EU's Climate Policy in Light of its Pursual of Global Leadership

A Social Identity Theory approach to the EU's climate policy

Marthe Skogland Wedøe

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Abstract:

As it is established that the EU is regarded as a leader within climate policy and that it has a desire to attain a higher status globally, it is interesting to explore to what extent these two features are related. The Social Identity Theory (SIT) will here be used as a theoretical framework as it shows how a group who performs well within one area can seek to generalize this position. For the EU, the US plays a significant role in deciding if it is allowed leadership, both within climate policy and in general. The US's notable position is mostly due to it being of slightly higher status than the EU. Global leadership is one of the multiple motivations behind the EU's active climate policy, but it seems that leadership just within climate policy plays a more prominent role as a motivation for the EU.

Content

Introduction

The member states of the European Union (EU) vary in their performance in climate policy. Indeed, the Union as a whole, ranked as a political unit, is known for putting considerable emphasis on climate while at the same time accomplishing more than many of its member states do individually (Bals, Burck, Hagen, Höhne & Marten, 2019, p. 7). There is no doubt that both Europeans and the climate are benefitting from the EU's effective climate policy. However, this may not be the results which drive the EU to perform well in the area. Rather, the Union is motivated by several other factors, and one of these may be that the pursual of an active climate policy will lead to it being perceived as a global leader in a more general sense. In other words, the EU may be seeking to attain a higher status globally through its climate policy. This motivation will be looked at in light of the research question: *how is the EU's active climate policy connected to its desire for global leadership?*

To support the argument that the EU is using its leading position within climate policy to attain a higher status globally, a theory known as Social Identity Theory (SIT) from psychology will be applied. The SIT will illustrate how a group viewed as leading in a dimension that others perceive as important will also be viewed as leading in general. To show how the EU is trying to generalise its leading position within climate policy, this essay will explore how it is attempting to make other actors view climate as important at general and climate diplomatic meetings meetings such as the Group of Twenty (G20), Group of Seven (G7) and various United Nations Climate Change Conferences (UNCCCs).

Before any conclusion, other motivations which have helped form the EU's active climate policy will be discussed in order to develop a broader understanding of the EU's approach to the policy area. It is essential to keep in mind that none of these motivations alone can explain why the EU acts the way it does within the field of climate. Rather, these motivations work together to shape the EU's climate policy. The first of these alternative motivations is that the EU is pursuing an active climate policy in order to maintain its position as a leader only within climate policy, and therefore not doing so to be perceived as a leader more generally. The second motivation is that the EU is pursuing an active climate policy for the

sake of the climate itself, based on its desire to fight climate change. The last alternative motivation that will be explored is to what level the EU is pursuing an active climate policy for the sake of stimulating economic growth.

Theory

To start off, it is essential to get a basic understanding of both climate policy and global leadership, and how they are used in this essay. Climate policy is, plainly put, politics that concern the climate, often concerned with limiting climate change. Climate policies include, but are not limited to, policies which deal with the ozone layer, deforestation, infrastructure in environmentally-sensitive areas, mass-production of food, sea-levels and pollution (Connelly & Smith, 2003, p. 2).

Global leadership will, in this context, entail an actor being perceived as a leading player globally. By attaining this position, the actor will be in a unique position to take on leadership in any area they see fit. A global leader will often also lead by example as other actors will look up to them and want to act like them (Bretherton & Vogler, 2006, p. 89). Being a global leader will in this context be the same as being of a high status.

To explain the first aim, how the EU wants to achieve global leadership by attaining a leadership position within climate policy, a theoretical framework from psychology needs to be applied. This theory is Henri Tajfel's SIT. A person's social identity is their knowledge of their membership in various social categories or groups of people, and the value they attach to it (Tajfel, 1978a, p. 63). In other words, the theory is concerned with groups which provide a social identity for their members.

Whether someone considers themselves satisfied with their social identity or not depends on the status of their group. If their group is of lower status, they will, in turn, find their own social identity unsatisfactory (Brown & Turner, 1978, p. 204). A general assumption in Tajfel's theory is that people will strive to define themselves positively, and will, therefore, strive for their group to obtain a high status (Brown & Turner, 1978, p. 204). The SIT is

supported by similar theories about prestige, status competition and identity, that all come to the conclusion that groups, and individuals, will always seek to maximise their status (Wohlforth, 2009) (Mercer, 2017) (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010) (Feklyunina, 2015) (Barnhart, 2016).

Comparison choice

In order to make sense of a group and its identity, one must compare the group to those around it. The members of a group will seek to make their group distinctive in a favourable way compared to other groups (Giles & Williams, 1978, p. 434). This is connected to how the individuals in a group, and the group as a whole, want to gain a higher status compared to other groups. Tajfel has dedicated a lot of his attention in this theory to groups that feel that their social identy is inadequate (Tajfel, 1978b, s. 89).

When a group compares itself to another group, that comparison will be based on characteristics and behaviours that are valued, such as power and abilities (Brown & Turner, 1978, p. 206). Groups will compare themselves with groups that are similar to them, but that attain a slightly higher status. The gap between the groups cannot be too big as it has to be possible for the lower status-group to potentially become like the higher status group (Brown & Turner, 1978, p. 205-6). The end goal for members when comparing their group to a higher status-group is to become of higher status than the other group.

