



International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Analysis of the Foreign Policies of Major Powers in Dealing with Climate Change: A Comparative Approach

Dr. Omid Ezzati

PhD in International Relations, Ankara Gazi university, Ankara, Turkey.

Dr.o.ezzati1899@gmail.com

Doi : <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.5.0924.2629>

ABSTRACT

This paper provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of the foreign policies of major powers — the United States, China, the European Union (EU), and Russia — in addressing climate change. The study aims to identify patterns, similarities, and differences in these powers' strategies, goals, and actions by employing a multi-theoretical framework that incorporates realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Using a qualitative methodology that includes content analysis, discourse analysis, and comparative policy analysis, the research draws on a diverse range of data sources, including policy documents, official statements, and international agreements.

The findings reveal that while all four major powers recognize the need for international cooperation on climate change, their approaches differ significantly due to national interests, economic priorities, political ideologies, and geopolitical considerations. The EU positions itself as a global leader advocating for ambitious climate actions, the U.S. exhibits fluctuating commitments influenced by domestic politics, China balances its developmental goals with climate responsibilities, and Russia maintains a more conservative stance prioritizing economic protection. The study contributes to the field by offering a nuanced understanding of the interplay between national interests and global climate objectives, highlighting the potential for both cooperation and conflict in global climate governance. The paper concludes with policy recommendations and suggestions for future research to further explore the complexities of international climate relations.

Keywords: Climate Change, Foreign Policy, Major Powers, Comparative Analysis, International Relations, Climate Governance, Mitigation, Adaptation.

Introduction

Climate change is widely recognized as one of the most pressing global challenges of the 21st century, with profound implications for environmental stability, economic development, and human security (IPCC, 2021). The increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and shifts in [agricultural productivity](#) are just a few of the impacts that underline the urgency of a coordinated global response (World Bank, 2020). Climate change transcends national borders, influencing not only domestic policies but also reshaping international relations, as countries grapple with how to protect their interests while contributing to global efforts to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of a warming planet (Keohane & Victor, 2016). In this context, foreign policy emerges as a critical tool for states to articulate and pursue their climate objectives on the world stage.

Foreign policy plays a pivotal role in addressing [climate change](#) because it governs the actions, commitments, and stances of states in international forums. Through diplomatic negotiations, international agreements, and strategic alliances, major powers such as the United States, China, the European Union, and Russia shape the global climate agenda, influencing the commitments and actions of other countries (Falkner, 2016). These diverse approaches, shaped by unique [political](#), [economic](#), and cultural contexts, create a complex landscape where cooperation, competition, and conflict coexist (Vogler, 2021). Understanding how these powers formulate and implement their foreign policies regarding climate change is essential for grasping the broader dynamics of international climate governance.

Despite an expanding body of literature on climate change and international relations, there remains a significant gap in understanding how major powers specifically address climate change within their foreign policy frameworks. The foreign policies of major powers are often influenced by distinct national interests, geopolitical considerations, and varying levels of economic development, leading to different strategies and levels of commitment to climate action (Rayner & Jordan, 2013). This paper addresses the following research problem: How do major powers approach climate change in their foreign policies? By analysing and comparing these approaches, this study aims to illuminate the underlying motivations and strategies that drive their actions in the global climate arena.

The primary objective of this paper is to identify patterns, similarities, and differences in the foreign policy approaches of major powers concerning climate change. This study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these powers balance national interests with global responsibilities and how their policies influence international climate negotiations and agreements (Betzold, 2015). Additionally, the paper aims to explore the broader implications of these policies for global cooperation and conflict over climate issues.

To achieve the above objectives, this study is guided by the following key research questions:

- What are the main strategies employed by major powers in addressing climate change through foreign policy?
- How do these strategies differ across various dimensions, such as mitigation and adaptation, economic considerations, and geopolitical interests?
- What are the implications of these strategies for international climate cooperation and conflict?

Understanding the foreign policies of major powers in dealing with climate change is crucial for several reasons. First, it provides insights into the motivations and strategies behind their international actions, which is essential for predicting future behaviour in climate negotiations (Bernstein & Hoffmann, 2018). Second, this knowledge is vital for identifying opportunities for cooperation and reducing conflicts in the international climate regime (Bodansky, 2010). Finally, by comparing the diverse approaches of major powers, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in the quest for effective global climate governance.

