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Global Change, Peace & Security

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2011.601853>

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Publisher: Routledge

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Global Change, Peace & Security

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cpar20>

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Available online: 05 Jan 2012

To cite this article: Antto Vihma, Yacob Mulugetta & Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen (2011): Negotiating solidarity? The G77 through the prism of climate change negotiations, *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 23:3, 315-334

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2011.601853>

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Negotiating solidarity? The G77 through the prism of climate change negotiations

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The negotiating group of developing countries, the G77, is one of the most important institutions in global climate governance. This article analyses the cohesiveness of, and internal tension within, the G77 coalition by using the politics of climate change as the empirical window. The study examines four arenas of UN-based deliberations on climate change in the years 2007–2010; the Security Council, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the General Assembly and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). We argue that these deliberations, once they reached the top of the international political agenda in 2007, and ever since, have posed deeper challenges to the G77 coalition than ever before. While developing country interests are both converging and diverging, the increasingly conflicting interests, as well as the very slowly eroding common identity, are creating increasingly unified subgroups in the G77. The G77 is highly unlikely to break up formally, but how functional it will be as a bloc in the forthcoming climate change negotiations remains an open question.

Keywords: climate change; the G77; United Nations; developing countries; global negotiations

Introduction

The developing countries – or the Third World, the South, or the Global South¹ – have undergone substantial changes as a collective in world politics since the formation of ‘the Group of 77’ (G77) in 1964. Throughout the 1990s, there was a lively debate on the relevance of the ‘Third World’ as a distinct grouping, sparked by the end of the Cold War and by accelerated globalisation.² Williams asserts that the arguments calling for ‘the demise of the Third World’ had two major weaknesses.³ First, they misrecognised the complex and dynamic process of solidarity achieved in the 1970s and 1980s as an easy and unproblematic outcome; and, second, they understated the fact that the coalition had never been homogenous, as socio-economic, cultural and political differences had been present from the outset. Williams’s view highlights that while the political and historical context of the genesis of the G77 is well known, the logic for its survival as the main body speaking and negotiating for *all* developing countries in today’s rapidly changing world is

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1 We will use these terms interchangeably and do not take a position on which is the most acceptable one. For a discussion on the difference between ‘Third World’ and ‘South’, see Adil Najam, ‘Developing Countries and Global Environmental Governance: From Contestation to Participation to Engagement’, *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 5 (2005): 303–21.

2 Marc Williams, ‘The Third World and Global Environmental Negotiations: Interests, Institutions and Ideas’, *Global Environmental Politics* 5 (2005): 48–69.

3 Ibid.

not sufficiently understood.⁴ Indeed, there is a delicate balance between political expediencies of alliance, a common identity based on a history of exclusion, and converging as well as diverging self-interests within the G77 ranks. These multiple voices are particularly loud in the climate change negotiations.

Among all the environmental issues subject to multilateral treaty negotiations, climate change has mobilised the largest share of resources and institutional effort. For developing countries, climate change and its governance is particularly important for at least three reasons. First, the impacts of climate change are now expected to be so severe for developing countries in particular that they will significantly thwart the efforts undertaken in the context of other global environmental regimes such as biodiversity and desertification, as well as the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.⁵ At the same time, many developing countries have contributed comparatively little to the problem itself, creating an issue of aggravated injustice. Second, climate change mitigation policies could provide an additional burden for developing countries struggling to develop their energy sector, improve electricity access and build infrastructure, thereby constraining their development efforts and priorities. Third, if the international community is serious about climate change mitigation, and deep emission reduction commitments are adopted by industrialised countries, the volume of the financial flows that will go from North to South through funds, existing flexible mechanisms and the emerging carbon markets could dwarf official development assistance. At the same time, there are enormous variations among developing countries' perceived self-interest, ranging from the fight for survival by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) to countries whose economies rely on fossil fuel exports, such as members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), who fear the economic impacts of mitigation actions.

Our objective in this article is to analyse the cohesiveness of, and internal tension within, the G77 coalition, using climate change as our empirical window. Thus this article updates and expands upon Williams's study in 2005.⁶ We argue that the climate deliberations, once they reached the top of the international political agenda in 2007, and ever since, have posed much deeper challenges to the coalition than ever before. We structure our analysis along two mutually supporting lines. First, we outline an analytical approach to explaining solidarity and tensions in the G77, and provide a brief history of the formation and persistence of the G77 and its role in global environmental governance. Second, we enter several arenas of UN-based deliberations on climate change in the years 2007–2010. In a descriptive section, we summarise key themes of selected meetings in the Security Council (SC), the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), the General Assembly (GA) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). We conclude with a discussion and analysis of how the diverging and converging positions relate to interest-based, normative and institutional factors, which form the basis of our analytical approach.

Framing the analysis

The division of theories in International Relations into distinct paradigms of rational choice and constructivism raises the question of whether we have to select the drivers for the behaviour of states derived from one of these, or whether we can combine drivers from different paradigms. The constructivist research is heavily influenced by anthropology and sociology, and seeks to

4 See also Jon Barnett, 'The Worst of Friends: OPEC and G77 in the Climate Regime', *Global Environmental Politics* 8, no. 4 (2008): 1–8.

5 Developing countries will be more severely impacted by climate change due to a combination of geographical and especially socio-economic factors. See IPCC, 'Fourth Assessment Report, Working Group II: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability', <http://www.ipcc.ch/>; (accessed May 2, 2011).

6 Williams, 'The Third World'.

explain the behaviour of states through cultural factors, norms, identities and habits. The rational choice paradigm has its roots in economics and public choice theory, according to which actors base their decisions on utilitarian calculation. We agree with several analysts that international regime-building is influenced by drivers from both theories.⁷ States clearly do react to incentives, as studied by rationalists, but their actions are also based on identities and norms. Without trying to merge the theoretical foundations of these paradigms, and echoing Williams, we can identify the prevailing state of G77 unity as an outcome of a mixture of (i) rational interests, (ii) an ideational and identity dimension, and (iii) institutional factors. This further means that changes in any of these factors can create new dynamics in the coalition and for this reason these factors provide our analytical approach.

Most of the recent literature on the G77 has a rationalist focus. The core assumption in the debate over South solidarity as manifested in the G77 collaboration has been that the rational interest of developing countries derives from their position in the global power structure. Underlying these arguments is a 'materialist-rationalist view', in which the basis of the 'Third World' is created by global security and economic structures.⁸ The rationalist approach has limitations as well as advantages, and these issues have been discussed by many scholars.⁹

In the issue area of global climate governance, countries negotiate on their responsibilities in mitigation and financing, governance and sources of finance, the role of market mechanisms, the adaptation framework, the international rules concerning accounting, and numerous technical issues. The utilitarian *interests* of developing countries are both converging and diverging. Differences in economic structures, levels of development, emissions and vulnerability create conditions for diverging national interests. However, the G77 is also known to have long-lasting common interests, such as opposing donor dominance in international financial mechanisms and preferring rights-based claims to resource transfers, rather than traditional 'assistance'. Group solidarity may also bring G77 members gains in terms of bargaining power, as it could increase the relative influence they, and in particular small developing countries, are able to exert in international negotiations.¹⁰ Utility-based calculations also have a geopolitical dimension, which used to divide the group along the lines of the Cold War.

