

Little Victories Against Capitalism: The ALBA Bloc's Participation in Climate Negotiations

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Abstract

In recent years, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) has gained strength as a united body that champions a common ideology of social equality and “Living Well.” Within the arena of global climate negotiations, ALBA negotiates as a bloc, providing a unified front and giving a stronger voice to its member states. This paper explores how ALBA has impacted the global climate change governance structure, and what its future holds. While ALBA countries are diverse in their political, economic, and cultural contexts, they are united by a similar set of political goals—specifically aimed at anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist governance—and have been using climate negotiations to promote their political positions. An analysis of ALBA's participation and impact on the different United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change conferences from Cancún to Paris, together with an analysis of its members' nationally determined contributions, show how ALBA has been advancing their ideological goals through climate negotiations. While ALBA has not been successful in achieving all of its objectives, its participation in climate negotiations has shaped the discourse by advocating for wider participation and stricter regulations within the global climate regime.

Introduction

On December 12, 2015, the world celebrated the adoption of the Paris Agreement. This document, which had been preceded by several rounds of unsuccessful negotiations, was hailed as an historic and ambitious treaty that would bring about a new era in environmental governance.¹ While the bottom-up approach of the treaty is more participatory and cognizant of national sovereignty issues than its predecessor, the Kyoto Protocol, many critics still believe that it does not do enough to battle climate change.

In the negotiations leading up to the Paris Agreement, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) emerged as a united front for several developing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to make their voices heard. Together, these countries expressed their discontent with the existing efforts to combat climate change and have continuously called upon the global community to take stronger action against it. ALBA's particular anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist ideology and unwavering position regarding the environment makes it an interesting case study.

This paper aims to explore how ALBA has impacted the global climate change governance structure and what its future holds. To do so, the first section of the paper will give a brief overview of the group and discuss the commonalities that unite the ALBA members in climate change negotiations. The second section will take a look at the involvement of ALBA in the negotiations leading up to the Paris Agreement and the individual commitments that the ALBA states have made under the Agreement. The final section will look at the future of ALBA and analyze whether or not it will be successful in achieving its goals.

Overview of ALBA

What is ALBA?

Understanding the origins of ALBA and the commonalities that unite its members is integral to analyzing the group's involvement in international climate negotiations. In Latin America, the 1980s and 1990s were characterized by a period of neoliberal reforms and military dictatorships that were backed by the United States and Northern financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF).² Attempting to increase American involvement in Latin American politics and economies, the United States first proposed the Free Trade Area of the Americas in 1994.³ Many people were disappointed with the lack of benefits from the economic development policies and regional trade initiatives that had been imposed on their countries, leading to strong opposition to foreign intervention in Latin America.⁴ Hugo Chávez, former President of Venezuela, was one of these people. In 2001, he created the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas and the Caribbean, a trade initiative to serve as a counterpoint to the free trade area proposed by the United States.⁵ By 2005, Fidel Castro's Cuban government had declared its support for the initiative, which the Declaration of Havana renamed as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, more commonly known as ALBA.⁶ The formal creation of

¹ Deluca, Frank, and Portalewska, "Annexed: The Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the UN Climate Change Conference 2015."

² Goodchild, "What is the ALBA?"

³ Linares, "The ALBA Alliance," 148.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

ALBA coincided with a “pink tide”⁷ of leftist governments in Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua, all of which opposed the American free trade option.⁸ This leftist trend gave Chávez and Castro’s trade alternative the strength it needed to expand throughout Latin America.

Since 2005, ALBA’s original members have been joined by Bolivia, Dominica, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Grenada, and Saint Kitts and Nevis.⁹ In addition, Suriname is awaiting full membership, and Haiti, Iran, and Syria are observer states linked to the organization by their anti-imperialistic ideology.¹⁰ ALBA also has the support of many social movements and social programs in Latin America, Africa, and the United States.¹¹ To accommodate them, ALBA has created a Council of Social Movements, which has the same authority as the Council of Ministers, a group of foreign affairs ministers that advises ALBA’s Presidential Council.¹² While ALBA members only represent a small percentage of the region’s economy, population, and territory, the wide support base from social movements and civil society helps give the alliance its legitimacy.