This paper is structured as follows: The next section reviews the existing literature on [foreign policy](#) and climate change, highlighting key theories and concepts that inform this analysis. Following this, the methodology section details the comparative approach used to examine the foreign policies of major powers. The analysis and results section presents the findings of the comparative analysis, identifying key patterns and differences. The discussion section interprets these findings in the context of international relations theory and global climate politics. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the key insights and suggests areas for future research.

Literature Review

Overview of Existing Literature

The literature on climate change policies and foreign policy analysis is extensive and multifaceted, reflecting the complexity and diversity of international responses to climate change. Studies on climate change policy have primarily focused on the development and implementation of national and international strategies aimed at mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the impacts of a changing climate (Bäckstrand & Kuypers, 2017; Hovi, Sprinz, & Underdale, 2019). At the national level, scholars have explored how states formulate and implement climate policies based on domestic political, economic, and social considerations (Christoff, 2016). At the international level, research has often concentrated on the role of multilateral agreements, such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, in fostering global cooperation (Falkner, 2016).

Foreign policy analysis concerning climate change has examined how states use diplomatic tools, international negotiations, and strategic partnerships to influence global climate governance (Vogler, 2021; Oberth & Groen, 2018). Major powers, such as the United States, China, the European Union, and Russia, have been the subject of numerous studies, with researchers highlighting the varied approaches and strategies these actors adopt in their international climate engagements. For instance, while the European Union is often depicted as a normative leader advocating ambitious climate goals, the United States' position has varied significantly depending on domestic political changes (Skovgaard, 2021). China has been analyzed as a pragmatic actor balancing developmental needs with growing international expectations (Yu & Zheng, 2019), while Russia's engagement has been characterized by its focus on economic and geopolitical interests (Tynkkynen, 2020).

Gaps in the Literature

Despite the extensive research on climate change policies and the foreign policy actions of major powers, there are several gaps that this paper aims to address. First, much of the existing literature tends to focus on individual countries or specific international agreements, with limited comparative analysis across different major powers. This lack of comparative studies makes it difficult to discern broader patterns and contrasts in how these powers approach climate change in their foreign policies. Second, while some studies have examined the motivations and strategies of major powers, they often do so from a single theoretical perspective, such as realism or liberalism, without integrating multiple theoretical lenses that could provide a more comprehensive understanding (Bernstein & Hoffmann, 2018; Keohane & Victor, 2016). Finally, there is a need for more research that connects these foreign policy strategies with their broader implications for global climate cooperation and conflict, particularly in light of recent geopolitical shifts and the evolving landscape of international relations (Falkner, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

To analyse the foreign policies of major powers concerning climate change, this paper employs a multi-theoretical framework, drawing on key theories of international relations: realism, liberalism, and constructivism.

- **Realism** focuses on the notion that states act primarily in pursuit of their national interests, emphasizing the role of power, security, and competition in international politics (Waltz, 1979). From a realist perspective, major powers engage in climate diplomacy primarily to enhance their security, economic interests, and geopolitical standing (Underdal, 2020).

- **Liberalism** argues that states are not only driven by self-interest but also by the potential for cooperation and mutual benefits, facilitated by international institutions, norms, and economic interdependence (Keohane, 1984). In the context of climate change, liberalism highlights the role of international agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, in promoting cooperation and collective action (Falkner, 2016).
- **Constructivism** posits that international relations are socially constructed through ideas, beliefs, and identities (Wendt, 1999). Constructivist approaches to climate change emphasize the influence of norms, values, and discourses in shaping state behavior and international negotiations (Checkel, 1998). This perspective is useful in understanding how different major powers perceive climate change and construct their policies based on ideational factors, such as environmental justice, sustainable development, or national identity (Dryzek, Norgaard, & Schlosberg, 2013).

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this paper aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the diverse foreign policy approaches to climate change adopted by major powers.