In the constructivist terrain, however, G77 solidarity is also built on ideational and identity-linked factors. There is a *normative agenda* of Third World unity, sometimes referred to as 'Third Worldism'.¹¹ The 'Third World' movement was originally a reaction to the dominance of the industrialised countries in world politics.¹² Its ideological base was a refusal to 'accept a universal model of development' rather than a common political or development ideology; there was a unity that a priori accepted diversity.¹³ According to 'Third Worldism', the G77 is bound together by a 'structuralist' world view that sees inequality as a dominating feature of the global society – and this insight is carried into the climate negotiations.¹⁴ Moreover, this world view affects

7 See for example Kenneth W. Abbott and Duncan Snidal, 'Hard and Soft Law in International Governance', *International Organization* 54, no. 3 (2000): 421–56; Oran Young, *The Institutional Dimensions of Environmental Change: Fit, Interplay, and Scale* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002); Xinuan Dai, *International Institutions and National Policies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

8 Williams, 'The Third World'.

9 For an excellent summary, see Dai, *International Institutions*, 9–11.

10 Williams, 'The Third World'.

11 Mark T. Berger, 'After the Third World? History, Destiny and the Fate of Third Worldism', *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2004): 91–139.

12 Najam, 'Developing Countries'; Williams, 'The Third World'.

13 Kathryn C. Lavelle, 'Ideas within a Context of Power: The African Group in an Evolving UNCTAD', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 39, no. 1 (2001): 31.

14 Bradley C. Parks and J. Timmons Roberts, *A Climate of Injustice: Global Inequality, North–South Politics, and Climate Policy* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008). Parks and Roberts also emphasise that the world view influences the perceived interests of states, illustrating how interrelated the rational and normative factors are.

perceptions of what a fair outcome in climate negotiations would look like, and is usually linked to arguments of the historical responsibility of the North and equal per capita rights. This identity further contributes to a more general tendency to mistrust the developed world and raises concerns about the possibility of having a fair negotiation process.

Institutional factors, as we call the third grouping, emerge from earlier agreements, the content of which exerts an influence on subsequent negotiations. This argument has also been referred to as 'path dependency',¹⁵ highlighting the inert tendency to build upon the initial policy choices that were made early in the history of any regime.¹⁶ The theoretical foundations of these institutional factors, especially their relation to rational choice and constructivism, are not always clearly defined – many rationalists acknowledge the role of path dependency due to transaction costs or economies of scale, and constructivist scholars link path dependency to the 'logic of appropriateness'.¹⁷ Important institutional factors include the decision-making rules and agenda-setting of the regime.¹⁸

These three types of explanatory factors for G77 solidarity in the climate regime will resurface in our empirical analysis below. First, we deepen the contextual description of G77 dynamics by taking a brief look at its origins and how it has operated in global environmental regimes more broadly. However, this will immediately serve to further illustrate the amalgam of factors affecting G77 solidarity in the climate regime.

G77 origins and global environmental governance

In the 1950s and 1960s many countries of the South were gradually breaking away from their colonial 'associations' with European countries, and were looking to the future with great optimism in terms of rapid social and economic development. However, having inherited economies from the colonial times geared towards raw material production and other distinctive primary production characteristics, many developing countries found themselves facing what they perceived as a 'structural disadvantage' that contributed to worsening terms of trade. The creation of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as part of the aim to advance a liberal international monetary and trading system without its intended corollary, the International Trade Organisation, left poorer agriculture and minerals trading nations with hardly any regulatory body to represent their interests.¹⁹ The period was also characterised by the politically charged atmosphere of the Cold War, which had the effect of coercing countries into political alliances that were at times counter to their long-term interests, and which was not particularly sensitive to demands from smaller players.

It was against this backdrop of Southern disquiet that developing countries pushed for the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which came into being in 1964.²⁰ The push was enabled by a large number of developing countries having finally been admitted as members of the United Nations in the early 1960s. At UNCTAD, a new solidarity bloc within the Third World contingent was formed with 77

15 Stephen D. Krasner, 'Approaches to the State: Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics', *Comparative Political Studies* 16 (1984): 223–46.

16 Guy Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The 'New Institutionalism'* (London and New York: Continuum, 1999).

17 For a thorough discussion on path dependency, 'historical institutionalism', and their relation to rational choice and constructivism, see Peters, *Institutional Theory*, 63–76.

18 Lynn M. Wagner, 'North–South Divisions in Multilateral Environmental Agreements: Negotiating the Private Sector's Role in Three Rio Agreements', *International Negotiation* 12 (2007): 83–109.

19 Clair Wilcox, *A Charter for World Trade* (New York: Macmillan, 1949).

20 For a more detailed history of the formation of the G77, see, for example, Marc Williams, *Third World Cooperation: The Group of 77 in UNCTAD* (London: Pinter, 1991); Carol Geldart and Peter Lyon, 'The Group of 77: A Perspective View', *International Affairs* 57 (1980): 79–101.

founding members under the name of 'the Group of 77'.²¹ From the early 1970s onwards, G77 concerns and activities widened far beyond UNCTAD, and the G77 has become the developing countries' principal negotiating coalition in several major UN arenas, including the UN General Assembly UNGA and the environmental negotiations, and its membership has also grown to accommodate more than 130 countries. On the other hand, trade issues in particular have proved challenging for South coalitions: over time the G77 ceased to operate as a bloc in UNCTAD and it never has been a voice of the South in the GATT or WTO negotiations.²² The G77 was active in advocating reform in the international system by pushing for a New International Economic Order in the 1970s,²³ and in recent decades the group has had to change their strategies substantially as a result of the rise of liberalism, the end of the Cold War and accelerated globalisation.²⁴

The environment–development dichotomy between the North and the South surfaced in the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, where there was a collective Southern unease with the agenda tabled at the conference by developed countries.²⁵ While not couched in environmental terms, but rather closely tied to natural resource use and extraction, the origins of the conflict can be traced further back in history. Developing countries had successfully sought to establish the doctrine of 'permanent sovereignty over natural resources' in the UN in the 1950s and 1960s, and this also featured as an important aspect of the campaign for the New International Economic Order.²⁶ In the Stockholm conference, many developing country representatives, such as Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, emphasised the position that gave precedence to socio-economic development over environmental stewardship, and which viewed them as inherently competing priorities.²⁷

Since the early 1970s, environmental law-making at the international level has mushroomed, and many negotiating processes have been seen by G77 countries as serving an explicitly Northern agenda. The group has expressed common demands in the multilateral environmental negotiations: the imperative to link environment and development; the need for more financial resources for environmental programmes; the transfer of technology; the need for capacity building for both negotiation and implementation; and, finally, longer time horizons for the implementation of new regulations.²⁸ With several notable exceptions, the G77 as a group has generally been a reactive coalition within the environmental negotiation processes, characterised by the familiar posture of a 'low-key negotiating collective, maintaining a united stand without the need for much formal coordination' and reassessing 'well-established arguments on a short menu of well-rehearsed concerns'.²⁹

21 China, while listed on the G77 website as a member country, is not an official member of the G77, but a very close 'associate' or 'invitee'. However, in the UNFCCC negotiations China has always been formally aligned with the G77, and the coalition is thus called 'G77 and China' in the UNFCCC negotiations. We use 'G77' for readability.

22 Lavelle, 'Ideas within a Context of Power'; Amrita Narlikar, 'Fairness in International Trade Negotiations: Developing Countries in the GATT and WTO', *The World Economy* 29, no. 8 (2006): 1005–29.

23 In the 1970s, the economic differentiation within the G77 also accelerated; with OPEC countries becoming rapidly wealthier, with the newly industrialising countries of Asia moving into the 'semi-periphery' and with other larger states reaching 'middle power status'. See Jacqueline Braveboy-Wagner, *Institutions of the Global South* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 7–8. Such differentiation continued during the debt crisis of the 1980s and the intensifying liberalisation of trade and foreign investment of the 1990s.

24 See Braveboy-Wagner, *Institutions of the Global South*.

25 Adil Najam, 'Dynamics of the Southern Collective: Developing Countries in Desertification Negotiations', *Global Environmental Politics* 4 (2004): 128–54.

26 Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 211.

