

MASTER'S IN HISTORY, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION

SPECIALISATION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION

The European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and the Limits of Climate Diplomacy in the Anthropocene

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Master's Dissertation in History, International Relations, and Cooperation, supervised
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To my family: Ana Maria Rojas Carrasco, Lucas Peña Vasques Filho, Mellina Rojas Klinkerfus, Natasha Rojas da Silva, Pedro Rojas, Vinícius Rojas Klinkerfus, and to Guilherme and Railson. Without your unwavering support, the journey would have been infinitely more arduous and winding.

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Declaration of Honour

I hereby declare that this dissertation is of my authorship and has not been used previously in another course, degree, curricular unit or subject, at this or any other institution. References to other authors (statements, ideas, thoughts) scrupulously respect the rules of attribution and are duly indicated in the text and bibliographical references, in accordance with the rules of referencing. I am aware that the practice of plagiarism and self-plagiarism is an academic offence.

I further declare that I have not used generative artificial intelligence tools (chatbots based on large language models) to carry out part(s) of this dissertation, and that all interactions (prompts and responses) have been transcribed in the annex to this work.

Łódź, 04.04.2026

Fellipe Peña Rojas

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Abstract

The advent of the Anthropocene poses a critical challenge to International Relations, one that transcends conventional theoretical tools of political analysis. This dissertation investigates the geopolitical shift in European Union's (EU) climate diplomacy under the von der Leyen Commission, through the creation and implementation of the European Green Deal (EGD) and, specifically, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) as the regulatory cornerstone of European foreign policy. The main purpose of the study is to conduct a critical analysis through the lens of theoretical concepts and fundamental analytical categories from the planetary approaches of International Relations. The research is grounded in four fundamental Anthropocene premises for conducting the analysis: urgency, the human-nature dichotomy, security/agency, and the state political dimension. From a methodological perspective, the research is conducted through a qualitative documentary and bibliographic review, carried out by analyzing primary and secondary sources. The observed results reveal that, from a planetary perspective, the CBAM operates as a tool for propagating the EU's coercive soft power, failing to promote a rupture with the very structures that generated the climate crisis. It is concluded that, although it is an instrument aimed at reducing internal emissions and acting as a model of influence that promotes decarbonization globally, the CBAM remains anchored in a technocratic and market-driven logic that reduces nature to the status of natural capital.

Keywords: International Relations; Anthropocene; Planetary Approaches; European Climate Diplomacy; Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM); Coercive Soft power.

Resumo

O advento do Antropoceno impõe às Relações internacionais um desafio crítico, que ultrapassa as ferramentas teóricas convencionais de análise política. Esta dissertação investiga a viragem geopolítica da diplomacia climática da União Europeia (EU) sob a Comissão von der Leyen, por meio da criação e aplicação do European Green Deal (EGD) e, especificamente, do Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) como máximo expoente regulatório da política externa europeia. A finalidade principal do estudo é de realizar uma análise crítica à luz de conceitos teóricos e categorias analíticas fundamentais das abordagens planetárias das Relações Internacionais. A pesquisa fundamenta-se em quatro premissas fundamentais do Antropoceno para a realização da análise: a urgência, a dicotomia ser humano-natureza, a segurança/agência e a dimensão política estatal. Sob a perspectiva metodológica, a pesquisa é conduzida através da revisão documental e bibliográfica qualitativa, realizada por meio da análise de fontes primárias e secundárias. Os resultados observados revelam que, à luz das abordagens planetárias, o CBAM opera como uma ferramenta de propagação do *soft power* coercitivo da UE, sem o objetivo de promover uma ruptura com estruturas que geraram a crise climática. Conclui-se que, embora seja um instrumento que visa diminuir as emissões a nível interno, e atuar como um modelo de influência que promove a descarbonização a nível mundial, o CBAM permanece ancorado em uma lógica tecnocrata e mercantil, que reduz a natureza à condição de capital natural.

Key-words: Relações Internacionais; Antropoceno; Abordagens Planetárias; Diplomacia climática Europeia; Mecanismo de Ajustamento Carbónico Fronteiriço (CBAM); Soft power Coercitivo.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

CBAM	CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM
CBDR–RC.....	COMMON BUT DIFFERENTIATED RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESPECTIVE CAPABILITIES
EEA	EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
EEAS.....	EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE
EEC	EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY
EGD.....	EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL
ENP	EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY
EU	EUROPEAN UNION
EU ETS	EUROPEAN UNION EMISSIONS TRADING SYSTEM
GATT	GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE
ICAP	INTERNATIONAL CARBON ACTION PARTNERSHIP
IMO	INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION
IPCC	INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE
UNCTAD	UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT
UNEP.....	UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
UNFCCC	UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE
WMO	WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION
WTO	WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

Introduction

The premise that human beings are intrinsically linked to the Earth System has faded from the contemporary social imagination, driven largely by the evolution of modern societies and the expansion of consumerism. Since the Industrial Revolution, the surge in commodity production has played a pivotal role in this transformation. Furthermore, the fact that climatic conditions were instrumental to human emancipation and evolution is frequently disregarded.

The end of the Pleistocene, following the last glacial period, was a turning point for the settlement and development of the human species. The stability of global climatic conditions paved the way for the rise of agriculture, occurring alongside the establishment and consolidation of human organisations. Consequently, it is clear that favourable climatic conditions were vital to this emancipation and evolution. The warm, humid Holocene provided a distinct environment from that of previous eras, allowing for our growth and progress in various respects (Richerson et al., 2001, p. 214).

According to planetary approaches, a theory that acts as the analytical anchor of this dissertation, the current condition of deterioration of the Earth System has driven the planet into a new geological era: The Anthropocene. The proposal for this new era stems from the realisation that intensive human activities have triggered interconnected effects, resulting in environmental and climatic shifts within the Earth System on an unprecedented scale. This has led to a profound human interference with the planet (Crutzen, 2006; Pereira, 2021), which operates alongside a neglect of the fundamental human dependence upon nature (Lamb, 1982, p. 15).

Echoing the arguments originally put forward by Crutzen, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was formed under the auspices of the United Nations as a techno-scientific body dedicated to addressing climate change through the collaboration of numerous researchers and scientists. The organisation was established through a joint initiative by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). According to the IPCC's Sixth Assessment

Report (AR6), atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations have reached levels never previously recorded:

“In 2019, concentrations of CO₂, methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) reached levels of 409.9 (±0.4) parts per million (ppm), 1866.3 (±3.3) parts per billion (ppb) and 332.1 (±0.4) ppb, respectively. Since 1850, these well-mixed greenhouse gases (GHGs) have increased at rates that have no precedent on centennial time scales in at least the past 800,000 years.” (IPCC, 2021, p. 290)

The advent of the Anthropocene compels International Relations to transcend traditional theoretical frameworks. No longer merely a dilemma of collective action, the climate crisis has evolved into a fundamental concern of power and security. Within this setting, planetary approaches provide a robust theoretical basis for this dissertation, enabling an examination of how ecological threats are instrumentalised to redefine the identities and power strategies of global actors. This is particularly evident in the case of the European Union. The bloc positions itself as a pre-eminent political actor in global climate governance.

The EU, traditionally recognised for its Normative Power (Manners, 2002), has identified the need to restructure its actions in the face of a distinct, multipolar international landscape, marked by the emergence of new systemic crises that threaten life on the planet. This perception culminated in a shift in its traditional foreign policy, which now requires a new basis for legitimacy and the projection of political influence. Given this situation, European climate diplomacy emerges as a strategic pathway through which Europe directs its influence and redirects its power on the international stage. By developing the European Green Deal, the EU has transformed the climate agenda into a tool for projecting geopolitical power. The project converts internal ambition, driven by the decarbonisation of various sectors of the European economy, into Coercive Soft power. Such power is exercised through the imposition of environmental standards as a *sine qua non* condition for access to the European market and the expansion of extra-territorial influence based on the regulatory standards presented in the official document.

Von der Leyen's Geopolitical Commission perceived the shift in the international political landscape and the potential for expanding political influence through climate diplomacy. Alongside these regulatory tools, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) emerged as the EGD's central instrument, aiming to broaden the use of trade as a tool for climate policy regulation. This Regulation, central to this study, transcends its role as a merely technocratic trade adjustment to become a fundamental pillar of the European climate diplomacy, conditioning the global market to the logic of carbon pricing.

Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to conduct a critical analysis of the official CBAM document based on the key theoretical concepts of planetary approaches of International Relations, by contributing to the existing literature on the EGD and EU climate diplomacy. From this perspective, this dissertation intends to: a) examine how the EGD and, specifically, the CBAM act as tools for the propagation of European soft power within the framework of EU climate diplomacy; and b) analyse the official CBAM Regulation through the lens of planetary approaches of International Relations, determining whether the document is capable of breaking with the logic that originated the Anthropocene crisis or whether it operates merely as a market tool. Consequently, this research seeks to address the following question: Does the CBAM constitute a tool for the propagation of European soft power, with the potential to reshape EU climate diplomacy, or does it function simply as a market instrument to maintain European political influence in the context of the Anthropocene?

The research was based on the need for an analysis that includes the environment at the centre of discussions, acting as the agent that sets political and legal agendas. For this reason, it became important to understand the geopolitical turning point established by the von der Leyen Commission (Haroche, 2023), as well as the evolution of European environmental policy and the way the EGD acts in the EU climate diplomacy.

Regarding the theoretical and conceptual framework, references were drawn from fundamental authors of international relations theories as well as the specific theory employed in this dissertation as an analytical lens. The literature review was conducted through the analysis of various primary sources, predominantly from EU and

United Nations digital repositories such as EUR-Lex, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The institutional primary sources of the EU itself provided the basis for understanding the strategic guidelines and technical instruments of the Union. European Commission portals were also consulted with a particular focus on the A Stronger Europe in the World and Global Gateway programmes alongside financial mechanisms such as the Just Transition Mechanism and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) (European Commission, n.d.-a, n.d.-b, n.d.-c, n.d.-d). The politico-diplomatic dimension was supplemented by official European Council documents concerning the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (European Council, n.d.), while the perspective of organised civil society was referenced through the own-initiative opinions of the European Economic and Social Committee (2023). Furthermore, the official European Parliament portal was consulted to reference treaties and other initiatives (European Parliament, n.d.-a, n.d.-b, n.d.-c, n.d.-d). Beyond official and technical governmental websites, the research analysed strategic documents that defined the geopolitical orientation of the bloc, namely the EGD itself (European Commission, 2019b) and the guidelines for the bilateral relationship with China (European Commission, 2019a). The integration of climate change and the current stage of the crisis into the EU's security and defence objectives was addressed through directives from the European External Action Service (EEAS, 2022), which allowed for greater insight into the Union's external action regarding climate change.

Secondary sources such as articles, books and book chapters were selected through a literature review to understand the EGD as a tool of European soft power within the context of EU climate diplomacy, alongside the CBAM as the primary policy addressed in this dissertation. The documentary analysis covering the EGD followed exclusion criteria based on the relevance of the documents within a timeframe from 2019 to 2025. Various databases were consulted, including Web of Science, Scopus, Taylor & Francis Online, Google Scholar, JSTOR and Wiley Online Library. The research was conducted by using keywords within these databases, such as Planetary Approaches, Euro-

pean Green Deal, EGD, EU Climate Policy, European environmental policy, Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, European soft power and EU Foreign Policy, restricted to the fields of social sciences and arts and humanities.

In terms of organization, the dissertation is structured to guide the reader from the evolution of European environmental policy towards an original theoretical and critical analysis. The literature review is divided into two main chapters, both subdivided, to ensure a logical argumentative progression. The first section, located in the first chapter, is dedicated to the evolution of European climate policy. Without this, it would be impossible to understand contemporary debates regarding climate change. EU climate diplomacy was contextualised through the progression of policies institutionalised by the European Treaties, notably Maastricht and Lisbon, which expanded the scope of the debate and granted the Union legal personality. The second section of this chapter examines the rise of the Geopolitical Commission under the leadership of von der Leyen, marking a fundamental shift in the EU's strategic priorities. The Union's foreign policy is restructured and the EGD developed as a response to the escalating climate crisis, reinforcing strategic autonomy and acting as an assertion of politico-climatic power.

The second chapter deepens the literature review by exploring the integration of the EGD into the Union's foreign policy and the implementation of the CBAM as the core Regulation of this analysis. From these sections, the study investigates how the mechanism reorients environmental governance via legally binding instruments. Additionally, it examines how the EU leverages trade as a tool for political influence, embedding sustainability and emissions reduction into its market strategies.

The central pillar of this dissertation lies in its critical analysis, representing an original theoretical framing of the CBAM. The Regulation is examined through the lens of the conceptual framework of planetary approaches of International Relations. The analysis is structured around four fundamental premises of the Anthropocene, applied in the scrutiny of the CBAM document: the dimension of climate urgency, the Human-Nature relationship, security and agency, and the political dimension. These analytical premises form the basis of this dissertation's original contribution, assessing whether

the CBAM breaks with the structures that caused the climate crisis or acts as a market tool to expand European soft power within the context of the Anthropocene.

Finally, the Discussion and Conclusion synthesise the research findings, consolidating the dissertation's contribution to a deeper understanding of EU climate diplomacy in the context of the Anthropocene. This study provides an insight into the strategic reorientation adopted by the von der Leyen Commission. It demonstrates how the EGD and the CBAM act as key vectors for the projection of European political influence on the international stage. Moreover, when analysed through the lens of planetary approaches, these instruments represent a significant deficiency in promoting policies that seek to restructure the economic system that drove the climate crisis. This deficiency persists albeit alongside ambivalent positive aspects that contribute to the complex discussion within this dissertation.

1. Literature review

Understanding contemporary global dynamics calls for the application of planetary approaches as an analytical lens. Diverging from the International Relations mainstream theories, which focuses solely on state behaviour and human agency, planetary approaches recognise the Anthropocene as the current geological era, marked by profound human interference in the Earth system (Crutzen, 2006; Pereira, 2021). This perspective operates a fundamental ontological shift, displacing the unit of analysis from the state and human actors to the ecosystem. It acknowledges that humanity and political structures interact within a finite, interconnected, and dependent biophysical system. The neglect of the concept of human dependence on nature (Lamb, 1982, p.15) has manifested through systemic crises that expose a flawed process of differentiation between humanity and the environment, intensified since the Industrial Revolution (Moore, 2017, p.3).

1.1 The climate crisis and the Anthropocene: Rethinking international relations

The worsening climate crisis, presented as a significant threat to humanity and terrestrial security, calls for, in the light of planetary approaches, a profound and constant reassessment of the agency structures of international relations actors, both human and non-human. Rockström et al. (2023) introduced the concept of Earth System Boundaries (ESB), which quantifies the planet's ecological limits. The findings of this study are dangerous and confirm that the stability once seen in the Holocene has been compromised. The authors reiterated that seven of the eight ESBs have already been exceeded, exposing the irresponsible manner in which humanity has handled environmental issues. The transgression of these barriers may trigger tipping points that irreversibly destabilise the Earth system, consolidating the climate crisis as an unprecedented crisis of power and security (p. 102). In the face of this reality, the traditional lenses of international relations, limited by the attempt to understand state behaviour in the light of merely state-centric analyses, and focused solely on the human (Kahler, 1998, p. 922), prove insufficient to interpret and analyse a crisis that is, by definition, transboundary, systemic, and more-than-human (Hurrell, 1994; Schrijver, 1999; Pereira, 2021).

Within this context, traditional approaches fail by ignoring the material capacity for agency of nature. Classical Realism (Morgenthau, 1978) and Structural Realism (Waltz, 1979, p. 79) focus on the rationality, power, and political survival of a state in anarchic systems, but they do not present solutions for concrete threats that do not derive specifically from other states, as is the case with climate change, whose origin is anthropogenic activity, in a broader and more abstract way. Similarly, Offensive Realism (Mearsheimer, 2001, 2014) views the pursuit of hegemony and productive logic as pillars of power, without considering that this very economic and military expansion is the motor of environmental degradation with planetary consequences. Even Institutional Neoliberalism (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985), although it values international cooperation through institutions, remains anchored in an anthropocentrism that does not transform production structures. In the field of Constructivism, although Wendt (1999, p. 309) explains how social ideas and identities are embedded in structures, he does so from an anthropocentric perspective that ignores ecology. Thus, it becomes imperative in the Anthropocene to recognise the biophysical agency of nature, which acts, increasingly, as a result of social constructions that ignore the planetary dimension of world politics (Pereira & Saramago, 2020).

