Call for Papers "The European Green Deal: moving to action. Opportunities and challenges for the European citizens"

THE EUROPEAN UNION VERSUS CLIMATE CHANGE. CLIMATE DIPLOMACY AS EXPRESSION OF EU ACTORNESS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an increasingly complex, connected and contested world, the political, economic and geostrategic contexts have evolved rapidly and generally became more unpredictable, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Emerging security challenges, ranging from cyber-warfare, democratic recession, massive illegal migration to identity politics and disinformation, have joined a list of long-lasting ones like terrorism, regional conflicts and great power rivalry. But no greater long-term challenge seems to be more pressing and consequential for Europe and the world than the menacing spectre of global climate change. This fact has been recognized in key European Union documents like the 'European Green Deal', the 'Strategic Agenda 2019-2024' and the 'NextGenerationEU' recovery plan. With no universal definition attached to it, climate diplomacy may be one of the best ways to enhance the global role and actorness of the European polity, while dealing with the quintessential global public good dilemma.

Social Media summary

The paper explores how climate diplomacy, as an expression of the European Union's Actorness, could boost the global role of the EU, driven by contextual intelligence and embedded in normative aspirations.

Keywords

#EU #climate diplomacy #actorness #geopolitics #normative power

Short bio

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[1] The opinions expressed in this publication are solely those of the author and are part of an ongoing research. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of any public or private entity, including the author's employer.

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1. **Introduction**

In an increasingly complex, connected and contested world, the political, economic and geostrategic contexts have evolved rapidly and generally became more unpredictable, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. The global outbreak has not as much created new mega-trends as it has exponentially accelerated existing ones (Zakaria, 2020). Emerging security challenges, ranging from cyber-warfare, democratic recession, massive illegal migration to identity politics and disinformation, have joined a list of long-lasting ones like terrorism, regional conflicts and great power rivalry. But no greater long-term challenge seems to be more pressing and consequential for Europe and the world than the menacing spectre of global climate change. Containing and mitigating its effects will require shared political will and common action from the major global stakeholders, including the European Union (EU) and its Member States (EUMS), individually and as a cohesive whole. This fact has been recognized in key EU documents like the 'European Green Deal' (EGD), the 'Strategic Agenda 2019-2024' and the 'NextGenerationEU' recovery plan. 'Climate change and the environment' represents one of the main topics of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) platform (CoFoE, 2021). In her 'State of the Union' address on September 15, 2021, President of the European Commission (EC) Ursula von der Leyen named working on closing the climate finance gap, together with the EU's global partners, as one of the flagship initiatives which the Commission plans to undertake in the coming year (European Commission, 2021a).

At the time of writing this paper, the world was consciously moving towards a much hotter global environment. As its name implies, global warming happens globally, but its effects are felt regionally and locally. Climate change is the exemplary global public good, as each country's greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions contribute cumulatively to the rise of overall levels, and each country's reduction could entail higher cost than benefit, unless effective concerted collective actions would take place (Grasso, 2004). Greenhouse gas emissions have already increased temperatures to dangerous levels and are drying up water sources, rising sea levels, and threatening lives and livelihoods around the world. According to NASA (2021), global sea levels are rising as a result of human-caused global warming, with recent rates being unprecedented over the past 2,000-plus years. Climate change has complex geopolitical implications and dire repercussions on human security. Scientific American (2021) has agreed with other news outlets to use the term 'climate emergency' in its coverage of climate change, in order to better illustrate the sense of urgency in addressing 'the biggest environmental emergency to beset the earth in millennia.' Climate diplomacy features among the instruments at the EU's disposal for raising awareness on the importance of climate change and fighting its devastating effects (EU Council, 2018). **EU climate action is increasingly political and climate diplomacy, as one of its foreign policy tools, is currently one of the best ways to enhance the global role and actorness of the European project.** The current policy paper makes this core assumption and explores it throughout its content.

