



EU-Brazil in Global Governance: the case of biofuels

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CEFIR Working Paper No 6: December 2018

EU-BRAZIL IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: THE CASE OF BIOFUELS¹

Introduction

In the broad framework of the international talks between the European Union (EU) and Mercosur² regarding a potential trade deal, many sensitive issues have come up as obstacles to negotiation, such as agriculture and biofuels. As the main agriculture powerhouse in Mercosur, Brazil has made clear that the trade deal would pass only if the EU would accept more generous import quotas for several commodities, including bioethanol³, which is derived mainly from the culture of sugarcane and corn-crops. It is used in a wide-range of products such as biochemicals, bioplastics, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, industrial products (solvents, paint) and, increasingly, as a biofuel for transport⁴. Bioethanol, as an alternative and renewable energy, has the potential to meet some of the world's energy needs, but its adverse social and environmental effects are considerable. Therefore, there is a need for better governance related to biofuel production, use, trade and cooperation.

¹ This article is a more empirical one, as it is based on a previous conference; W. CUSSON Gabrielle « EU-Brazil in Global Governance: The Case of Biofuels », Conference EUCROSS « *The EU and its Partners in Global Governance: Trade, Investment, Taxation and Sustainable Development* », Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, June 14-15, 2018. A further analytical version will come within the author's dissertation.

² Mercosur (1991) includes Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay (Venezuela has been a member since 2012, but is an observer in the trade negotiations)

However, Brazil-EU collaboration on biofuels has a deeper history on both bilateral and trilateral levels to promote biofuel production in underdeveloped countries. In this framework, environmental and social issues related to this specific agricultural production did not seem to engender the same kinds of debates. In a context where the EU-Brazil relationship on energy security and sustainable development is part of a political project aimed at consolidating their respective status as powers, it is relevant to reflect on the following question: How does this struggle affect the EU and Brazil's power-seeking strategies?

The purpose of this paper is therefore to investigate, in a critical perspective based on an alternative conception of power, how biofuel can be mobilized as a foreign policy tool in an important emerging area of global environmental governance, through the notion of norms ideas and material capacities diffusion⁵. The analysis will cover a period of 11 years, going back to EU –Brazil's first strategic partnership (SP) on renewable energy in 2007 to the more recent trade negotiations in 2018. This article will focus on the EU-Brazil bioethanol relationship

³ In Europe, ethanol is normally produced from agricultural sources such wheat, maize, barley, rye, triticale, and sugar beets

⁴ ePure, « What Is Renewable Ethanol? », *About ethanol*, <https://www.epure.org/about-ethanol/what-is-renewable-ethanol/> (consulted on June 10th, 2018).

⁵ COX Robert, « Social Forces, States and World Orders », in KEOHANE Robert Owen (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 225.

on interregional (EU-Mercosur) and the trilateral levels (EU, Brazil and Mozambique) and demonstrate how they can mobilize biofuel as a foreign policy tool. From a critical perspective, we will analyze the differences between the official discourse and the realities on the ground.

1. Power through influence: building models of reference

Going beyond economic strategies, both the EU and Brazil deploy intangible assets of power to increase their political influence in international affairs. Such influence is based on both the image they seek to project on the international scene (representation) and on other international actors' perceptions (external recognition)⁶. In this sense, state power is also measured by the state's ability to assert itself and to be recognized as a global reference⁷.

1.1 The EU: a green normative power?

Following the scientific debates surrounding EU's position as a normative

actor since Ian Manners first introduced the concept in 2002⁸, an important literature has addressed the central role and the leadership of the EU in global environmental policy. According to Manner, a normative power uses normative justification (ideas, values), rather than economic incentives or military forces⁹, to externalize its norms and standards in international relations. The question has been raised whether the EU could be considered as a green power as it has been exercising more leadership in global environmental governance, namely in biotechnology regulation¹⁰.

