

# POLITICS AND CLIMATE CHANGE: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTIES AND CLIMATE ISSUES IN LATIN AMERICA<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

In democratic political regimes, the level of attention that political parties pay to an issue and how they address it, are central elements for understanding the development of public policy in relation to that matter. One of the functions of political parties is to articulate and represent the interests and visions of different social sectors and actors, with the expectation that this will impact on government's agenda and policies (Dalton, 2009; Rohrschneider and Miles, 2015). To what extent, then, climate change is a relevant issue for political parties and coalitions is a key aspect to be analyzed in order to understand the development and trajectory of the climate agenda in a given political system.

This article aims to explore the relationship between political parties and climate change in the Latin American context. Specifically, it addresses three central aspects. First, it analyses the patterns of politicization of climate change in Latin America, in other words, how mainstream political parties and coalitions in countries of the region tend to address the climate problem. Secondly, it addresses some of the factors that influence the level of politicization of the climate agenda in Latin America. Finally, it discusses the consequences of a greater or lesser level of politicization. It is important to clarify that this is not a research paper that presents the results of an original study. Rather, it is an essay that raises and discusses certain key issues of the relationship between political parties and climate change in the Latin American context, based on a review of the comparative literature on the subject. In this regard, it is necessary to emphasize the exploratory nature of this work, given the limited amount of empirical analysis and published research articles on the political dynamics of the climate agenda in the countries of the region, and in particular on the role of political parties and the electorate (Ryan and Ramirez Cuesta, 2016). Most of the literature addressing these issues refers to developed countries, especially the US, Australia, and European Union countries. Our analysis incorporates

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1. A previous version of this article was published by the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN), as a result of the project "Research Legacy in Latin America and the Caribbean" implemented by the SARAS Institute, the Regional Center on Climate Change and Decision Making, and funded by CDKN.

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and speaks with this literature, but recognizing that in many cases their findings and arguments might be of limited applicability to the Latin American context.

Before proceeding with the analysis, it is important to make a couple of conceptual clarifications. First, based on the work of Carter (2006; 2007), we used the term politicization to refer to the process of positioning climate change on the political agenda, by which it becomes a matter of electoral relevance and competition between political parties. This conceptualization differs from others in the literature on climate change politics that tend to associate the term politicization with specific political positions towards climate change. For example, from critical approaches or perspectives the term politicization is used to refer to positions that problematize the current model of development and promote radical changes at the political, social and economic level in order to face the challenges posed by climate change (Pepermans and Maesele, 2016). Instead, we used the concept of politicization in a broader manner; it is not reduced to, or depends on the radicalism of the political position taken by political actors, but rather on the relevance that the issue has on the political agenda of these actors.

Second, in order to analyze climate change politicization patterns, the article focuses on mainstream political parties and coalitions. That is, those political parties or coalitions that have most chances of winning elections or becoming the main political actors in the opposition. The reason for focusing the analysis on these actors is because these are the parties and coalitions that are most likely to shape public policy, supporting or blocking advances in relation to the climate agenda.

The article is organized in four sections. First, it discusses different patterns of politicization of climate issues in Latin America. Then, it identifies and analyzes some of the most relevant factors that influence the level of politicization of the climate agenda in the countries of the region. Third, it explores what policy consequences can result from a greater or lesser level of politicization of climate change. The last section summarizes and discusses the main conclusions and insights resulting from this analysis.

## Features and patterns of politicization of the climate agenda

In his analysis of how political parties address environmental issues in industrialized countries, Carter (2015) identifies three main strategies developed by mainstream political parties and coalitions to respond to the emergence of any new issue of social interest: to openly reject the issue (adversarial strategy); to ignore it (dismissive strategy); or to integrate it into their discourses and policy programs (accommodative strategy). We will use these categories to explore the patterns of political positioning in Latin American countries in relation to climate change.

