

Conclusion

This study examined the activities and impact of the European Union as a foreign policy actor in one central domain of global politics. In so doing, it touched upon a range of crucial academic and political debates about the opportunities for a single actor to make a difference on the world stage in an age of globalization. This concluding chapter synthesizes the key insights of the study by explicitly answering the three research questions that guided it, before setting the results into a broader context. To do so, a brief sketch of the contribution this study makes to existing research is linked to the identification of research desiderata. The work closes with a reflection on the normative implications of the study, projecting itself into the future of EU foreign climate policy.

Major Findings of the Study and their Significance

Understanding the EU as a Foreign Policy Actor in the Global Climate Regime

When it comes to answering the first research question of *how the European Union attempts to exert influence on the global climate regime*, the findings of this study were fairly clear-cut across time. As a foreign policy actor, the EU makes use predominantly of formal, diplomatic tools aimed at solving the problem of climate change through arguing *within* the multilateral arena. Its main influence attempts are geared toward the UN negotiation process, and regularly come in the form of written or oral submissions to the UNFCCC, based on internal political agreements or legislation. In advancing its positions, timing is frequently crucial: the EU regularly tries to be the first major player to make far-reaching substantial proposals. Across time, a clear tendency toward complementing this arguing approach with incentivizing economic tools, for example through bilateral technological partnerships with emerging countries and clean energy aid programmes for LDCs, could be discerned. The Union has also increasingly engaged in broader outreach activities in recent years, mostly to explain its position to partners outside the UN arena. At the same time, its foreign climate policy positions were regularly found to be rather inflexible, resulting from decision-making processes that focus on internal policy preferences with limited reflection about the external political context. Frequently, extensive internal coordination is needed to adjust the external behaviour, which implies less time for foreign policy implementation.

In the final analysis, a systematic mapping of its activities suggests that the EU can best be qualified as a *multilateral, diplomacy-focused and policy-oriented foreign policy actor* in the area of climate change. By contrast, strategic thinking in terms of politics, characteristic of many other players' approaches to global climate talks, clearly represents the more neglected dimension of the Union's foreign policy in this domain.

Specifying the EU's Influence on Global Climate Politics

The second research question guiding this work was designed to allow for *the assessment of EU influence* so as to come to statements about whether the Union actually makes a difference through its actions in world politics. In answer to this question, the EU was found to have exerted medium overall influence during the entire evolution of the global climate regime and very low influence during the December 2009 Copenhagen summit and its immediate aftermath. This overall influence was attributed on the basis of an analysis of its leverage over the two key pillars of the climate regime: (i) the core norm of the regime (emissions reduction target), which was consistently moderate until 2012 but low at COP 15, and on (ii) the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, which was permanently limited. Moreover, the EU was found to have influenced the agenda of the climate talks at various points in time as well as the decision on the fora in which to discuss global climate policies, notably through the early to mid-2000s and in 2011. While the EU is thus capable of shaping world affairs if it meets with favourable conditions, the most striking finding of the study is certainly the decline in its influence over key pillars of the climate regime across time, which underscores the need for yet better understanding and, eventually, explaining its external impact.

Explaining EU Influence on the Global Climate Regime

While understanding the Union's influence attempts and their effects was a major objective of this study, it did not stop with a description and analytical reflection of its foreign policy acts. Rather, the third research question stipulated a further investigation into the *determinants of the effects of EU actions* in the context of the studied case. The responses to this question are necessarily complex, as the Union's influence co-depends on multiple exogenous factors at the international level of analysis as well as on actor-specific variables. A central result of the study is that a minimum degree of actor capacity represents only a necessary, but by no means a sufficient condition for the EU to exert influence. The study demonstrated that while the EU's actor capacity and activity level generally increased over time, this did not clearly correlate with heightened degrees of impact. Whether or not it is able to shape world affairs thus does not depend so much on what the Union *is* and on the full development of