Since the 1990s, the EU has asserted itself as a reference and a pivotal actor in the environment arena¹¹. It has been innovative and progressive in a range of different areas such as greenhouse gas emissions, trading, recycling, biosafety and ecolabeling¹², and has played a leadership role in both international environmental negotiations and multilateral environmental policymaking. Furthermore, the EU has identified the concept of sustainable development as a core norm of EU's foreign policy and has been promoting it through global governance as an official goal to be integrated in all EU policies and decision-

⁶ WINTGENS Sophie, « Biotechnologies et coopération Sud-Sud : les défis liés aux OGM dans la politique brésilienne d'exportation de produits agricoles en Chine », *Études internationales*, 2013, vol. 44, n° 4, p. 541.

⁷ SANTANDER, Sebastian (coord.), *L'émergence de nouvelles puissances : vers un système multipolaire ? : Afrique du Sud, Brésil, Chine, Inde, Mexique, Russie*, Paris, Ellipses, 2009, p. 24.

⁸ MANNERS Ian, « Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms? », *Journal of Common Market Studies*, n° 2, vol. 40, 2002, pp. 235-258.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ FALKNER Robert, « The European Union as a 'Green Normative Power'? EU Leadership in International Biotechnology Regulation », *Center*

for European Studies, Working Paper, Series #140, 2006, <http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~ces/publications/docs/pdfs/Falkner.pdf> (consulted on November 6th, 2018)

¹¹ EU played a constructive role at the 1992 UN Conference on Environmental and Development, and the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development; and a leading role in pushing the adoption of Cartagena Protocol on Biodiversity (2003) and Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change (1998).

¹² FALKNER Robert, « The political economy of 'normative power' Europe: EU environmental leadership in international biotechnology regulation », *Journal of European Public Policy*, n° 4, vol. 14, 2007, pp. 507-526.

making processes and mobilized through a series of instruments¹³. Since the recent withdrawal of the United States, under Donald Trump's government, as a leader in the environmental arena, the EU has attempted to strengthening its reputation as a normative power and a reference in global environmental policy. However, Robert Falkner suggests that EU's normative identity must be understood within a specific historical framework and connected to its domestic political and economic forces¹⁴.

1.2 Brazil's biofuel diplomacy

On the other hand, Brazil is considered as an agricultural power thanks to its agrarian performance, the rapid development of its agro-industries and the internationalization of its agribusinesses. Furthermore, Brazil is a pioneer in biofuel, as it promoted the use of first generation ethanol produced from sugar cane to reduce the use and dependence on fossil fuels as a response to the 1973 oil crisis. It also institutionalized a national program called Pró-Álcool to finance this transition in the automobile sector.

Since then, Brazil has managed to develop a substantial technological and scientific expertise in agriculture for biofuel production. The modernization of its agriculture is mainly due to the success the

Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation's (Embrapa) research and technological innovations, specifically regarding soy farming in tropical conditions. Doing so, Embrapa has contributed to the transformation of the Brazilian savanna, *Cerrado*, previously considered as non-arable and marginal crop lands, into a rich fertile agricultural area providing 70% of the country's agrarian production. Embrapa has also developed a specific technology for biofuel production derived from sugarcane, which has contributed to make Brazil the world's second largest producer and consumer of biofuels (7.32 billion gallons were produced in 2017) and the largest global bioethanol exporter¹⁵.

Under Lula's government (2003-2011), Brazil had been highly involved in environment, sustainable development, and renewable energy issues¹⁶ on the international arena both with Southern countries and more traditional partners. Brazil has supported investment and research on biofuels in several international forums, arguing it would engender many benefits for developing countries, among them energy security, new sectors of foreign investments, employment creation, economic growth, reduction of green gas

¹³ VOGLER John, « The European Contribution to Global Environmental Governance », *International Affairs*, n° 4, vol. 81, 2005, pp. 835-850.

¹⁴ FALKNER Robert, « The political economy of 'normative power' Europe », *op. cit.* p. 14.

¹⁵ VOEGELE Erin, « Brazil establishes national biofuels policy », *Biomass magazine*, January 2nd 2018, <http://biomassmagazine.com/articles/14948/brazil-establishes-national-biofuels-policy>, (consulted on October 14th 2018).