By now, it has become abundantly clear inside the EU that decarbonisation requires creative destruction and unpopular socio-economic adjustments, and that climate policy is not just about domestic mobilization, but it is also foreign policy. The European Union, which has come to define and embody the (albeit flawed) concept of *normative power* in international relations (Manners, 2002), remains to the day a *sui generis* polity blending elements specific to international organizations with attributes pertaining to modern states. Oftentimes, debates have focused more on what the EU *is* than what it *does*, highlighting both congruence and contradiction between

vision and action/capabilities at supranational level. At first sight, the EU seems perfectly equipped to use its *soft power* in order to promote its foreign policy agenda and lead by the power of its example. However, utilizing this concept in the case of the European Union is nothing short of a dangerous methodological overstretch, given that the EU does not function from a political, economic and institutional point of view as a state. Indeed, the EU is the most advanced project of supranational regional political and economic integration in the world, but its system of differentiated integration remains far from the federalist utopia envisioned by the Founding Fathers in the early 1950s. The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) especially remains dominated by intergovernmentalism even after the Treaty of Lisbon reforms. The fact that the United Kingdom (UK) withdrew from the EU as a result of a fatidic popular referendum was a stark reminder that European integration, although an evolutive process, is by no means rectilinear and irreversible.

The following section of this policy-oriented research paper will present a brief theoretical apparatus, leading to our case study dedicated to potential EU climate change leadership via climate diplomacy. After reviewing selected works on the international role of the EU, the focus will shift to the **'EU actorness under construction'** approach based on the notions of presence, opportunity and capability (Vogler & Bretherton, 2006), and the concept of **'soft power,'** (Nye, 1990). The research design is interpretative-qualitative, consisting of institutional analysis, content interpretation and a case study. By utilizing the analytical model developed by Vogler and Bretherton, we will critically assess the EU's ability to capitalize on presence and respond to opportunity by means of climate diplomacy. Although the EU's external action arsenal is much more diverse than climate diplomacy actions, what we argue is that this particular area is poised to gain prominence due to objective and subjective factors. As such, the concluding part of this paper will outline projected outcomes considering both challenges and opportunities, including pragmatic policy recommendations for recalibrating the EU's global role through the lens of climate diplomacy.

2. Theoretical apparatus

International role of the EU

The academic debate on whether the EU is/ought to be a global power or not has stimulated and divided international relations experts, integration theorists and policy makers for several decades, at least since the end of the Cold War and the 1992 Maastricht Treaty that created the European integration project in its current iteration (Naumescu, 2020). In his first official letter to EU foreign ministers, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell wrote in 2019 that the EU 'has the option of becoming a player, a true geostrategic actor, or being mostly the playground of renewed geostrategic competition between China, Russia and the United States of America.' When presented with such clear-cut options, the road ahead for the European project seemed fairly obvious. But experience has shown time and again that supranational ambition has to be supported by national capabilities and political will in order to become reality.

The European Union matters in the world and world affairs matter for the European Union. Equally true may be the fact that the EU is easier to experience, via an Erasmus study mobility or no mobile roaming charges for example, than to define or measure by scientific standards. With regards to the international role of the EU, we should note right from the start that the Union has always seemed more interested in wielding power together with others, by privileging multilateralism and international law, rather than exerting power over others. One of the first convincing attempts to

define the role of the European Community on the world stage was made by François Duchêne (1972). He argued that the international role of the European Community should be that of a 'civilian power' as the means to exercise influence on the world stage and to elude the vicissitudes of (great) power politics. Another pioneer in theorising the international influence of the European project, Johan Galtung (1973), maintained the conceptualisation of a significant external role of the European Community, this time from the viewpoint of structuralism and emphasising the economic dimension, as a 'European capitalist superpower.' By contrast, authors like Hedley Bull (1982), the most influential writer of the English School, noted that the ability to become a powerful actor in international affairs requires self-sufficiency and involves the exercise of military power and pleaded for the transfer from North American to European hands of a greater share of the European defence. Recent years have seen encouraging developments down this line, with the notable launch of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) or the European Defence Fund (EDF), as part of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

Building upon the concept of 'civilian power' and others, including Nye's 'soft power,' Ian Manners (2002; 2006; 2008) introduced and later refined the idea of 'Normative Power Europe' (NPE) as a framework of analysis for the role of a united Europe in the post-Cold War era. According to Manners, contrary to the other great powers, the EU shapes the international system not as much as with the use of 'hard power' (e.g., military power or economic sanctions), but instead through the attractiveness of the ideas, standards, and values driving the project of European integration (defining resources of soft power) (Manners, 2002: p. 239). Manners talked about five core norms: the centrality of peace, the idea of liberty, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, which constituted the normative basis of the European Union and also a common guide of foreign policy. To those, he added another four 'minor' norms: social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development, and good governance. Jumping to the year 2021, one can safely say that the latter norms have, to a great extent, caught up with their 'big sisters' in terms of importance and relevance for world politics. They are all reflected in the EU's 'Strategic Agenda 2019-2024' (European Council, 2019).