The adversarial strategy consists in the opposition or resistance to the advance of climate policies and agenda. This approach to climate change is an element of programmatic and electoral differentiation by political parties or coalitions taking this type of stance. The case of the Republican party in the US is perhaps the most paradigmatic example of this type of strategy, based on a strong skepticism or rejection of the scientific evidence on climate change or on the anthropogenic causes of this phenomenon (Dunlap et al., 2016).

In Latin America, climate skepticism has not had relevant political expressions as in the case of the US or Australia. Although we do not know of works analyzing political parties' manifestos in relation to climate change in Latin America, media coverage analysis shows a very marginal presence of climate skepticism in the declarations of political, business and social leaders in the region (Kitzberger and Pérez 2009, Gonzáles Alcaraz 2014).

A more significant factor to explain adversarial strategies in the Latin American context is the argument that addressing climate change is mainly a responsibility of the developed world and should not be an obstacle for economic development. This argument expresses, although partially, the well-known principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, which is one of the key elements of the architecture of the international regime on climate change. Brazil's opposition to the inclusion of carbon sinks (forests) in the Kyoto protocol negotiations (1996-2001) is a good example of this dynamic; this opposition can be partly explained by the strong concerns from sectors of the Brazilian elite that the economic use of the Amazon -whose high rates of deforestation was one of the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) in Brazil, could be questioned or regulated internationally (Johnson, 2001; Viola et al., 2013).

Regardless of the receptivity of this argument among some political, economic and intellectual elites circles in Latin America,<sup>i</sup> the adversarial strategy is not a generalized position among mainstream political parties and coalitions in the countries of the region. The fast ratification of the Paris Agreement in most countries of the region (United Nations, 2017), and with broad political support from governing coalitions and main opposition parties, is a good indicator of this lack of adversarial strategies among mainstream political actors. On the contrary, the predominant modes to address climate change adopted by mainstream political parties seem to fit more clearly with the remaining strategies proposed by Carter: indifference to the issue or gradual accommodation.

The strategy of indifference to climate change implies that political parties or coalitions do not take explicit positions on the issue or on what policies or measures must be taken to address it. In this way, climate change does not become an issue of policy differentiation nor an object of electoral competition with the rest of the political forces. One consequence of this type of strategy is that when climate policy issues reach the political or legislative agenda, they tend to "cross-cut" mainstream political parties or coalitions. Given the lack of a defined party positions on the issue, legislators and party leaders adopt their own policy positions, and in many cases, contrasting policy positions depending on their different views regarding climate change, on the different economic or regional interests potentially affected by the policies under discussion, or other contextual issues.

The processes of legislative discussion and approval of the native forest protection law (2007) and the glaciers protection law (2010) in Argentina are good examples of this dynamic. These laws represent two of the most important environmental protection norms approved in Argentina during the last decade and are highly relevant for the climate agenda of the country. The legislative negotiations of these rules demonstrate how these issues crossed and divided the legislators from the governing coalitions as well as from the main opposition parties (Bonasso, 2011; Ryan, 2014 b). While some lawmakers, whether from the governing coalition or major opposition parties, supported the bills with

the highest levels of environmental protection, other legislators from the same coalitions supported weaker regulations, prioritizing the regional economic activities and interests affected by the legislative proposals.

Finally, the accommodation strategy implies that political parties or coalitions incorporate climate change problem in their discourse, recognizing the relevance of the issue and the need to take action. However, beyond this internalization of the climate problem, there can be a great variation in the depth or ambition of policies that political parties are willing to promote or support, or the extent to which the scope of climate policies can become an issue of programmatic differentiation and electoral competition between parties.