Conceptual Framework

To facilitate the analysis, it is essential to clarify several key concepts that underpin the study:

- **Foreign Policy:** In the context of this paper, foreign policy refers to the strategies, actions, and positions adopted by states to achieve their objectives in the international arena, particularly concerning climate change. It encompasses diplomatic efforts, international negotiations, bilateral and multilateral agreements, and strategic partnerships aimed at addressing both domestic and global climate challenges (Hill, 2016).
- **Climate Change Mitigation:** Mitigation refers to efforts to reduce or prevent the emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) to limit global warming and its associated impacts. It includes policies and measures such as transitioning to renewable energy sources, enhancing energy efficiency, and adopting carbon capture and storage technologies (IPCC, 2021).
- **Adaptation Strategies:** Adaptation involves adjusting to the actual or expected effects of climate change to minimize harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. This can include developing resilient infrastructure, improving disaster risk management, and implementing sustainable agricultural practices to cope with changing environmental conditions (Smit & Wandel, 2006).

By defining these concepts and employing a comprehensive theoretical framework, this paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of how major powers navigate the complexities of climate change in their foreign policies, offering a comparative analysis that fills existing gaps in the literature.

Methodology

This study employs a comparative research design to analyze the foreign policies of major powers in addressing climate change. The comparative approach is chosen because it allows for the systematic examination of similarities and differences across multiple cases, thereby enabling a deeper understanding of how different countries formulate and implement their climate policies in the context of international relations. By comparing the foreign policy approaches of several major powers, this study aims to uncover patterns, variations, and underlying drivers that shape these policies. This method is particularly suited to examining complex phenomena, such as climate change policy, which involves multiple actors, interests, and strategies across different political, economic, and cultural contexts (Ragin, 2014). The comparative approach also facilitates the identification of both common and unique strategies, providing insights into how global governance on climate change might be improved through cooperation or better understanding of conflicts (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003).

The study focuses on a selected group of major powers: the United States, China, the European Union (EU), and Russia. These cases are chosen for several reasons. First, these actors play a pivotal role in global climate governance due to their significant contributions to greenhouse gas emissions, economic influence, and geopolitical clout (Falkner, 2016). The United States, China, and the EU are among the largest emitters of greenhouse gases and have substantial influence over international climate negotiations, such as the Paris Agreement (Oberthür & Groen, 2018). Russia, while less active in climate negotiations, represents an important case due to its significant fossil fuel resources and strategic position in global energy markets (Tynkkynen, 2020). Second, these powers have demonstrated diverse foreign policy approaches to climate change, reflecting different economic priorities, political ideologies, and international relations strategies (Vogler, 2021). By examining these varied cases, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how different major powers navigate the complexities of climate change in their foreign policies.

The data for this study are collected from a variety of sources to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the foreign policies of the selected major powers. The primary types of data include:

- **Policy Documents:** National climate strategies, white papers, and official reports issued by governments and international organizations. These documents provide insights into the formal positions and priorities of each major power.
- **Official Statements:** Speeches, press releases, and statements by political leaders and diplomats, which offer a glimpse into the political discourse and framing of climate change by these major powers.

- **International Agreements:** Texts of key international treaties and agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted by the countries under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- **Academic and Policy Literature:** [Peer-reviewed journal](#) articles, policy briefs, and expert analyses that provide context, interpretation, and critique of the foreign policy actions of the selected powers.

Data collection involves systematically searching official government websites, international organizations (such as the UNFCCC), and academic databases (e.g., JSTOR, Web of Science) to gather relevant documents and publications. This ensures that the analysis is grounded in both primary sources (direct statements and documents from the governments and international bodies) and secondary sources (scholarly interpretations and critiques).