27 The Stockholm Address of Prime Minister Gandhi (1972) elaborated that 'Many of the advanced countries of today have reached their present affluence by their domination over other races and countries, the exploitation of their own masses and their own natural resources. They got a head start through sheer ruthlessness, undisturbed by feelings of compassion or by abstract theories of freedom, equality or justice.'

28 Williams, 'The Third World'.

29 Najam, 'Dynamics of the Southern Collective', 153.

At the same time, the environmental issues on the table have increasingly been of a global common property nature ('global commons'), which has given the South both a stronger negotiation position and a stronger interest in ozone, climate change and biodiversity negotiations, for example.³⁰ Governance of global environmental interdependence requires the cooperation of major developing countries because they are – or are in the process of becoming – major contributors to the degradation of the global commons. This has led to claims that the South will use this leverage to the fullest in order to strategically renegotiate economic, trade and debt issues in the spirit of the NIEO,³¹ and, indeed, some constituencies such as the South Centre are pushing for this agenda.³² However, the logic of coalition formation and G77 unity in this issue is far from evident, as both the interests and identities of developing countries vary to a considerable extent.

Negotiating climate change in multiple arenas

The literature which investigates the positions and actions of the G77 in the negotiations of multi-lateral environmental agreements is relatively limited. A handful of articles and books have analysed the G77 in specific environmental negotiation processes such as the Convention on Combating Desertification and the UNFCCC negotiations.³³ Some have discussed the G77 in the broader sense of global environmental governance across the range of multilateral environmental agreements.³⁴ The methodological approach in these studies – none of which cover the period after 2007 – is not always clearly described, but seems to involve observing the negotiations (unclear whether from a distance or on-site), literature reviews, as well as interviews in some cases.

Our analysis focuses on the period from 2007 to 2009 when a number of developments in the science and politics of climate change helped propel the issue to the highest level on the international agenda. We also touch upon the latest developments in the UNFCCC in 2010. In this period a great deal of attention was attached to global climate governance as it had finally reached the top of the international agenda. The intention of the 2007–2009 negotiations was to agree on the continuation of UN-based climate governance with a 'post-2012 agreement' – a schedule which would leave no gap between the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol ending in 2012, and the entry into force of the future climate regime. Moreover, climate change was deliberated in a number of other UN arenas including the UN Security Council, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the UN General Assembly. Including these deliberations in the analysis gives us the potential to identify the common and contrasting faces of the G77 and its member countries across diverse arenas. The UNFCCC arena is the one where negotiations are centred on devising and implementing legally-binding agreements, international law in its 'hard' form. The legal characteristics of the outcome are quite different in arenas such as the

30 Marian Miller, *The Third World in Global Environmental Politics* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995).

31 Mukund Govin Rajan, *Global Environmental Politics: India and The North–South Politics of Global Environmental Issues* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 2–4.

32 An influential think tank based in Geneva, the South Centre's line has remained very stable over the years: see 'Environment and Development – Towards a Common Strategy of the South in the UNCED Negotiations and Beyond' (Geneva: South Centre, 1991); 'Promoting the Development of the South in the Trade and Climate Regimes' (Geneva: South Centre, 2008).

33 Najam, 'Dynamics of the Southern Collective'; Joyeeta Gupta, *The Climate Change Convention and Developing Countries – From Conflict to Consensus?* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997); Sjur Kasa, Anne Gullberg, and Gørdil Heggelund, 'The Group of 77 in the International Climate Negotiations: Recent Developments and Future Directions', *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 8, no. 2 (2008): 113–27. Miller, *The Third World*, looks at the role and positions of the 'Third World' in three specific regime formations – ozone depletion, hazardous waste and biodiversity – but does not analyse the role or the dynamics within the G77 explicitly. Her conclusion is that across these regimes the 'Third World' had no significant divergence of interests, but there was substantial divergence in how salient the issues were for individual developing countries.

34 Miller, *The Third World*; Najam, 'Developing Countries'; Tim O'Riordan and Andrew Jordan, 'The Group of 77 and Global Environmental Politics', *Global Environmental Change* 7 (1997): 295–308; Williams, 'The Third World'.

CSD and the GA. Yet they can still be considered part of international norm development in the large territory referred to as 'soft law'. Soft law is expected – in theory at least – to provide a less charged, discursive arena for exploring individual country priorities and mutual learning.³⁵

Our main empirical material consists of the official statements made by the G77 coalition, sub-coalitions and individual G77 member states during the listed events (see Table 1), complemented by on-site observation of the open parts of the negotiations during the CSD meeting in New York and the UNFCCC meetings in Bali, Poznan and Copenhagen.³⁶ The individual country statements represent the priorities of each member state of the coalition, which have been prepared either by diplomatic staff in New York (especially in the case of the CSD and UNGA) or by ministry staff in the respective countries. By comparing the statements of the group, subgroups³⁷ and individual member states we are able to map out the common positions as well as the lines of divergence in views and priorities, at least as far as they were portrayed to wider audiences. The actual negotiation positions in corridors and in closed sessions may, of course, differ from these statements to some extent.

Meetings and outcomes

The results of the analysis are presented in two stages. The first four sections below summarise the deliberations from the perspective of G77 unity and disagreement in each meeting in chronological order (as in Table 1). In the next section we identify major themes of the analysis across the four different arenas.

The Security Council: the new platform for climate deliberations

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the organ of the UN tasked with the maintenance of international peace and security. The powers of the SC are exercised through resolutions, which, when made under Chapter VII, are considered legally binding. In its role as holder of the rotating presidency of the UNSC, the United Kingdom introduced a day-long debate on 16 April 2007 to explore the relationship between climate, energy and security. This was the first time climate change had been explicitly discussed within the UNSC.

The issue of the changing climate and its effect on security in its broader meaning or on the concept of human security is neither a new nor a radical idea within the circles of academia or think tanks. However, the UNSC meeting was both unprecedented and risky. Forcing this discussion in an arena where parties are accustomed to dealing with immediate peace and security concerns ran the risk of alienating some of the members as well as non-members who may already have harboured misgivings about the effectiveness, and indeed fairness, of some UNSC decisions in the past. Some countries saw the UK initiative as a shrewd way to change the rules, institutional boundaries and the focus of future negotiations on climate change, particularly on the awkward question of responsibility. For example, Egypt insisted that all parties, developed and developing, should implement their commitments according to the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities', and, by initiating the climate and security discussion in the UNSC, the UK was seeking to promote the principle of 'shared responsibilities'. This statement was echoed by a number of representatives from the G77, especially from emerging economies and OPEC nations.

35 For a discussion on the potential benefits of soft law, see, for example, Abbott and Snidal, 'Hard and Soft Law'; Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Antto Vihma, 'Comparing the Legitimacy and Effectiveness of Global Hard and Soft Law: An Analytical Framework', *Regulation and Governance* 9, no. 3 (2009): 400–420.

36 In addition to these Conferences of Parties, we also participated in UNFCCC intersessional meetings in Vienna (2007), Bonn (2008), Bonn II (2009), Bonn III (2009) and Barcelona (2009), Bonn I (2010), Bonn III (2010), as well as Conference of Parties 16 COP-16 in 2010.

37 See Table 2 for an overview of the most relevant G77 subgroups in the UN climate change negotiations.

Table 1. Climate meetings during 2007–09 covered in the analysis.