its formal preconditions for acting (i.e. possessing competence, speaking with a single voice), but rather on what it *does* and how it does it, *given the external context*. By consequence, a concept was introduced into this research context to grasp a finding strongly suggested by the evidence: the *goodness of fit*, i.e. a certain degree of compatibility between the Union's action and its external environment, which is regarded as a second necessary condition for EU influence. Finally, more specific propositions were formulated on the basis of the two causal mechanisms and in the form of INUS conditions. The EU is capable of influencing global climate politics through *bargaining* when it possesses sufficient actor capacity and a well-prepared negotiation strategy, which it coherently defends in a global context of relative power homogeneity and positional proximity between major players. It is able to wield influence through *arguing* when global climate negotiations are at an early stage and other actors still uncertain about their preferences, when the EU possesses at least minimum actor capacity and addresses other actors' beliefs, acts proactively, coherently and consistently as a foreign policy actor with a strategy invoking external sources of knowledge and/or norms.

Research and Normative Implications of the Study

Following the synthesis of the study's main insights, this final section of the work invites the reader to consider the broader implications of the findings for the future, in both academic and political-practical terms. Regarding academic research, the analysis generated a few findings requiring further clarification as well as a range of interesting new questions. Concrete suggestions for future research are embedded into a discussion of what the insights of this work signify for the different bodies of literature it aimed to contribute to. For political practice, the publication of this book does not coincide with the end of global climate negotiations or of the EU's participation therein, far from it. To remain within the problem-driven logic of the study, a brief outlook into the future of EU foreign climate policy is therefore in order.

How the Study Relates to Existing Bodies of Literature: Suggestions for Future Research

An analysis of EU foreign policy activities and influence in global affairs necessarily had to draw on different bodies of literature at both levels of analysis. By consequence, the findings of this study hold a range of implications for several fields of research: besides the contribution it makes to IR research pertaining to the object of the study (global climate politics), where it helps to better understand the dynamics of actors' interaction in – and thus the very essence of the politics of – the global climate

regime, the work contributes above all to research on the main subject of the study, the EU. It inserts itself primarily into debates held (i) on the Union's foreign climate policy and (ii) in EU foreign policy analysis as a sub-discipline of integration studies more generally.

First and foremost, the work concretely contributes to **research on EU external climate policy**. For this body of literature, it not only holds a significant amount of new empirical material, gathered from a longitudinal perspective with a special focus on the most recent periods of negotiations in the UN climate regime (2007–2009 and its aftermath), but also makes a critical conceptual-theoretical contribution to the debate. Applying the logic and concepts of foreign policy and influence analysis to the EU's performance in the climate regime over time helps to nuance the notion of EU climate leadership as an empirical reality. While the findings confirm its leadership for isolated issues and specific points in time, especially the period after the US withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol in 2001, they also show that it would be much more accurate to speak of *attempted* EU leadership for most of the history of the global climate regime: the EU tried hard, but seldom succeeded in mobilising any followers. For academic research on this topic, this implies that leadership as an analytical concept, and more specifically the way this concept has been applied in most studies, indeed displays limitations. While this work made an empirical and conceptual contribution toward rectifying this situation, similar investigations may be needed to corroborate the picture that emerged from it on the type of foreign policy actor the Union is in this domain. Turning to broader research desiderata for scholars working on EU climate policy, three elements of the Union's foreign climate policies require specific attention: its *strategic behaviour* as a foreign policy actor in general terms, its approaches to and *relations with key actors* in global climate politics (the US, China, India, Brazil, South Africa, the African Group, AOSIS, etc.) and its *influence on topics* that were not yet explicitly touched upon in this study (e.g. the EU's capacity to shape the financial architecture of global climate politics). Secondly, as the Union's foreign policy activities and their effects in the domain of global climate politics can be regarded as a critical case for its activities and influence more generally, the study also contributes – empirically, conceptually, theoretically and methodologically – to the **research on EU foreign policy and the EU's role in UN bodies** as such. Empirically, the study provides insights into the analyzed case as an example of its participation in UN treaty-based regimes more widely. Conceptually, the study helps to clarify how the Union acts as a foreign policy player by introducing the concept of EU influence attempts and systematically linking it to specific foreign policy instruments this actor has at its disposal. The result of this exercise is a broader conceptualization of the Union's foreign policy implementation, which provides the