To analyze the data, this study employs several qualitative analytical methods:

- **Content Analysis:** Content analysis is used to systematically examine the policy documents, official statements, and international agreements. This method involves identifying key themes, phrases, and terminology related to climate change policy and foreign policy approaches, enabling the study to quantify and compare the frequency and context of specific terms and concepts (Krippendorff, 2018).
- **Discourse Analysis:** Discourse analysis is applied to understand how different major powers frame climate change in their foreign policy discourses. This method focuses on examining the narratives, metaphors, and rhetoric used by political leaders and diplomats to construct meaning around climate change, thus revealing underlying assumptions, priorities, and strategies (Hajer, 1995).
- **Comparative Policy Analysis:** A comparative policy analysis is conducted to identify similarities and differences in the foreign policy approaches of the selected major powers. This method allows for a detailed comparison of various dimensions, such as mitigation and adaptation strategies, economic and geopolitical interests, and levels of commitment to international climate agreements (Béland & Cox, 2011).

By combining these methods, the study seeks to provide a robust and multidimensional analysis of the foreign policies of major powers concerning climate change.

While the chosen methodology offers several strengths, there are also limitations that must be acknowledged:

- **Selection Bias:** The study focuses on a select group of major powers, which may not capture the full diversity of global foreign policy approaches to climate change. The findings may therefore have limited generalizability to other countries, particularly smaller states or those in the Global South.
- **Data Availability:** The study relies heavily on publicly available documents and statements, which may not always reflect the full extent of internal policy discussions or strategic considerations. Some documents may be inaccessible due to confidentiality or lack of translation.
- **Subjectivity in Analysis:** Qualitative methods like content and discourse analysis involve a degree of subjectivity in interpreting texts, which may introduce bias. Efforts have been made to mitigate this through triangulation — using multiple sources and methods to validate findings.
- **Dynamic Nature of Policies:** Climate change policies are highly dynamic and subject to change due to shifts in political leadership, economic conditions, or international developments. The study captures a snapshot of current policies, but these may evolve rapidly, affecting the relevance of the findings over time.

By acknowledging these limitations, the study aims to provide a transparent and credible analysis while suggesting directions for future research to address these challenges.

Analysis and Results

Overview of Foreign Policies

To understand how major powers approach climate change within their foreign policies, this section provides a summary of the climate-related foreign policy strategies of the United States, China, the European Union (EU), and Russia.

- **United States:** The United States' foreign policy on climate change has fluctuated significantly due to changes in political leadership. Under the Obama administration, the U.S. took an active role in international climate negotiations, notably in securing the Paris Agreement in 2015 (Davenport, 2016). However, under the Trump administration, the U.S. withdrew from the Paris Agreement, signaling a shift towards prioritizing economic growth over climate commitments (Duggan, 2017). With the Biden administration, the U.S. rejoined the Paris Agreement, emphasizing a renewed focus on [international cooperation](#), climate finance, and ambitious emission reduction targets (White House, 2021). The U.S. foreign policy on climate change now aims to reassert leadership in global climate governance, promote clean energy technology, and engage with allies and partners to enhance global climate action (Kerry, 2021).
- **China:** China's foreign policy on climate change is characterized by a pragmatic balance between developmental needs and international responsibilities. As the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter, China has pledged to peak its carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve

carbon neutrality by 2060 (Xinhua, 2020). China's foreign policy emphasizes green development, technology transfer, and South-South cooperation to assist developing countries in addressing climate change (Zhang, 2021). Additionally, China actively participates in international climate negotiations, positioning itself as a leader among developing countries while advocating for differentiated responsibilities based on developmental status (Zhang et al., 2020).

- **European Union (EU):** The EU's foreign policy on climate change is built around the principles of multilateralism, [environmental sustainability](#), and leadership in global climate governance. The EU has consistently advocated for strong international climate commitments, ambitious targets for emission reductions, and the promotion of renewable energy (Skovgaard, 2021). The European Green Deal and the EU's Climate Law set a legally binding target to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, which has been a cornerstone of the EU's diplomatic efforts (European Commission, 2019). The EU also engages in climate diplomacy through strategic partnerships, climate finance initiatives, and capacity-building programs, particularly with developing countries (Oberthür, 2020).
- **Russia:** Russia's foreign policy on climate change is primarily shaped by its economic dependence on fossil fuel exports and its strategic geopolitical interests. While Russia ratified the Paris Agreement in 2019, its climate policy has been relatively conservative, focusing on adaptation measures and emphasizing the economic risks of rapid decarbonization (Tynkkynen, 2020). Russia promotes its vast forest resources as a carbon sink and has called for recognition of these contributions in international climate agreements (Yafimava, 2021). Russia's approach to climate diplomacy often reflects a cautious engagement, balancing its participation in global climate negotiations with the protection of its economic interests (Molho, 2019).