¹⁶ Brazil launched and hosted the new Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), participated to many Conferences of Parties to the United Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP), signed to Kyoto Protocol (2001), hosted any conferences (8th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the 3rd meeting of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (2007), the International Conference on Biofuel in Sao Paulo (2008), etc.

emissions, and sustainable development¹⁷. Therefore, Brazil has been exporting and diffusing its expertise, ideas and material capacities regarding agriculture and biofuel production through South-South cooperation (SSC) initiatives. Emerging powers, including Brazil, promote SSC as a solidarity model of cooperation based on the promotion of equal partnerships and horizontal relationships with the intent to create mutually beneficial economic development for both the emerging donors and the recipients as part of a 'win-win' strategy¹⁸. Such projects are based on local demands and guided by the principles of national sovereignty, national ownership, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs¹⁹. SSC is a part of a greater holistic approach of development aid, which integrates trade and investment flows and has economic growth and industrial productivity as its two main objectives²⁰. Brazil's SSC strategy has been identified as a foreign policy priority under Lula's government, first in Latin America, then in Africa in the name of a 'solidarity

¹⁷ FAGUNDES VISENTINI Paulo G. and REIS DA SILVA André Luiz, « Brazil and the economic, political, and environmental multilateralism: the Lula years (2003-2010) », *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, n° SPE, vol. 53, 2010, pp. 54-72.

¹⁸ CHATURVEDI Sachin, FUES Thomas, and SIDIROPOULOS Elizabeth, *Development Cooperation and Emerging Powers*, Chicago, Zed Books, 2012, 288 p.

¹⁹ United Nations Office for South South Cooperation, « What is South South Cooperation », *UNPD*, http://unosscl.undp.org/sscexpo/content/ssc/about/what_is_ssc.htm (consulted on September 15th, 2014).

²⁰ W. CUSSON, Gabrielle, and CULPI Ludmila, « The BRICS New Development Bank: a China-led challenge to the Western Hegemony? », In E., Woertz (ed.), *Reconfiguration of the Global*

diplomacy'²¹, which, according to its narrative, is not based on commercial interests.

In this context, Brazil has been diffusing its model of development in Africa through technical knowledge transfer, training, exchange of best practices and private sector investment to support its food and energy security²² throughout South-South and trilateral cooperation. Through its 'ethanol diplomacy'²³, Brazil is trying to influence the overall agriculture and biofuel cooperation governance and to promote the idea that the energy source is the key to development. Brazil is also strengthening its image and reputation as a responsible and well-intentioned actor capable of representing the interests of Southern states.

2. EU-MERCOSUR's sensitive trade relationship

Since 2016, the EU has been negotiating a trade agreement with the four members of Mercosur as part of a bi-

South: Africa and Latin America and the 'Asian century', London, Routledge, 2016, p. 109.

²¹ MUGGAH Robert and PASSARELLI HAMANN Eduarda, « Le Brésil et sa généreuse diplomatie : un dragon amical ou un tigre de papier ? », *Revue internationale de politique de développement*, vol. 3, 2012, <https://poldev.revues.org/955#quotation> (consulted on November 9th, 2014).

²² CABRAL Lidia, SHANKLAND Alex, FAVARETO Arilson and COSTA VAZ Alcides, « Brazil–Africa Agricultural Cooperation Encounters: Drivers, Narratives and Imaginaries of Africa and Development », *IDS Bulletin*, 2013, n° 4, vol. 44, 2013, p. 5.

²³ AFIONIS Stavros and al., « Unpacking Brazil's Leadership in the Global Biofuels Arena: Brazilian Ethanol Diplomacy in Africa », *Global Environmental Politics*, n° 3, vol. 16, 2016, p. 128.

regional association agreement. Previous negotiations had occurred between 2010 and 2012 and current trade relations are based on the inter-regional Framework Cooperation Agreement of 1999.