In the years since its creation, ALBA has evolved from a regional trade alternative into a “political, economic, and social alliance in defense of independence, self-determination, and the identity of peoples comprising it.”¹³ While the scope of the alliance has expanded, its purpose as an instrument to assert Latin America’s sovereignty from United States’ imposition is still expressed throughout all of its operations. Institutionally, ALBA now includes the ALBA Bank, which operates with a new regional monetary unit known as the SUCRE,¹⁴ and the Peoples’ Trade Treaty.¹⁵ It has also created “grannational” (as opposed to multinational) companies that operate in social, cultural, and economic projects aimed at strengthening national and regional sovereignty within ALBA.¹⁶ Through all of its projects and institutions, ALBA has been successful in its efforts to keep the United States’ impositions out of its member states.

Unity Against a Common Threat

The member states of ALBA are spread throughout Latin America and the Caribbean and have different economic and political contexts; however, they are united by a common ideology. ALBA’s name itself is symbolic of the ideology supported by this group of countries. The term “Bolivarian” pays tribute to Simón Bolívar, who liberated much of South America from Spanish rule in the early 19th Century. Bolívar wanted to integrate all of Latin America into one “Big Homeland” that was sovereign and free from colonial powers.¹⁷ He believed Latin America’s only way to prosper was if it became integrated into one single nation that was powerful enough to stand up to the United States.¹⁸ Related to this idea, “Our America” comes

⁷ The term “pink tide” refers to the trend of socialist governments that came to power in Latin America during the late 1990s and early 2000s. In general, these governments were strongly opposed to American hegemony and its neoliberal ideology, but they did not fundamentally change the capitalist system in each of their countries. By 2011, leftist governments were in power in Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Peru.

⁸ Goodchild, “What is the ALBA?”

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Hirst, “A Guide to ALBA.”

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ The SUCRE, or United System of Regional Payment Compensation (in Spanish), is a virtual regional currency used for trade between the central banks of ALBA member states. It was intended to replace the US dollar as the common currency in Latin America, but so far has had little market penetration outside of trade between Venezuela, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Bolivia. As of its creation in 2009, 1 SUCRE is equivalent to 1.25 USD.

¹⁵ Hirst, “A Guide to ALBA.”

¹⁶ ALBA-TCP, “Principles of the ALBA.”

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Hirst, “A Guide to ALBA.”

from José Martí's concept that Latin America should be owned and governed by its own people and not by foreign interests.¹⁹ This concept makes a clear distinction between “our” America and the “other” America, whose actions are guided by imperialist ideas.²⁰ In essence, ALBA is *of* Latin America and *for* Latin America, and the members are united in a common struggle to defend their sovereignty and independence from foreign intervention.

ALBA's member states are all former colonies of European powers, so they have experienced the conditions of inequality, exploitation, and underdevelopment that are associated with imperialism. In contrast to the United States and much of the Global North, ALBA's politics and economy are intended to prioritize solidarity and mutual benefit, and seek to complement productivity through fair and sustainable natural resource use.²¹ In its effort to fully integrate its member nations, ALBA wants to overcome national borders and local barriers by merging their economies.²² In this way, ALBA aims to meet the social and economic needs of the largest possible majority of people in the region.²³ As utopian as these policies sound, in practice ALBA states have had mixed results in achieving the goals stated in their regional unity discourse.

As ALBA itself states, there is an affinity among its members to do away with the “fiction” of the free market, globalization, and neoliberalism, all of which are Northern ideals.²⁴ This fundamental difference in ideology has caused many analysts to classify ALBA's economic scheme as one that happens outside of the classical theory of trade and capitalism. Some authors even claim that ALBA wants to create a new Bolivarian world order that is a fundamental threat to American freedom and productivity.²⁵ Despite all of this discourse, ALBA's radically anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist discourse has not materialized into a new world order opposed to Northern ideals.