As status depends on other groups' status, we say that status is relational (Mercer, 2017, p. 137). When a group compares itself with other groups, the other groups will also compare themselves with the first group. This means that if a group's comparison choice loses status, it is likely that the first group will gain higher status and vice-versa. Related to this is how status will be dependent on the beliefs of others (Mercer, 2017, p. 139). It is imperative that a group is *perceived* by others to be of higher status in order to *be* of higher status. If the members of the group are the only ones who think they attain a high status, they will quickly realise that their impression is wrong when they come into contact with the rest of the world which will be of the opposite belief.

Methods to improve your status

Tajfel further assumes that people will strive to define themselves positively, an assumption that is supported by research from fields such as neuroscience, biology, psychology and sociology (Wohlforth, 2009, p. 35). To explain how the groups aspire to attain a higher status, Tajfel maps out three ways in which a group can improve their inadequate social identity. It is necessary to mention that these three approaches do not need to be applied separately, instead, it is common to see a combination of the three being used (Tajfel, 1978b, p. 93).

The first approach is *social creativity*, where the group tries to redefine the dimensions by which its group's status is defined. Here, the group will seek to be defined by a dimension in which it already excel, and thereby it will be of higher status in general (Tajfel, 1978b, p. 94). Within social creativity, there is also the option for a group to find a new group of lower status to which it can compare itself (Abrams & Hogg, 1990, p. 5).

The second approach is *social mobility*, which means the group will work to become like the superior group by changing some of its own characteristics (Tajfel, 1978b, p. 93-4). Within social mobility, there is also the option for individuals to leave their current group in favour of a superior group, known as individual mobility (Brown & Turner, 1978, p. 204).

The last approach differs from the others by being more direct and is referred to as *social conflict*. This approach entails a group directly competing with their comparison choice and challenging its superiority in dimensions by which the comparison choice defines itself (Abrams & Hogg, 1990, p. 5).

The three status-improving approaches will only be applicable if a group wants to improve its status because they think their current status is unfair. If the members of the group accept the group's low status, they will instead aim to improve their individual social identity, not the group's social identity. They will do this through individual action, not group action (Giles & Williams, 1978, p. 434).

EU and SIT

Now that we have an overview of the SIT, the next step is to see how the EU fits within the theory as a group which strives for a better social identity, and how it possibly use its climate policies as a tool to attain a higher status globally. To discover how the EU fits within the theoretical framework, and how it is aiming at improving its status globally through its climate policies, a document analysis is applied. This analysis is based on the Europe 2020 strategy and the Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's 2018 State of the Union speech. Documents related to several G20 and G7 summits from 2011 to 2018 will also be explored, such as the various Leaders' Summit communiqués and declarations. Documents that show members intent at the meetings will also be examined, such as the joint letter signed by Juncker and European Council president Donald Tusk addressing the EU's priorities before the G20 and G7 leaders' summits. The various presidencies of the G20 and G7's priorities will also be given some emphasis. As climate-oriented diplomatic meetings will be explored, relevant documents from various UNCCCs between 2009 and 2018 will be used.

Unhappiness with its position

A first step in determining if the EU wants to attain a higher status globally through its active climate policy is by asserting that it has been unhappy with its status and therefore wants to improve it. The EU's unhappiness with its current position comes across clearly in the Europe 2020 strategy from 2010, as well as having been backed up by observers of the EU.

The Europe 2020 strategy is the EU's strategy for the period from 2010 to 2020 and is the document which puts down the Union's overall guidelines for the decade. The European Commission is the proposing entity for all of EU's strategies, including Europe 2020. The 2020 version's primary focus is to ensure a "smart, sustainable, inclusive growth rooted in greater coordination of national and European policy" (European Commission, 2010a).

In the Europe 2020 strategy, it is evident that the EU is unhappy with its current status in the world. The reason for the unhappiness is clear from how it is pointed out that the EU is "not

progressing enough relative to the rest of the world" and is experiencing increased competition from countries such as China and India. The increased competition from these two countries is particularly significant in the area of research and development (European Commission, 2010b, p. 5). The EU shows that it does not see itself as a global leader by stating that other economic blocs are doing better and developing faster than itself. The EU's belief that there is a gap between itself and other economic blocs is reinforced by the fact that the EU has implemented strategies and measures in order to reduce the gap between itself and the other blocs. This is particularly interesting as it suggests that the EU is aware and dissatisfied with its current position in the world. It also shows that the EU is ready to act and introduce measures to ensure itself a higher status.

Europe's power compared to that of other blocs is mentioned again later in the strategy in the context of the available "room for manoeuvre," and how the EU perceives this to be limited (European Commission, 2010b, p. 6). Europe's limited room for manoeuvre, according to the strategy, is rooted in the growing importance of the G20, where emerging countries can demonstrate increased economic and political power (European Commission, 2010b, p. 6). The G20 consists of nineteen of the countries with the largest economies in the world and the EU (G20 Argentina, 2019). The growing G20, and the EU's observation of it, highlights how the EU does not feel as if it is progressing fast enough compared to other countries. Furthermore, this shows that the EU has identified which institutions that are helping developing countries gain more power.