Mercosur represents the world's 7th largest economy. The EU is Mercosur's biggest trading partner (21,8 % of foreign trade in 2016). In 2016, the EU's exports to the Mercosur's members were up to 41.5 billion euros (machinery: 28%, transport equipment: 17%, chemicals and pharmaceutical products: 24%). The same year, Mercosur's exports to the EU reached €40,6 billion, among which the biggest exports are agricultural products (foodstuffs, beverages and tobacco: 24%, vegetable products – including soy and coffee: 18%, meats and other animal products: 6%). Furthermore, the EU exported for €20 billion of services to Mercosur in 2014; the EU is the biggest foreign investor in the region (€387 billion in 2014) and Mercosur also invested in the EU, with stocks of €115 billion in 2014²⁴. A new trade agreement would benefit EU companies as it would eliminate very high customs duties in key sectors (cars and parts, machinery, chemicals, pharmaceuticals) and services (information technology, telecommunications, business services and transport). The current negotiations cover various issues, including sustainable development and agriculture.

For some agricultural products, EU and Mercosur are complementary, but for

²⁴ European Commission, «EU-MERCOSUR Association Agreement: a vast economic potential, building bridges for open trade and Sustainable Development », February 18th, 2018, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/regions/mercosur/> (consulted on May 22nd, 2018).

others, such as sugar, beef, poultry and ethanol, negotiations are more difficult since they've been identified as sensitive products for the EU, meaning that, according to the Doha Round, they are subject to tariff rate quotas, a quantitative threshold for imports of protected domestic product²⁵, limiting local market access.

In the current trade talks, 11 EU Member States have called for sensitive products to be withdrawn from the negotiations. However, during the trade round with Mercosur in October 2017, the European Commission offered an import quota of 600 000 tons of ethanol, including 200 000 for transport fuel. Brazil considers this quota insufficient whereas the EU members have mainly justified their protectionist position on environmental standards and norms.

1.1 Sustainable bioethanol: From local to global

As part of EU-wide goal to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030, the European Strategy for Low-Emission Mobility aims to decarbonize the transport sector. Most vehicles in Europe currently run on a mix of fossil fuels, biofuel and electricity. In 2009, the Renewable Energy Directive (RED I) laid down a new policy with a series of objectives for 2020 regarding the production and promotion of energy from renewable sources, among which EU use of

²⁵ Doha World Trade Organization Ministerial, World Trade Organization, signed in Qatar, November 20th 2001, https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min01_e/mindecl_e.htm (consulted on May 24th, 2018).

renewable energy should reach 20% of and 10% in transport fuel²⁶.

Biofuels (whether bioethanol, biodiesel or biogas) are made from living matter, usually plants (palm oil, rapeseed, soya), and have been proven to be cleaner and to produce less carbon dioxide than fuels²⁷. They are sources of renewable energies that can help the EU countries meet their 10% target in transport. RED I has established a list of sustainability criteria that guarantees carbon savings and protects biodiversity for all biofuels produced or consumed in the EU;

- “Biofuels must achieve greenhouse gas savings of at least 35% in comparison to fossil fuels. This savings requirement rises to 50% in 2017. In 2018, it rises again to 60% but only for new production plants. All life cycle emissions are taken into account when calculating greenhouse gas savings. This includes emissions from cultivation, processing, and transport.
- Biofuels cannot be grown in areas converted from land with previously high carbon stock such as wetlands or forests.
- Biofuels cannot be produced from raw materials obtained from land with high biodiversity such as primary forests or highly biodiverse grasslands”

However, some criticism has been made regarding these criteria, on the basis that ‘hidden carbon emissions’ from indirect land-use change (ILUC) are not considered, as biofuel production engenders food production displacement, which forces

²⁶ Directive 2009/28 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of April 23rd 2009 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and amending and subsequently repealing Directives, May 5th 2009, *Official Journal of the European Union*, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal->

[content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009L0028&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009L0028&from=EN) (consulted on June 9th, 2018).

²⁷ HANAKI Keisuke and PORTUGAL-PEREIRA Joana, «The Effect of Biofuel Production on Greenhouse Gas Emission Reductions », In TAKEUCHI Kazuhiko & al. (ed), *Biofuels and Sustainability: Holistic Perspectives for Policy-Making*, Tokyo, Springer Japan, 2018, pp. 53-71.

farmers to fall back on carbon-rich lands such as forests and peatlands²⁸.