As these norms are an indication of the EU's unique international identity, values, and ideas, they also force it to act in a normative way due to their legally binding nature – the EU's core values are enshrined in the *acquis communautaire*. As such, normative power should primarily be seen as legitimate in the principles it aims to promote, both internally and externally. Numerous studies have focused on the ability, or rather inability, of the EU to diffuse any of the core norms, primarily by the power of its example. The EU, as an 'empire by invitation' (Lundestad, 1998), perceives itself as a model for effective and legitimate governance to be emulated by others – the 'European Way of Life' has its own European Commissioner. The EU's legitimacy in this sense is mainly drawn from its adherence to international documents such as the United Nations (UN) Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter or the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Multilateralism and the rules-based international order are engrained in the EU's metabolism and are constantly featured on its foreign policy agenda. However, at least in terms of rule of law and liberal democracy standards, the EU has observed a dangerous backsliding among its Member States even before the exceptional times of COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns. This, in turn, eroded the Union's normative power and invited accusations of double standards, especially from states that are part of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), but also from strategic rivals like China or Russia. The introduction of a new rule of law mechanism, although half-baked, on January 1, 2021, was meant to signal Europe's determination in safeguarding European values.

Considering that the efficiency of the EU's normative power is contingent on its capabilities to radiate its values, standards, and norms, examining the instruments at its disposal can shed light on the potential that its influence has or could have on third states. Climate diplomacy is one of the EU's external action instruments, with clear normative connotations given that it allows the EU to work for the 'global common good' (Aggestam, 2008). Another quintessential concept when discussing the EU's international role and external action – *EU Actorness* – is presented in the following sub-section, together with Nye's soft power concept.

'Smart Actorness'

For the purpose of the present paper, we will use Vogler and Bretherton's (2006) definition of actorness, as having four basic requirements: shared commitment to a set of overarching values; domestic legitimation of decision processes and priorities related to foreign policy; the ability to identify and formulate policies; the availability of, and capacity to utilize, policy instruments – diplomacy/negotiation, economic tools and military means (p. 28). Bretherton and Vogler (2006) have postulated that the EU's ability to act on the world stage was contingent on three interconnected and mutually reinforcing variables: *presence* (the ability of the EU to exert influence beyond its borders), *opportunity* (the structural context of action) and *capability* (the internal context of EU action). Granted, these broad concepts remain rather vague, making operationalization difficult. The two authors (2013) also mentioned the importance of three-dimensional *coherence*, to be detailed later in the paper, in the process of effectively formulating and implementing common policies.

In debating EU climate leadership potential, other authors (Oberthür & Dupont, 2021) have stressed the systemic distinction between the different facets of *exemplary leadership* (credibility, policy learning and diffusion, market and regulatory power) and *diplomatic leadership* (coherence/unity, adaptation to international context), as well as the identification of *key trends in international climate governance* (polycentricity, multipolarity, geopolitics). Their main premise was that an actor could qualify for the title of 'leader' in global climate governance if it would be more ambitious than others in the pursuit of the common good.

'Soft power,' an almost oxymoronic construct, is the ability to obtain preferred outcomes by attraction rather than by coercion or payment, which pertain to 'hard power' (Nye, 2004; Nossel, 2004). Its use became almost synonymous to the name of Harvard professor Joseph Nye, who first devised the concept as an analytical tool meant to fill a deficiency in which analysts thought about power (Nye, 2017). The concept was initially developed in connection to American foreign policy analysis, but its application has grown exponentially since its introduction. The idea behind soft power – the ability to affect others and influence agendas by persuasion and seduction – seems to fit like a glove to the EU's normative and ethical aspirations. Regardless, soft power is only one component of power and rarely sufficient by itself. The ability to combine hard and soft power into successful strategies where they reinforce each other resulted in 'smart power' (Nye, 2011). **The EU's stated ambition of becoming a full-fledged global actor has in recent years been translated through what we could call as a 'Smart Actorness' approach, mixing 'carrots and sticks' in order to increase its global influence and act as a normative power.** The EU Global Strategy of 2016 recognized this fact when stating that 'for Europe, soft and hard power go hand in hand' (EEAS, 2016). Another related concept, also coined by Nye (2008), is that of 'contextual intelligence,' described as 'the ability to understand changing environments, capitalize on trends, and use the flow of events to implement strategies.' A concept that should go hand in hand with the EU's 'principled pragmatism.'