The strategy mentions that if the EU is not able to maintain its role as a global actor, it risks facing high levels of unemployment and social distress (European Commission, 2010b, p. 7). This highlights how the EU believes that not having a central position globally could have significant implications for its internal political conditions, as well as for its possibility of securing acceptance for the externalisation of its policies. As a way to try to become a global leader, the EU calls for itself to strive to "play a leading role in shaping the future global economic order through the G20" (European Commission, 2010b, p. 21). In other words, we can see that the EU is unhappy with its current position, wants to improve it, and has identified a way to do so: through the G20. By not having the desired position globally, it is

also not able to influence policies globally as much as it would like to. Therefore it makes sense for the EU to want to use its representation at the G20 more effectively.

Observers of the EU also agree that it is not currently a global leader. One of these is Wyn Rees, a professor in international security, who has written that concerning global security policy, the EU has been unable to address global challenges adequately. He further states that this has lead them to be unable to create a significant change globally (2011, p. 31). Similar tendencies have been identified concerning the EU's capabilities in global finance and global trade policies (Leblond, 2011, p. 458) (Sbragia, 2010, p. 368).

Professors of international relations Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, on the other hand, still regard the EU as an important global actor, but they agree that it will continue to face more limits on its power (2013, p. 387). By analysing the EU's ability to exert power globally, they further conclude that the Union reached a peak in its global power around the year 2000. Bretherton and Vogler predict that the development the EU has experienced with globally exerting less and less power will continue (2013, p. 387). Although it is not outside of the EU's power to make a difference, it has been less able to do so in recent years. The areas in which the EU is still able to make a considerable difference are those where it can present a unified front, that is to say where all member states agree on the issue at hand (Bretherton and Vogler, 2013, p. 14). Thus, it is crucial that all member states agree within climate policy in order so the EU can use this area to become a global leader.

Comparison choice

So far, it seems that the EU is an excellent match to Tajfel's SIT as it constitutes a group which is aware of its status globally and views it as inadequate. In other words, it is unhappy with its current status globally as it is not able to exert as much influence as it would like to be able to. Another aspect of the EU which is vital to look at in light of the SIT is its comparison choice. The group of slightly higher status to which the EU compares itself to is the US. The two blocs are each other's competitor, at the same time as they are highly interdependent. This unique relationship is rooted in the fact that both of them define their success vis-a-vis each other (Sbragia, 2010, p. 369). However, they are not always two

comparable cases, and it is apparent that their position opposite each other is different in regard to both their economic and defence policy, as well as their policy and actions within climate policy and global governance.

Economic policy

The first dimension in which the EU compares itself to the US is in the economic field. Economic policy is a field in which the two powers are often perceived as equals and interdependent as they are each other's most significant economic partner (Hincu, 2014, p. 112). It is quite interesting to note that even though the EU economy is technically larger, few perceive it as the bigger of the two (Budiman & Manevich, 2017). As status is dependent on how someone or something is perceived, it can be argued that the US is of a slightly higher status in the economic field based on people's perceptions. The US, therefore, fits well to the description as the EU's comparative choice as it is similar, but is recognised as being of a slightly higher status in the economic field. This is also the field of policy the US fits the best as the EU's comparison choice.

Defence policy

While the EU and the US are quite similar economically, they are very different in terms of power. Both the tools available to them and their attitude towards the use of power is very different. The American military capacity is stronger than any of its counterparts, which is clear proof that the US is stronger than the EU concerning defence (Rees, 2011, p. 30). The EU is known for not being able to use its limited military power effectively, but doing so is also something that it has typically not been motivated to do (Rees, 2011, p. 23). The lack of motivation to do so is rooted in its approach to power. Both the EU and the US use soft power resources such as cultural attraction and international institutions, but the US has also been prone to apply hard power tools (Hincu, 2014, p. 112) (Nye, 1990, p. 167). The difference between the two types of power is that soft power is the ability to change the action of someone else through attraction, while coercion is used regarding hard power (Nye, 1990, p. 166).

While it is clear that the US is superior in regards to military power, it does not mean that its European counterpart views them as of higher status. This is due to the European tendency

to look at US policies as less sophisticated than its own (Rees, 2011, p. 35), which is unsurprising considering that the opposition against US foreign policy is as high as 80 per cent in some European countries (Zakaria, 2008, p. 227). It would also be logical to conclude, based on SIT, that the EU does not directly compare its power abilities with the US as the latter is considerably stronger.

Climate policy

A third dimension in which the two blocs to some extent look to each other is in climate policy. The EU-US relationship within climate policy has been characterised by a climate change divide, where the approaches and policies of the EU and the US have tended to be quite different (Schreurs, 2004, p. 207). This is rooted in the blocs' quite different political cultures and attitudes toward climate change. The EU is operating according to the belief that effective climate policies can be connected to economic growth (Szarka, 2011, p. 33). This belief is evident through the EU highlighting in the Europe 2020 strategy how resource efficiency will "save money and boost economic growth" which, in turn, has the potential of creating "well over 1 million jobs" (European Commission, 2010b, p. 13). The US, on the other hand, has typically been of the perception that active climate policy is an obstacle to economic growth, and has therefore often limited its climate actions to ones that are beneficial to other policy areas as well (Szarka, 2011, p. 32) (Schreurs, 2004, p. 211).