Since 2016, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council have been negotiating for a revised Renewable Energy Directive policy (RED II) to establish the EU as a global leader in renewable energy. They've recently agreed, on June 14th 2018, on new targets for 2030, aiming to increase EU's renewable energy consumption up to 32%, with a revision clause by 2023²⁹. Regarding biofuels, and based on high ILUC, the agreement aims to reduce the cap of first-generation biofuels (crop and food-based) in EU transport sector fuel from 7% in 2020 to 3.5% to encourage the use of second-generation biofuels (made of agricultural residues) which deliver less ILUC³⁰. So after years of promoting first-generation biofuel, this policy change will engender a decrease in local demand and local production, meaning that European bioethanol market will shrink. This provides another argument to those opposed to the opening European markets to Brazilian ethanol.

²⁸ WHITE Samuel, « Biofuel debate a political hot potato as EU renewable energy law nears home straight », *Euractiv*, October 2nd, 2017, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/biofuel-debate-a-political-hot-potato-as-renewable-energy-debate-nears-the-home-straight/> (consulted on May 22nd, 2018).

²⁹ European Commission, « Europe leads the global clean energy transition: Commission welcomes ambitious agreement on further renewable energy development in the EU », *Press release*, June 14th, 2018, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release-STATEMENT-18-4155_en.htm (consulted on October 14th, 2018).

1.2 EU-Brazil-Africa cooperation

biofuel

However, the EU and Brazil have shared a relatively important bilateral relationship since their first bilateral summit in Lisbon in 2007. Their various SP agreements have addressed several international development and governance issues, such as development cooperation, multilateralism, trade, and climate change.

The second EU-Brazil summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 2008 established a Joint Action Plan that set ground rules and principles for trilateral cooperation³¹ between the EU, Brazil and Africa in key areas such as environment, sustainable development, and biofuels production.

The third EU-Brazil Summit, held in Stockholm in October 2009, laid ground for joint actions to deploy renewable energy projects in Africa, including the production of biofuels. This initiative was aligned with their commitment toward the International Biofuels Forum (IBF), a 2007 initiative from the IBSA forum (Brazil, China, India and South Africa), the United States and the European Commission, that aims to “create a world market for alternative fuels”³² for developed and developing countries. The

³⁰ « Advanced ethanol (...) is produced by using agricultural residues such as straw, non-food ligno-cellulosic materials and waste ». ePure, « What Is Renewable Ethanol? », *op. cit.*

³¹ Triangular or trilateral development cooperation refers to a partnership between a traditional donor, an emerging power and a recipient country, and relies on SSC principles.

³² United Nations, « Press conference launching international biofuels forum », Press conference, New York, March 2nd, 2007, https://www.un.org/press/en/2007/070302_Biofuels.doc.htm (consulted on May 18th, 2018)

fourth EU-Brazil Summit Joint Statement, held in Brasilia in 2010, announced a more specific and concrete cooperation for sustainable development of bio-energy Africa, taking into account social, environmental and economic components to counter climate change, poverty, and food and energy insecurity. Following this statement, a first project was launched in Mozambique, a country well positioned for biofuel production and agriculture cooperation, due to the abundance of its subsoil, the extend to its uncultivated lands, its low population density, and its favorable climate to tropical crops, including soy and sugarcane³³. This bioenergy pact aims to increase the efficiency of biodiesel, bioelectricity, and biofuels production by agricultural intensification. Since then, a feasibility study for project implementation has been underway³⁴. However, biofuel production in Mozambique has been subject to much criticism from Mozambican civil society, which has denounced environmental and social impacts, such as land grabbing, rural exodus, small farmer marginalization, and the imposition of monocultures for exportation³⁵. Since then, the EU has been more reticent to further pursue the project³⁶.

³³ THALER Kai, «Brazil, Biofuels, and Food Security in Mozambique», in CHERU Fantu et MODI Renu, (ed.), *Agricultural Development and Food Security in Africa: The Impact of Chinese, Indian and Brazilian Investments*, Chicago, Zed Books, 2013, p. 7.

³⁴ AFIONIS Stavros and al., «Unpacking Brazil's Leadership in the Global Biofuels Arena», *op. cit.*, p. 136.