Arena	Date	Place	Sources
Security Council	16 Apr 2007	New York	Summary available at http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/sc9000.doc.htm
Commission on SD	30 Apr–11 May 2007	New York	Following negotiations on-site. Statements available at http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd15/statements.htm
General Assembly	24 Sep 2007	New York	Statements available at http://www.un.org/webcast/climatechange/highlevel/index.asp?go=c070924
UNFCCC COP 13	3–14 Dec 2007	Bali	Following negotiations on-site. Meeting documents available at http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_13/items/4049.php
UNFCCC COP 14	1–12 Dec 2008	Poznan	Following negotiations on-site. Statements available at http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_14/statements/items/4662.php
General Assembly	22 Sep 2009	New York	Statements available at http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/climatechange/lang/en/pages/2009summit
UNFCCC COP 15	7–18 Dec 2009	Copenhagen	Following negotiations on-site. Statements available at http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_15/statements/items/5087.php

The developing country statements were largely focused on whether the SC was a legitimate arena for discussing climate change.³⁸ There were two main orientations that questioned the legitimacy of the UNSC. First, there were countries such as China, South Africa and Brazil which argued that there was a more relevant connection to be made between climate change and development, but the link between climate and security was hard to pin down given the difficulty of tracing conflicts back to a single cause. The second orientation was overtly political in the sense that some countries – such as Venezuela, Cuba, Sudan and to a lesser extent India – argued for transparency of the UNSC and raised the alarm about its encroachment upon the functions and powers of the GA, the Economic and Social Council and other UN organs.

However, a number of individual G77 members eschewed questioning the legitimacy of the UNSC in climate-related matters. Several countries from AOSIS and sub-Saharan Africa made the case that they were likely to face massive dislocations of people as a result of sea level rises and drought, and that such displacement would have an effect on the social cohesion and identity of those countries that receive migrating peoples. For example, Ghana and Namibia supported the UK initiative as a positive development in bringing the most prestigious body of the UN system into the climate debate. Their statements also reflected different types of security issues, ranging from the potential problems posed by ‘environmental refugees’ to cases where ecological crises (desertification) could escalate the level of conflict between pastoralists and farmers.

The Commission on Sustainable Development: bringing energy to the centre

The CSD is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council. It was established in 1993 via the GA on the recommendation of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.³⁹

38 It is worth noting that the event not only received a frosty response from members of the G77, but also from the USA and Russia.
39 The CSD mandate is to monitor and review the implementation of Rio outcomes – primarily Agenda 21 and its later developments – and make recommendations to the GA.

In the 2006/2007 cycle, CSD-14 and CSD-15 addressed four themes: energy for sustainable development, air pollution/atmosphere, industrial development and climate change. The negotiations on climate change were regarded by many parties as redundant since the UNFCCC should be the main arena for the climate issue. The second week of CSD-15 even coincided with a UNFCCC session in Bonn, to which many delegates duly travelled. Instead, energy became the focal point of the CSD-15 meeting and the main bone of contention, particularly within the G77 coalition. However, climate change clearly provided a permanent backdrop to the negotiations on energy.

The G77 made a number of joint statements to the meeting, expressing their usual positions, including the need for financial resources and technology transfer, and urging developed countries to honour their earlier commitments in these and related areas. The joint and individual country statements also showed a considerable degree of unity within and beyond the G77 on the role of energy in reducing poverty and in achieving many of the Millennium Development Goals. Furthermore, there was unanimous recognition of the need to address climate change, with many countries referring to specific events which demonstrated that climate change was happening in the here and now. There was also strong support for promoting energy efficiency, as it was seen to represent a win-win situation for both the economy and the environment. When the direct negotiations on the energy theme got underway, however, internal G77 disagreement ensued, with the overriding issue being the future role of different energy sources. The G77 repeatedly broke up and postponed negotiations in order to reach a common position among themselves first. Disunity within the G77 seems to have centred on two major themes: firstly in relation to the balance between fossil fuels and renewable sources of energy, and secondly over the issue of nuclear power as an energy source.

The Chair released a compromise text on the last day which had to be accepted in full or rejected. The G77 and the USA accepted the text, but the EU and Switzerland rejected it because it was weak, particularly in terms of institutionalising a review of the decisions taken. Thus, instead of a decision, the meeting resulted in a Chair's Summary.⁴⁰ This was the first time in the CSD's fifteen-year history that no agreement on a decision text was forthcoming. Clearly, a sizeable faction in the G77 had hoped for a stronger text, but their voices were not strong enough to influence the outcome.

Climate change at the heart of the UN: the General Assembly

The UN General Assembly, established in 1945, is one of the five principal organs of the UN system and the only one within which all members have equal representation. This makes it the UN's main deliberative, policy-making and representative organ where the full spectrum of international issues are discussed and non-binding recommendations are made in the form of GA Resolutions. The impact of the GA events on climate change in 2007 and 2009 was intended to advance a post-2012 agreement by 'infusing this process [UNFCCC] with political momentum'.⁴¹

The meetings were structured along four parallel thematic plenaries on mitigation, adaptation, technology and innovation, and financing. In all the plenaries, a number of common areas of discussion were raised among G77 members. These included (i) the question of how to fund adaptation and mitigation initiatives, (ii) the 'sanctity' of the common but differentiated responsibilities principle, (iii) Northern responsibility in mitigation efforts, (iv) the relationship between economic growth and climate-related factors, (v) access to energy and the nature of a

40 Summary of the Fifteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development: April 30–May 11, 2007, Earth Negotiations Bulletin 5 (2007).

41 Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Welcome Address, UNGA, 2007.

low-carbon future, and (vi) the ongoing challenges in technology transfer. The statements were rather general and repetitive, and consisted of virtually no new positions or initiatives. A notable exception was China announcing its unilateral carbon intensity target for 2020 in the GA event of 2009.

Funding and technology transfer for both mitigation and adaptation measures received significant emphasis. On the mitigation side, most statements revolved around the issue of financing clean energy. Many G77 countries, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, argued in favour of scaling up the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) to drive their development activities. Many of the arguments were based on the view that Northern countries have a historical responsibility to take the lead in mitigation efforts and an obligation to support developing countries in their adaptation efforts.

The climate regime: UNFCCC meetings

We observed three main negotiation sessions under the UNFCCC in the period 2007–2009: the 13th Conference of the Parties (COP) in Bali in December 2007, the 14th COP in Poznan in December 2008, and the 15th COP in Copenhagen in December 2009.

A major part of the two years of intense negotiations for a post-2012 agreement was spent arguing over procedural issues. These included extensive deliberation on the linkages between the two negotiation tracks, one of which is under the Convention and the other under the Kyoto Protocol; deliberation on the exact mandates of certain contact groups and on the contact groups' relation to the principles of the UNFCCC; repetitive disputes over whether a 'friends of the Chair' group should be convened or negotiations carried out solely in the plenary setting, and disagreement on whether the Chair should be given a mandate to prepare a streamlined 'Chair's text'.⁴²

In the Bali conference and the negotiations prior to it, the proposals from the North called for new 'comprehensive negotiations' under the Convention. This drew quite different responses from various countries in the South. Some countries, such as Saudi Arabia and the OPEC countries, supported by Malaysia, wanted the informal dialogue on long-term cooperative action which had started in 2006 to continue as an informal exchange but opposed formal negotiations, while others were strongly in favour of launching a new round of formal negotiations under the Convention. Even in the Vienna meeting before COP-13 in Bali, countries such as Brazil, Chile and South Africa had supported entering a formal negotiation process. China wanted the dialogue to continue informally for two more years, and India reminded delegates several times that the dialogue 'was not supposed to lead to any new commitments'.⁴³ At the Bali meeting China (and the USA) finally agreed to launch a formal process as early as the first week, while India waited until the high-level segment of the meeting to voice its agreement.

The real test of G77 unity in the UNFCCC was undoubtedly the Copenhagen COP-15 – the perceived deadline for a post-2012 agreement, and the biggest and most anticipated climate meeting in history. Not surprisingly, the first public disagreement within the G77 group in Copenhagen was over procedure and legal form, specifically over whether to set up talks to consider a new legally-binding protocol. A contact group was initiated by the COP president, strongly advocated by AOSIS, and supported by many Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and African countries, in order to push for a maximally-binding and ambitious agreement.⁴⁴ China, India

42 A contact group is the term for a formal meeting on a certain agenda item. Informal meetings are usually referred to as bilateral consultations, or 'friends of the chair' consultations in a larger group.