Comparative Analysis

The comparative analysis highlights key similarities and differences in the foreign policy approaches of the United States, China, the EU, and Russia concerning climate change.

- **Similarities:**
 - **Commitment to International Agreements:** Despite differences in strategies, all four powers are parties to the Paris Agreement and have made commitments to emission reduction targets, demonstrating a baseline level of participation in international climate governance (Falkner, 2021).
 - **Recognition of Economic Interests:** All four actors consider their economic interests in shaping their climate policies. For instance, the U.S. emphasizes job creation through green energy, China balances economic growth with environmental sustainability, the EU seeks to lead in green technology, and Russia focuses on protecting its fossil fuel revenues (Skovgaard, 2021; Zhang, 2021; Yafimava, 2021).
 - **Use of Climate Diplomacy:** Each major power employs climate diplomacy to advance its interests, whether through bilateral engagements, participation in multilateral negotiations, or offering climate finance and technology transfer (Kerry, 2021; Oberthür, 2020).
- **Differences:**
 - **Level of Ambition and Leadership:** The EU positions itself as a global leader on climate issues, advocating for higher ambitions and legally binding commitments. In contrast, the U.S. approach has fluctuated with political leadership changes, China focuses on balancing development with climate commitments, and Russia adopts a more conservative stance, emphasizing economic protection (Oberthür & Groen, 2018; Tynkkynen, 2020).
 - **Focus on Mitigation vs. Adaptation:** While the EU and the U.S. focus heavily on mitigation strategies, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions and investing in renewable energy, Russia emphasizes adaptation measures, particularly those that align with its economic interests (Yafimava, 2021; Molho, 2019). China adopts a mixed approach, advocating for both mitigation and adaptation but with a strong emphasis on technological innovation and international cooperation (Zhang et al., 2020).
 - **Geopolitical Considerations:** The foreign policy approaches also differ significantly in terms of [geopolitical considerations](#). The U.S. and the EU use climate policy as a tool to strengthen alliances and counterbalance rival powers. In contrast, China positions itself as a leader among developing countries, promoting South-South cooperation, while Russia emphasizes its role as a global energy supplier and negotiates for concessions in international agreements (Vogler, 2021; Zhang, 2021).

Policy Dimensions

The foreign policy approaches of these major powers can be analyzed across several key dimensions:

- **Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies:** The EU and the U.S. prioritize mitigation strategies, such as reducing emissions and transitioning to renewable energy. China focuses on a dual approach that incorporates both mitigation and adaptation, promoting green technology and infrastructure development while also engaging in international cooperation. Russia emphasizes adaptation strategies, particularly those that protect its economic interests, such as leveraging its vast forests as carbon sinks (European Commission, 2019; Tynkkynen, 2020).

- **International Cooperation:** The EU and China actively promote multilateralism and international cooperation in climate governance. The EU uses its leadership position to push for more ambitious international commitments, while China promotes South-South cooperation and plays a key role in international climate negotiations (Oberthür, 2020; Zhang, 2021). The U.S., under the Biden administration, has re-embraced international cooperation but with a focus on alliances and climate finance, whereas Russia participates cautiously, emphasizing its unique circumstances and advocating for economic considerations in global climate policies (Kerry, 2021; Yafimava, 2021).
- **Economic Considerations:** Economic interests heavily influence the climate policies of all four powers. The EU sees climate policy as an opportunity for economic growth through green technology and innovation. The U.S. highlights job creation and economic benefits from green energy transitions. China balances economic growth with environmental sustainability, while Russia prioritizes maintaining its status as a leading energy exporter (Skovgaard, 2021; Zhang, 2021; Molho, 2019).
- **Geopolitical Impacts:** The foreign policies of these powers are also shaped by geopolitical considerations. The U.S. and the EU use climate policy as a diplomatic tool to strengthen alliances and counter rival influences. China positions itself as a leader among developing nations and leverages its investments in green technology to build influence in global climate governance. Russia maintains a cautious approach, emphasizing its energy interests and seeking recognition of its unique position in international negotiations (Vogler, 2021; Zhang, 2021).