This paradigm shift demands that security be redefined beyond the state and the human. The climate crisis acts as a threat multiplier that impacts the stability of ecosystems and the viability of life on a global scale, transcending political borders (Ilkilic, 2023, p. 13; Pereira, 2021, p. 23). Under this prism, nature ceases to be a passive backdrop to become an existential threat (Hardt, 2023, p. 4), challenging the concept of territorial security, which had always been analysed as a central topic in international relations theories (Buzan, 1984; Kolodziej, 2005). This shift is reinforced by critical theories that incorporate views such as the millenary sustainable management of indigenous peoples in the Amazon (Clement et al., 2015), as well as concepts such as "Buen Vivir", prioritising the integrity of nature over the sovereignty of the Nation-State (Acosta & Martinez, 2009; Gudynas, 2011).

Despite the insufficiency of state-centric models, the state remains the central entity acting as political and legal authority, capable of exercising regulation,

management, redistribution, and necessary coercion to confront the climate existential challenge (Conca, 2015; Eckersley, 2004, p. 12). The European Union (EU) materialises this transition by attempting to reconcile its normative identity (Manners, 2002) with the imperatives of the Anthropocene through the European Green Deal (EGD). By assuming decarbonisation costs and ambitious internal targets aimed at consolidating external credibility, the bloc challenges the traditional logic of political survival (Oberthür & Roche Kelly, 2008). Thus, the EU utilises mechanisms such as the European Citizens' Initiative (Lee, 2008, p. 135), which legitimises its climate diplomacy, bringing deliberative democracy into the matter, uniting its historical normative identity with the geopolitical turn of the Von der Leyen Commission. With this, the bloc seeks solutions for the intersection between resource scarcity and global security (Schwartz & Randall, 2003; Barnett, 2007).

1.2 The evolution of European environmental policy: From internal regulation to global environmental leadership

The integration process demonstrates how the evolution of EU foreign policy allowed the climate issue to be incorporated as a strategic priority. It is not possible to dissociate climate policies from the construction of the EU's normative identity and geopolitical strategy, as these have defined its external action. Precisely for this reason, it is necessary to analyse how the evolution of EU climate policies occurred. Originally, the environmental issue began to be discussed due to the need to improve waste management and raise the quality of life of EU citizens, evolving into a central pillar of its political identity.

The Stockholm Conference (1972) and the first Action Programme (1973) aimed to align economic development and preservation, serving as the initial pillar of environmental debates (Papadaki, 2012; European Commission, n.d.-a). Frameworks were defined to ensure the protection of the biosphere, with the objectives of preventing, reducing, and eliminating pollution as much as possible. The Single European Act (1986)

was the first major legal milestone (Art. 25), granting the European Economic Community (EEC) the competence to intervene in environmental matters based on scientific data and academic publications (European Parliament, n.d.-c). At an external level, the accession to the Montreal Protocol (1987) demonstrated the community's ability to promote global solutions (United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP], n.d.).

The Maastricht Treaty (1992) established the environment as a central objective, introducing "sustainable development" and incorporating fundamental principles that would become the basis of European environmental legislation, such as precautionary measures, preventive actions, rectification at source, and the polluter-pays principle, which assigns the share of responsibility for pollution to the emitting agent, stating that they should bear the costs of the environmental damage caused by the destructive action (Wilkinson, 1992, p. 222). Within the scope of Environmental Diplomacy, the Treaty legitimised the EU to act with significant unity in climate negotiations in international forums, conferring legal personality to discuss fundamental issues as a unified bloc (European Parliament, n.d.-d). At this stage, the environment became a transversal component of all European public policies, at least in theory, although authors such as Lenschow (2002, pp. 19-20) point out gaps between legal rhetoric and practical implementation. The creation of the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) consolidated these principles in primary law (Mahmoudi, 2000, pp. 124-125; Hey, 2005, p. 25).

From 2005 onwards, climate policy intensified further with the launch of the European Union Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) programme, which developed the emissions market and integrated environmental costs into the economy (Biancalani et al., 2024; Papadaki, 2012, p. 157). The Lisbon Treaty (2009) did not merely provide a legal mandate to confront climate change. Inclusions were made regarding the improvement of environmental quality at a global level, based on Article 3, which states that the bloc must introduce the defence of environmental issues not only in Europe, but across the entire planet, providing a certain legal mandate for the EU to incorporate sustainable development into its foreign policy (Boasson & Wetttestad, 2013). In this way, the shift in the balance of political power brought about by the Lisbon Treaty

considerably affects European environmental policy, in addition to promoting participatory democracy through the citizens' initiative (Lee, 2008, p. 135). Structurally, the EU defined binding targets through the 2020 and 2030 Climate and Energy Packages, establishing the model of leadership by example (Kulovesi & Oberthür, 2020, p. 153; Ollier et al., 2022, p. 162).

This evolutionary process of European green policies, whether through the broadening of the debate or the implementation of new laws, culminates in the perception that environmental policy is inseparable from the EU's normative identity. Soveroski (2004) makes an important contribution to the literature by asserting the existence of a direct relationship between the development of EU environmental policies and the enlargement process itself, stating that the new countries that successively joined the European community contributed significantly to raising the perception of environmental preservation, with the exception of certain Eastern European countries. Preceding the Paris Agreement (2015), the EU consolidated itself as an actor that deploys climate diplomacy and its soft power to export norms (Kelemen, 2010). This path of environmental policy development paved the way for the EGD, where climate policy ceases to be merely normative and becomes the driver of a new Geopolitical Commission, imposing conditions for access to the European market and ensuring the Union's prominence and influence within a competitive international system.

1.2.1 The geopolitical turn: Redefining European strategy under von der Leyen

“President von der Leyen has set up a geopolitical Commission underpinning the EU’s role in the world as a promoter of freedom, democracy, and the rules-based order” (European Commission, n.d.-a).

The rise of the "Geopolitical Commission" under the leadership of Ursula von der Leyen marks a fundamental turning point in the debate over EU priorities, triggered by internal crises arising from 21st-century geopolitical events. The pragmatic stance adopted by the Union can be interpreted as a project that dissociates itself from normative objectives and aims to strengthen the EU's strategic autonomy within an unstable and competitive multipolar environment (Haroche, 2023, p. 970).

Aligned with the "geopolitisation" of the Commission, the environmental dimension was also raised to the status of a fundamental pillar of European foreign policy, with the EGD serving as the EU's Climate Law. This resulted in a reconfiguration of how the climate crisis was managed and a reshaping of EU diplomatic conduct, transforming decarbonisation and energy transition into tools for power projection and global leadership (Graziano, 2024, p. 32; Haroche, 2023; Kyriazi & Miró, 2023, p. 128; Siddi, 2021, p. 330). Haas and Sander (2020) consider that the process of European integration contributes to promoting its image as a climate leader, while Wetttestad & Gulbrandsen (2022, p. 250) argue that the growth of liberal groups (ALDE) and the Greens in Parliament smoothed the path for the approval of the New Commission, which was more favourable to climate issues.

Catalysing events, such as the invasion of Ukraine (Camisã & Peixinho, 2025, p. 1306) and the rise of China as a global power, intensified this shift, forcing the EU to seek energy security and reduce external dependencies through the concept of Strategic Autonomy advocated by Josep Borrell (Siddi & Prandin, 2023, p. 293; Bouckaert & Dupont, 2025, p. 311; Borrell, 2020). The institutionalisation of this new identity is evident through the creation of the External Coordination Group, which acts as a new po-

litical body that aligns internal and external objectives, enhancing the Commission's legal and institutional tools so that it can act, alongside the EEAS, as a relevant actor in EU foreign policy (Baracani, 2023, p. 1454). Additionally, there was the integration of trade and industry as geopolitical instruments that condition access to the European market on sustainability standards (Carlson, 2025, p. 18; Puetter & Terranova, 2025, p. 21).

The EGD represents the materialisation of a new European soft power, where the fundamental values of the normative identity referred to by Manners (2002) have been reconfigured and instrumentalised in favour of an agenda of strategic survival and climate sovereignty within the contemporary international system (Pollex & Lenschow, 2025, p. 2217; Prandin, 2025, p. 10). The Geopolitical Commission, in addition to perceiving the rise in crises and the structural shift in the international political context, reflected on how it could leverage environmental issues to develop its climate diplomacy. This was achieved by expanding regulatory and technological tools, directing them towards the establishment of new global norms and standards, and thereby influencing other countries. In this way, the EGD represents the pragmatic materiality of discussions held within academic and scientific circles.

2. The European Green Deal and EU climate diplomacy

"The European Green Deal is a response to these challenges. It is a new growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use" (European Commission, 2019b, p.2).