ALBA and Climate Change

Although ALBA is now mostly a political alliance for sovereign economic and social development, the heads of state from member countries decided in 2009 to create the People's Trade Treaty, which declares that trade among member states should promote harmony between men and nature, in addition to respect for the rights of Mother Earth.²⁶ Trade should be conducted in such a way that it generates both economic growth and sustainability. Since this first mention of environmental protection, environmental issues—and more specifically climate change—have taken a larger role in the alliance as a whole. In addition, ALBA has determined that the members have to coordinate their positions in international negotiations, particularly those that take place within the United Nations and its agencies.²⁷

The World Peoples' Conference on Climate Change

In April of 2010, the Bolivian Government organized the World Peoples' Conference on Climate Change. The Conference followed the failed United Nations Framework Convention

¹⁹ Goodchild, “What is the ALBA?”

²⁰ ALBA-TCP, “Principles of the ALBA.”

²¹ Linares, “The ALBA Alliance,” 151.

²² ALBA-TCP, “Principles of the ALBA.”

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Hirst, “The Bolivarian Alliance and the United States of America,” 291.

²⁶ ALBA-TCP, “Principles of the ALBA.”

²⁷ *Ibid.*

on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) conference in Copenhagen from 2009. Over 30,000 participants from 100 countries came together to find alternative ways to address climate change. The participants included environmental activists, indigenous leaders, representatives from NGOs and cultural organizations, scientists, and official government staff.²⁸ The principal aims of the conference were to discuss a project of "Universal Declaration of Mother Earth Rights," analyze the systemic and structural drivers of climate change, and agree on new commitments for the second period of the Kyoto Protocol.²⁹

The Conference united stakeholders who are usually left out from the decision-making process at formal UNFCCC negotiations. Very early on, it became evident that the conference would be framed in terms of climate justice and differentiated responsibilities for different states. As Pablo Solón, Bolivian Ambassador to the United Nations, stated at the start of the conference:

The main point of the conference is to convince developed countries to make and meet commitments to reduce emissions, and we have observed that this will not happen without pressure from civil society. Those who are already suffering from global warming will have the chance to speak out.³⁰

Solón's statement makes it clear that developing countries place the blame for climate change and the responsibility for its mitigation on the developed world. The Conference took a new approach by allowing all the interested parties, most of them individual citizens from areas that were already experiencing the effects of climate change, to express their concerns in the more than seventeen working group sessions.³¹ In line with the ideology of ALBA, the participants at the conference looked critically at the role of the global neoliberal economy in creating the current conditions of climate change.³² The Conference produced declarations on indigenous issues, agriculture, and the rights of Mother Earth, which could then be used to pressure governments at the UNFCCC negotiations.

A Unified Front Against Climate Change

The most important document that was produced during the Conference is the Peoples Agreement (2010). This declaration became the basis for ALBA's position on climate change at all subsequent negotiations. The Agreement is very critical of capitalism, consumerism, and materialism. It encourages the world to give up capitalism in favor of a new system known as "Living Well."³³ Living Well is a popular concept among Andean countries that frames the development strategies of both Ecuador and Bolivia. It recognizes that Mother Earth is a living being and advocates for collective well-being and universal satisfaction of basic needs, solidarity and equality among all, as well as the elimination of colonialism, imperialism, and interventionism.³⁴ The Agreement also demands that developed countries commit to the following:

²⁸ United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, "World Peoples' Conference on Climate Change."

²⁹ IISD, "World Peoples' Conference on Climate Change."

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change, "Peoples Agreement."

³² Global Justice Ecology Project, "Climate Justice."

³³ Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change, "Peoples Agreement."

³⁴ Ibid.