43 Vienna intersessional meeting, August 27, 2007.

44 Many of the vocal G77 subgroups are overlapping in their membership; for example many LDCs are African countries, as is BASIC member South Africa. Most AOSIS members are G77 countries, but not all, such as Tuvalu. See Table 2 for clarification.

Table 2. The active subgroups in the G77 and China in the UNFCCC negotiations.

BASIC	The emerging economies of China, India, Brazil and South Africa. The BASIC group started to coordinate climate positions during the 2009 ministerial meetings, although Sino-Indian coordination has a long heritage in the climate regime. BASIC countries resist Northern pressure to have mitigation actions that are subject to international verification, but also advance their domestic climate change programmes.
LDCs	The Group of 49 Least Developed Countries, whose 'special situation' is officially recognised by the UNFCCC provisions. The recognition of the special needs of the least developed countries within the G77 coalition dates right back to 1967. LDC interventions in the climate negotiations emphasise vulnerability and adaptation needs in a relatively general way.
African Group	The 53 member states of the African Union. African countries have significantly tightened their climate cooperation in the period of this study, resulting in submissions to the UNFCCC, ministerial declarations, and protests such as walkouts in the Barcelona and Copenhagen meetings. The African Group is a mixed group that includes radical demanders of climate justice as well as more moderate countries, one BASIC country, many LDCs and some OPEC members.
AOSIS	The Alliance of 42 Small Island States, including some non-G77 members such as Tuvalu and Singapore. AOSIS has been an active coalition since the start of the climate talks in 1991. United by a sense of urgency and vulnerability, AOSIS emphasises ambitious targets, overall effectiveness and the environmental integrity of the climate regime, as well as adaptation needs.
ALBA	The Bolivarian Alliance of Latin American countries, through which Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Cuba and Nicaragua coordinate climate change positions. The ALBA group is a newcomer to the climate talks, activated during the 2009 negotiations. The countries emphasise radical equity, democracy in the negotiations and Northern responsibility in climate mitigation, framed in anti-American and anti-colonial rhetoric.
OPEC	The Group of 12 oil-exporting countries, led by Saudi Arabia. OPEC has been a very unified, well-resourced and strategic subgroup, often playing an obstructionist role in the climate talks. OPEC countries do not usually make group statements but operate discretely.

and many member states of OPEC were opposed to setting up the group, seeing it as premature and asserting that the focus should instead be on the 'the very valid system of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol'.⁴⁵ Brazil and South Africa expressed no clear position in the heated debate.

In the last week of the Copenhagen meeting, a rather fundamental division in the negotiating tactics and strategies of the G77 members emerged. Several G77 members, including the Sudanese Chair, did not agree to informal 'friends of the Chair' consultations, even in situations where Heads of States and Governments were arriving while the text was still too contentious to be delivered to them. Sudan – supported by countries such as Bolivia, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Nigeria, Angola and The Gambia – blocked closed informal negotiations and demanded separate open, inclusive drafting groups to continue on both tracks, as well as 'assurances that no other processes or consultations ... [would] be established'.⁴⁶ This procedural blockage was publicly opposed by several G77 members – such as South Africa, Maldives, Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru, Guatemala and Grenada (on behalf of AOSIS) – who wished to utilise simultaneous 'friends of the Chair' consultations in both tracks to try to break the deadlock. Overall, the response to the 'friends of the Chair' proposal revealed roughly the same divisions as the legal form debate

45 In the plenary session, the Chair's proposal was supported by AOSIS, Costa Rica, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Togo, Kenya, Mali, Burkina Faso, and less explicitly by Rwanda, The Gambia, and Niger on behalf of the Sahel Countries. The proposal was opposed by China, India, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Algeria, Bahrain, Botswana, Libya, Syria, Venezuela, Nigeria, Ecuador, Chad and United Arab Emirates.

46 Delegation of Sudan, UNFCCC COP-15, December 16, 2009.

earlier, with Sudan, ALBA and OPEC countries – with implicit support from China and India – positioning themselves against AOSIS and several LDCs, South Africa and some Latin American countries. From a Northern perspective, the role of China and India was seen as ‘allow[ing] the obstruction of the G77 to take place’.⁴⁷

In the final plenary, Sudan and countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), supported to some extent by non-G77 member Tuvalu, rejected the Copenhagen Accord, which was negotiated in the final hours by leaders of 25 countries. The main argument as far as the G77 members were concerned was that the Accord was the result of an opaque and undemocratic negotiating process. Several other developing countries, including spokespersons for AOSIS, LDCs, the African Group (Algeria) and the African Union (Ethiopia), claimed that the negotiating process had been legitimate and encouraged COP-15 to adopt the Accord. The result was that the Accord was only ‘noted’ by the COP and not adopted as a decision.

Analysis across the four arenas

The analysis of the G77 and its member state positions on climate change in each of the four different UN arenas in 2007–2009 yields two themes of considerable converging interest within the coalition: the need for Northern leadership in mitigation, and the need for substantial financial flows and technology transfer to the South for both mitigation and adaptation. On the other hand, two themes of disunity were increasingly visible, namely responsibilities and transparency in mitigation actions, and the relationship between adaptation and ‘response measures’.⁴⁸ Several new and old subgroups took explicitly diverging positions. The most active formal and informal subgroups expressing divergent views in the G77 are summarised in Table 2. There were other rather notable divergences as well, such as the role of market mechanisms, the role of different energy sources, and the role and design of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD+), but these issues are beyond the scope of this present analysis. In addition, a converging normative element of fairness, feeding into distrust towards the developed countries, emerges strongly from the analysis.

The different arenas shaped, enabled and also constrained the debates on climate change. Notably, the deliberations in the Security Council centred on legitimacy. This is understandable due in part to the nature of the SC which, in security issues, has an unrivalled ‘hard law’ mandate to take and enforce decisions in support of international peace and security, despite being composed of a small number of states, five of which have permanent membership and the power of veto. The SC arena prompted even those countries that do recognise climate change as a serious threat to be particularly cautious in their statements. At the other end of the hard–soft law continuum, the CSD represents soft law,⁴⁹ which enabled deliberation on energy policies, an issue area traditionally at the heart of national sovereignty and one which demonstrated the extent to which energy interests play a divisive role within the G77. The GA one-day events on climate change were held to help the parties make progress towards an agreement without engaging the politicians in actual negotiations, resembling more the *ad hoc* types of soft law climate meetings such as the G8/G20, but under the UN umbrella. However, the visible parts of the meetings largely consisted of the reiteration of well-rehearsed, conservative positions by both developed and developing countries.

47 The COP presidency consulted bilaterally with the EU on the morning of 17 December 2009, stating that ‘the huge splits in the G77 and China block are most problematic’, and that it is ‘extraordinary that the four big ones let Sudan do the talking’ and not use their authority to bring order to the group (transcript on file with the authors).

48 ‘Response measures’ refers to policies taken to mitigate climate change that may adversely affect the exports of developing countries, mainly the oil exports of the OPEC bloc.

49 Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Vihma, ‘Comparing the Legitimacy and Effectiveness’.

Converging interests: Northern leadership

There is a considerable degree of unity surrounding the implications of the principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ (CBDR) within the G77 membership with regard to the foremost responsibility of developed countries in climate change mitigation. Enshrined in the Convention (Article 3.1), the CBDR calls on developed countries *to take the lead* in making reductions in their emissions and to assist through contributions towards technology (Article 4.5), finance (Article 11) and capacity building (Article 9.2 d) developing countries in their mitigation efforts.⁵⁰

[T]he poor are not the main cause of global environmental degradation. Global pollution is first and foremost caused by unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, characteristic of the development pathways of developed countries.⁵¹

These commitments are deemed prerequisites for an international framework for actions given that the developing countries are less responsible for historical emissions, (usually) have low per capita emissions, are worst-affected by climate change and have the least capability to invest in coping mechanisms.