The background of the differences between the two blocs can be traced to the differences in support among the citizens for climate actions. While EU citizens generally show at least mild support for the EU's climate policies, climate action is perceived as a highly divisive issue in the US (Schreurs, 2004, p. 214). This has lead to the EU generally being more willing to take action against climate change than the US.

Global governance

The two different approaches to climate policy can be traced back to their general approach to global governance. All the EU member states share a commitment to international institutions and order, while the Americans have typically viewed cooperation between states as a matter of choice (McGuire & Smith, 2008, p. 253). This can help us understand

why the EU ended up ratifying the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), while the US did not. The ratification of the Kyoto Protocol can tell us a lot about early leadership within global climate policy, as the EU showed initiative to lead while the US did not (McGuire & Smith, 2008, p. 256-257). In withdrawing the US from the Kyoto protocol, the Bush administration was under the impression that it was signing the treaty's death warrant; it was perceived that US ratification was decisive for the protocol to come into effect (Schreurs, 2004, p. 208). What happened instead was that the EU took on the leadership position without the US by ratifying the protocol and then securing the ratification of enough other states so it could go into effect, which it did in the end without US support (Schreurs, 2004, p. 209).

China as a comparison choice

When we look at the biggest economies in the world we find the US, the EU and China in the lead (The World Bank, 2017). Could this perhaps mean that China has more in common with the EU than the US and therefore should be the Union's comparison choice? China is a force to be reckoned with in regards to international climate policy as the country has been improving its policies in the area in recent years, but, as we will discover, it does not fulfil the criteria to be the EU's comparison choice (Chen, 2012, p. x). As mentioned before, a group's comparison choice will be an entity it views as similar but is of slightly higher status, and this is not how the EU views itself compared to China.

To start off, we can see that China is in general very different from the EU. This can most easily be seen through how China is a developing country, while the EU consists solely of developed countries (UNCTAD, 2014, p. 145-146). Secondly, the two blocs have not always been known to have a strong relationship like the transatlantic relationship. Their relationship has, at times, been dominated by multiple disputes, where some have lead to the EU introducing sanctions against China (Torney, 2015, p. 99-104). This illustrates how it does not look up to China as it has no aspiration to become like the country. Rather, the EU has typically hoped that China's increased contact with it and the rest of the world might lead to political reform in the country. However, this has not happened (Vogt, 2012, p. 1-2). The EU has also repeatedly expressed its unhappiness with, among other things, China's

lack of transparency, policies that favour Chinese companies, and the country's lack of respect for the rule of law and human rights (European Commission, 2016, p. 3-6).

Even though we can see that China is not the EU's comparison choice, we cannot disregard that China may have impacted the EU's climate policies and vice-versa. Climate policy has in later years become one of the areas in which the two blocs work most closely, and their partnership has, among other things, resulted in developing common zero emission coal technology (Balme, 2012, p. 169). Close cooperation on projects such as this in the area of climate policy between the two will, without doubt, lead to their policies in the area being inspired by each other. Nonetheless, it does not mean that this will lead to China being considered similar enough to the EU to be regarded as its comparison choice.

Methods to improve one's status

After establishing that the EU is aware of its inadequate status globally and that it compares itself with the US, we can see how the EU is working to improve its status. Tajfel suggests next that a group with these prerequisites will try to improve its position through either social creativity, social mobility, social conflict, or a combination of these three methods. This essay will focus specifically on social creativity as, if it transpires that the EU uses its climate policy to gain a higher status globally, it will require exploration.

The State of the Union from 2018 is one of the documents that will be analysed in this part. It is an annual speech which the President of the European Commission delivers to the European Parliament. The intention behind the speech is to deliver a clear overview of the past year's events in Europe, in addition to it serving as an excellent platform for the President of the Commission to look ahead at what priorities the Union should have for the upcoming years (European Commission, 2018). By discussing such a public and central speech, we will be able to not only look at the concrete measures the EU wants to implement, such as those mentioned in the Europe 2020 strategy, but also see how top EU officials imagine the status and future of the EU in general. As status is primarily concerned with how others perceive one, Juncker sharing his vision for Europe allows him to influence how others view the Union.

Social Creativity

Social creativity is twofold; it could mean redefining which dimension is viewed as important or changing who one's comparison choice is. In our case, if the EU practises social creativity in the first way mentioned, it would mean that it tries to make climate policy an important dimension globally. The end goal would then be for everyone to view the group which does well in climate policy as a group with high status.

In the Europe 2020 strategy, the EU identified five dimensions it views as most important for its own success. The five dimensions are employment, research and development, climate, education, and poverty (European Commission, 2010b, p. 3). This tells us that it views climate as one of the most critical dimensions for the Union to focus on. It is still essential to keep in mind that climate is here viewed as equally important to the four other dimensions mentioned, so it does not necessarily give climate an exceptionally unique role for the EU.