The next section will further elaborate and use the essentially interrelated concepts of presence, denoting the international reputation of the EU and associated third-party expectations of EU action; opportunity, describing the external environment or context that enables or constrains EU action; and capability, referring to internal factors affecting the EU's ability to capitalise on presence and respond to opportunity, to discuss the potential of climate diplomacy to enhance the EU's global posture and consolidate its international role, while dealing with the quintessential global public good dilemma.

3. EU vs. Climate Change

Presence

Presence may indeed be the most subjective and hard to assess component of Bretherton and Vogler's recipe for actorness, relying mostly on perceptions and expectations, both internal and external. **As previously stated, presence refers to the ability of an actor, by virtue of its existence, to exert influence beyond its borders.** An indication of structural power, presence combines understandings about the fundamental nature, or identity, of the European Union and the often-unintended consequences of the Union's internal priorities and policies. In this case, success matters a lot and failure can weigh in heavily. Perceptions of the Union as a community of security and prosperity make attractive to others the norms it radiates beyond its borders and its 'way of life.' Similarly, perceptions of shared purpose, unity and effectiveness also enhance presence (Bretherton and Vogler, 2013: p. 377). As such, one can argue that the United Kingdom's departure from the block affected the overall credibility (and presence) of the EU. However, the whole Brexit policy fiasco and the fact that there was no domino effect, as some observers predicted, may have actually contributed to the unity of the EU-27 and bolstered its resilience during overlapping crises.

Starting with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC, 1992), the EU has seen its fair share of ups (1997 Kyoto Protocol) and downs (2009 Copenhagen Conference) in climate policy coordination, but it nonetheless constantly strived to pursue the most ambitious science-based climate policy objectives (Bäckstrand & Elgström, 2013; Oberthür & Groen, 2018). During the period up to the entry into force of the Paris Agreement in November 2016, the EU seemed to have heeded Cassandra's warning and was able to capitalize on its presence, adopting a leadership role in climate diplomacy that it managed to maintain afterwards. The development of EU climate policy, which today includes a mix of regulatory, market-based and procedural instruments, really took off in the mid-2000s (Delbeke & Vis, 2019). More recently, the 'European Green Deal' set forth the EU's ambitions in climate policy leadership: no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050; economic growth decoupled from resource use; no person and no place left behind. Nevertheless, EUMS are still divided over a range of climate issues emanating from the implementation of the 'European Green Deal,' like the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) or the revised Emissions Trading System (ETS) (European Commission, 2021b).

On July 14, 2021, the European Commission adopted a set of proposals to make the EU's climate, energy, transport and taxation policies fit for reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. Achieving these emission reductions in the next decade will prove crucial to Europe's ambition of becoming the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and making the 'European Green Deal' (a high-risk/high-reward plan) a tangible reality and a landmark achievement of the Union. The EU also coupled green growth to its COVID-19

pandemic recovery plan – one third of the 1.8 trillion-euro investments from the 'NextGenerationEU' recovery plan, and the EU's seven-year budget will finance the 'European Green Deal' (European Commission, 2021c). The 'Recovery and Resilience Facility,' the key instrument at the heart of 'NextGenerationEU,' is specifically designed with the green and digital transitions in mind: EUMS national recovery and resilience plans had to fulfil the twin targets of 37% of expenditure for climate investments and 20% of expenditure to foster the digital transition in order to obtain Brussels' approval (see Figure 1).

Circular economy, electric vehicles and green hydrogen, featured in the EC's strategy, are expected to act as potential 'game-changers' by industries (Euractiv, 2021). **Overall, the EU has so far delivered, and sometimes overachieved, in its domestic mitigation levels, consolidating its exemplary leadership.** But the road ahead is still long and filled with tough choices requiring clever policymaking and consistency. For example, the decarbonisation of the energy sector will have to go hand in hand with secure and affordable supply of energy, ensuring both the citizens' wellbeing and the EU's long-term competitiveness. By deploying American innovative clean technology, Romania was taking an initial step in November 2021 in advancing climate action and clean energy access through a first-of-a-kind small modular reactor (SMR) plant.