- Restore the atmospheric space occupied by their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions,
- Assume the costs of missed development opportunities for the developing world and provide technology transfers to developing countries,
- Take responsibility for the millions of people who will be forced to migrate due to climate change,
- Assume their climate debt by giving developing countries the means to adapt, and
- Adopt and implement the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth.³⁵

These demands are clear in assigning the responsibility for climate change on developed countries. They specifically call for monetary payments from developed countries to compensate developing countries for past environmental damage, as well as current and future climate change adaptation needs. Specifically in UNFCCC negotiations, ALBA countries have pushed the international community for more transparency, wider participation of developing states, and greater respect for the process of adoption by consensus.³⁶ They also advocate for limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, continuing the Kyoto Protocol, and the need for developed countries to provide sufficient amounts of financing to developing countries.³⁷ Although ALBA shares the need for financing with other groups of developing countries, it is generally stricter in its demands for the temperature limit and the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol, in which developed countries have mandatory GHG emissions reduction targets.

The Peoples Agreement presented a radical break in traditional climate change politics because it took a strong position on climate debt and the principle of differentiated but common responsibilities. The 1992 Rio Declaration was the first to define the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, which then served as the basis for the Kyoto Protocol's distributional approach. This system separated countries into two annexes, where the 37 developed countries of Annex 1 had specific and mandatory emissions reduction targets, and all other states in Annex 2 were not required to take any specific action.³⁸ The distinction between Annex 1 and Annex 2 was made based on historical levels of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which meant that those states who contributed the most GHG emissions had the greatest responsibility to reduce them, hence the "distributional" approach.³⁹ After the failure of the Kyoto Protocol and its system of annexes, the international community moved away from that particular system in favor of a more universal plan of action through the Paris Agreement.⁴⁰ ALBA keeps the distinction alive even post-Paris, and continues to demand that Annex 1 countries be the ones responsible for taking action to mitigate climate change.⁴¹ As shown below, this demand in particular has led ALBA to oppose climate negotiations on several occasions.

In addition to a strong belief in differentiated responsibilities, ALBA believes that developed countries owe developing ones a climate debt for having contributed more to climate change.⁴² This belief guides their other radical demands in international negotiations, such as the creation of an International Climate and Environmental Justice Tribunal and an International Tribunal of Conscience. Both would have the legal capacity to judge and penalize both states and industries whose actions cause climate change and who violate the rights of climate migrants

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Edwards and Roberts, *A Fragmented Continent*, 107.

³⁷ Ibid., 208.

³⁸ CISDL, "The Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities."

³⁹ UNFCCC, "Kyoto Protocol."

⁴⁰ Falkner, "The Paris Agreement and the New Logic of International Climate Politics," 1107-1108.

⁴¹ Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change, "Peoples Agreement."

⁴² Ibid.

and refugees.⁴³ The courts would give developing countries much more power against abuses and violations by the developed world and its industries. Considering that the United States alone holds over 40 percent of the global climate debt,⁴⁴ many of the cases brought to court would specifically target the United States and demand that it repay its debt to developing countries.⁴⁵ Hirst considers that these international courts, based on a new regime of “planetary rights,” are an affront to the international system based on the Western values of the Enlightenment, which placed the importance on human rationality rather than on the natural world.⁴⁶

ALBA in the UNFCCC Negotiations

After the Copenhagen climate conference in 2009 failed to produce a new global regime to govern climate change, many people became disappointed in the way the negotiations had traditionally been done. While Copenhagen is widely considered a failure, it did succeed in creating the system of voluntary pledges that grew into the Paris Agreement of 2015.⁴⁷ This system was developed throughout the following years at the Conferences of the Parties (COPs) in Cancún, Durban, Doha, Warsaw, and Lima.⁴⁸ After the creation of the Peoples Agreement in 2010, ALBA was ready to negotiate as a cohesive bloc and introduce the ideas of climate justice and debt into the discussions.⁴⁹ ALBA’s opposition in the negotiations leading up to Paris was very unified in Cancún, but slowly fragmented by the time of the Lima COP four years later.