As discussed previously, European environmental policy is not a mere collection of isolated political measures, but rather a continuous trajectory that has evolved from the earliest discussions on pollution and the ozone layer in the 1970s to the incorporation of sustainable development into its legal and constitutional framework, following the Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties. The EGD, launched by the von der Leyen Commission in 2019 and introduced in section 1.1.1 of this dissertation concerning the geopolitical

turn, represents a step change in this evolution, establishing itself as the EU's Climate Law. For the EGD to be published and integrated into EU foreign policy, an institutionalised progression of European climate policies was required.

The EGD, developed by Frans Timmermans' team while he served as Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for the EGD, was initially not well received by European left-wing parties, even though the environmental agenda has always been supported by progressive wings of European societies. However, the dependency of climate policies on market regulation mechanisms meant that the further-left sector did not approve the EGD (Almeida et al., 2023, p. 2). The Green Deal is not, however, limited to being merely a domestic policy tool seeking decarbonisation by 2050. Sandri et al. (2025, p. 197) explain that, although the EGD was initially understood as a tool for promoting internal growth, it also takes on the role of reorienting EU foreign policy, based on regional strategies in the Western Balkans, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), Africa, among others.

There is a certain consensus in the academic literature that the Green Deal has institutionalised paradigm shifts in EU climate policy (Dupont & Torney, 2020; Fetting, 2020), establishing important initiatives for environmental governance through industrial innovation mechanisms (Bloomfield & Steward, 2020; Vogler, 2023) and new binding legal frameworks (Sikora, 2021). Among these, the European Climate Law of 2021 stands out, stipulating the target of climate neutrality by 2050, as well as an increase in the emission reduction target to 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. Alongside this legal instrument, the Fit-For-55 Package was developed, released in 2021 and officially incorporated between 2022 and 2024, comprising 20 legislative measures in the fields of climate and energy, implementing the new emission reduction objective for 2030 (von Homeyer et al., 2025, p. 1243; Oberthür & Kulovesi, 2024).

Within the scope of EU climate diplomacy, the EGD can be interpreted as the primary tool acting as a drive for the Commission's new geopolitical identity in the international system (Siddi & Prandin, 2023). In addition to representing and reinforcing the centrality of the EU as the leading political actor in the fight against climate change (Smith et al., 2024, p. 603), the EGD also presents a significant economic growth model,

promoting the restructuring of the European productive system across various sectors and transforming climate challenges into opportunities through regulatory mechanisms. Leonard et al. (2021, p. 2) state that the European Green Deal reshapes the trade patterns already established by the EU and its partners, as well as investments. Moreover, as the EU currently accounts for around 20% of world crude oil imports, it is possible to assume that this energy transition would considerably impact the oil market. This pressure may prompt other political actors to also seek a just energy transition and an end to fossil fuel dependency. Although the EU cannot stipulate global environmental rules, international cooperation and trade can establish links of influence over other political actors (Lebel & Nilsson, 2024, p. 67).

As stated by Carlson (2025), the EGD constitutes the mechanism through which the EU employs trade as a foreign policy tool, incorporating sustainability into its market strategy, a move criticised by some and applauded by others. Indeed, it could not be otherwise. There is no way to decouple the EGD from EU foreign policy, as climate change is a global problem rather than a merely regional one (Leonard et al., 2021, p. 2), representing a threat to humanity. Consequently, it is clear that climate policies must be developed based on this premise, since decarbonising only the European continent would not change the state of degradation of the planet itself. The intention must be precisely to promote this change on a large scale. Earsom & Delreux (2021, p. 408) also connect European climate policies with the international dimension, specifically with the policies defined by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Within the scope of its climate policy, the EU seeks to promote the reduction of emissions in the international maritime transport sector, which is a significant topic in environmental discussions but generates great resistance due to its complexity, resulting in friction not only within the EU itself but also within the IMO.

The establishment of regulatory standards is consolidated as an effective soft power tool, incorporating the climate crisis into the EU's foreign policy agenda. This climate policy transcends the merely environmental dimension, acting as the primary strategic driver for the EU with the aim of expanding its global projection. This expansion must be justified by the effective use of regulatory mechanisms in the formulation and

implementation of climate policies, which represent an essential instrument at both the national and international levels (Goldthau, 2021, p. 33). The EU also classifies climate change as an existential risk to global stability and international security, perceiving that the issue is interconnected and giving full priority to the challenge presented (EEAS, 2022). Based on this consideration, the EU recognises how it can leverage the climate issue as an instrument for expanding European soft power, while striving to preserve the environment and establish itself as the leading political actor in climate diplomacy.

The concept of soft power, developed in academia by the political scientist Joseph Nye, refers to the ability of a political actor to achieve its objectives through non-military means. Many countries may thus choose to pursue outcomes similar to those achieved by an actor that implements effective standards and attains consistent results through moderate political influence. The goal must be to project an image of legitimacy based on normative resources, in order to strengthen credibility and the acceptance of power. Soft power also materialises through political institutions on the international stage, which manage to influence the actions of other States or limit their activities, without the need to resort to the use of force (Nye, 1990, p. 167).

For the EU, the application of soft power occurs through the stability of its institutions, the promotion of democracy and environmental protection, the welfare state, and the EU's commitment to multilateralism and the norms of international law. By incorporating issues related to climate change into the core of its external action strategy, the EU establishes climate diplomacy as a field for operating mechanisms of attraction, co-optation, and the projection of its regulatory power.

“Sharing EU experiences, enabling external actors to adopt climate measures and convincing non-EU governments of the importance of climate action is a core part of EU climate diplomacy and one in which EU Delegations can play a central role.” (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2018, p.2)

While climate change demands a shift in the way policies are developed, regarding the international economy, the EU must understand the material reality of each

State, taking into account the inherent difficulties existing in the adoption of institutional standards propagated by the EU. Bargaining power depends not only on market attractiveness but also on maintaining the debate concerning the negotiations that stipulate trade standards. Consequently, climate diplomacy must also consider the geo-economic and geopolitical conjuncture of a State, as well as the practical constraints inherent to the reality of each political actor (Nolte, 2021, p. 15).

Prandin (2025) highlights that, in a context marked by multiple crises, EU climate policy has transcended the exclusively environmental dimension. The issue has come to represent a strategic challenge for the EU's global leadership as a political actor and constitutes a fundamental element in the reconstruction of its identity following the political crises that affected the EU. In this sense, climate-related issues are intrinsically connected to geopolitics and shape the EU's capacity for external action. Koch & Keijzer (2021) state that, although the EGD presents a high potential for decarbonisation, it is essential to incorporate the external dimension by bringing together different international policies, such as those related to development, foreign and security policy, and trade. Moreover, they suggest that expanding regional integration is vital, as it promotes greater participation by Member States, strengthening the contribution to both external and internal policies and serving as a basis for increasing dialogue with developing countries.

Earsom and Petri (2025) argue that the EGD also plays the role of encouraging the incorporation of climate issues into all spheres of EU policy, both internally and externally. With the increase in discussions regarding the EGD, it is expected that European political elites from different sectors will integrate climate demands into decision-making processes. Even though several authors have already discussed the inclusion of climate issues in the sphere of European public policy, particularly since the Maastricht Treaty, the EGD presents itself as a measure to stimulate debate and pressure political elites to further increase this integration. Consequently, European initiatives should not weaken or jeopardise climate-related goals (von Homeyer et al., 2025, p. 1243). This discussion was also supported by a significant institutional incorporation, following the

creation of the Green Transition Office within the EEAS. The term most formally used was Green Diplomacy, replacing what had been known as climate diplomacy. It thus becomes important to understand the existing relationships between political actors rather than studying the actors themselves, gaining a deeper insight into the nature of EU climate diplomacy, which is inherently connected to its external action through the EU's fundamental values (Arias & Varela-Aldás, 2025, p. 18).

Bremberg and Michalski (2024) state that the EGD not only structures EU climate diplomacy but also develops narratives directed at other political actors, underpinned by both scientific and experiential dimensions. The authors mention Marc Vanheukelen, the former EU Ambassador for Climate Diplomacy, who highlights the importance of using these narratives in diplomatic actions. The scientific dimension is supported by IPCC reports, which advocate that climate-related actions must be aligned with science. Additionally, there is the dimension of experience itself, which demonstrates that, although the European economy has grown by 60% since 1990, emissions were reduced by 25%, proving that it is possible to promote economic growth while decreasing emissions. These narratives are employed in EU climate diplomacy with the aim of urging other political actors to also adopt strategies for decarbonising their economies (pp. 518-519).