Climate is not only an important policy area within the Union's borders, but it is something it wants other actors to view as important as well. This comes across in the Europe 2020 strategy, where it is stated that it is vital for the EU to "continue its outreach to other parts of the world in pursuit of a worldwide solution to the problems of climate change" (European Commission, 2010b, p. 6). This aligns well with the idea that the EU uses social creativity to achieve a higher status, as by externalising its policies it compels other groups to view the dimension as important.

The EU at diplomatic meetings

General diplomatic meetings: G20 and G7

A closer look at how the EU has tried to externalise its view of climate as one of the most important dimensions in world politics is through the G20, which as we have seen earlier, is a group the EU views as key to improving its status. The G20 has typically focused on issues related to global economic policy, but there is also room to discuss other policy areas it views as relevant, such as climate change (G20 Argentina, 2019). It could be argued that the

EU is in a slightly disadvantaged position in the G20 as it is the only member unable to hold the presidency, a position that passes from one member state to another from year to year. The state attaining the presidency is in a unique role to shape global governance and decide which areas should be prioritised (Chin & Dobson, 2016, p. 1). However, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom and France are all members of the EU and the G20 (G20 Argentina, 2019). When the EU member states act in international forums, they have been known to do so in light of common European goals (Bjerkem, 2017, p. 22). Hence, the EU is in practice able to hold the presidency by proxy, as well as it has multiple representatives at the G20-table making it a stronger player at the summits.

The different members are additionally not irrelevant when they do not hold the G20 presidency as they are fully able to suggest their priorities for their participation. The EU did this before the annual Leaders' Summit in 2018, where the presidency was held by Argentina, through a joint letter written by Juncker and Tusk. The letter was written to inform the EU and the public about their planned approach to the summit. Here they mapped out the five priorities they would have on behalf of the EU at the G20 Summit, which were climate change, trade tensions, irregular migration, poverty and terrorism (Juncker & Tusk, 2018, p. 1). In the letter, they describe the commitment to climate action as an area where the EU "leads by example," making it apparent that it both want to externalise its climate policies and that it views itself as an important actor and initiative-taker in the field of climate (Juncker & Tusk, 2018, p. 2).

By putting climate as the main priority for its global agenda, the EU contrasts with Argentina, which priorities for its presidency were focused around employment, infrastructure and food security (G20 Argentina, 2017). Although Argentina is not listing climate as one of its main focuses, it has included it as one of the eight legacies it is renewing from earlier presidents (G20 Argentina, 2017). As we can see, the EU is putting more emphasis on climate than Argentina. However, it is not the only member keen for the climate to be a part of the global agenda. This, therefore, makes it seem that the climate would no matter what be discussed by the G20, but that the EU would like to give it more emphasis than the hosting country.

Keeping both the EU and Argentina's approach to the G20 leaders' summit in mind, it makes sense now to look at the outcome of the meeting to see if the EU's strong emphasis on climate affected the result of the meeting. In the Buenos Aires Leaders' Declaration, the G20 shows what it agreed on during its discussions at the summit. Most of the points it addresses in this declaration are related to the three top priorities of the Argentinian presidency, but there are also two points on climate which reveal dissent among the member states.

These two points on climate both concern the UNCCC Agreement from 2015, known as the Paris Agreement. The first point splits the members into two groups, with the US alone on one side and the rest of the members on the other (G20, 2018, p. 4). The following point explains the US's opposing standpoint on the issue, which is that it justifies its decision to withdraw from the Paris agreement (G20, 2018, p. 4). By opposing the stance of the remaining members, the US is actively taking a stand against putting climate as one of the most important dimensions globally. For the EU, which is trying to encourage others to consider climate as a vital dimension, the US's action here can be perceived as a loss. The EU and the US can in this instance be described as opposites, where the first wants to put more emphasis on climate while the latter wants less.

In addition to the disagreement over the importance of climate at the G20 Leaders' Summit, there is an overall limited emphasis put on climate in the Leaders' Declaration. This could be both due to the US's negligence of the issue and due to it not being mentioned as one of the main priorities of the Argentinian presidency. The lack of emphasis on climate is not unique for the US and Argentina. Rather, there were reports that states such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Russia all considered joining the US side in the dissent on the Paris Agreement (Associated Press, 2018). Another possible reason behind the lack of emphasis on climate in the G20 Leaders' Declaration could be a failure on behalf of the EU to convince the other G20-members of the importance it believes climate ought to be given. This could then mean that they were unable to lead within this field, contrasting with their desire before the summit (Juncker & Tusk, 2018, p. 2).

The G20 Leaders' Summit in 2018 is not the only diplomatic meeting where the EU has worked to emphasise climate. Rather, it is only one of many cases in which it has tried to do so, but its success rate in doing so have variated. The EU has been less able to get the breakthroughs it has sought for in the years after 2017, largely due to the new American president Donald Trump. A look at the Leaders' Summit Communiqués from the G20 and G7 summits from 2017 and 2018 show us that the G20 Leaders' Summit was not the only one where the US disagreed with the rest of the attendees on climate. Rather, the US has also disagreed with the rest of the members on climate at the G20 Summit in Hamburg in 2017, as well as the 2017 and 2018 G7 Summits held in Taormina and Charlevoix (G20, 2017, p. 10) (European Council, 2018a) (G7, 2017, p. 5-6). This shows a tendency of the EU being hindered from achieving the breakthrough it is seeking on international climate policy at diplomatic meetings such as the G20 and G7 mostly due to the American Trump presidency, which began in 2017.