In general, the Latin American experience suggests that mainstream parties and coalitions in different countries of the region are addressing and incorporating climate change but in a way that could be characterized as a “low intensity” integration.<sup>ii</sup> The political discourse recognizes the relevance of the issue and there is support for the development of gradual and moderate climate institutions and policies. However, the central components of the policy agendas of government coalitions and major opposition parties remain anchored in social and economic growth strategies which are not necessarily compatible with low carbon development. There are numerous examples in different countries of the region of government policies and programs developed in recent years that aim to contribute to the reduction of GHG emissions in a given sector or activity, while macroeconomic or sectoral policies promote and deepen practices that have opposite effects (Ryan 2014a). The tensions between, on the one hand, programs and policies for the protection and sustainable use of native forests and, on the other, policies that favor the expansion of “business as usual” agricultural and livestock activities, are clear examples of this dynamic, which have been well documented in many countries of the region (Vargas Ríos et al., 2012; Di Paola 2017; Reis et al. 2017). From a political perspective, a consequence of this low intensity integration of climate change is that mainstream parties do not risk losing political and electoral support from economic and labor sectors which could be threatened by more transformational climate agendas, either for competitiveness or job concerns.

Another characteristic of the Latin American political scenario is the difficulty to distinguish between the political positions of mainstream political parties in relation to climate change. In the context of Latin American politics, the climate agenda has some typical features of what the literature on electoral behavior calls “valence issues” (Stokes, 1963). Unlike “positional” issues, in which political parties and voters take clear positions for or against, valence issues are those in which there are broad social consensus on the objectives to be reached, for example good education, government without corruption, etc. In these issues, mainstream parties and political coalitions –regardless of their ideological characteristics- tend to adopt the same general position of supporting that shared goal, being difficult to distinguish the programmatic stances of the different parties in relation to the issue.

In summary, climate skepticism and open opposition to the climate agenda have not been a relevant pattern among mainstream political parties and coalitions in Latin

American countries. The predominant strategies have ranged from political indifference to a low intensity integration of climate change, which is reflected in support for moderate and gradual policies to address climate change issues. In any case, there is a low level of politicization of climate change, which is not the object of electoral competition and programmatic differentiation between the mainstream parties and coalitions. Addressing climate change tends to be framed and perceived by political actors as a shared, general objective, which is the subject of a broad social consensus.

## Factors shaping the levels of politicization

Several different factors can help us explain this low intensity integration of climate issues by mainstream parties and the low level of politicization of climate change in the Latin American context. Based on the literature on political parties and electoral competition, we identify and analyze three main factors: the social demand, the ideological component and the institutional-electoral framework.

First, the level of public attention and demand on an issue is a key factor that strongly shapes its political and electoral relevance. In the case of climate change, as with environmental issues in general, Latin American societies send ambivalent messages and signals about its importance. Various public opinion polls stress that Latin America shows a very high level of social concern in relation to climate change. According to the latest global survey published the Pew Research Center (2015), 74% of Latin Americans consider that climate change is a very serious problem, while in Europe this response was 54% and in the USA 45%. Disaggregated by country, this response reached 86% in Brazil and 59% in Argentina (the lowest rate of the six Latin American countries included in the survey but above the global average of 54%).

A linear reading of these results indicates a high level of attention and social concern on climate change. However, when these results are interspersed with opinion studies asking about the most urgent or priority problems faced by the country, or which are the most worrisome issues at a personal level, climate change -and environmental problems in general- do not appear as a main subject of social concern (Cussianovich, 2014). As an example, it is interesting to analyze the results of the *Latinobarómetro 2015* report. Given the open question “*What do you consider to be the most important problem in your country?*”, climate change or environmental problems did not appear in the list of ten issues that exceeded the threshold of 3% of the total responses. According to this opinion study, the most important problems for Latin American societies are economic issues (34%), crime and security (23%) and corruption (7%) (*Latinobarómetro, 2015*). When disaggregated at the country level, this pattern of response is repeated in the 18 countries of the region covered by the study; in none of these countries, climate / environmental issues reached 3% of the answers.

Based on the cross-reading of these public opinion polls, we can make two observations or comments. On one hand, climate change seems to be a matter of concern to Latin American societies, but it is not considered a priority or an urgent matter. There are other issues that are perceived as more important in the short term (economic issues,

crime, corruption, etc.). Undoubtedly, this is an element that can strongly shape the attention and relevance that political parties and political leaders place on climate change issues, and which can help to explain its low level of politicization in the countries of the region. However, the high level of concerns shown by Latin American societies in relation to climate change issues is not a minor fact. It suggests a level of social attention and latent concern on the issue that can be mobilized politically.