³⁵ CABRAL Lidia and al., «Brazil's Agricultural Politics in Africa: More Food International and the Disputed Meanings of 'Family Farming'», *op. cit.*, p. 54.

3. A power-seeking strategy

Despite EU promotion of environmental norms and Brazil's ethanol diplomacy and solidarity, national political and commercial interests dominate the EU-Brazil bioethanol relationship.

3.1 An interest-based approach

To project itself as a normative green power, the EU has been promoting global sustainability values in its foreign policy agenda. From a political economy point of view, it seems like commercial interests lay behind Europe's normative discourse and identity construction.

Indeed, in the context of the EU-Mercosur trade talks, the EU argues that opening its market to Brazilian bioethanol would; 1) contradict its efforts to increase domestic renewable energy sources in transport; 2) kill incentives to invest in new technology; 3) create negative environmental impacts, since bioethanol is not "produced under the same conditions" or meet the same standards³⁷. However, the objective of imposing high tariffs on bioethanol is to limit imports, thereby protecting the interest of national industries and European farmers³⁸. Doing so, the EU

³⁶ AFIONIS Stavros and STRINGER Lindsay C., «The Environment as a Strategic Priority in the European Union–Brazil Partnership: Is the EU Behaving as a Normative Power or Soft Imperialist?», *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, n° 1, vol. 14, p. 49.

³⁷ WHITE Samuel, «Biofuel debate a political hot potato as EU renewable energy law nears home straight», *op. cit.*, p. 6.

³⁸ AFIONIS Savros and STRINGER, Lindsay C., «The Environment as a Strategic Priority in the European Union–Brazil Partnership: Is the EU

is refusing to open its “heavily subsidized” and “largely inefficient biodiesel-dominated market”³⁹ to Southern ethanol producers who could provide a sustainable solution to renewable energy related issues. These protectionist measures seem incoherent with EU’s normative rhetoric regarding global sustainable development.

It is also interesting to underline that EU-Brazil trade relations are asymmetrical, in the sense that the EU appears to have a stronger negotiating position; while Brazil only accounts for 2% of total EU’s trade, the EU is Brazil main trading partner, representing almost 25% of its total trade⁴⁰. As demonstrated earlier, agricultural and other raw material products represent $\frac{3}{4}$ of Mercosur exports to the EU; therefore, the EU has favorable position regarding Mercosur and may be able to set the rules to its advantage for bilateral and trilateral cooperation. As Brazil is trying to maintain its negotiating position on quotas to maintain its status as a global agricultural power and a bioethanol leader through multilateralism and intraregionalism, the EU, according to Stavros Afionis and Lindsay C. Stringer, behaves as a “soft imperialist”, pursuing its national interests while communicating “normative rhetoric”⁴¹.

Behaving as a Normative Power or Soft Imperialist? », *op. cit.*, p. 59.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ AFIONIS Stavros and BAILEY Ian, « Ever Closer Partnerships? European Union Relations with Rapidly Industrializing Countries on Climate Change », in BAILEY Ian and COMPSTON Hugh (ed.), *Feeling the Heat*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 57-74.

3.2 A prestigious cooperation

On the one hand, Brazil has a major interest in exporting its bioethanol production to Europe and exporting its agricultural and technical know-how to promote biofuels in Africa, since Brasilia has long been capitalizing its competitive advantage aiming to transform the country as a global leader in bioenergy and creating a global biofuel market⁴². To achieve this goal, Brazil has promoted the specific use of sugarcane for biofuel production worldwide. By increasing the number of producing countries, Brazil hopes to increase the supply of biofuels to satisfy the continued growth in international demand. Furthermore, exporting its material capacities contribute to the construction of his status as a key player in biofuel production and energy development in Africa.