Figure 1: Recovery and Resilience Facility

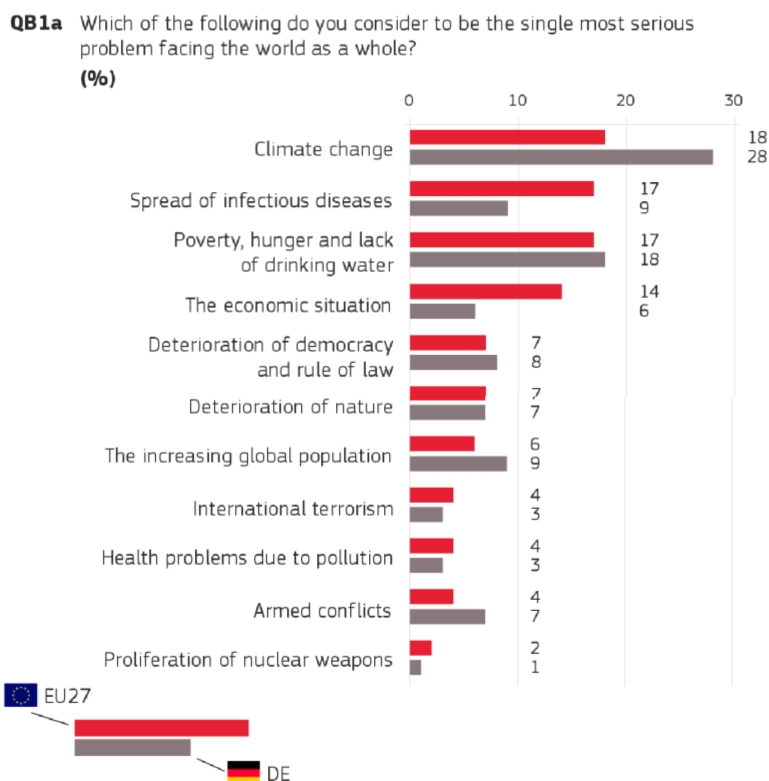
Source: European Commission, 2021c.

Opportunity

Opportunity refers to the external context of ideas and events that enable or constrain a particular course of action. **A growing international consensus points to the fact that there is no greater and more consequential global problem threatening the very survival of mankind than climate change.** Inside EUMS, there is substantial support and awareness for joint action against climate change. European citizens believe climate change is the single most serious problem facing the world (Figure 2, Eurobarometer, 2021). Although most of the international community's efforts are currently focused on countering the deadly pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, climate change looms large over all other aspects of world politics. Citing the Sixth Assessment Report of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2021) recognized in an

October 2021 Ministerial Council Statement that 'the climate crisis is existential.' The pandemic attested the need for coordinated and concerted actions in order to effectively counter a borderless and ideology-free threat that strikes without discrimination. The same will have to apply in the case of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Climate vulnerability is an unsustainable state of being in the short-term, but especially in the long-term. This fact was recognized by the EU Council (2021) when it endorsed the new EU strategy on adaptation to climate change: 'climate change is not just a future threat – it is happening now. We need to be better prepared for its consequences on human health, nature and the economy.' The Council highlighted the important role of building climate-resilience in the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, not least because global warming will facilitate the spread of new viruses. The symbolic Doomsday Clock was set in 2020 at 100 seconds away from its apocalyptic midnight due to scientists' climate and nuclear fears (BBC, 2020). On November 1, 2021, at the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, Sir David Attenborough warned that 'no nation has completed its development because no advanced nation is yet sustainable,' demanding that 'all nations have a good standard of living and a modest footprint' (The Guardian, 2021).

Figure 2: European Perceptions of Climate Change



Source: Eurobarometer, 2021.

An increased opportunity to act on the world stage for the European Union was provided by the former Donald Trump Administration's decision to withdraw the United States (US) from various international agreements and organizations, including the Paris Agreement. President Trump announced his country's withdrawal from the global climate pact in June 2017, but United Nations regulations meant that his decision only took effect in November 2020, the day after the latest US presidential election was won by the Democrat Joseph Biden. However, on day one in office at the

White House, President Biden not only reversed his predecessors' decision on the Paris Agreement, but also set a 50-52 percent reduction from 2005 levels in economy-wide net greenhouse gas pollution by 2030. A policy aimed at creating good-paying union jobs and securing US leadership on clean energy technologies (White House, 2021). Building on that momentum, President Biden convened 40 world leaders in a virtual Leaders Summit on Climate in April 2021 to rally the world in tackling the climate crisis and meeting the scientific appeals (Department of State, 2021). While the United States now represents roughly 15% of global GHG emissions, it remains the world's biggest and most powerful economy. Renewed EU-US partnership was on full display at the COP26 summit. Together with the European Union, President Biden launched a Global Methane Pledge to collectively reduce methane emissions, one of the most potent GHG, by at least 30 percent by the end of the decade. Other big polluters like China, India and Russia will need to be brought into line in order to achieve genuine progress in this area, avoid freeriding, and keep the rise in the global average temperature to 'well below' 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels, ideally 1.5 degree. And this is where climate diplomacy, among others, comes into play.