foundations for eliminating the blind spot that exists around this issue in the discipline of EU foreign policy analysis. In terms of theory, the broad conceptualization and subsequent explanation of the Union's impact provide further ground for hypothesizing on the capabilities underlying EU influence-wielding. In this regard, the findings of this analysis point to the explanatory power of factors at various levels of analysis and their interplay, which could inspire studies on similar cases of EU participation in global (environmental) politics. Questions that persist after this study concern firstly the concept of EU foreign policy implementation: while the tools that the Union employs were identified, the question – again from the classical foreign policy analysis perspective – *why* it chooses the one above the other at given points in time remains unsettled. Further, the link between a specific tool and the capabilities it relies on needs to be worked out more precisely (Brighi/Hill 2008: 127). Finally, in terms of methodology, this work has developed a method capable of combining a broad mapping of a foreign policy actor's influence attempts with the determination of this influence and its explanation. In so doing, it provides an example of how a significant methodological research gap for EU foreign policy studies can be filled (Smith 2007, 2010: 335). Following its application, lessons can be drawn on its operability and usefulness. On the one hand, the study does demonstrate that an influence analysis method can be designed and successfully applied to determine a foreign policy actor's influence. On the other hand, further development can help to still improve the operability of the method. First, a yet stronger pre-framing of influence analyses – reducing the temporal, actor-specific or thematic scope of such studies – could yield even more precise results. Second, the reputational analysis of EU influence could be strengthened by exploiting synergies with another important research domain investigating “how others see the EU” (Lucarelli/Fioramati 2010), which could help to determine the role of existing – and detect further – external explanatory factors of the Union's impact.

The EU's Future Foreign Climate Policy: Policy-relevant Findings of the Study

The discussion of its key findings highlighted that one value added aspect of the study lies in its longitudinal character, which allows for identifying the (dis)continuities in the EU's foreign climate policy over time. An extrapolation of the discovered trends into the future makes it possible to discuss the major policy-relevant insights that emerged from this audit of the Union's external effectiveness in global climate politics.

Following the – for European climate diplomats – quite disappointing experience of the 2009 Copenhagen summit, reactions to the EU's

under-performance seemed to go into two directions, which could well be described as the poles of a continuum. On the one hand, concerns were voiced about the limits of the Union's achievements in light of its considerable investments in the climate domain. This led some policy-makers and commentators to prescribe the EU a more modest and pragmatic approach to global climate politics, which was also reflected in its foreign policy actions right after 2009, and especially in the run-up to the Cancun COP (see Chapter 6). Another group of policy-makers and observers drew, on the other hand, the opposite conclusion: for them, the EU had not quite done enough yet to "show the way" and convince other parties of the well-foundedness of its positions. Continued efforts and patience were needed, and it was then only a matter of time until the Union would eventually book successes in global climate politics (see, for example, Wurzel/Connelly 2010). While the policy discussions have been – and continue to be – held between the former proponents of greater pragmatism and scaled-down ambitions and the latter – arguably more successful – advocates of a more-of-the-same approach, a promising future development of EU foreign climate policy might actually lie in a combination of the two: while maintaining a high level of aspiration as a final *objective* of its foreign policy action, the EU could use a more pragmatic *approach* to attempt to reach this aim. The crux obviously lies in delimiting aims from means, and striking the right balance between the two. Several suggestions, based on the empirical findings of this study, may provide starting points for reflecting about necessary changes. Key concepts used in this study – EU actor capacity, EU foreign policy implementation and the notion of goodness of fit – are employed to structure these thoughts. The insights are based on the premise that the EU is bound to remain active in global climate politics. It has invested too much, and has harmonized internal climate policies to such an extent that a simple disengagement from the global negotiation process is no option. Of course, a major precondition for continued engagement is a solid internal climate regime. In this respect, recent problems encountered by the ETS will need to be settled, both by reinforcing this flagship policy and by complementing it further through policies and measures that will ensure that the Union attains its emissions reduction objectives for 2020 and beyond, or else the credibility of its climate policy might suffer a severe blow (Verdonk *et al.* 2013). Parting from the assumption that the EU is capable of solving these domestic problems, the study's findings concretely suggest that its activism will need to rely on greater strategic capacities for it to become more effective. Importantly, it must empower itself to be a more flexible foreign policy player (for the more detailed argument, see Schunz 2011, see also Torney 2013). This flexibility depends on an improved actor capacity and