Teevan et al. (2021) maintain that European diplomacy seeks to expand bilateral partnerships in order to lead by example, integrating external action with trade and incorporating the EGD into various diplomatic channels of the EU and its Member States. This involves partnerships with G7 and G20 States, as well as third countries, with a particular emphasis on trade relations with African nations. This strategy, which also includes strengthening Energy Diplomacy, must focus on developing actions that prioritise vulnerable and conflict-affected regions, using regulatory and multilateral instruments to promote social stability and peace in the face of climate risks (Lazard, 2021, p. 13).

Bäckstrand (2025, p. 279) contributes an interesting analysis to the literature on the EGD, underlining that the democratic decline seen today in various countries poses a considerable threat to decarbonisation goals. Notably, 70% of the global population

did not live in democratic regimes in 2024. Narratives promoting climate scepticism already played an influential role in the 2024 European Parliament elections, supported by populist and anti-democratic political parties. Over time, these issues may compromise the viability of ambitious climate targets, further deteriorating the internal integration process. Linked to this, the growth of the far-right, which often goes hand in hand with climate scepticism, tends to undermine decarbonisation (Lockwood, 2018; Forchtner, 2019; Duijndam & van Beukering, 2021). Within the context of other crises in the international arena, such as Russia's war against Ukraine, rising authoritarian populism, scientific scepticism, energy insecurity, and economic recession, climate scepticism and the denial of climate change could also significantly weaken the instruments established by the EGD.

The European Climate Pact, designed to encourage the participation of EU citizens and organisations, serves as an essential tool for promoting democracy and engagement in climate public policy. The mobilisation of Climate Pact Ambassadors, for instance, coordinates sustainability actions at the national level (Tosun et al., 2023). Such measures are crucial for connecting European social segments and encouraging democratic participation. The path towards implementing a deliberative democracy that aims for the genuine involvement of all social layers within European countries is fundamental to addressing the threat of climate denialism looming over Liberal States. Buzogány et al. (2025, p. 135) contend that the EGD strives to address climate challenges by grounding itself in democratic pillars, establishing a link between the guidelines portrayed in the official document and democratic principles. The authors reiterate that the likelihood of the EGD's failure increases in the absence of a solid bond with democracy. The core democratic aspects included in the EGD are representation, participation, deliberation, justice, and just transition, along with expertise. These democratic foundations transcend the content of an official document, since the defence of democracy represents a fundamental and non-negotiable European normative value. Without it, any objective would fail.

Another considerable challenge for the EU lies in the complexity of reconciling diverse internal opinions and demands regarding climate issues, in order to enable the

development of external action strategies. The search for discourse cohesion complicates the formulation and implementation of policies, which can often compromise their application. Krämer (2020, p. 303) maintains that the international discussions promoted by the EU cannot be sustained without an internal agreement reached among Member States, who are expected to collaborate on formulating common ideas and policies to determine the EU's position in international negotiations. Naturally, this difficulty exists in the formulation of all the EU's public policies. Yet, as the EGD aims to reshape the entire European productive sector through mechanisms that affect the various economic layers of the EU, the challenge of achieving cohesion is significantly higher.

Almeida et al. (2023) present a critique of the EGD anchored in anti-colonial concepts, claiming it is merely a discursive strategy to reproduce colonial relations of dominance and transform crises into profitable opportunities. The authors also classify this logic of dominance as an interventionist stance, specifically attacking the EU's role as a climate leader. Still, it is important to consider that science has already produced numerous official documents indicating that the state of the planet's ecosystems is critical and the Anthropocene is already a reality, putting everyone's lives at risk. Because of this, while it is possible to criticise political measures such as the EGD on the grounds that they favour profit, one cannot forget that the EGD ultimately encourages various countries to include climate issues in other domestic policies. This inclusion, in and of itself, would trigger a shift in public policy-making by placing climate change at the heart of the discussion. It is better for the planet and the species that something is being done, regardless of the profit-driven logic, as otherwise the damage would be far greater. For this very reason, a Green Pact of this scale should not be viewed solely through this lens, especially when developed by one of the few political actors today that incorporates science and climate issues into public policy development.

Underlying the narrative divergences between climate leadership and anti-colonial critiques, the EU's effective capacity for external action in promoting political influence stretching past its geographical borders is grounded in a material base of market power. As portrayed by Anu Bradford (2020), Europe operates through a concept she

defines as the “Brussels Effect”, a unilateral mechanism of power that aims to regulate global markets, influencing other political actors and conditioning access to its consumer market. Without needing to resort to Hard Power, or even international treaties, the EU can stipulate standards that third countries must follow if they wish to trade goods and products with Member States, due to the need to adapt their production chains to the regulations set in Brussels. In the case of the EGD, regulatory power ceases to be merely normative and takes on a clear geopolitical and geo-economic dimension, materialising through trade policy instruments (Leonard et al., 2021; Siddi, 2020).

Ultimately, the literature corroborates the argument that the EGD moves past mere diplomatic rhetoric, consolidating itself through more assertive and influential external policy mechanisms. Smith et al. (2024, pp. 603-612) argue that the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) constitutes the practical materialisation of this influence, acting as a lever that ensures the fulfilment of the EU's climate objectives through interaction with various global value chains. In this light, the relationship between the EU and its trading partners, portrayed by the authors as “Significant Others”, is based on regulatory measures and the conditions of the EU's political and economic influence. Both the EGD and the CBAM itself serve as engines for intervention and persuasion, forming the core of European soft power in climate diplomacy.

2.1. The CBAM as a tool of EU coercive soft power

One of the core directives established in the EGD is the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), officialised through the Fit for 55 climate package alongside other legal measures aimed at the EU's decarbonisation (Government Offices of Sweden [GOS], 2023). The literature highlights the CBAM as a strategic instrument to tackle carbon leakage, which refers to the relocation of EU industrial production to countries with less stringent environmental laws. As discussed by Bellora and Fontagné (2023, p. 11), without an intervention policy, the rising emission costs resulting from the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) could compromise the competitiveness of European industry, leading to a global displacement of emissions rather than their actual reduction. Consequently, the EU might not only lose key industries across various economic sectors but also fail to contribute effectively to global emission reductions. There is no well-defined consensus on the full extent of the CBAM's practical consequences, given that it remains a recent development. Still, the academic debate is broad and addresses the issue through various perspectives.

The pricing of embedded carbon emissions is directly tied to the framework of the EU's internal Emissions Trading System through the use of certificates. Unlike traditional EU ETS allowances, these are non-tradable electronic titles corresponding to one tonne of carbon emissions embedded in the goods. They can be purchased from the date stipulated by the Commission, namely 1 January 2026 (Durel & Grosselin, 2024, pp. 3841–3842; Talus et al., 2025, p. 173). Detailing this dynamic, Elkerbout et al. (2023, p. 3) observe:

“The European Union argues the EU CBAM is an extension of the ETS, under which industrial facilities operating within the European Union must surrender allowances for each ton of GHGs emitted from their production facilities. EU CBAM fees result from the obligation for importers (termed declarants) of covered products to buy and surrender “CBAM certificates” (virtual ETS allowances) on the ETS market equal to the GHGs embodied in the covered products they wish to import. Since ETS allowance market prices fluctuate in response to demand, there is some uncertainty with respect to the price declarants must pay to import covered products.”

Eicke et al. (2021, p. 9) argue that the enforcement of the CBAM remains essential, even if it is perceived as a measure that negatively impacts the most vulnerable countries, not only due to their trade dependence on the EU but also because of the difficulties in decarbonising specific productive sectors. By serving as a price regulator, the mechanism can influence other countries to adopt the emission-reduction standards desired by the EU. This alignment occurs because the EU integrates scientific consensus into public policy, meaning that more stringent measures directly follow academic recommendations, driven by the urgency of the climate crisis.

In its initial phase, the scope of the CBAM covers high-emission sectors with an elevated risk of carbon leakage, such as iron and steel, cement, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity, and hydrogen (European Commission, n.d.-b). The selection of these specific sectors reflects a genuine concern for, and recognition of, industries that are fundamental to the global economy but face significant challenges in reducing emissions. Although the CBAM is currently a central agenda item, attempting to establish border adjustment mechanisms is not unprecedented for the EU. Mehling et al. (2019, p. 449) explain that, for the 2013–2020 period, a proposal introduced the “Future Allowance Import Requirement”. This mechanism targeted products subject to unfair international competition, conditioning its application on the absence of comparable climate action by the EU's trading partners, and even allowing compliance through Kyoto Protocol credits. Ultimately, the proposal was shelved, only to be incorporated much later into the CBAM.