In this regard, there are numerous examples in the region of socio-environmental demands articulated through NGOs and social movements, which have positioned climate relevant issues in the public agenda and affected the development of public policy. The control of deforestation in the Amazon in Brazil (Viola 2010, Reis et al., 2017) or the process of approving the law for the protection of native forest in Argentina (Giardini, 2009; Gutiérrez, in press) are examples of how certain climate relevant socio-environmental demands have generated support from large sectors of the public and formed broad political and social coalitions to advance these initiatives.

A second important factor to consider is the extent to which the ideological orientation affects the positioning of political parties and coalitions in relation to climate change. In the context of developed countries, there are a number of studies suggesting that parties on the left of the ideological spectrum have increasingly tended to adopt more favorable positions on climate and environmental issues than conservative parties or coalitions (Dalton, 2009; Anderson and Stephenson, 2011; Rohrschneider and Miles, 2015). The distance in the political standing in relation to climate change is rather small in the case of the mainstream social-democratic and conservative parties in Western Europe (Carter, 2015). However, it has strongly deepened in those countries where mainstream conservative coalitions or parties have heavily embraced climate skepticism as in the case of the US (Dunlap et al., 2016) or Australia (Tranzer, 2013), generating strong political and social polarization in relation to the subject.

In Latin America, on the other hand, the incorporation of climate issues by mainstream political parties and coalitions does not seem to respond to the classic ideological distinction between left and right. For example, Barros' study of the electoral manifestos of political parties in Brazil (2015), argues that the main political parties of the Brazilian political system (PT, PSDB, PMDB) share the same key thematic elements in their approach to environmental issues. Along the same line, the development of climate policy in the countries of the region during the last decade does not indicate that governmental coalitions of the so-called "new Latin American left" were clearly more favorable or supportive to advance the climate agenda (or more general, the environmental agenda), than governments run by center-right parties or coalitions (with the analytical limitations that these ideological characterizations might have in the context of Latin American political systems). In fact, the environmental performance of the governments of the new Latin American left has been strongly criticized by Latin American socio-environmentalism actors and analysts (see for instance, Gudynas, 2012).

It is important to clarify that we are not arguing that ideational factors are irrelevant in the development of climate policy in the region. For example, the government of Evo Morales in Bolivia has strongly rejected the use of REDD and other market instruments



in climate policy, arguing that implies a mercantilization of nature, among other reasons (Vargas Ríos et al., 2012 ). As this case shows, ideological frameworks can clearly affect the range of possible policy instruments that are considered legitimate or more appropriate to address climate change issues. However, as we pointed out above, the ideological orientation in terms of the traditional left and right cleavage does not seem to be a key factor to explain the level of support for the climate agenda by mainstream political parties in the Latin American context, which is a significant difference with the comparative literature findings in relation to developed countries.

A third relevant factor to explain the greater or less politicization of climate issues is the political-institutional framework, in particular the rules of the electoral system and the competitiveness of the political system. In general, proportional representation electoral systems facilitate the politicization of climate issues by generating incentives for certain parties and coalitions to try to articulate and capture sectors of the electorate that have a special interest in climate or environmental issues in general (Harrison and Sundstrom 2007 ). On the contrary, in majority electoral systems parties tend to focus on the average voter and on the issues that raise most social concern. Based on the experience of the United Kingdom, Carter (2006) argues that in these electoral systems, major political parties or coalitions address environmental / climate issues when there is an emergence of social attention on these issues and the risk that other parties may capture that attention.