Opposition in Cancún

The Cancún COP took place between November 29 and December 11, 2010, and had close to 12,000 participants from governments, NGOs, UN agencies, and the press.⁵⁰ The aim of the conference was to enhance long-term cooperation under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. Although Copenhagen had failed to renew the reduction commitments for Annex 1 countries in the Kyoto Protocol, there was hope that these would finally be established during the conference in Cancún. While this conference was not expected to produce any legally-binding agreements, negotiations took place on topics covering emissions from land use change in developing countries, technology, financing, mitigation, and adaptation strategies.⁵¹ During the second week of the negotiations, the ministers of developed countries were paired with ministers from developing countries in an effort to facilitate the negotiation process through a better understanding of their counterparts’ interests.⁵²

The ALBA countries were opposed to many of the negotiations that took place in Cancún. Bolivia, as a representative of the ALBA group, initially stated that any legally-binding agreement that was to be produced would have no credibility or legitimacy unless the second

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Climate debt refers to the idea that wealthy countries should pay reparations to poor countries for climate change. The idea is common among developing countries, who believe that all the adaptation costs need to be borne by the countries who caused the current crisis. Monetary values can be assigned to each ton of carbon dioxide equivalent emitted by each country, and thus can be used to calculate the climate debt owed by each developed country.

⁴⁵ Matthews, “Quantifying Historical Carbon and Climate Debts Among Nations,” 61.

⁴⁶ Hirst, “The Bolivarian Alliance and the United States of America,” 287.

⁴⁷ Falkner, “The Paris Agreement and the New Logic of International Climate Politics,” 1111.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Peoples’ World Conference on Climate Change, “Peoples Agreement.”

⁵⁰ IISD, “Summary of the Cancun Climate Change Conference.”

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

period of reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol was adopted by the Annex 1 countries.⁵³ In response, the United States, one of the largest GHG emitters, stated that it would not be willing to undertake any commitments that focused solely on reductions for developed countries and did not include any commitments for other countries with growing economies.⁵⁴ After informal conversations, the parties agreed that further discussion was necessary and would be extended for one more year until the next conference in Durban. Toward the end of the conference, the Kyoto Protocol working group declared that it had been unable to agree on any amendments for the second period of emissions reductions, but it presented several documents that were intended to serve as a draft for future amendments.⁵⁵ Bolivia again opposed the documents, declaring that they were nothing but a step backwards since they postponed the second period of commitments indefinitely and were a move toward a “more flexible and voluntary regime based on a pledge-and review-system.”⁵⁶ Considering that the documents also made references to commitments that did not exist yet, Bolivia was vehemently opposed to accepting them without knowing their content. Despite Bolivia’s opposition as representative of the ALBA countries, the decisions were accepted by consensus, with the COP President Patricia Espinosa stating that she could not ignore the will of the more than 190 parties that had reached an agreement.⁵⁷ As bad as the decisions of Cancún were for ALBA’s interests, the opposition to the agreements represented a symbolic declaration for the bloc.

Fragmentation in Lima

After the Cancún conference, the ALBA countries continued to express their position against the various decisions taken by the international community regarding climate change governance, but the bloc began to slowly lose cohesion. The Lima COP took place between December 1st and 14th of 2014, and it brought together 11,000 participants from governments, NGOs, and the media.⁵⁸ ALBA was still united in many of its demands, but some countries within the group began to take on more progressive positions. Bolivia and Ecuador, for example, remained obstructive, while Venezuela took a more open stance in favor of reaching a global agreement.⁵⁹ ALBA’s varied positions shows that the bloc respects the individual circumstances of each member state.⁶⁰

During the Lima conference, the ALBA countries took different positions on the methods and strategies that were proposed for mitigation and adaptation. As a whole, ALBA rejects REDD+ and Clean Development Mechanism programs, as well as all market-based instruments.⁶¹ REDD+ programs aim to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation by allowing international aid organizations to buy carbon credits from activities that protect the forest.⁶² These initiatives rely on the involvement of foreign entities and have been criticized for failing to protect the rights of people living in the areas where REDD+ is implemented.⁶³ While Bolivia and Venezuela continue to oppose market-based mechanisms,

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ IISD, “Summary of the Lima Climate Change Conference.”

⁵⁹ Herold, Cames, and Cook, *The Development of Climate Negotiations*, 16.

⁶⁰ Edwards and Roberts, *A Fragmented Continent*, 104.

⁶¹ Herold, Cames, and Cook, *The Development of Climate Negotiations*, 69.