Hancock and Wollersheim (2021, p. 3) address the diplomatic intent behind the CBAM, arguing that it is more than a simple import tax. Since the EU perceives climate change as a threat to both European territory and humanity as a whole, it must push third countries to expand their decarbonisation efforts. This pioneering framework seeks to align climate and trade policies, driving nations to adopt more sustainable measures even if this disrupts European production and trade flows, subsequently leading to a decline in both imports and exports (Magacho et al., 2024, p. 245).

Byiers and Medinilla (2024, p. 19) argue that the transition period is insufficient for the economies of developing nations to adapt to the conditions established by the

CBAM. The mechanism entered into force in 2023, initiating its transitional phase, which runs until the end of 2025. From 2026 onwards, the gradual phasing out of the EU ETS free allowances will begin (International Carbon Action Partnership [ICAP], 2023). The full implementation of these new measures follows an extended timeline, beginning in 2026 and concluding only in 2035, when free allocation is entirely removed for the products covered by the CBAM (Mörsdorf, 2022, p. 2).

By stipulating that industries must now be prepared to pay the border charge from 2026 onwards, the bloc imposes a stringent emission containment practice on third countries. Despite facing criticism from various sectors of society, this measure offers an effective alternative to influence other nations, through mechanisms of coercive soft power and regulatory enforcement, to adopt decarbonisation policies for the production of specific goods. Nonetheless, Fernández-Miguel et al. (2025, pp. 14–15) explain that these measures can be weakened by the emergence of tensions among the various entities involved in European governance, such as regulatory authorities and the Member States themselves, driven by individual interests. Because the CBAM also impacts European exports, concerns were already raised in 2021 by member countries and European Parliament committees regarding these effects (Mehling & Jakob, 2024, p. 368).

Leal-Arcas et al. (2022) define the CBAM as a regulatory tool that enables the EU to extend its mechanisms of influence extraterritorially, with directives that reach beyond its borders. In parallel with this international perspective, Espa (2022) argues that compliance with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules is the primary determining factor for the mechanism's environmental success. There is a concrete need for the Union to demonstrate the absence of discriminatory practices within international trade, compelling European authorities to prioritise features that solely reflect carbon price equalisation. Otherwise, Brussels could face trade conflicts and disputes with current partners (Bacchus, 2021; Lim et al., 2021). The WTO imposes climate-legitimising mechanisms on the CBAM, preventing it from acting as a protectionist industrial policy. Holmes et al. (2011, p. 896) warn that caution is required with such measures, as they can generate trade uncertainty among nations, even if they do not violate General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) rules. Leal-Arcas et al. (2022, p. 19) provide key insights by linking

the WTO to climate change mitigation efforts. Since trade is a sector with immense environmental impacts, it must operate in alignment with measures designed to mitigate climate change effects, supporting the political actors responsible for these initiatives.

The CBAM stands as a trade instrument that ensures the integrity of the EGD by requiring external producers to contribute financially according to their carbon footprint, thereby guaranteeing fairness for domestic producers (Bevilacqua, 2024, p. 385). This regulatory drive aims to expand monitoring and verification to other nations, integrating them into the “CBAM climate club” (Szulecki et al., 2022, p. 5). For Smith et al. (2024), the legitimacy of this mechanism depends on incorporating European normative values and strengthening diplomatic dialogue, thereby reinforcing the Union's identity as a political actor that pursues legitimacy through engagement.

Spiegel et al. (2024, p. 25) highlight another concern related to the CBAM, arguing that climate change mitigation measures can also cause carbon leakage, making it essential for the EU to find ways to minimise these adverse effects. Given the study's focus on agriculture, the authors advocate for the potential establishment of a carbon pricing policy within the agricultural sector, following Denmark's example. Similarly, Faichuk et al. (2022, p. 6) note that while the possibility of extending tariff applications to other goods remains a hypothesis, it is still undecided whether the CBAM will include additional agricultural products in the future. Crucially, this potential for further impact is limited, as the EU ETS does not cover agriculture.

Pieralli et al. (2025, p. 29) analyse the potential impact of the CBAM on fertilisers using models of agricultural products. The authors argue that pricing mechanisms could lead to a significant increase in the domestic prices of imported fertilisers, particularly affecting farmers struggling to maintain profitability and small-scale food producers. Conversely, the CBAM has the potential to stimulate the domestic production of these fertilisers, reducing import dependency and contributing to lower global emissions in agricultural markets.

Through the CBAM and other EGD directives, the EU compels external political actors to align with its trade and emission standards to access the European single market. Given its scale, the market sets stringent regulations that global firms must adopt to operate in Europe. Within the literature, some scholars view the mechanism as excessively restrictive, potentially conflicting with established international trade law and risking retaliation (Clora et al., 2023, p. 11; Lim et al., 2021; Tanaka & Nagashima, 2025). On the other hand, others interpret the CBAM as an effective tool for mitigating climate change under the scope of Climate Law, helping to decarbonise Europe (Espa et al., 2022; Korpar et al., 2023, pp. 95–96; Wróblewska & Zmitrowicz, 2024, p. 260). A third perspective advocates the inclusion of exemptions within the CBAM framework (Zhong & Pei, 2022) due to disparate national realities and insufficient preparation time. Ultimately, the CBAM stands as the element of the EGD most focused on foreign policy, clearly reflecting the current direction of climate diplomacy. For this reason, it has been incorporated as a central topic in this dissertation.

Corvino (2025, p. 36) argues that the CBAM and the emissions trading system are unjust, as they impose financial costs on vulnerable nations in the Global South that bear less historical responsibility for total emissions and climate change as a whole. Beyond this disparity, the heavy administrative burden imposed on economic operators exerts significant pressure on the sectors involved (Bachmann & Nellen, 2025). While the injustice argument demands legislative attention, compensation is structurally delivered through alternative frameworks such as the Global Gateway. This European initiative aims to mobilise up to €300 billion in investment across strategic sectors, including the digital transition, climate and energy, transport, health, and education, while integrating financial institutions to leverage private sector funding (European Commission, n.d.-c). Even if such investments are widely deemed insufficient to counter structural economic asymmetries, current geopolitical and material realities must be confronted directly.

Although the material reality of vulnerable countries cannot resolve the disparities stemming from centuries of colonial relations and cumulative emissions (Almeida et al., 2023, p. 2), and despite the fact that those who contributed least to the problem

suffer the most (European Economic and Social Committee, 2023), the severity of the Anthropocene (Crutzen, 2006) enforces a strict pragmatism. The EU developed the Just Transition Mechanism as one of the key internal tools of the EGD, providing financial and technical support by deploying €55 billion between 2021 and 2027 to regions severely impacted by climate change, thereby supporting the transition toward sustainable activities and green job creation (European Commission, n.d.-d). Capital investments alone will not fully unravel the complexities of climate change. However, with ecosystems on the brink of collapse, preserving life on Earth becomes an imperative that supersedes rhetorical disputes over historical reparations. This perspective does not reject or diminish climate justice, which remains essential for ensuring developed nations bear the transition costs in developing economies. Instead, the irreversibility of environmental degradation precludes protracted, purely theoretical debates. The absolute priority must be emission reduction and the enforcement of policies designed to mitigate climate effects. Should the planet enter absolute collapse, the framework for even having these theoretical discussions will cease to exist.

The allocation of CBAM revenues to subsidise renewable energy in developing nations is another subject that generates divergent discussions within the literature. Perdana & Vielle (2022, p. 8) argue that these collected revenues will be directed toward climate adaptation in developing countries through targeted investments in solar and wind energy, with the returns being proportional to each country's contribution. While this redistribution appears positive given that funds are allocated to the countries that need them most, critics argue that, under this framework, disadvantaged nations are effectively financing their own transition.

International law provides another significant framework for discussing the CBAM, focusing specifically on the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC). This foundational pillar, established by the United Nations, dictates that climate mitigation policies must account for the distinct socioeconomic realities and varying capacities of individual nations (UNFCCC, 1992). Statements from the BASIC group (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China) have flagged

the CBAM as a troubling development for international trade, labelling it discriminatory. A 2021 United Nations report highlights this stance, noting that the group's ministers interpret the mechanism as a unilateral trade barrier that violates the UNFCCC principle of equity by imposing disproportionate costs (UNCTAD, 2021, p. 7). In addition, the literature indicates that the CBAM has the potential to adversely affect the economies from these nations (Gu et al., 2023, p. 8). Consequently, the core argument is premised on the notion that applying the identical carbon cost to an exporter from a developing economy and a producer from an industrialised nation is inherently asymmetrical and unjust.