a more adequate foreign policy implementation that ensures a procedural and a policy fit between the EU's activities and the context it operates in.

An improvement of its actor capacity would require a number of adaptations that could be made at a fairly low cost, but require political willingness. To begin with, the EU could use the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty as a basis for reforming its system of internal coordination and external representation to ensure a more coherent position-building and outreach strategy. In recent years, EU external climate policy has often run on two parallel tracks: the multilateral negotiations under the UN, which were the responsibility of the lead negotiators and issue leaders and, at the higher level, of Environment Ministers; and the climate-relevant negotiations at bilateral summits or in fora such as the G-20, which were a matter for Foreign Ministers and/or Heads of State, the HR and the Commission President and their staff, including the EEAS. This study suggests that this repeatedly caused high transaction costs. Not only for that reason, the two tracks should be more systematically integrated, providing ownership of EU foreign climate policy to both constituencies. This would require a more stringent intra-EU task-sharing and coordination that would assign roles to all actors.¹ While the WPIEI-CC and the system of lead negotiators and issue leaders, involving member states' environmental experts and the Commission's DG Climate Action, could continue to prepare the EU's positions and play a role in technical negotiations in all fora, the strategic outreach could be coordinated by the HR and the EEAS. Regular joint sessions of the Environment and Foreign Affairs Councils could define the EU's mandate for climate (and other environmental) negotiations (see also Van Schaik/Egenhofer 2003). EU positions could then be represented by the EU HR in all fora outside the UN climate regime and through EU delegations in key countries, while a Troika of the Commissioner for Climate Action, the Environment Minister of the Council Presidency and the HR could conduct the UN climate negotiations. Key conditions for this task-sharing to succeed would be a symmetrical access to information of all actors involved, ensured via close cooperation between the WPIEI-CC and the EEAS's department for global and multilateral issues. Such collaboration between experts on the subject matter and diplomats would exploit synergies and ensure coherence between positions. Moreover, it would allow for information about third parties' preferences to be systematically fed back into the EU's decision-making machinery to adapt

¹ While discussions have been held, ever since 2010, on reforms that could point into the direction of this scenario (see EEAS/Commission 2011; Council 2011c, 2013), no significant advances have been made with regard to integrating environmental expertise and diplomatic skills. At the time of writing, only two diplomats in the EEAS are in charge of dossiers directly related to climate change.

positions and coordinate between outreach activities. This would enable strategic behaviour placing the Union on an equal footing with other parties in all climate fora. The resultant approach would be characterized by a greater feeling of solidarity among member states, based on the insight that the EU can only be an effective foreign climate policy player if it acts collectively and coherently – and risks repeated instances of failure and a damaged reputation, if it does not.

