of energy and mines, Lima, Peru, August 2014.



Some short-term policy and behavioral changes were also observed among the consortium of Brazilian enterprises contracted to construct the proposed projects. In particular, Odebrecht's decision to withdraw from Tambo 40 was made in Brazil at the board level and reflected a combination of desires to reduce risks and comply with human rights norms. For instance, in a letter sent to the regional government of Junín, a representative of Odebrecht's Peruvian subsidiary referenced the need to "avoid social conflicts" as a major reason for the company abandoning Tambo 40 and for not challenging MINEM's Pakitzapango decision. Letters sent by company officials to MINEM also added that executives had read CARE's letters to the Peruvian government and agreed on the need to "respect the opinions of local populations."<sup>24</sup> However, the main shareholders in the remaining Inambari, Tambo 60, and Mainique projects, such as Eletrobrás and OAS Ltda., have demonstrated a wait-and-see response, deciding not openly to push forward but neither to divest officially.<sup>25</sup>

Despite its achievements with the first two targets, CAH had no impact on BNDES policy or behavior. This finding supports previous findings on the weak influence environmental activists have had on BNDES' lending policy (Sierra and Hochstetler 2017). However, as noted, the CAH campaign contributed to the creation of a BNDES-focused SSTAN, the Regional Coalition for Transparency and Participation, which has made some modest inroads toward pressuring BNDES to adopt transparency standards (Sierra and Hochstetler 2017). What is more, this SSTAN has since begun to liaise with Indian and Chinese advocacy networks seeking to make similar inroads with their countries' globalized national development banks (Regional Coalition for Transparency and Participation 2014).

### Proximate Exogenous Factors

It is worth noting that some seemingly unrelated factors contributed to the outcomes of CAH's campaign by increasing the vulnerabilities of the Peruvian state to anti-dam mobilizations and by cementing its decision to suspend energy cooperation with Brazil.

Socioenvironmental conflict has increased markedly in Peru since 2004 (Defensoría del Pueblo 2014). The rising levels of violence and insecurity associated with it has, more recently, prompted national authorities to adopt a risk-averse approach when responding, from which CAH benefited. Several conflicts have been emblematic of the state's mismanagement (e.g., the "Baguazo" massacre of 2009), but one that was proximate to CAH's campaign stands out as particularly important. In 2012, peasant and urban groups mobilized against the proposed Conga mine in the Andean region of Cajamarca. Despite campaigning a year earlier on a platform to renegotiate the country's relationship

24. Documents on file with first author.

25. First author's interview with former director of SPDA, Lima, Peru, August 2014.

with mining, at the time, the recently elected president Ollanta Humala (2011–2016) authorized security forces to intervene to push forward with Conga. This led to a series of clashes that killed five and injured hundreds (*La Republica* 2012), triggering a political crisis for the Humala administration as several high-profile officials resigned in protest.<sup>26</sup> Importantly, as CAH was ramping up its campaign in Peru, the executive branch was only recently beginning to emerge from the Conga scandal. Wary from almost a decade of rising socio-environmental conflict, moreover, authorities and legislators in Lima were facing increasing pressure to proceed cautiously when responding protest movements targeting large-scale infrastructure projects. While most socioenvironmental conflict in Peru revolved around mining investments, hydroelectric dams were becoming a new front along which antimining activists were mobilizing.<sup>27</sup>

Second, two months prior to the Peruvian Congress' rejection of the bilateral treaty, Brazil was thrust into a period of protracted national economic and political turmoil. By March 2014, the now famous Operation Carwash was beginning to expose a web of corruption involving major political figures and the country's champion enterprises, including, notably, Odebrecht. The scandal was further compounded by a 2015 recession, which triggered the controversial impeachment of President Rousseff in 2016. These successive domestic crises not only harmed Brazil's reputation as a "third-way" development power but, importantly, had the effect of shifting domestic priority away from regional energy integration as its executive branch dealt with the political fallout. In the year that followed rejection of the bilateral energy treaty, Brazil's reputation was in such tatters that diplomats could not overcome its credibility problem when attempting to lobby Peruvian officials to renew energy treaty talks.

Finally, Peru has steadily shifted its gaze toward Asia, diminishing the relative importance of Brazil as a Southern partner. Since the mid-2000s, Peruvian authorities have increasingly appealed to Chinese investors, which have ramped up their activities in the country's mining, oil, and gas industries but also provided investment capital for major infrastructure projects. While Northern investment in the country's commodity and energy sectors remains significant, Peru has sought to operationalize closer commercial ties with China, which now views the country as a leading location for investment (Sanborn and Chonn 2015). This burgeoning relationship has been detrimental to Brazil, suppressing the impetus to reignite energy exportation projects.

## Conclusions

Combined, rejection of the bilateral energy accord, cancelation of the Pakitzapango concession, and Odebrecht's divestment from Tambo 40 represent principled

26. Second author's interview with former deputy minister of the environment, Lima, Peru, May 2014.

27. Second author's interviews with local environmental activists, Cajamarca, Peru, September 2014.

socioenvironmental victories over pressures to achieve energy security through regional integration. While CAH's anti-Brazilian dam campaign was aided by some favorable exogenous factors, this SSTAN nevertheless had a direct effect on the decisions of the Peruvian state and Brazilian transnational enterprises to abandon hydroelectric investment. Although this issue-specific campaign was unable to leverage BNDES, it contributed to the formation of a regional coalition that has since targeted Brazil's national development bank. This suggests that highly articulated SSTANs may successfully push against the inertia of strategic national interests to achieve limited, albeit significant, objectives.

Importantly, our case draws attention to the agency of Southern actors that has accompanied shifts in the loci of transnational environmental advocacy generated by the emergence of the BRICS. This instance of exclusive South–South energy integration precluded both government and corporate targets from outside influence, preventing CAH from structuring its anti-Brazilian dam campaign around a boomerang pattern. Accordingly, this network could not activate international NGOs to advocate on behalf of grassroots groups, utilizing, among other things, the leverage of multilateral fora. Instead, network agency shifted to its Southern nodes, which responded strategically by structuring its campaign around a three-pronged attack “from below.” The combination of direct action protests, discursive engagements with policy makers and lawmakers, and a counterintuitive framing of Brazil proved successful with two of the three targets. By hedging its bets through this triple-target strategy, CAH provided a schema for subsequent anti-infrastructure project campaigns in the region to possibly replicate, demonstrating how this SSTAN may be contributing to governance diffusion (Kauffman 2017).

The challenges and opportunities of transnational environmental advocacy within the primary sectors of the Global South warrant sustained attention within global environmental politics. Across Latin America and Africa, many low- and middle-income countries are renewing investments in their primary sectors as a means of achieving diverse national goals, from economic growth and poverty reduction to energy security. Increasingly, this strategy of resource-driven development has entailed the BRICS as financiers and agents of large-scale infrastructure projects. Their activities, moreover, are legitimized by claims that South–South “cooperation” offers opportunities for less exploitive relations. While Brazil's status as a development power has declined markedly in the years following our case, much uncertainty remains about what Chinese expansion entails for socioenvironmental mobilizations and cross-border advocacy in the primary sectors of Southern countries. China's contribution to the expansion of the energy, extractive and infrastructure frontiers in Latin America and Africa is likely to generate socioenvironmental grievances and may even trigger new social conflicts, some of which may result in successful advocacy campaigns. Further research on the transnational environmental advocacy encircling South–South development initiatives can help us better

understand not only how civil society actors are mobilizing transnationally in response but the conditions under which they succeed or fail.

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