Findings

The comparative analysis of the foreign policies of the United States, China, the EU, and Russia concerning climate change reveals several key findings:

1. **Diverse Approaches Reflect National Interests:** The analysis shows that each major power's foreign policy approach is shaped by a combination of national interests, including economic priorities, political ideologies, and geopolitical strategies. While all four are committed to some form of international climate action, the scope and ambition of their policies vary widely.
2. **Leadership and Ambition Vary Widely:** The EU emerges as the most ambitious actor, consistently advocating for stronger international commitments and integrating climate goals into its broader foreign policy framework. The U.S. shows fluctuating ambition, highly dependent on domestic political changes. China balances ambition with developmental needs, whereas Russia remains the least ambitious, prioritizing economic protection over aggressive climate action.
3. **Economic and Geopolitical Motivations are Central:** Economic considerations are a common thread in the foreign policies of all major powers, though they manifest differently based on each power's specific context. Additionally, geopolitical considerations play a crucial role, with each power using its climate policy as a means to reinforce its strategic interests globally.
4. **Cooperation and Conflict Coexist:** The study finds that while there are areas of convergence, such as a shared commitment to the Paris Agreement, there are also significant areas of divergence that could lead to conflict or competition in the future, particularly concerning the levels of ambition, mitigation strategies, and the balance between national interests and global responsibilities.

These findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how major powers navigate the complexities of climate change in their foreign policies and the implications for global climate governance.

Discussion

Interpretation of Results

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the evolving landscape of international relations and climate policy. The diverse foreign policy approaches of the United States, China, the European Union (EU), and Russia toward climate change highlight the complexity of global climate governance. The results suggest that while all major powers recognize the need for international cooperation in addressing climate change, their strategies are shaped by different national interests, economic priorities, and geopolitical considerations.

From an international relations perspective, the varying levels of ambition and leadership among these powers reflect the ongoing tension between national sovereignty and the necessity for collective action in addressing global challenges. The EU's proactive stance underscores the potential for multilateralism and leadership in fostering international cooperation on climate issues. In contrast, the more cautious or inconsistent approaches of the United States, China, and Russia illustrate the challenges of aligning diverse national interests with global climate objectives (Falkner, 2021). These differences also point to potential areas of conflict or competition, especially concerning the balance between mitigation and adaptation efforts, economic protectionism, and geopolitical maneuvering.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study have several important policy implications for major powers as they navigate the complexities of climate change in their foreign policies:

1. **Enhancing Multilateral Cooperation:** The results suggest that major powers should prioritize strengthening multilateral frameworks, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to facilitate greater cooperation and trust-building. This

includes ensuring that international agreements are more inclusive, accommodating both developed and developing countries' needs and capabilities (Oberthür & Groen, 2018).

2. **Aligning National Policies with Global Goals:** There is a need for major powers to align their domestic climate policies more closely with their international commitments. For example, the United States could benefit from ensuring more stable and consistent climate policies across different administrations, while China could balance its development goals with more ambitious climate actions (Kerry, 2021; Zhang, 2021).
3. **Addressing Economic and Geopolitical Factors:** Policymakers should consider the economic and geopolitical dimensions of climate policy more strategically. For instance, the EU's emphasis on green technology and economic innovation provides a model for integrating climate policy with economic growth objectives. At the same time, Russia's approach highlights the need to consider how climate policies intersect with global energy markets (Skovgaard, 2021; Tynkkynen, 2020).
4. **Leveraging Diplomatic Channels for Climate Diplomacy:** Major powers can use their diplomatic channels more effectively to build coalitions and partnerships that advance shared climate goals. The United States and the EU, for example, could leverage their alliances to promote higher climate ambitions globally, while China could use its influence in the Global South to foster greater cooperation on sustainable development (Oberthür, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020).