Converging interests: international financing

There is a strong overarching unity within the G77 across all arenas that developed countries will provide transfer of financial resources, transfer of technology and investment in capacity building for both mitigation and adaptation. The developing countries also share common concerns about how the mechanisms of financial transfers should be governed, in that donors should not be in the driving seat. There was an especially strong common interest in substantive transfers of technology:

[T]echnology holds the key to combating the causes and effects of climate change. It plays a critical role in the mitigation and adaptation process the world over ... There are mitigation technologies that developing countries can use to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without adversely affecting their development.⁵²

Some of the G77 countries pointed to the difficulties encountered in accessing low-carbon technologies, and several also pushed for the utilisation of flexibilities in the intellectual property rights regime to promote the transfer of climate-friendly technologies. The financing discussion took a somewhat different turn following the credit crisis in 2008, which saw the injection of public money to rescue the financial system in the North. This generated discussions in climate negotiation arenas on several fronts. First, confidence in the ability of private finance to meet mitigation and adaptation challenges took a knock, as the crisis illustrated the ‘continued relevance and importance of the public sector’ in contributing to problem areas with requirements for the secure and reliable flow of investment.⁵³ Second, the crisis, and the swift action that ensued, conveyed a new message that considerable resources can be mobilised in developed countries when the political will is present:

50 The CBDR principle initially featured in IPCC’s First Assessment Report in 1990. The Northern position was to emphasise ‘common responsibilities’ to combat climate change – and a draft document reflected this view – while the developing countries called for the developed countries to take the ‘main responsibility’. The principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ is a semantic compromise of these two views. See for example Rajan, *Global Environmental Politics*, 107–8.

51 Delegation of Brazil, CSD-15, 2007.

52 Delegation of Uganda, General Assembly, 2007.

53 Delegation of Pakistan, General Assembly, 2009.

The practical lessons we have learnt from the recent financial crisis is that developed countries have the capacity to meet their need, therefore commitment for additional financing for adaptation and mitigation to address climate change are achievable.⁵⁴

The financial crisis served to amplify the level of ambition in the G77 with regard to the volume of finances that could 'potentially' be raised. Indeed, a number of countries made statements similar to the one from Maldives above, and some even called for a specific proportion of global GDP to be allocated to climate finance, ranging from 0.5% to 1.5% to 5%.

Diverging interests: differences in responsibilities

The call by G77 member states for developed countries to take internationally-negotiated, legally-binding, economy-wide emissions reductions is unequivocal. The official G77 line on the use of CBDR, shared by most of its powerful members, is often expressed in a categorical fashion across the North–South divide. However, over time some divergence has emerged on the specific interpretations of the CBDR principle, especially on the question of the 'respective capabilities' of countries to act (as in Article 3.1 of the UNFCCC). There exists an increasingly vocal call for more ambitious action on mitigation, as well as international transparency of such action, involving all major emitters, mainly arising from the AOSIS and LDC camps:

[M]ajor emitting developing countries also need to take action to address their emissions with the assistance of developed countries ... everyone must be more responsible. Defending the economics of gas emissions cannot be a just cause if millions of lives are threatened. While the UN is doing its part, we urge all responsible countries to do their part.⁵⁵

Some countries, with vocal examples including Maldives and Bangladesh, have chosen to continue to pay allegiance to the CBDR principles, while calling for developing countries to be more substantively involved in future mitigation efforts. Several other G77 countries, most notably South Africa and some Latin American states, have also indicated their willingness to achieve a legally-binding framework that covers developing country actions as well, possibly including provisions for international verification. In the Cancún meeting, the large developing countries agreed to some level of 'internationalisation' of their national targets through 'international consultation and analysis', but the specifics of such an international framework, and when it would be agreed upon, are important open questions likely to continue to divide the G77.

Diverging interests: vulnerability and adaptation challenges

There is a consensus on developing countries being especially vulnerable, and that industrialised countries need to honour their commitments relating to financing, technology transfer and capacity building. However, since the early discussions on adaptation, disagreements have emerged between developing countries over the issue of who should be entitled to draw from the adaptation financing. The conflict between OPEC countries and AOSIS (and several LDCs) is well-documented.⁵⁶ The main sticking point is whether adaptation funds would be used to support the economic diversification of oil-exporting countries:

Saudi Arabia will not accept any agreement which will not address the concern of being victims to policy mitigating climate change. We cannot be selective with principles; we also have an abnormal burden ...⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Delegation of Maldives, UNFCCC COP-14, 2008.

⁵⁵ Delegation of Vanuatu, General Assembly, 2007.

⁵⁶ Joanna Depledge, 'Striving for No: Saudi Arabia in the Climate Change Regime', *Global Environmental Politics* 8, no. 4 (2008): 9–35; Mari Luomi, 'Bargaining in the Saudi Bazaar: Common Ground for a Post-2012 Climate Agreement?', The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Briefing Paper 48 (2009).

⁵⁷ Delegation of Saudi Arabia, UNFCCC Vienna climate meeting, 2007.

[There] needs to be full analysis of implications of mitigation pledges on developing countries, such as those that export rice, or cocoa, or tomatoes; those who export oil or coal ...⁵⁸

The OPEC position has been strongly opposed by AOSIS and several LDCs. Due to this conflict of interests, the G77 positions on adaptation have usually been very general in nature. As the negotiations turn to more concrete issues, touching directly on the operationalisation of adaptation financing, there is potential for significant disagreement within the G77. Saudi Arabia and OPEC countries are likely to continue to obstruct progress if their specific demands for a part of the adaptation financing are not met.

Converging ideas: fairness and trust

An area where G77 members have displayed strong unity is in their appeal for a more 'just world order' that guarantees developing countries full rights to pursue their development priorities. Similar argumentation was linked to demands for fairer trade rules throughout the Doha round, as well as other issues such as debt relief and increased aid flows. In the climate negotiations, the sense of injustice is key to the G77 unity, manifested in the general 'we are not the North' common identity assumed by developing countries. This identity is reinforced by concerns relating to the 'atmospheric space' for development that are often expressed, sometimes in a manner that is critical of Northern lifestyles:

Developed countries occupying so much of the carbon capacity of the earth's atmosphere must take and deliver on significant emissions reductions. The per capita emission of developed countries must also reduce [*sic*] which would involve shifts from current unsustainable lifestyles ... All human beings must have equal rights to the global atmospheric resources with accounting for historical responsibilities.⁵⁹

The collective sense of an 'unjust world order' also feeds into the feeling of a trust deficit among G77 members towards the developed countries. Procedural concerns and doubts over whether developing countries will be treated fairly feature continually in the deliberations:

[There is] a need for a multilateral trading and financial, non-discriminatory, open and transparent system, in addition to the full participation of the developing countries in the formulation of international policies and decision-making processes.⁶⁰

Procedural concerns are also used strategically by OPEC and BASIC countries to block progress in the negotiations.