⁶² Wells and Brands, “Seeing REDD.”

⁶³ Ibid.

Ecuador has implemented several Clean Development Mechanism projects.⁶⁴ Bolivia has also moved toward support for the adaptation mechanism of loss and damage, which serves to promote education on climate risks. This involves all stakeholders in decision-making and enhances international action and support for the adverse effects of climate change.⁶⁵ This shift toward more individually-determined positions mirrored the transition that was also happening in the climate governance sphere from legally-binding reductions to the voluntary commitments that would become the basis for the Paris Agreement.

ALBA under the Paris Agreement

Under the Paris Agreement, all parties to the conference were required to submit pledges known as “nationally-determined contributions” (NDCs). Each state can determine how much it wants to contribute to the global effort to reduce GHG emissions and mitigate climate change.⁶⁶ Having learned from the distributional challenges of the Kyoto Protocol, the UNFCCC’s Paris Agreement avoided top-down regulations and instead decentralized the climate regime.⁶⁷ Although the process was made more democratic and should have been welcomed by ALBA countries as a way to make their individual voices heard, they did not waiver in their opposition to the voluntary pledges, which they had expressed since the COP in Cancún in 2010.⁶⁸ Although they were initially reluctant to submit their NDCs, all of the ALBA countries, with the exception of Nicaragua, have now done so. The following section will provide an overview of the content of the NDCs of the ALBA countries, looking specifically at the ways in which they framed their pledges within their anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist ideology.

Individual Contributions to the Paris Agreement

The commitments reflected in the NDCs submitted under the Paris Agreement show a wide array of individual positions and beliefs that call into question the ideological unity of the ALBA group. Table 1 shows the per capita emissions for each state (based on data from CAIT),⁶⁹ whether the NDC mentions anti-capitalism or alternatives to the capitalist system, if and how emissions reductions will be achieved, whether the actions are framed through a development focus, whether adaptation strategies are included, and whether the actions are dependent on financial and/or technological support (all based on the states’ NDCs). Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, and Ecuador frame their pledges squarely within an anti-capitalist framework, but none of the small island states have any mention of this ideological standpoint. With the exception of Bolivia, these countries are all committed to reducing their own GHG emissions. Although the emissions from these countries are relatively low, their commitment to work toward reducing them shows that they have moved away from their previous position of placing all responsibility on the developed world. Bolivia, in contrast, continues to place the bulk of the mitigation responsibility on Annex 1 countries based on their historical emissions.

⁶⁴ Edwards and Roberts, *A Fragmented Continent*, 108.

⁶⁵ UNFCCC, “Warsaw International Mechanism.”

⁶⁶ Falkner, “The Paris Agreement and the New Logic of International Climate Politics,” 1115.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1114.

⁶⁸ IISD, “Summary of the Cancun Climate Change Conference.”

⁶⁹ CAIT, also known as the Climate Analysis Indicators Tool, is an open source program run by the World Resources Institute that tracks the NDCs provided by each party member to the Paris Agreement to gauge the global progress toward the 2°C limit.

All countries have pledged to take action to improve their adaptation responses to climate change. While each country mentions different national contexts and climate vulnerabilities, they all consider adaptation strategies to be important for the future. Interestingly, Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, and Ecuador frame their adaptation strategies, and all commitments in general, under the framework of development through the ideals of “Living Well.” The intended contributions will address climate change, but are better aimed at improving the social and economic conditions in these countries. While many of the actions taken by the small island states will have the same effects, they do not mention development as a specific goal.