However, the G20 meetings have regularly discussed climate since 2011, so by looking at the meetings since then up until 2016, it is possible to gain further insight into the tendencies surrounding their climate-related discussions (G20 Argentina, 2019). The Leaders' Communiqués and Declarations published between 2011 and 2016 included no disagreements on climate; rather, they all reaffirmed the members' commitment to the various UNCCCs (G20, 2011) (G20, 2012) (G20, 2013) (G20, 2014) (G20, 2015) (G20, 2016). By uncovering this trend of unanimous support for the climate and the UNCCCs, which all took place during Trump's predecessor Barack Obama's presidency, it is apparent that the US' stance in these meetings has changed.

The sudden shift in the stance on climate between the Obama and Trump Presidencies indicates that the EU faces quite different levels of resistance on the topic, all depending on who holds the US presidency. The increased opposition it is facing is a threat to the EU's desired leadership position as it is not able to take on effective leadership. The EU wants to make other members view climate as an important dimension, and by failing to persuade the US to do so, it becomes harder for them to sell the same message to states who look up to the US. This implies that the EU is dependent on US support to be a leader within the

field, and therefore it cannot be a leader on its own. The disparity between the US and the EU on climate is something of which the EU is aware of as Tusk himself has stated that the Union is unable to change the US's mind, but that it will not give up on trying to do so (European Council, 2018b). In other words, the EU is aware of its inability to fully take on leadership and make a change alone, but it will not let this stop them from trying.

Diplomatic climate meetings: United Nations Climate Change Conference

In addition to the G20 and G7 summits, there are also several diplomatic meetings which focus solely on climate. One of the most known climate diplomacy meetings is the UNCCC, which is held annually with representatives of all signatories of the UNFCCC present (UNFCCC, 2019). This is a venue where the EU has both taken on leadership and been undermined from doing so, with the best example of the latter being the 2009 UNCCC, more commonly known as the Copenhagen summit. The EU reported ahead of the summit that it was ready to take on a leadership position but failed to do so. Instead, the US together with Brazil, South Africa, India and China devised a deal without the EU's knowledge which ended up being the final deal of the conference (Black, 2009). What is interesting to note is that the Copenhagen summit has been characterised as a "huge climate diplomacy failure," where the EU's lack of climate leadership was not the only defeat of the meeting (Boasson & Wettestad, 2013, p. 49).

The EU's inability to act during the Copenhagen Summit lead to non-binding commitments and thus an insufficient agreement, something that was not ideal for the EU which was motivated to make a difference with binding commitments (Boasson & Wettestad, 2013, p. 50). The situation was quite different a few years later at the 2015 UNCCC, which was the meeting that resulted in the Paris Agreement, where the EU took on an active position which contributed significantly to the final result. The EU came to the negotiations table with high ambitions for a more binding agreement than the one it had witnessed in Copenhagen, but had to scale down its ambitions as it was constrained by states who had different visions for the agreement (Groen & Oberthür, 2018, p. 721). Ultimately, it can be said that the EU played the role of both leader and mediator as it did not reach all its goals but managed to

push other states' limits (Groen & Oberthür, 2018, p. 722). This approach was similar to the one it adopted during the 2011 UNCCC in Durban (Bäckstrand & Elgström, 2013, p. 1382).

By changing how it acts at the UNCCC, the EU has shown that it has learnt from its mistakes and adopted a more productive approach to climate diplomacy. It has experienced that it cannot take on an effective leadership position without mediating as interests within climate policy do not always align internationally. By taking other key actors approach to climate policy into account, the EU is now able to achieve results through its diplomatic participation, resulting in effective leadership. As seen before, the US put a stop to this trend.

Why climate?

An important question to ask oneself regarding this is: why is the EU picking climate as the dimension through which it wants to gain global leadership? First and foremost this is an area in which the EU has been able to act as a unified force, which means it can act as a strong voice globally within this policy area (Elgström & Kilian, 2010, p. 261). The effect of unified actions in this area is reinforced by the classification of climate as a shared competence, meaning that both the EU and the member states can act in this area (TFEU, 2007, p. 5). The EU being able to act efficiently is especially beneficial considering that climate change is an issue no country can tackle itself, so the EU can do more than the member states would be able to do individually. The individual member states cannot create a change on their own, but neither can the EU. This is why it is essential for the EU also to externalise its policies to states outside the Union.

It is also very beneficial, as we have seen earlier, that climate is an area in which the EU is more proficient in comparison to the US. This means that it is not expecting to be challenged by the US in respect of this area. This, as well as the EU being an early frontrunner in combating climate change, gives it good prerequisites to be a leader in the area (European Commission, 2010b, p. 12-20).