The North has, to varying degrees, failed to implement the UNFCCC commitments from 1992, including reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, as well as providing technological and financial support for Southern mitigation and adaptation. G77 suspicions find further confirmation in the inflexible negotiation positions adopted by developed countries in other arenas such as trade and finance, as well as a history of indifference towards several non-legally-binding UN commitments. The statement by Barbados captures some of these sentiments:

[W]e are ... concerned that year after year there is continuous tinkering with the language of the text, which only results in repetition of previously agreed outcomes. Is it too much to hope that tangible support in the form of long-promised funds might also accompany the implementation effort?⁶¹

58 Delegation of Saudi Arabia, UNFCCC Bonn II meeting, 2010.

59 Delegation of India, UNFCCC COP-14, 2008.

60 Delegation of Qatar, General Assembly, 2007.

61 Delegation of Barbados, CSD-15, 2007.

Discussion

The G77 has been described as a coalition engaged in the pursuit of collective goods whose power in any negotiation arena will be affected by its internal 'integrative and disintegrative tendencies'.⁶² This article was written to analyse the dynamics of these tendencies in the context of climate change deliberations across a set of UN arenas during the period 2007–2010. We now return to the analytical approach and discuss the interest-based, normative and institutional factors behind the current G77 dynamics.

First, the specific *interests* of the G77 countries in the climate negotiations do indeed differ to a great extent, as indicated by the variations in national resource endowments, levels of development, political cultures, emissions profiles and trajectories, as well as vulnerability to climate change impacts. This sometimes results in 180-degree divergent views on specific issues in global climate change talks. The end points of the diverse motivations of self-interest among G77 members, such as extreme vulnerability to climate change impacts (AOSIS) or extreme dependence on oil exports (OPEC), have changed little since negotiations for an international agreement began two decades ago. Indeed, according to our analysis, it is even possible to argue that action based on the imperatives of self-interest has actually sharpened in light of the raised stakes in UN climate talks.⁶³ On another front, there is growing political awareness that the magnitude of the impacts of climate change on the livelihoods of people in AOSIS and LDCs in particular will be considerable. A heated confrontation was again recently witnessed in the intersessional climate talks in June 2010, where AOSIS objected to Saudi Arabia blocking a proposition to allow the Secretariat to prepare a review paper on recent scientific findings related to limiting global warming to only 1.5 degrees:

It is ironic that developing country brothers have blocked us. Is this the solidarity that they so eloquently talk about? ... This is not a game. The lives of people, the future of nations is at stake. This is not a game.⁶⁴

AOSIS, LDCs and African countries represent the most vulnerable within the G77, and these groups occupy an important but not always influential position. More often than not, the 'consensus' reached in the G77 does not reflect their interests, which would be better served by North–South compromises and early action. This has led analysts to wonder why the G77 has tolerated Saudi Arabia's obstructionism all these years, for example.⁶⁵

There were several signs at the 2007–2010 negotiations that some of the vulnerable countries were increasingly challenging the official G77 line on CBDR and calling for large developing countries to agree to a level of international 'transparency' in their climate actions.⁶⁶ This counters the traditional G77 emphasis on sovereignty and non-differentiation among developing countries, which are of particular interest to China and OPEC. Although the LDCs were not as vocal and unified a subgroup in the negotiations as AOSIS, many LDC countries frequently supported the positions adopted by AOSIS. According to Najam, the increasing differentiation in

62 Williams, *Third World Cooperation*, 11.

63 An interesting parallel development of diverging interests can be observed in the trade negotiations over the past decades. During the Uruguay round, the G77 never functioned as a coalition but instead there were a number of fluid alliances among developing countries also spanning the North–South divide. See Lavelle, 'Ideas within a Context of Power'.

64 Delegation of Barbados (on behalf of AOSIS and several LDCs), UNFCCC Bonn II, 2010.

65 Depledge, 'Striving for No'; Barnett, 'The Worst of Friends'. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia, while having considerable negotiating capacity, can be regarded as 'absolutely dependent on the G77' for the pursuit of many of its demands, as it has been able to 'capitalize on the underlying mistrust that many developing countries feel towards industrialized countries and the strong desire of the G77 to remain united'. Depledge, 'Striving for No', 17–18.

66 Quoting Indian Minister of Environment Jairam Ramesh in the Indian parliament after the Copenhagen meeting: 'The Bangladeshi delegates asked, "why are you not settling the issue of transparency?" The Maldives delegation asked me, "why are you not settling the issue of transparency?"' So, the issue of transparency had become a stumbling block.' December 21, 2009, Rajya Sabha (transcript on file with the authors).

vulnerability towards climate change impacts, and especially the capacity to address it among the G77 member states, competes with the South's self-definition of exclusion.⁶⁷ The traditional notion of exclusion, implying obstruction vis-à-vis full participation in global economic affairs, is less and less credible with the emergence of powerful Southern economic and political players on the global scene. For the most vulnerable, who are calling for the climate regime to become significantly more effective in reducing emissions, both the intransigence of OPEC countries and the reticence of the major emerging economies within the G77 to sign up to internationally transparent mitigation actions are likely to become a growing source of frustration. This is due to both the emission growth levels themselves (especially in China and India) as well as to the Northern (especially US) political conditionality that in order to achieve substantial agreements in the UNFCCC, the major developing countries must enhance mitigation efforts and their international transparency.

The climate deliberations also confirm that the G77 countries still value the long-lasting traditional Southern agenda, such as opposing donor dominance. A broader but related issue has been the so-called 'democratisation' of the international system, particularly the international financial institutions and other fora where the disbursement of financial and technology transfers are decided upon. As a coalition, the G77 has a safe majority when decision-making follows the 'one country one vote' principle, and the group has from the start been critical towards the Global Environmental Facility⁶⁸ as a funding mechanism for the climate regime, preferring new funds to be under the control of the COP.⁶⁹

The interest-based position of the poorer and less powerful G77 countries also needs to be viewed in the broader context of their political and economic relations with the dominant players, in relation to the USA (especially in Latin America) and to China (especially in Africa). It is rather widely assumed that since China insists on the norms of non-interference, sovereignty and avoiding interference in the internal affairs of countries⁷⁰ – and often accuses the North of interventionism – it would apply its bilateral financing and lending without attaching policy conditions.⁷¹ However, recent analysis convincingly suggests that this view is based on a narrow perception of conditionality; that China is actually no stranger to conditionalities in a broader sense, although these are not imposed explicitly by a unitary state actor.⁷² Secondly, many Southern countries, most visibly several Latin American states, seemingly define their negotiating positions based on their own interests, depending partially on their alliance with the G77, and partially on their relations with the USA. These tactics can cut both ways, either by sending an anti-American message to domestic and international audiences, or by seeking a closer alliance with the USA. Clear signs of these geopolitical dynamics were in evidence, for example, in the turbulence of the Copenhagen meeting.

Second, we frequently encountered in our analysis the converging *identity* of being a developing country. A common history of colonial and imperial experiences and the perception of being victims of an unjust world order are still clearly visible in the climate deliberations of G77 members. It is at this ideological level that norms of non-interference and sovereignty come into play, as they have been at the core of many developing countries' foreign policy since their independence. Conceding in a debate touching on these principles in climate talks

67 Najam, 'Developing Countries'; Najam, 'Dynamics of the Southern Collective'.

68 The Global Environment Facility has a weighted voting system between donor and recipient countries.

69 Rajan, *Global Environmental Politics*.

70 See, for example, Ian Taylor, 'Governance in Africa and Sino-African Relations: Contradictions or Confluence?', *Politics* 27, no. 3 (2007): 140.

71 An estimate this year by the *Financial Times* is that the China Development Bank and Exim Bank lent at least US \$100 billion to developing countries in 2009–2010: 'China: Beijing Puts its Huge Piles of Cash to Work', *Financial Times*, January 25, 2011.