Country Name	Per Capita Emissions	Anti-Capitalism	Emissions reduction	Development	Adaptation	Finance/Technology
Venezuela	11.21 tCO ₂ e	Yes	Yes, through carbon sinks	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cuba	2.86 tCO ₂ e	Yes	Yes, through renewable energy	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bolivia	12.76 tCO ₂ e	Yes	No specific mention	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ecuador	5.88 tCO ₂ e	Yes	Yes, through clean energy	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nicaragua	2.40 tCO ₂ e	-	-	-	-	-
Dominica	4.95 tCO ₂ e	No	Yes, through carbon sinks and renewable energy	Yes	Yes	Yes
Antigua and Barbuda	12.29 tCO ₂ e	No	Yes, through renewable energy	No	Yes	Yes
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	2.68 tCO ₂ e	No	Yes, through renewable energy	No	Yes	Yes
Saint Lucia	6.40 tCO ₂ e	No	Yes, economy-wide	No	Yes	Yes
Grenada	18.91 tCO ₂ e	No	Yes, economy-wide	No	Yes	No
St. Kitts and Nevis	7.99 tCO ₂ e	No	Yes, economy-wide	No	Yes	Yes

The analysis of the NDCs submitted by the ALBA countries to the Paris Agreement points to a clear division between the small island states and Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, and Ecuador. While these countries all cooperate in ALBA's regional trade initiative and social programs, it seems that they do not share the same ideology or positions regarding global climate governance. Although in the past the group negotiated as a cohesive bloc, the transition to individual voluntary commitments under the Paris Agreement has generated a rift in the group. While the small island states do not mention the principal goal of the ALBA organization in their NDCs, the other countries are fully committed to using them as an instrument to spread their anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist messages.

This is not to say that the island states are moving away from ALBA as a whole. In fact, the Declaration of the Fourteenth Heads of State Summit on March 5, 2017 specifically addresses the vulnerabilities of the island states in the face of the changing climate and promises to work toward helping them reduce their climate risks.⁷⁰ The differences in the NDCs reflect the differences in national contexts and necessary responses to climate change, but the solidarity and common purpose to defend their sovereignty is still present among all the ALBA nations.

ALBA's Impact on Global Climate Change Governance

In general, the ALBA bloc has been a persistent and loud voice in climate change negotiations and has worked cohesively to influence the direction of climate change talks around the globe.⁷¹ Most notably, ALBA blocked the passage of the Copenhagen Accord, which they believed was too weak to have any impact on avoiding dangerous climate change.⁷² According to a former negotiator, ALBA has been described as "strong, potent, and noisy" by other delegations.⁷³ For a small group of countries, ALBA has been able to successfully block some unfavorable outcomes, as well as insert its concepts of climate justice and the rights of Mother Earth into the preamble of the Paris Agreement.⁷⁴ Calling ALBA's participation in the negotiations a success would be misleading, but it has certainly been a major push toward climate justice, thus having a positive influence on the current state of affairs.

Since they began negotiating as a unit, the ALBA states have fiercely opposed many of the agreements that have come out of the UNFCCC negotiations. While ALBA has been very critical of the negotiation process itself, its strict demands and strong ideology have (somewhat unintentionally) helped advance the UNFCCC toward a more democratic and participatory system. The ALBA bloc has given a voice to people who have traditionally been left out of the global decision-making process, such as indigenous groups and other minorities.⁷⁵ ALBA's insistence on adopting the strict limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius for global temperature increase has also resulted in this figure being included in the final text of the Paris Agreement. Basing their position on climate change upon the foundations of the Peoples Agreement, the ALBA countries have shown that they are truly committed to a more equal and just future.

Under the Paris Agreement's new structure of voluntary pledges, the ALBA members will have more room to determine their own positions based on their specific national contexts. While many states have established different mechanisms and strategies for adaptation and

⁷⁰ Cuba Debate, "Declaración Cumbre del ALBA."

⁷¹ Edwards and Roberts, *A Fragmented Continent*, 101.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁷⁴ UNFCCC, "Paris Agreement."

⁷⁵ Edwards and Roberts, *A Fragmented Continent*, 100.

mitigation, many of these mirror the statements made in the People's Agreement from 2010, on which ALBA has based its position on climate change. Even though the ideology of anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism is not shared in all of the member states' NDCs, the ALBA leadership continues to support the island states that do not cite the need for alternatives to capitalism and American values as the main goal to be achieved through environmental means. Under the Paris system, ALBA can continue to negotiate as a united bloc to push the international community toward more actionable commitments that address the causes and symptoms of climate change. In addition, they can continue to advocate for alternatives to capitalism. Each country can individually determine what it is willing and able to do. Although there are still some discrepancies among ALBA members regarding mitigation responsibilities, most of them are willing to cooperate by reducing their emissions, no matter how small they might be on a global scale. Since they advocate stronger commitments, we should see ALBA states continuing to call for strict adjustments to the commitments from the United States and other major GHG emitters.