Theoretical Contributions

The findings of this study contribute to the theoretical framework discussed in the literature review by highlighting the relevance of multiple international relations theories in understanding climate policy:

- **Realism** is evident in how states pursue their national interests in climate negotiations. For instance, Russia's emphasis on economic protection and the U.S.'s fluctuating commitment reflect a realist perspective focused on power and security (Waltz, 1979; Underdal, 2020).
- **Liberalism** is reflected in the EU's approach to multilateralism and international cooperation, advocating for legally binding commitments and broader international agreements (Keohane, 1984; Falkner, 2016). The emphasis on cooperative frameworks and economic interdependence underscores the potential for collaborative action on climate issues.
- **Constructivism** is highlighted in how the different powers frame their climate policies based on ideational factors, such as environmental justice, national identity, and developmental responsibilities. China's positioning as a leader among developing countries and the EU's normative leadership on climate issues align with constructivist views (Wendt, 1999; Dryzek et al., 2013).

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how diverse foreign policy approaches to climate change reflect underlying political, economic, and cultural dynamics.

Comparative Insights

The comparative analysis reveals several insights into how different approaches reflect underlying factors:

- **Political Factors:** Domestic political contexts, such as the EU's supranational governance structure, the U.S.'s federal system, China's one-party state, and Russia's centralized political authority, shape their respective climate policies. Political changes, especially in democracies, can lead to shifts in policy direction, as seen in the U.S. (Skovgaard, 2021; Vogler, 2021).
- **Economic Factors:** Economic priorities heavily influence climate policies. The EU and the U.S. focus on integrating climate action with economic growth through green innovation. In contrast, China balances economic development with climate commitments, while Russia prioritizes protecting its fossil fuel-dependent economy (Zhang, 2021; Yafimava, 2021).
- **Cultural Factors:** Cultural factors, such as public perceptions of climate change, historical responsibilities, and national identities, also shape foreign policies. The EU's commitment to environmental sustainability reflects its cultural and normative values, while China emphasizes its developmental status and responsibilities towards economic growth (Dryzek et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2020).

Conclusion

This study provides a comparative analysis of the foreign policies of the United States, China, the European Union, and Russia regarding climate change. The findings reveal diverse approaches driven by national interests, economic considerations, political ideologies, and geopolitical strategies. While all four powers participate in international climate agreements like the Paris Agreement, their levels of ambition, strategies, and focus on mitigation or adaptation vary widely. The EU emerges as a leader advocating for more ambitious climate actions, the U.S. shows variability depending on domestic political changes, China balances development with climate responsibilities, and Russia maintains a conservative stance prioritizing economic protection.

This paper contributes to the field of international relations and climate policy by offering a comprehensive comparative analysis of the foreign policies of major powers concerning climate change. It highlights how diverse national contexts shape foreign policy approaches and provides insights into the

potential for cooperation and conflict in global climate governance. The study also bridges gaps in the literature by integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, offering a nuanced understanding of the interplay between national interests and global climate objectives.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could deepen the analysis of specific policies or examine additional countries, especially those in the Global South, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of global climate governance. Investigating the impact of emerging geopolitical shifts, such as the role of non-state actors or the influence of regional alliances, could also enhance understanding of the evolving dynamics of international climate policy.

The challenge of climate change requires unprecedented levels of international cooperation, transcending political, economic, and cultural boundaries. As this study shows, while significant differences remain in how major powers approach climate change, there are also opportunities for collaboration. By understanding these diverse approaches, policymakers and scholars can better navigate the complexities of global climate governance, ultimately contributing to more effective and inclusive international climate action.