Brazil’s commercial and private interests are also at stake. Regarding biofuels, Brazilian ethanol is subject to high EU tariffs, but the production of biofuels by Brazilian companies in Africa, and namely in Mozambique, would benefit from lower taxes and preferential access to EU markets. Therefore, the profit from trade would be greater for nationalized Brazilian companies such as Cosan or Copersucar. Other Brazilian multinationals are already in Sub-Saharan Africa. Petrobras has

⁴¹ AFIONIS Stavros and STRINGER Lindsay C., « The Environment as a Strategic Priority in the European Union–Brazil Partnership: Is the EU Behaving as a Normative Power or Soft Imperialist? », *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁴² GUIMARÃES DALGAARD Klaus, « The Energy Statecraft of Brazil: Promoting Biofuels to African Countries », *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 13, n° 2, 2017, pp. 317-337.

acquired exploitation rights on Mozambican land to create its first biofuels factory⁴³. Vale, the Brazilian mining company, financed an “agro-climatic zoning in Mozambique that aimed to assess the agricultural potential of different zones”⁴⁴. This analysis is also a part of the viability study to produce biofuels, as requested by the Brazilian government to deploy some agricultural projects in Mozambique, including the *ProSavana*.

On the other hand, in a globalized context where power is no longer only defined by material capacities, the EU is trying to redefine its role as a global environmental power on the international arena. Through trilateral cooperation, EU’s strategy is motivated in “search of prestige” and international recognition⁴⁵. The UE is trying to redefine its place in the global stage among emerging powers on both economic and political levels and wants to project itself internationally as a “more credible actor and a more influential partner”⁴⁶. The EU also uses triangular cooperation to develop international dialogue with emerging powers on major issues in Europe, such as climate, trade and energy.

Conclusion

This paper proposed a reflection on 1) how the struggle between the EU and Brazil regarding bioethanol trade and production could affect their own power-seeking strategies; 2) how biofuel can be used as a political tool to pursue an international projection and insertion strategy through norm, ideas, and material capacities diffusion. The EU is trying to project an image of a global green power and Brazil promotes bioethanol production in underdeveloped countries through South-South cooperation under the auspices of an ‘ethanol diplomacy’.

However, in both cases analyzed above, whether the EU-Mercosur trade-talk and trilateral cooperation projects between the EU, Brazil and Africa on biofuel production, national commercial and political interests seem to trump EU normative rhetoric on sustainable development and Brazil’s rhetoric on solidarity. Indeed, the EU makes claims for a normative orientation of its external environmental policy, but erects barriers to protect its domestic biofuel production. It prioritizes trade competitiveness and economic growth at the expense of its green ambitions, whereas. Brazil’s discourse about solidarity and bioethanol diplomacy

⁴³ SANTANDER Sebastian, « La politique africaine du Brésil : entre discours bienveillant et réalpolitik », in SANTANDER Sebastian (dir.), *L’Afrique, un nouveau terrain de jeu des puissances émergentes*, Paris, Karthala, 2014, p. 110.

⁴⁴ NOGUEIRA Isabela and OLLINAHO Ossi, « From Rhetoric to Practice in South-South Development Cooperation – A case study of Brazilian intervention in the Nacala corridor development program », *Working Paper*, Institute of Socioeconomics, University of Geneva, 2014, p. 8.

⁴⁵ SANTANDER Sebastian, « The EU and Brazil in a changing world: strategic partners or competitors? », in SMITH Michael, KEUKELEIRE Stephan and VANHOONACKER Sophie (ed.), *The Diplomatic System of the European Union Evolution, Change and Challenges*, London, Routledge, 2016, pp. 181-196.

⁴⁶ SOLE NA, 2003:15; EC, 2007b:3, in SANTANDER Sebastian, « The EU and Brazil in a changing world: strategic partners or competitors? », *op. cit.*, p. 186.

is built on a global ambition to dominate the international bioethanol market.

This puts into question EU normative green rhetoric and Brazil's ethanol diplomacy, which are both mobilized as foreign policy tools to consolidate their status as global power in a changing world order. The lack of coherence and transparency between EU and Brazil's discourse and practices, whether at bilateral, interregional or trilateral level, impede their respective political projects. Furthermore, it continues to undermine efforts of global governance in sustainable development.

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How to reference this paper:

Gabrielle W. Cusson, « EU-Brazil in Global Governance: the case of biofuels », *CEFIR Working Paper*, N° 6, December 2018, pp. 1-16.