The CBAM represents the most audacious tool of the EGD, uniting trade policy with climate ambition. Operating as an instrument of coercive soft power, the mechanism exercises market-driven leadership by conditioning access to the single market on strict environmental regulations. However, its success depends as much on the effective reduction of emissions as it does on managing the resulting diplomatic tensions. With the implementation taking full effect in 2026, future research will be essential to evaluate whether the CBAM achieved its objectives or fell short of institutional expectations.

Ultimately, the literature review conducted in this dissertation provides a clear understanding that the current paradigm of European climate diplomacy is not a sudden or isolated phenomenon, but rather the culmination of a long standing construction of the EU's normative and strategic identity. The trajectory of EU integration was driven by the founding Treaties and shaped by the political instability caused by internal crises that impacted European cohesion and the eventual consolidation of the von der Leyen Geopolitical Commission, revealing a deliberate transition. This shift demonstrates that the EU has evolved from a strictly normative political actor, focused on dialogue when formulating policies while avoiding military considerations, into a power that articulates its environmental stance alongside diplomacy and contemporary geopolitical realities. The EGD emerges as a pivotal element in this evolution, turning the logic of decarbonisation into the core of European foreign policy. The CBAM represents the materialisation of EU coercive soft power, which, by uniting trade and climate, challenges estab-

lished international structures. Understanding the operation and critiques of this mechanism is essential to mapping the limits of European influence within the contemporary international system. Having established this fundamental analytical foundation for diplomacy and the grounding of the European foreign policy strategy, this dissertation now proceeds to its next phase, which is the methodology.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach, using documentary and bibliographical analysis as the primary technical procedure. For the interpretation of the collected data and documents, the theoretical and conceptual framework of planetary approaches was employed as an analytical lens. This choice is justified by the need to transcend a purely commercial and economic analysis of the EGD and specifically the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), allowing for an investigation guided by a post-anthropocentric perspective. As a result, the analysis of the CBAM extends past the fiscal dimension, which views it strictly as a tax mechanism under political economy, to situate itself within the field of international relations. The objective is to understand whether the directive acts as a practical materialisation of European soft power developed mainly through the EGD. The critical analysis of Regulation (EU) 2023/956 is operationalised by crossing the analytical categories of planetary approaches with the text of the official document, namely the Recitals, Articles and Annexes. To achieve this, the investigation focuses on four fundamental conceptual dimensions:

1 – Dimension of urgency in the Anthropocene: This dimension analyses how the incorporation of global targets is used to build political legitimacy that authorises the shifting of environmental costs onto external actors. Additionally, the failure to recognise resource finiteness is identified as a driver that pushes the climate crisis into a state of urgency, which is then used to justify extreme regulatory measures.

2 - Relational dimension (Human-Nature Relationship): This dimension investigates whether the CBAM breaks or reinforces the human-nature dichotomy. It also proposes a discussion on the concept of embedded emissions to understand whether it promotes a reconnection with the biophysical structure of the planet or reinforces separation through the utilitarian view of natural capital, rendering the complexity of the Earth System into simplistic accounting and bureaucratic metrics.

3 – Dimension of security and agency: This analytical category examines the material agency of nature and whether it is recognised as an existential threat to humanity, or if

the concept of security is mobilised strictly to safeguard European economic stability and prevent the obsolescence of domestic targets.

4 – Political dimension: This component scrutinises the role of the State as a central entity and the exclusive political agent acting as a regulator of the crisis, verifying how administrative centralisation and technocratic management capture climate politics to the detriment of a planetary vision that includes plural forms of knowledge.

This analytical procedure serves to determine whether the CBAM fosters a new planetary consciousness or if the mechanism acts to perpetuate the systemic structures that generated the crisis. The originality of this dissertation stems from applying this analytical lens through the study of primary and secondary sources to interpret the official text. To this end, the study assesses whether the condition of the Anthropocene and the core arguments of planetary approaches were integrated into the drafting of the regulation. Crucially, it examines whether the mechanism is ultimately confined to a market-based tool forming part of European soft power within the continent's climate diplomacy.

4. CBAM in light of planetary concepts: A critical analysis of Regulation (EU) 2023/956

This section offers a critical analysis of Regulation (EU) 2023/956 (CBAM) through the theoretical lenses of planetary approaches to International Relations. The objective extends beyond merely describing the technical functioning of the mechanism, aiming rather to examine the policy as strictly anchored in the theoretical premises outlined in the conceptual framework. Additionally, a critical reading of its Recitals, Articles, and Paragraphs seeks to identify the extent to which its guidelines disrupt the anthropocentric paradigm or, conversely, reinforce the structures of domination and state-centrism characteristic of mainstream International Relations theories. The analysis transcends the bureaucratic surface of the official document to investigate the ontological and practical implications of one of the most significant mechanisms of the EGD.

To achieve this, the study is structured around four fundamental axes that address the tension between European regulatory efficacy and the existential demands of the Anthropocene, treating the agency of nature and the departure from state-centrism as foundational pillars.

4.1 Is the Anthropocene narrative of climate urgency incorporated into CBAM? If so, how does the EU use this rhetoric as a tool for political legitimization aimed at shifting environmental costs onto external actors?

Although Regulation (EU) 2023/956, which establishes the CBAM, contains no direct reference to the Anthropocene, it explicitly integrates the narrative of climate urgency into its directives. This shift is primarily reflected in the EU's targets to achieve climate neutrality in the near future, incorporating the pivotal resolutions of the Paris Agreement and the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. This inclusion implicitly registers the Framework Convention's warnings that failing to meet these targets would

yield catastrophic planetary consequences (UNFCCC, n.d.). Consequently, anchoring CBAM obligations within the Paris Agreement serves as an indirect acknowledgment of this climate emergency. This commitment is reinforced by Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 (the European Climate Law), which legally bound the EU to attaining climate neutrality by 2050, alongside a net domestic emission reduction target of at least 55% compared to 1990 levels by 2030 (European Union, 2023).

Through these legal benchmarks, the EU signals an understanding that core climate action must transcend partisan political debate, positioning the climate crisis as an existential threat that justifies extraordinary measures. Evidence of this stance emerges in Recital 9, which addresses the risk of carbon leakage should the climate ambitions of international partners fall short of EU standards. As the text states, "as the Union increases its climate ambition, the risk of carbon leakage could undermine the effectiveness of Union emission reduction policies" (European Union, 2023). Such measures risk overstepping diplomatic boundaries and amplifying European protectionism. This underlying intent is corroborated by Article 1(1), which, despite ostensibly aiming to support the Paris Agreement, permits the deployment of EU influence "by creating incentives for the reduction of emissions by operators in third countries". When Article 1(2) establishes an "equivalent set of rules to imports", the Union effectively neutralises competitive advantages rooted in laxer environmental standards, actively reshaping the behaviour of trading partners outside its domestic jurisdiction (European Union, 2023).

This exceptionalism materializes structurally through the management of carbon leakage, as detailed in Recitals 9, 10, and 11 of the aforementioned regulation. Viewed through the lenses of planetary approaches, the EU's focus on this risk signals an implicit recognition that the Earth System operates independently of political boundaries, meaning that emissions displaced to other jurisdictions carry the exact same global impact as those generated within the Union. Consequently, the transboundary challenge central to planetary approaches is arguably incorporated by the EU within the CBAM directives, as the shifting of industrial production to countries with weaker environmental regulations would ultimately undermine global emission reduction targets (European Union, 2023). Admittedly, as stated in Recital 1, a primary objective of the CBAM is to

transform the European region into a "*resource-efficient and competitive*" economy (European Union, 2023), demonstrating that safeguarding industrial competitiveness, employment, and revenue within European territory remains central to the strategy.

By establishing that the efforts of European nations would be compromised by the lower climate ambitions of its international partners, specifically those trading with the Union, as previously demonstrated in Recital 9, the EU asserts itself as a global regulatory authority, thereby dictating the norms that govern what constitutes "right" and "wrong" climate action. The externalisation of environmental costs to external actors through the purchase of CBAM certificates, as outlined in Article 21 (European Union, 2023), serves as a tool designed to safeguard both the European economy and the structural integrity of the Earth System by incentivising emission reductions.

The European strategy reflects what can be conceptualised as "Anthropocene leadership", establishing the CBAM as a justification for the Union's trade practices by dictating the rules and norms to be followed. By requiring the embedded carbon price of imports to complement the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), the Union seeks to mitigate environmental damage while simultaneously developing its own metric for pricing nature and exporting it to the rest of the world.