The Brazilian presidential election of 2010 is a good example of this dynamic. Sustainability issues and the transition to a low-carbon economy were incorporated into the Brazilian electoral campaign as a result of the irruption and consolidation of Marina Silva (the former environment minister of the Lula's government) as presidential candidate of the Green Party. Given that the Brazilian presidential election system is based on an absolute majority vote with the possibility of a second round,<sup>iii</sup> the consolidation of Marina Silva's candidacy represented an electoral threat for the two leading political coalitions with a better chance of winning the presidency, but especially for the ruling party candidate and favorite in the polls, Dilma Rouseff. The electoral growth of Marina Silva affected the chances of the ruling party (the PT) to win the presidency in the first round and forced a second round with the uncertainties and risks that this implied for the PT. This situation led the ruling party to incorporate the issue of sustainability and climate change into the electoral campaign and strongly influenced the Lula government's decision to adopt voluntary emission reduction commitments at the COP 15 in Copenhagen and to support the approval of the national climate change law at the end of 2009 (Viola 2010).<sup>iv</sup>

The Brazilian presidential campaign of 2009-2010 is a clear example of how the institutional framework, in this case the rules of the electoral game, can give greater visibility (or not) to climate change issues in the political agenda. However, it is important to note that the impact of institutions on public policy and on the behavior of political actors is not linear. Institutions do not function in a vacuum and their effects may vary according to the political, social and ideological context in each case (Thelen y Steinmo, 1992). This highlights the need for a configurational approach (Ragin, 2000) to analyze

the development of climate issues in the political agenda and how various factors (social demand, institutional frameworks, ideational elements and others) can interact in a specific case, resulting in a greater or lesser level of politicization.

## Exploring the consequences of politicization

One of the central arguments of this article is that climate change has a low level of politicization in Latin American countries, but what are its consequences for the domestic climate agenda in Latin America? How the lack of politicization affect the development of climate policy in countries of the region?

In principle, we can identify two unfavorable or negative consequences for the climate agenda. First, as we have previously pointed out, the lack of politicization generates the conditions for a low-intensity climate policy. The importance and severity of climate change is acknowledged and incorporated in the political discourse and there is support for the development of gradualist and moderate policies. However, there is no significant progress with more transformational policies that can affect the political and electoral support of economic and labor sectors that may be threatened or harmed by more ambitious climate policies.

In this scenario, significant advances in climate agenda or policy tend to occur when there are certain types of configuration of conditions that allow for qualitative policy changes to occur. For example, when there are opportunities to advance policies that generate significant economic and social benefits as well as climatic. The case of the Uruguayan energy reform, the 2005 - 2030 Energy Policy, is a clear example of this type of win-win policy (WWF, 2014; IRENA, 2015). This reform, mainly motivated for energy security reasons, has substantially changed the energy matrix of the electricity sector in Uruguay; it has promoted a strong development of renewable energies in a context in which the reduction of GHG emissions was not a relevant issue for the governing coalition nor the opposition. Similarly, the emergence of external factors, such as extreme climate events or changes in the international context (e.g., availability of international funding), generate opportunities for policy innovation and change at the domestic level. The profound reform and strengthening of Colombia's climate institutions following the 2010 winter wave, is a clear example of how an external factor (in this case, an extreme climatic event) generated the conditions for a process of institutional change (Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social, 2011; Sarmiento et al., 2012).

Second, the lack of politicization directly affects the functioning of the system of political rewards and sanctions of a democratic system. In low politicization scenarios, government parties or coalitions are unlikely to pay electoral or political costs due to poor policy implementation or compliance with existing climate commitments. This is a particularly important issue for Latin America, given that the implementation deficit of environmental policies and climate policies in particular, is a critical problem faced by the region. Just as an example, it is worth mentioning the reports elaborated in 2012 by the Latin American Climate Platform (PCL) assessing the state of climate policies in the agricultural and forestry sector of 10 countries in the region.<sup>v</sup> The comparative



analysis of these reports underscores that deficit in the implementation of climate policies and programs was a feature that affected, to a greater or lesser extent, all the countries analyzed (Ryan 2014a).