Capability

Capability refers to the internal context of EU external action, or lack of it. To no small extent, capability is the central component of actorness. Not once, the 'capability-expectations gap' was invoked to undermine the EU's desideratum of becoming a full-fledged international actor (Hill, 1993). But, in the case of climate change, capability may be best considered as a contributory rather than determining factor. **Capability refers to those aspects of the EU policy processes that, by constraining or enabling action, govern the Union's ability to capitalise on presence and/or respond to opportunity.** The ability to formulate policies, on the one hand, and the capacity to utilize policy instruments, on the other hand, are key when discussing an actor's capability (Bretherton and Vogler, 2013: p. 381). With regards to policy formulation, the two authors stress the importance of *three-dimensional coherence*: vertical coherence (between supranational and national levels of policy-making); horizontal coherence (between policy sectors) and institutional coherence (within and between the EU institutions). The three are, in practice, intimately connected, and all must be present if policy-making is to be effective, regardless of the domain under scrutiny.

Vertical coherence seems to be highest in areas where the EU has exclusive competence, like trade and fishery, and gradually lowers in areas where the EU has support competence, like industry and culture. The EU's CFSP is characterised by specific institutional features, such as the limited participation of the European Commission and the European Parliament in the decision-making procedure and the exclusion of any legislation activity (EUR-Lex, 2016). Because of the way in which EU environmental policy has evolved, and because of the 'crosscutting' nature of the subject, it is particularly demanding in terms of effective mechanisms for coordination of EU external climate policy.

In relation to climate diplomacy, where competence is shared between the EU and Member States, things were at times complicated by a persistent division between proactive 'frontrunners' (Nordic green leaders) and so-called reluctant 'laggards' (Central and Eastern European countries). In the past, such divisions were overcome through a burden sharing formula meant to align ambitions with capabilities. The trick was always to not let ambitions exhaust capabilities, avoiding frustrations, and to not let capabilities corrupt ambitions, avoiding complacency. After the 'Big Bang' enlargement of 2004 and 2007, a further source of incoherence arose due to the very different energy requirements of the Central and East European members. This incoherence was

reduced through the adoption of the 'European Green Deal,' whose primary function was ambition-raising, but it was not (and could not be) entirely eliminated. One ECFR report points to the way in which the deal managed to divide Europeans over a range of climate issues, including CBAM implementation, the role of nuclear energy, and the socio-economic consequences of the green transition. There was no broad polarization effect observed in connection with the national politics of the 'European Green Deal,' but rather varying perspectives on how to advance the whole process (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2021).

Horizontal coherence refers to tensions that arise between policy sectors that impede effective policy formulation and implementation. Such tensions are evident and some are endemic or formulaic, for example, those between trade, energy and environment policy, or between agriculture, fisheries and development policy. In the case of the EU climate policy, the biggest challenge of horizontal coherence will be to set the long-term direction of travel for meeting the 2050 climate neutrality objective through all community policies, in a socially fair and cost-efficient manner. A sustainable and irreversible transition to climate neutrality should consolidate the EUMS' state and societal resilience, with no 'collateral victims.'

Institutional coherence refers to the Union's internal policy coordination procedures. Several provisions of the Lisbon Treaty sought to improve EU internal policy coherence by implementing new ways of dealing with disputes between the Council and the Commission, and within the Commission itself. In the case of the EU climate policy, the Commission has taken a leading role, with the 'European Green Deal' being its most touted gambit so far. Ranging across eight policy areas – biodiversity, sustainable food systems, sustainable agriculture, clean energy, sustainable industry, building and renovating, sustainable mobility, eliminating pollution and climate action – the deal marked an unprecedented effort to review more than 50 European laws and redesign public policies (World Economic Forum, 2021). It also committed one trillion euros to climate-related investments. In the case of the 'NextGenerationEU' recovery fund, as previously noted, the Commission pushed for a mandatory provision to devote at least 37% of all national recovery and resilience plans to climate-positive initiatives. Put into action by 2026, this will represent a unique opportunity for governments to ensure a green recovery. **The 'European Green Deal' would also play an important role in the region's COVID-19 recovery, making a direct link between human health and a healthy environment.** The European Parliament has also pledged to work to ensure that the EU's climate package would be fully in line with the Paris Agreement (European Parliament, 2021).