Social mobility and social conflict

The second and third method to improve a group's status, as presented by Tajfel, will in this context be used as alternative perspectives of how the EU is improving its status by other means than through its climate policy. The first of these two is social mobility, which would involve the EU trying to become more similar to the US by adopting some of its characteristics.

Two of the dimensions in which the US is more successful than the EU in are defence and the ability to influence global politics. Juncker mentions both of these dimensions as ones in which the EU wants to improve by establishing a European Defence Fund and Permanent Structured Cooperation in Defence and by becoming "an architect of tomorrow's world" (European Commission, 2018, p. 5 & 12). By becoming better in a dimension in which the US is known for being proficient in, the EU is to some extent trying to become more similar to the US.

The EU will not be able to directly challenge the US in terms of defence soon as the gap between them is too big, but the EU does stand a chance in challenging the US in terms of its ability to influence global politics. This can be described as a social conflict rather than social mobility as the EU is challenging its comparison choice, not just trying to become like them. The EU has repeatedly emphasised its desire to become a more active player in various official documents and speeches, so this can be described as one of its long-term goals (European Commission, 2018, p.5-6) (European Commission, 2010b, p. 22) (Juncker & Tusk, 2018, p. 1-2). It also makes sense for the EU to choose the ability to influence global politics as the dimension in which to challenge the US, as the country has over time displayed various signs of withdrawal from the international order, as well as pursual of isolationism (McGuire & Smith, 2008, p. 238). The US pursuing isolationism will make it easier for the EU to act globally as power is relational, but this newfound power might not make the US feel threatened as it will feel like it left its position as a global player voluntarily.

The last dimension in which the EU is challenging the US is within monetary policy, concerning the global use of the European euro and the American dollar. The US currency has been characterised as a global currency as many international transactions are made in US dollars (Gilpin, 2001, p. 86). In the 2018 State of the Union speech, Juncker calls for the euro "to play its full role on the international scene" (European Commission, 2018, p. 10). With this, Juncker is expressing that he wants the dollar to play less of a role in Europe so the euro can be used instead, thereby explicitly challenging its dominance.

Alternative motivations:

Leadership just within climate policy

As we have seen above, it is apparent that the EU is striving to be viewed as a leader within global climate policy. Above it was explored if the Union was pursuing this position to achieve a position as a global leader, but there might be a reason to think that becoming a leader within global climate policy is a goal in itself. One of the reasons for this could be that the EU feels as if it needs to maintain the leadership position it already has within the field (Delreux, 2012, p. 299). It does not want to lose this position as this would be perceived as a loss for them. This would also explain the EU's increased role in global climate policy as other actors are doing more, thus competing with the EU for the position of leader in climate policy. This results in that the EU has to do more to maintain its leading position (Delreux, 2012, p. 290).

Just achieving leadership within climate policy can be connected to William Niskanen's assumptions about the bureaucracy, where he assumes that bureaucrats will try to maximise the size of their agency to increase their status and salary (Peters, 2010, p. 13). This assumption, applied to the bureaucrats working with climate policy in the EU, suggests that they are motivated to increase the size of the EU's climate policy to give themselves prestige. Therefore they will want the EU to take on the leadership within climate policy as that will give the EU status within the policy field, but they will not care too much about the implications that can have of the EU's general global leadership as that will not affect them as directly.

It can be argued that leadership just within climate policy is a more important motivation than global leadership for the EU. This is because the EU has itself not made the connection between its active climate policy and its goal of achieving a higher status. Rather, as seen in the analysis above, the EU has only stated, when discussing climate policy, that it wants climate leadership, not global leadership.

To fight climate change

The motivation behind the EU's active climate policy cannot be explained with ambitions about leadership positions alone, as it has to be combined with its desire to reduce the effects of climate change and to protect the environment. One of the key arguments used regarding this motivation is that the EU has a social responsibility. This is rooted in the fact that Europe is to blame for a large portion of global emissions, and is therefore expected to "clean up its own mess" (Woerdman, 2002, p. 66-67). Also Juncker, in his 2018 State of the Union speech, underlines that Europeans "want to leave a healthier planet behind" (European Commission, 2018, p. 4 & 6).

Although the EU knows it is responsible for a large portion of emissions, it also knows it cannot act alone to reduce climate change. Therefore, as part of its social responsibility, it is also pursuing active climate policy in order to put pressure on other countries responsible for large parts of global emissions, namely Russia and the US (Woerdman, 2002, p. 85). By urging others to act alongside it, the EU is still pursuing its active climate policy as a way of attaining leadership, but the motivation behind this leadership is not for the leadership in itself. Rather, it is striving for the leadership position in order to be able to lead by example.

The EU is not the only entity pressuring others to act: in fact, the Union itself is pressured by its citizens to pursue an active climate policy. This is partly because EU-citizens are not willing to compromise their environmental standards, and therefore the Union has to make sure citizens' wishes are reflected in its policies (Zielonka, 2008, p. 481). The fact that citizens expect the EU to uphold its current standards and policies within the area is connected to the aforementioned point, that the EU wants to be perceived as a leader just

within climate policy, as both points assume that the EU is trying to maintain its current position, not attain a new one. Citizens' influence on the EU's climate policy can also be traced to their growing concern about climate change, illustrated by the 2011 Eurobarometer report which found that EU-citizens in 2009 viewed climate change as a more significant worry than the economic situation (Boasson & Wettestad, 2013, p. 50).