With its actor capacity enhanced in this way, the Union's foreign policy implementation could also be improved in several respects. The findings of this study suggest that the EU fares better when it can provide for a procedural and policy fit, i.e. possesses a clear vision of (i) which actors to approach (who?) (ii) via what type of channels (where?) and with the help of (iii) what type of instruments (how?), and if it manages to implement this approach coherently (Schunz 2011). In terms of *channels*, the EU has always had a default strategy of acting through the multilateral system. This may not in each case be the most suitable choice. Other fora, such as the Major Economies Forum or the Cartagena Group can be used to advance global climate talks, and the EU needs to think about ways of smartly integrating those into the negotiations under the UN. First steps into this direction have been taken after COP 15, especially via the Cartagena Group. The prospect that an EU member state will host the COP in 2015 (France) could be a strategic advantage in this regard. When it comes to the *actors* the Union reaches out to, the main lesson from the Copenhagen experience is that it not only needs to diversify its outreach by benefiting from its impressive diplomatic network, but should also listen more attentively to other players and gear its positions more adequately toward their preferences and underlying interests. To that end, relationships with a wide variety of actors need to be reinforced and transcend pure exchanges of positions. Judged again on the basis of the example of the Cartagena Group, the Union seems to have learned part of the lesson, but it can certainly still do better, integrating country-/group-specific approaches into one overarching strategy. To do so, it will have to think more and more multilaterally while acting bilaterally, i.e. adopt an approach marked by “effective multiple bilateralism” (Keukeleire/Bruyninckx 2011). Although it seems indispensable to resort to bilateral relations to build trust and ensure continuous exchanges, it does not make sense to address AOSIS or the United States without thinking about the impact certain positions and decisions would have on China or India, and vice-versa. With regard to foreign policy *instruments*, diversification equally seems to be the key. To date, the EU's focus on diplomatic instruments has been fairly technical and policy-oriented. The findings from this study underscore the fact that the Union cannot afford to stop at this level of purely argumentation-based influence attempts, but

needs to more systematically “think the other” and reason more in terms of politics than policy. Although it has tried to use economic tools like bilateral partnerships in recent negotiation rounds, it has not often effectively employed issue-linkage and conditionality to reinforce its argumentation strategy. For the future, such intelligently conceived linkage seems to hold greater potential: if the Union manages to mainstream climate change into its development aid programmes and international trade negotiations, for instance, leverage may be gained over key partners’ positions on global climate politics (Curtin 2010; Purvis/Stevenson 2010). Other than the nexus between diplomatic and economic tools, the EU could also more systematically consider the use of coercive foreign policy instruments. The analysis showed that it was quite reluctant to actively employ mechanisms like border adjustment taxes, even as threats, during the post-2012 negotiations until 2009. By contrast, in 2011/2012, it adopted and initially enforced legislation that imposed a cap on GHG emissions from flights operating to and from EU airports. The hostile reactions from especially the US and China did not make the Union falter. Only when the International Civil Aviation Organization finally evoked that it could decide on globally concerted action on aviation and climate change at its September 2013 Assembly, the European Commission proposed “stopping the clock” in the application of its legislation – a proposal that was later endorsed within the Council and the European Parliament (Agence Europe 2013). Although the EU’s behaviour did not deliver the desired advances in the short term,² its position on aviation could be a sign that it is willing to adopt a more assertive strategic stance *vis-à-vis* key parties in the global climate talks, aligning ambitions and strategic capacities.

In the final analysis, although it may practically be far from straightforward to implement these changes, following the policy-relevant insights of the study could help the Union to improve its effectiveness as a foreign policy player in the climate change regime. While the global context for climate politics is without doubt intricate and cannot be altered by the EU, it does have the possibility to address the main weaknesses that have characterized its activities to date: its inflexibility and its reliance on a policy-rather than politics-based approach. Internal consolidation to provide for better preconditions for foreign policy implementation should be paired to a more strategic, flexible approach and a diversification of its outreach to ensure that the EU lives up to its full potential in global climate politics.

2 In September 2013, the ICAO committed to starting negotiations on a global market-based mechanism on aviation emissions that would only take effect as of 2020. At the same time, it refuted the EU’s plans to impose ETS rules outside its own airspace. In reaction to this development, intra-EU debates on whether to maintain the original provision, apply it only to EU airspace or abandon it altogether are ongoing at the time of writing.