On the other hand, however, a high level of politicization can also bring negative consequences for the development of climate policy and agenda. Two arguments can be put forward to justify this assessment. First, when an issue is highly politicized, it might be more difficult to reach policy agreements between parties in relation to that matter. In other words, if climate change is the subject of a strong political and electoral competition between political parties and coalitions, this situation might make more difficult to develop policy coincidences on the issue since parties have incentives to differentiate among themselves. In certain contexts, this might even lead to some of the mainstream parties in a political system to adopt adversarial strategies, strongly opposing the advance of climate policies, as a way of differentiating itself electorally. The growing political polarization in the US and Australia in relation to climate change are examples of such situations.

Second, it can be argued that a high level of politicization can also affect the stability and continuity of climate programs and policies. In highly politicized contexts, climate institutions are more exposed to electoral processes and changes in government. The recent US experience is a good example of this argument. Soon after taking office, the Trump administration began taking action to dismantle the clean energy plan that was the basis of the Obama administration's climate agenda. Furthermore, it recently announced the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, a measure that was promised by Donald Trump as candidate during the 2016 presidential campaign.

Our analysis suggests that, currently, the climate agenda in Latin America is more severely affected by situations of low politicization than by the high politicization of climate change. Nevertheless, it is useful to raise the risks and problems implied by both types of scenarios. It invites us to reflect on whether is possible to achieve a balance scenario (and how that can be done) that allows us for taking advantage of the "favorable" consequences of politicization (greater accountability, incentives for more ambitious policies, etc.), while avoiding or containing its "unfavorable" aspects (difficulties reaching policy consensus, lack of continuity of policies by changes of government, etc.).

## Final comments

To conclude, this final section summarizes and highlights some of the main insights and observations resulting from this exploratory analysis of the relationship between political parties and climate change in Latin America. First, climate skepticism and open opposition to the climate agenda has not been a relevant pattern in Latin American politics. On the contrary, the predominant strategy of mainstream parties and coalitions in recent years has tended to be a "low intensity" integration of the climate change, which is reflected in support for moderate and gradual policies to address climate issues. This moderate incorporation is also reflected in a low level of politicization of climate change, which is not the object of electoral competition and policy differentiation between

mainstream political parties and coalitions. Instead, climate change is framed as a shared concern, supported by a broad social consensus. In this regard, climate change in Latin American politics seems to have the characteristics of a valence issue.

However, it can be argued that even if an issue is subject of a relatively high level of social consensus, it can still be the focus of public debate and attention from political actors (both political parties and citizens). In other words, there can be politicization even when a topic has the characteristics of a valence issue. The difference is that consensual issues structure the process of politicization in a different way than positional issues, in which actors are “for or against”. The literature on electoral competition argues that in valence issues, voters and political parties emphasize performance and capacity to deliver the desired goals rather than ideological position (Clarke et al 2009). Arguably, one of the political problems facing the climate agenda in the Latin American context is that, although it is an issue in which there are relatively high levels of social consensus, still it is not perceived as a politically and electorally salient one.

In relation to the possible causes and factors that affect politicization, it is worth stressing the level of public attention and demand with respect to climate issues in the region. Our analysis suggests that climate change is an issue of great concern to Latin American societies but is not perceived as an urgent matter or a priority. There are other issues (the economy, crime, corruption, etc.) that seem to be more relevant for public opinion in the short term. Undoubtedly, this is an element that strongly influences the level of attention that political parties place on climate change and helps explain its low level of politicization and electoral relevance in the Latin American context.

Finally, in relation to the consequences of politicization, our analysis argues that low levels of politicization adversely affect the development of the climate agenda in the Latin American context. Specifically, it generates the conditions for a climate policy with low levels of ambition; significant policy changes and innovations tend to occur only when certain configurations of favorable conditions are present. Furthermore, low levels of politicization do not generate adequate political incentives to address the implementation deficits faced by the environmental and climate policies in the region, since ruling parties and coalitions do not suffer electoral or political costs at the domestic level for the lack of compliance with existing climate policies and commitments.