Although it has certainly tried through discourse in the negotiation rounds, ALBA has not been successful in overturning the current capitalist system. According to the delegation from the European Union, ALBA's continual opposition to the outcomes of the negotiations was motivated by its incompatibility with the United States and other capitalist economies, and not by a simple dislike of the documents produced in the conferences.⁷⁶ ALBA has used climate change as another tool for protesting the capitalist system on a global stage. Venezuela, for example, denounced the way of life in the developed world and their strategies for mitigation and adaptation as an attempt at perpetuating their global hegemony.⁷⁷ While much of their rhetoric used in the negotiations and in several of the NDCs is purposefully intended to be anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist, ALBA has not achieved its anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist goals through international climate negotiations.

ALBA is not likely to achieve its anti-capitalist goals through climate change negotiations, but it is a necessary actor in attempts to move the system of global climate governance toward a more participatory and just future. ALBA is not the first to criticize the capitalist system and will not be the last. A growing number of authors, with Wolfgang Sachs and Naomi Klein among them, have denounced the exploitative and unequal character of capitalism,⁷⁸ but it is highly unlikely that we will see the end of capitalism on a global scale. ALBA will certainly not be able to create a global revolution to replace capitalism through climate negotiations, but it should not give up the fight for stricter environmental protections, stronger commitments to action, and universal justice. Many delegations recognize ALBA's strength and dedication year after year, which is a constant reminder that as states, they should all ensure that the governance structures they create are respectful to both humans and the Earth.

Conclusion

Throughout its analysis, this paper has sought to identify the impact that ALBA has had on the global climate regime through the negotiations under the UNFCCC platform. ALBA is a small political alliance that focuses on regional trade and development, but it has become increasingly important in climate change talks. Although it is strongly committed to an anti-

⁷⁶ Herold, Cames, and Cook, *The Development of Climate Negotiations*, 17.

⁷⁷ Republica Bolivariana de Venezuela, "Contribuciones Previstas Nacionalmente Determinadas de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela."

⁷⁸ See also: Klein, Naomi, *This Changes Everything*, and Sachs, Wolfgang, *Planet Dialectics: Explorations in Environment and Development*.

capitalist message and aims to create a new world order based on solidarity and complementarity, it has not, and will likely not, achieve this goal through environmental governance. Despite this inability to establish an anti-capitalist world order, ALBA has been effective in giving civil society and other non-state actors a voice on the international stage.

ALBA's position on climate change aims to have strict international regulations to avoid any further damage to the environment caused by emissions from developed countries. They also aim to receive reparations from developed states to compensate for the all of the damage that has already been caused and to meet the adaptation needs of those who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. ALBA's participation in the UNFCCC negotiations was critical to the introduction of the concepts of climate justice and the rights of Mother Earth in the preamble of the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, ALBA's desire for stricter regulations influenced the mention of a specific limit to temperature increases. The Paris Agreement explicitly has the goal of limiting temperature rise to 2°C, with the aspiration of limiting it to 1.5°C. While it is important to mention that ALBA was not the only actor calling for stricter climate change regulations, its position as a bloc of national governments working cohesively throughout many rounds of UNFCCC negotiations was important to their ability to influence the Paris Agreement.

Since the adoption of the Paris Agreement, there have been many economic and political changes in Latin America that have undoubtedly affected ALBA. The "pink tide" has begun to turn toward the right, and Venezuela, one of the strongest proponents of the bloc, is currently experiencing a complicated political situation and a severe economic crisis. It will be interesting to see how ALBA is impacted by these changes, and how the bloc itself responds to them. In the meantime, ALBA should continue to be a voice for indigenous peoples and other civil actors in international negotiations, as it was in the Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change.

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