72 Mikael Mattlin and Matti Nojonen, 'Conditionality in Chinese Bilateral Lending', Helsinki: Bank of Finland, Discussion Papers, 14 (2011): 1–36.

is seen as 'opening the floodgates' for further concessions on international norms and intrusive practices. Williams argues that 'the idea of a Third World is essentially a term referring to identity rather than an objective fact'.⁷³ Identity is a difficult concept in both analytical and empirical terms, yet political posturing with wide ideological and identity concerns – notably along North–South lines – played an important part in the climate negotiations, and featured throughout the deliberations analysed in this paper. Politicians are presented with an opportunity to score political points with domestic as well as international constituencies in the South by 'acting tough' against 'the hypocrisy of the rich North'. This reality has not changed to any great extent with the rise of the emerging economies. The essential issue is that the global power structure still 'creates conditions conducive to the formation of an identity based on a lack of access to meaningful participation in decision making'.⁷⁴ This backdrop enables a level of political support for radical climate change positions *beyond* the socialist ALBA countries and 'rogue states' like Sudan. Identity based on marginalisation and its implications posed a crucial political stumbling block in the climate change negotiations of 2007–2010. Managing this issue and the attendant debates on participation and inclusiveness is of paramount importance for a successful COP, as demonstrated once again in the Copenhagen and Cancún climate meetings.

Finally, institutional factors or path dependency play a role in the cohesiveness of the G77 in climate change negotiations. The clear Annex I and non-Annex I divide and the institutional firewall between the two categories featured in G77 statements throughout the different climate meetings. The BASIC countries, which face the biggest pressure from the North, see value in resisting any changes that could, in principle, lead towards more explicit Southern differentiation. Without a definition of what constitutes a developing country, it is not possible to identify relevant differences among countries and assign responsibilities relative to them.⁷⁵ Not all members of the group are fully aligned behind a categorical Annex I/non-Annex I division in responsibilities. However, the relative flexibility of the G77, and the opportunity for countries to adopt very divergent positions according to the context in the climate talks (section 2.1), ostensibly functions as another notable institutional factor that contributes to the overall durability and stability of the coalition.

Conclusions

In sum, we can echo what observers in the early 1980s concluded, that the G77 has shown a 'remarkable capacity to endure'.⁷⁶ We also agree with Williams's argument that the continuing construction of the G77 coalition in environmental negotiations is a product of many factors, both rationalist and normative.⁷⁷

We argue that while developing country interests are both converging and diverging, the increasingly conflicting interests, as well as the very slowly eroding common identity, are creating growing unity in some of the subgroups of the G77. During the period of study there was a notable expansion of subgroups within the G77 that forcefully took explicitly diverging positions. Some of the subgroups – notably OPEC, AOSIS and BASIC – are interest-based, while ALBA and the African Group are arguably driven together by a normative agenda rather than a mere calculation of interest. However, there is doubt regarding the stability of the subgroups, as many of them

73 Williams, 'The Third World'.

74 Ibid., 54.

75 Lavanya Rajamani, *Differential Treatment in International Environmental Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 169.

76 Geldart and Lyon, 'The Group of 77', 79.

77 Williams, 'The Third World'.

are hardly institutionalised, at least not to the extent that the G77 itself is.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, we can confidently argue that the subgroups with clear common interests are likely to have political stability, even while they remain *ad hoc* and lacking institutional structure.

The idea of an identity-based North–South divide has also featured strongly in recent climate talks. This divide would indeed appear to be real, as the North and the majority of the South seemingly do hold genuinely different perceptions of fairness.⁷⁹ There is firm agreement on the need for Northern leadership, and many G77 countries are strongly in favour of allowing equity concepts such as per capita allocations and historical responsibility for emissions to have a bearing on current responsibilities in mitigation. The institutional factors in the climate negotiations have the effect of stabilising the status quo. The G77 is highly unlikely to break up formally, but how functional it will be as a bloc in the forthcoming climate change negotiations remains an open question.

Some analysts such as Kasa, Gullberg and Heggelund argue that the role of the G77, as well as the multilateral UN regime in the climate negotiations, will decrease in the future because the major developing country economies with more opportunities for advantageous bilateral agreements will have less need for it.⁸⁰ The rationalist approach taken by these analysts underlines ‘huge differences in emission levels and economic development’ within the G77,⁸¹ while attributing the group’s coherence so far to shared problems in domestic governance and an interest-based strategy that builds on sovereignty.

We find this rationalist framing inadequate for capturing the current G77 dynamics, and do not support the conclusion of bilateralism arising in the global climate governance due to changes in the politics of emerging economies. It is precisely BASIC countries like China which have a lot to gain from maintaining the UN-based approach and from steering the G77 negotiation trajectory, as the G77 provides a useful cover for the emerging powers to avoid being singled out in mitigation and transparency debates by the North. A case in point was the Copenhagen Accord, which BASIC countries negotiated and agreed to, while allowing Sudan – over which China has considerable influence – to object to it in the plenary. After the Copenhagen meeting, the BASIC countries also played down the role of the Accord for a considerable period of time, thus manifesting their actual reluctance to agree to the compromises it represented. Further, the normative dimension of South unity and possibilities of identity-based North–South politics support the BASIC countries’ emphasis on the UN and the G77. A notable degree of importance attached to the UN climate regime was also evident in India’s constructive role in the Cancún meeting in 2010, as well as China’s willingness, albeit reluctant, to compromise in the transparency debate in order to ‘save the UN process’ and secure an outcome in Cancún.

Other recent articles approach the G77 and climate negotiations from a critical realist perspective, emphasising that the roots of G77 cohesion, as well as the difficulties in forming a global response to climate change, lie in the unequal global economic structure and its current phase of restructuring.⁸² Their normative prescription is to focus on the wider equity agenda, which has resonance with ‘Third Worldism’. This contrasts with the Northern perception, voiced by British and Swedish ministers after the Copenhagen meeting, that China uses the G77 for its narrow national self-interest. We argue that the picture is more complex, as there is a mutual dependency at work; China depends on the G77 and the G77 depends on China. Without the

78 AOSIS and LDCs are clearly the most institutionalised subgroups and have a long history of international support for their activities.

79 See for example Parks and Roberts, *A Climate of Injustice*, 148.

80 Kasa et al., ‘The Group of 77’.

81 *Ibid.*, 4.

82 J. Timmons Roberts, ‘Multipolarity and the New World Dis(Ord)er: US Hegemonic Decline and the Fragmentation of the Global Climate Regime’, *Global Environmental Politics* 21, no. 3 (2011): 776–784; also, Parks and Roberts, *A Climate of Injustice*.

G77 and the BASIC group, China could find itself increasingly positioned *against* the rest of the world in the climate change debate. China is also looking to enhance its geopolitical presence within a large pool of nation-states that have similar development aspirations and pathways. Many small G77 countries see China as a donor today, and also as an ally that brings to the table what developing countries as a collective have lacked since the group's inception – economic and political clout.

UN-based global climate governance is indeed experiencing great difficulties in dealing with North–South politics. Achieving North–South compromises in order to enhance environmental goals is rendered even more complicated by the current G77 dynamics outlined in this article, which offer ample opportunities for strategic behaviour to those parties within the G77 that have less interest in moving forward in global climate politics. In addition, there is a sense of distrust among developing countries towards the North, based on experiences of failed promises, which does not bode well for G77 willingness to compromise. The view that old commitments have to be honoured before the developing countries give any more concessions is somewhat similar to the Doha trade negotiations.⁸³

This hard reality of global negotiations increases the likelihood of dangerous climate change and hinders early action by progressive states on both sides of the North–South divide. The big picture is likely to remain in virtual deadlock for several years to come, as the key open questions relating to mitigation, financing and legal form can only be addressed with concentrated and painstakingly slow diplomatic efforts, ultimately building a broad-based, more transparent and better financed climate regime within the UN.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to Harro van Asselt, Lorraine Elliot and Janne Hukkinen for providing insightful commentary. We would also like to thank Lutz Morgenstern, Thomas Spencer, Achala Chandani, Steve Sawyer and Kati Kulovesi for their guidance.

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⁸³ See Narlikar, 'Fairness in International Trade Negotiations'.