Last but not least, the availability and capacity to utilize policy instruments is the final ingredient in Bretherton and Vogler's recipe for 'EU actorness under construction.' The instruments traditionally employed in pursuit of external policy objectives include political (diplomacy/negotiation), economic (incentives/sanctions) or military means – the soft and hard power components that together constitute smart power. The Union has access, albeit to varying degrees, to all three types of instruments. The ability to utilise all or any of these instruments depends, however, upon the extent to which problems of vertical coherence are overcome. And the Union's ability to respond to global challenges like climate change will continue to depend, as ever, upon its capability.

In relation to political instruments of policy, the Union engages extensively in the traditional practices (and art) of diplomacy. Political dialogue as an element of the Union's communication both with international partners and competitors is routine. So is the EU's habit of reaching out to foreign publics via public diplomacy in order to promote its causes and advertise its cooperative

model. Here, the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS), with its broad policy remit, strengthened EU efforts on all levels, including in third countries, where the former Commission Delegations, now a component of the EEAS, are explicitly linking the political and economic aspects of external policy. At the moment of writing this policy paper (November 2021), EU Delegations and embassies of EU Member States around the world already held in October 2021 events to foster dialogue and cooperation on climate change, meant to showcase success stories and inspire further action (EEAS, 2021). Among others, the EGD reconfirmed the focus on building 'climate alliances,' especially with Africa and the European strategic neighbourhood (European Commission, 2019). Sometimes, building cognitive communities counts as much as forging tangible military alliances.

Another important element of the EU's climate policy, and exponent of its soft power and exemplary leadership, is the Emissions Trading System, which requires industries in the European Union to purchase carbon credits to compensate for their polluting emissions. **The ETS is the world's first international emissions trading scheme and the EU's flagship policy to combat climate change and the world's biggest carbon market (EEA, 2021).** Ideally, after the CBAM will become fully operational in 2026, it will harmoniously complement a revised ETS. However, if the EU were to adopt the revised ETS without levying tariffs against outside partners, it would severely disadvantage local industries and local sectors, undermining its own overall competitiveness. And, if enacted unilaterally, the CBAM would surely face objections under World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. Intra-EU bargaining (and diplomacy) will play a great part in achieving vertical cohesion.

Another instrument to watch will be the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM), touted as a key tool to ensure that the transition towards a climate-neutral economy happens in a fair way, leaving no-one and no place behind. A small step in the right direction, the JTM will provide targeted support to help mobilise at least €65-75 billion over the period 2021-2027 in the most affected regions, to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the transition from fossil fuels and carbon-intensive processes. At COP26, EC President Ursula von der Leyen announced the launching of the Just Energy Transition Partnership (between the US, the UK, Germany, France and the European Union) with South Africa, meant to support latter's decarbonisation efforts. Overall, recent years have seen a growing acknowledgement from the wealthy countries that they have to do more to help other poorer countries around the world, especially developing ones, to accelerate their clean-energy transition and address pollution. The most developed have to share a bigger part of the burden and pay their historical climate debt (Adow, 2021).

4. Conclusion

All things considered, the overarching idea remains that the European Union cannot stop climate change on its own, but it has the potential to trigger a green trickle-down effect. It first needs to fine tune the differences in perception and perspective at home on what climate action should look like. It then needs to work with like-minded countries on this issue as it will strive to convert remaining climate change sceptics. The COP26 in Glasgow may well remain in history as a moment of truth for the international community's commitment to tackle climate change. A moment when it became abundantly clear that every nation had to do its part with ambitious targets in order to keep the 1.5 degrees goal in reach and specific plans as to how to get there, especially the major economies. After acknowledging the multi-faceted nature of EU climate policy, the final section of this paper will provide concrete policy recommendations and practical advice on how to effectively move further the EU climate diplomacy, as a means to increase EU smart actorness and consolidate its international standing.

5. Policy recommendations

Reduce internal 'cacophony' regarding climate change action

The 'European Green Deal,' launched in 2019 as a European Commission strategy and policy programme for transforming the EU's economy for a sustainable future, and the July 2021 legislative package have set the EU at the forefront of the global efforts to mitigate the effects of aggressive climate change. The EU's stated ambition to become a climate-neutral continent by 2050 will require considerable additional efforts from the EUMS and more coordination amid its thick mix of regulatory, market-based and procedural instruments. There are still questions to be answered regarding the implementation of the EGD, ranging from the application of the CBAM to the role of nuclear energy. **Before speaking with one voice on climate policy, EUMS will need to understand one another's fears and anxieties in order to successfully decouple economic growth and prosperity from fossil fuels and carbon emissions.** Internal/vertical cohesion will translate into external credibility and enhance presence.