Stimulate economic growth

As seen earlier when comparing the EU's climate policy to the US's, the EU believes that effective climate policies can lead to economic growth and job creation. Climate change is also costly for sectors such as agriculture, energy, transport and tourism, whom all lose business and have to invest in new infrastructure due to damages created by the changes in the climate (COACCH, 2018, p. 3). By adjusting to the changes while also trying to limit them, the EU is able to be better prepared for the future and the climate-related challenges it might bring. It still makes sense that the EU would want to externalise its active climate policy with economic growth as a motivation, as reducing climate change is not something one actor can do alone.

Conclusion

The EU fits well within the SIT as it wants to improve its status globally and have a comparison choice: the US. Seeing as it is unhappy with its current position, it naturally wants to improve it. This essay has aimed to explore to what degree the EU has tried to improve its status by adopting a social creativity-approach. This entails trying to make others view climate policy as an essential dimension globally. The EU is perceived as a leader within climate policy, something that is primarily due to its unified position in the field which makes it easier for the Union to act. It also helps that the US does not notably challenge the EU within climate policy. All of these factors combined make up a good base for the EU if it wants to try to generalise its leading position within climate policy, potentially making them a leader globally. As it seems plausible that the EU has been motivated to use its leadership position within climate policy to gain global leadership, this essay is based on

the research question: *how is the EU's active climate policy connected to its desire for global leadership?*

To explore the connection between EU's climate policy and its desire for global leadership the SIT is applied as the theory's attention is dedicated to groups who seek to improve their status. Here social creativity is highlighted as it is an approach used for groups to gain higher status through making others view the dimension it does good in as an important dimension globally. If successful, the group will be seen as a global leader generally as it is already a leader within a dimension that is viewed as important by others.

Social creativity will in this context play out through the EU putting particular emphasis on climate policy, which it has done at both general and climate-specific diplomatic meetings. It has here tended to prioritise climate policy to maintain its leading position within the field, while at the same time pushing for more active climate policy. However, there are no signs of climate having an extraordinary role compared to the other priorities of the EU. Nevertheless, if EU's priorities are compared to the other attendees' at the summits analysed, it is possible to conclude that the EU puts a greater emphasis on the policy area than what the others on average do.

As the EU is becoming known for putting climate as a priority, it is interesting to note to what degree it has succeeded in making other actors prioritise in the same way. By looking at how other states have reacted to the EU's priorities at the diplomatic summits analysed, it is possible to get an impression of how successful the EU has been in making others view climate as an important dimension. What is interesting to note is that the EU is dependent on the US agreeing with them to be able to lead, something particularly evident at the Copenhagen Summit in 2019 where lack of this resulted in the EU not being included in shaping the final deal. Similar tendencies have also been visible during the Trump presidency, illustrated through the G20 and G7 Leaders' Summits held in 2017 and 2018. It is here essential to not only concern oneself with specific courses of events, but rather remember that it is the tendencies that form patterns.

It is evident that the EU is trying to make states around the world view climate policy as necessary. This is apparent in the way that it as one of its top priorities at diplomatic

meetings. It is also evident through how senior EU officials, such as Juncker and Tusk, express that it is a goal for the Union to change the minds of key state leaders such as Trump. Despite the EU acting according to social creativity, it is not a given that it does this knowingly. The EU has stated in key documents and speeches, such as the Europe 2020 Strategy and the State of the Union, that it is vital for it to keep performing well in climate policy. However, there is little to no evidence of the EU itself explicitly expressing that a global leadership position is a motivation behind its active climate policy.

The EU itself not mentioning global leadership as a motivation behind its climate policy does not necessarily mean that the EU completely disregard the implication its active climate policy has on its status. Rather, it only shows that other motivations have been given a greater emphasis and thus they play a greater role. Motives such as leadership just within climate policy, the desire to fight climate change and stimulation of economic growth have all briefly been touched upon in this essay but would need further emphasis if we were to explore the general motivations behind the EU's climate policy. Other potential motivations that have not been touched upon in this essay, nor have they gained significant attention in EU documents, are external shocks such as climate migration and the negative effect climate change has on human health and agriculture (Arnslett, 2017) (FAO, 2016).

It could also be possible to link this to a phenonomen known in the corporate world as greenwashing. Greenwashing is when businesses try to make their product or service appear climate-friendly, while it is not (Ekstrand & Nilsson, 2011, p. 167). Although this is a term coined from the corporate world, it is based on the same principles that are explored in this essay: that some actors have status-related motivations behind their climate friendly-profile. Additionally, it would also be interesting to look at the dimensions the EU is advocating for at diplomatic meetings, and to what degree the emphasis it gives them is connected to the EU's goal of becoming a more active player. Mainly could EU's focus on multilateralism, rather than climate, be a new approach to its desire for global leadership, as the EU themselves is a result of multilateralism.

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