Once again, it is important to outline that these insights and observations on the relationship between political parties and climate change in the Latin American context are the result of an exploratory analysis. Obviously, they should be subject to empirical validation by studies in countries of the region. This will allow us to evaluate the internal validity of our analysis in specific cases, as well as the extent to which these assessments are generalizable to the various countries of the region.

Moreover, these insights and observations also raise different interesting issues and questions for researchers and practitioners working on climate change in the region. For instance, how can this latent concern of Latin American societies in relation to climate issues be politically mobilized? Under what conditions Latin American countries are more likely to advance more ambitious climate policies? These are just some of the questions that may arise and which require further research and analysis in order to have a better

understanding of the relationship between the dynamics of democratic politics and the problem of climate change in the Latin American context.

## Notes

- i See, for instance, Parker, Letelier and Muñoz's work (2013) on the perceptions of Chilean elites on climate change.
- ii Once again, it is worth emphasizing that the article refers to mainstream political parties and coalitions. In several countries of the region, there are minority political parties or coalitions that promote more radical policy changes in relation to the climate and environmental agenda.
- iii The winning candidate of the first round must receive at least 50% plus one of the votes; if no candidate reaches this percentage of votes, then there is a second round between the two candidates with the highest number of votes.
- iv However, it is important to point out that in parallel with the adoption of these climate commitments, the governing coalition in Brazil promoted other policies that were hardly compatible with a low carbon development strategy. See, for instance, the report produce by the *Observatorio do Clima* on the Ten-Year Energy Plan (Monzoni, 2009).
- v The countries analyzed were: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. The reports are available at <http://www.intercambioclimatico.com/articulos/>.

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Submitted on: 31/08/2017

Accepted on: 10/10/2017

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1809-4422ASOCEX0007V2032017>



# POLITICS AND CLIMATE CHANGE: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTIES AND CLIMATE ISSUES IN LATIN AMERICA

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**Abstract:** This article explores the politicization of climate issues in the Latin American context. In other words, to what extent climate change is a relevant issue for political parties and coalitions. This is a key aspect to analyze in order to have a better understanding of the opportunities and obstacles that affect the development of the climate agenda in a given political system. Specifically, the article addresses three key issues. First, it analyses the patterns of politicization of the climate problem prevailing among mainstream political parties and coalitions in countries of the region. Second, it addresses what factors influence the level of politicization of the climate agenda in Latin America. Finally, it explores the consequences of a greater or lesser level of politicization.

**Key words:** Climate change, political parties, politicization, climate politics

**Resumen:** Este artículo explora la politización de la problemática climática en el contexto latinoamericano. En otras palabras, hasta qué punto la problemática climática es un tema de relevancia para los partidos y coaliciones políticas. Este es un aspecto clave a analizar para poder tener una mejor comprensión de las oportunidades y obstáculos que se presentan para el desarrollo de la agenda climática en un sistema político determinado. Específicamente, el artículo aborda tres cuestiones claves. Primero, cuáles son los patrones de politización de la problemática climática predominantes entre los principales partidos y coaliciones políticas de países de la región. Segundo, qué factores inciden en el nivel de politización de la agenda climática en América Latina, Finalmente, cuáles son las consecuencias de un mayor o menor nivel de politización.

**Palabras claves:** Cambio climático, partidos políticos, politización, política climática

**Resumo:** Este artigo explora a politização das questões climáticas no contexto latino-americano. Em outras palavras, em que medida a mudança climática é uma questão relevante para os partidos políticos e as coalizões. Este é um aspecto chave a analisar para

ter uma melhor compreensão das oportunidades e obstáculos que são apresentados para o desenvolvimento da agenda climática em um determinado sistema político. Especificamente, o artigo aborda três questões fundamentais. Primeiro, quais são os padrões de politização do problema climático que prevalecem entre os principais partidos políticos e as coalizões de países da região. Em segundo lugar, quais fatores influenciam o nível de politização da agenda climática na América Latina. Finalmente, quais são as consequências de um maior ou menor nível de politização.

*Palavras chaves:* Mudanças climáticas, partidos políticos, politização, política climática

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