In spite of its occasional functional hiccups, starting from the 1990s, through its official documents and normative actions, the EU has demonstrated at least two noteworthy aspects: firstly, given its ambitious package of climate regulation, it is an example to be followed in decarbonisation; secondly, the EU considers that climate change mitigation does not have to come at the cost of economic development and increasing global inequalities. It also seems to recognize that a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is the best way to go forward for human societies. It understands the 'tragedy of the commons' better than it does the 'tragedy of great power politics.' Regardless, the realization of the desired positive synergy between the global pandemic recovery plans and the EGD will depend on their respective implementation procedures. And it is safe to assume that the rest of the world will be watching and taking notes.

Effectively mitigate the socio-economic challenges of 'European Green Deal' implementation

European Union Member States and institutions have the European public opinion on their side when it comes to acknowledging the gravity of global warming and the importance of its collective containment. Arguably, the most prevalent concern when it comes to the 'green transition' rises from its associated socio-economic challenges, such as the prospect of rising unemployment

caused by the closure of carbon-intensive industries. The digital revolution envisioned to go hand in hand with the green revolution provokes similar reactions. Some EUMS lack the human and institutional capacity to access and use available EU funds dedicated to the twin transitions.

The EU needs to build on the Just Transition Mechanism and expand it in tandem with the development of its ambitious climate policy. In doing so, it will set an example to be followed globally and will show that the no-one left behind principle is more than wishful thinking. The green transition implies creative destruction, meaning that it will also provide many new economic and political opportunities for EUMS and their citizens. These will need to be consistently communicated to stakeholders, in a broader people-centred positive narrative, in order to avoid disinformation and unwarranted scepticism.

Develop a coherent foreign policy strategy for the 'European Green Deal'

After dealing with the domestic front, and building on the optimistic scenario of a more united European voice on climate change issues, Brussels will then need to establish a coherent foreign policy strategy revolving around the perks of the 'European Green Deal.' To preach its utility, promote its goals and praise what it had achieved so far. **Climate diplomacy will increasingly act as an expression of EU Actorness, but only if this objective will remain consciously assumed and actively pursued.** Some of the instruments for achieving that are already in place. The EU has a Council Working Party on the Environment for intra-European coordination and a Working Party on International Environment Issues preparing positions for international negotiations. Climate finance support for developing countries in the next decade will have to include a significant stimulus in support for adaptation efforts.

The European Union and its Member States are already the largest contributors to climate finance and they have shown before that they can present a unitary position in the international fora dedicated to discussing climate changes. The common EU approach to personal data and cybersecurity stands as a prime example of deepening vertical integration, as talks about the EU 'digital sovereignty' are catching speed. European defence is another worthy case study. In what regards climate diplomacy, the EU tried to verbally persuade COP26 participants that legally binding emissions' reductions were not as bad as they sound. A new body of 'EU climate ambassadors,' with one representative from each of the 27 EUMS, could work in close coordination with the High Representative in order to disseminate that same message, in hoping for better outcomes in the future.

Use climate diplomacy to enhance the EU's international role

The 2021 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report stressed that it was still possible to achieve the 1.5-degree target, but only if unprecedented action was taken without any further delay. Climate vulnerability is an unsustainable *status quo* in the short-term, but especially in the long-term. External perceptions of a proactive EU 'domestic' environmental programmes and policies have generated expectations of a similarly proactive role in climate diplomacy. The EU Council (2018) outlined four dimensions of EU action in the realm of climate diplomacy: continued commitment to multilateralism; addressing the implications of climate change on peace and security; accelerating domestic action and raising global ambition; enhancing international climate cooperation through advocacy and outreach. **As such, the EU should use climate diplomacy to manage the potential geopolitical fallout of the EGD in its relationships with its strategic neighbourhood and with global players** such as the United States, Russia, China, India and Saudi Arabia. The EU could use the current opportunity to co-opt the United States in a carbon border

adjustment mechanism similar to its CBAM, as it remains dedicated to becoming a global standard-setter and a normative power for green transition, including circular economy and hydrogen. The role of nuclear energy inside the European Union will have to be thoroughly analysed and its opportunity critically assessed. Responding to the persistent need for climate leadership and by acting as an 'honest broker' in the international climate policy cooperation, the EU could more generally uphold its own capacity to incrementally develop a grand climate strategy and its capability to diffuse its normative prescriptions onto others.

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