References

1. Bäckstrand, K., & Kuyper, J. (2017). The Democratic Legitimacy of Orchestration: The UNFCCC, Non-State Actors, and Transnational Climate Governance. *Environmental Politics*, 26(4), 764-788.
2. Béland, D., & Cox, R. H. (2011). *Ideas and Politics in Social Science Research*. Oxford University Press.
3. Bernstein, S., & Hoffmann, M. (2018). Climate Politics, Metagovernance, and Functional Differentiation: The Case of International Climate Change. *Environmental Politics*, 27(3), 1-20.
4. Betzold, C. (2015). Adapting to Climate Change in Small Island Developing States. *Climatic Change*, 133(3), 481-489.
5. Bodansky, D. (2010). *The Art and Craft of International Environmental Law*. Harvard University Press.
6. Checkel, J. T. (1998). The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory. *World Politics*, 50(2), 324-348.
7. Christoff, P. (2016). The Promissory Note: COP 21 and the Paris Climate Agreement. *Environmental Politics*, 25(5), 765-787.
8. Davenport, C. (2016). How Paris Climate Agreement Reached. *The New York Times*.
9. Dryzek, J. S., Norgaard, R. B., & Schlosberg, D. (2013). *Climate-Challenged Society*. Oxford University Press.
10. Duggan, T. (2017). Trump Pulls U.S. Out of Paris Climate Agreement. *Scientific American*.
11. European Commission. (2019). *The European Green Deal*. Brussels: European Commission.
12. Falkner, R. (2016). The Paris Agreement and the New Logic of International Climate Politics. *International Affairs*, 92(5), 1107-1125.
13. Falkner, R. (2021). International Climate Policy after Paris: The Role of Major Powers. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 24(2), 1-20.
14. Hajer, M. A. (1995). *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process*. Clarendon Press.
15. Hill, C. (2016). *Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century*. Palgrave Macmillan.
16. Hovi, J., Sprinz, D. F., & Underdal, A. (2019). The Club Approach: A Gateway to Effective Climate Co-operation? *British Journal of Political Science*, 49(3), 1071-1096.
17. IPCC. (2021). *Sixth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2021*. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
18. Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton University Press.
19. Keohane, R. O., & Victor, D. G. (2016). Cooperation and Discord in Global Climate Policy. *Nature Climate Change*, 6(6), 570-575.
20. Kerry, J. (2021). U.S. Climate Leadership: Goals and Actions. *U.S. Department of State*.
21. Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
22. Mahoney, J., & Rueschemeyer, D. (2003). *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge University Press.
23. Molho, N. (2019). Russia's Climate Policy: A Balancing Act. *Carbon Brief*.
24. Oberthür, S., & Groen, L. (2018). Explaining Goal Achievement in International Negotiations: The EU and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(5), 708-727.
25. Oberthür, S. (2020). EU Climate Policy: Shaping International Cooperation. *Global Environmental Politics*, 20(1), 1-22.

26. Ragin, C. C. (2014). *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. University of California Press.
27. Rayner, T., & Jordan, A. (2013). The European Union: The Polycentric Climate Policy Leader? *WIREs Climate Change*, 4(1), 75-90.
28. Skovgaard, J. (2021). The Role of Finance in the European Union's Climate Leadership. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 59(3), 632-649.
29. Smit, B., & Wandel, J. (2006). Adaptation, Adaptive Capacity, and Vulnerability. *Global Environmental Change*, 16(3), 282-292.
30. Tynkkynen, V.-P. (2020). The Energy of Russia: Hydrocarbon Culture and Climate Change. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 72(2), 1-14.
31. Underdal, A. (2020). Climate Change and International Relations (After Kyoto). *Annual Review of Political Science*, 23, 1-18.
32. Vogler, J. (2021). The International Politics of Climate Change. *International Relations*, 35(2), 230-248.
33. Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*. Addison-Wesley.
34. Wendt, A. (1999). *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
35. White House. (2021). *Executive Actions to Tackle the Climate Crisis*. Washington, D.C.: The White House.
36. Xinhua. (2020). China Announces Carbon Neutrality Goal by 2060. *Xinhua News Agency*.
37. Yafimava, K. (2021). Russia's Climate Policy: Between Adaptation and Mitigation. *Energy Policy*, 149(1), 111-123.
38. Yu, H., & Zheng, Q. (2019). China's Climate Change Policy: Responding to Domestic and International Pressures. *Climate Policy*, 19(2), 130-144.
39. Zhang, H. (2021). China's Climate Diplomacy: Balancing Development and Responsibility. *Climate Policy*, 21(2), 123-134.
40. Zhang, H., Li, J., & Zhu, T. (2020). China's Green Development Strategy: Implications for Global Climate Governance. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 268(1), 110-126.