"The CBAM seeks to replace those existing mechanisms by addressing the risk of carbon leakage in a different way, namely by ensuring equivalent carbon pricing for imports and domestic products. To ensure a gradual transition from the current system of free allowances to the CBAM, the CBAM should be progressively phased in while free allowances are allocated and phased out for the sectors covered by the CBAM." (European Union, 2023)

Although critics argue that the emergence of a colonial-tinged regulatory policy points towards a phenomenon of ecological imperialism or green colonialism (Almeida et al., 2023, p. 2; Bassey et al., 2023), a broader analytical perspective is warranted. Given that the climate emergency threatens both humanity and the integrity of the Earth System, decarbonisation becomes an imperative necessity. Even if the Union's actions are driven by domestic economic interests, net greenhouse gas emissions within

the EU notably decreased by 36% between 1990 and 2023 (European Environment Agency, 2025). From an environmental standpoint, this substantial decline reflects a tangible contribution to mitigating the atmospheric accumulation of greenhouse gases.

By centering its strategy on crisis mitigation, the Union develops a rhetoric of regulatory "mirroring" that can equally be interpreted as green protectionism. The climate emergency serves as a justification for the EU to neutralise the competitive advantage of foreign industries operating outside the regulatory standards mandated by the CBAM. By doing so, the Union establishes compliance rules while effectively restricting third-country industries from emitting greenhouse gases unchecked as a prerequisite for accessing the European market, specifically regarding cement, electricity, fertilisers, iron and steel, aluminium, and hydrogen. Although highly critical to the global economy, these sectors account for a significant share of global emissions, prompting the CBAM to target both the direct impacts of the manufacturing process itself and the indirect carbon footprint embedded within the electricity consumed during production.

Ultimately, the convergence of the CBAM with the Anthropocene is not driven by a purely ecological concern, as might be expected. On a planet whose biophysical boundaries are increasingly breached, economic and political power shifts to those who control the pricing of both natural resources and industrial production. The political response to this crisis lies in the externalisation of costs onto the "other", namely third countries, thereby converting planetary vulnerability into a regulatory mechanism of adjustment and political leverage. This mechanism functions as a crucial tool of European soft power within the broader framework of its climate diplomacy.

The CBAM offers documentary evidence that European governance recognises both the finitude of natural resources and planetary boundaries. By establishing a carbon cost at European borders, the Regulation implicitly acknowledges that the Earth System's capacity to absorb industrial waste is exhausted. This directly converges with the concept of planetary boundaries, even if the text omits the fact that relentless industrial production was the primary driver of the crisis. From an Anthropocene perspective, the CBAM ceases to be a mere fiscal instrument and operates instead as a management tool for a finite common good. This management, however, aligns with the Union's

own political and economic interests. By pricing scarcity according to its own criteria, the EU asserts a form of global sovereignty, dictating the rules of market participation based on the volume of greenhouse gases permitted.

The EU's legitimacy to transfer emission costs to external actors is grounded in regulatory coercion and imposition, while simultaneously attempting to reconcile the necessary pragmatism demanded by the Anthropocene with its climate diplomacy and external action efforts. As referenced in the literature review, the European Union seeks to address socio-economic inequalities through important instruments such as the Just Transition Mechanism (European Commission, n.d.-d) and the Global Gateway programme, which promote investments in developing countries to assist them in the decarbonisation process (European Commission, n.d.-c). Through these initiatives, the European Union recognises the vulnerability of the Global South and the need for technical and economic assistance within a complex geopolitical context. Faced with the risk of ecosystem collapse and the irreversibility of environmental degradation, which define contemporary reality, the Union adopts an interventionist pragmatism, considering the preservation of life on Earth the central point of the debate. The convergence of the CBAM with the Anthropocene is revealed through this very pragmatism. This approach converts climate urgency into a priority through the reduction of emissions and the mitigation of the consequences of climate change affecting the stability of the Earth System. This remains true even if it represents a redefinition of trade rules.

4.2 Does the CBAM break down or reinforce the human-nature dichotomy?

The climate crisis is, fundamentally, the result of a historical rupture in the perception of interdependence between humanity and the Earth System, or nature (Lamb, 1982). The very process of intensified industrial production tends to ignore this finitude of nature, aiming instead at profit and trade expansion. Modernity consolidated this human–nature dichotomy, within which the economic system was conceived as an autonomous entity, supposedly operating in a productive vacuum that treats natural resources as infinite externalities and passive objects of agency. The economic system lacks autonomy since it depends intrinsically on natural resources for the production of industrial goods. Similarly, human perception shifted towards a dissociation from this dependence on the natural world, forgetting humanity's own evolutionary process as a species. The CBAM, as a cornerstone of the Green Deal, is developed at the exact moment this illusion of separation collides with the biophysical boundaries of the Earth System itself.

The analysis of Regulation (EU) 2023/956 reveals an ambivalent treatment regarding this dichotomy. The mechanism partially promotes a reconnection, which to some extent may be considered forced, since it establishes the concept of embedded emissions under Article 3(22) (European Union, 2023). Through this, the EU recognises that goods produced by industry, such as steel, cement, or fertilisers, are not mere products of human creation, but contain within themselves a portion of nature and carry a physical trace. Indirect emissions acknowledge the use of electricity in industrial production, which also consumes the integrity of nature. The document pragmatically admits that the full functioning of the Earth System is what sustains the continuation of the Union's economic development. Under Articles 7 and 35, declarants are obliged to report emissions (European Union, 2023). Nature, in this way, ceases to be viewed as an externality and becomes part of the product cost, recognising the economy's consumption of climate system stability. These emissions are reported through the submission of the CBAM report, a legal device requiring the declarant to quantify

actual emissions, in accordance with Article 35(2)(b) (European Union, 2023). The biophysical footprint of the commodity is thus integrated into the EU's bureaucratic sphere of control. This framework introduces a fundamental limitation, given that nature is only truly perceived and considered by the EU as operational technical data.

The document struggles to move beyond a utilitarian view of nature. When nature is cited, it is integrated merely as an accounting quantification rather than a living system with its own capacity for agency. This is exemplified in Recital 1, which states that *"The European Green Deal aims to protect, conserve and enhance the Union's natural capital"* (European Union, 2023). The use of the term "natural capital" corroborates a perspective that treats the natural world as a commodity. The current focus on carbon pricing risks sustaining the human–nature dichotomy by failing to promote the perception of nature as an active agent, which implies that the integrity of the biosphere can be compensated through financial transactions. Nature is no longer invisible in this context, but it has effectively become a commodified, bureaucratic entity. By reducing the complexity of climate change to instruments that measure tonnes of CO₂, the CBAM risks reinforcing the logic that nature is assimilated and controlled by market mechanisms, thereby failing to shift the intensive production model that generated the crisis. Regardless of any reduction in emissions, the use of nature here remains strictly bureaucratic and economic.

The vision of controlling and reducing nature manifests itself with technical rigour through Annex IV of the Regulation, which establishes the calculation methods for embedded emissions (European Union, 2023). By reducing the biophysical complexity of ecosystems and the impacts of industrial production to mathematical emission formulas, the EU reaffirms the position adopted since the Industrial Revolution. Humanity thus becomes the "controlling subject who manages", while nature is relegated to the "measurable object". This rationalist approach ignores the ecosystemic interconnectivity advocated by planetary approaches, as well as the intrinsic human dependence on the natural environment.

While the EU's primary concern targets carbon leakage, according to Recital 11, nature remains in the background. The natural environment only gains political centrality when its degradation threatens to destabilise the integrity of the European internal market and the EU's own economy. At no point does the document reflect upon the finitude of natural resources or the necessity of pursuing alternatives to current modes of production. Economic growth itself continues to be treated as a primary objective, decoupled from environmental degradation. The CBAM effectively functions as a tool for mere systemic maintenance, protecting the climate solely to advance the EU ETS and secure the industrial competitiveness of the EU (European Union, 2023).

Instead of being resolved, the human–nature dichotomy is sophisticatedly expanded in this context. Under the Regulation, nature ceases to be an ignored externality and becomes a risk asset that must be monitored and quantified. An anthropocentric worldview remains deeply embedded in the EU's climate policies, with the CBAM operating as a mechanism designed to preserve nature only to the extent that it serves as the necessary infrastructure for human economic activity. In practice, any reduction in emissions yields tangible environmental benefits. Without a fundamental shift in logic to recognise both nature's capacity for agency and humanity's dependence on the planet's biophysical balance, the core problem will hardly be resolved. Mitigating symptoms fails to address the underlying structural crisis.

The European perspective on nature invites an ambivalent assessment. While the practical effects of the EU's climate policies lead to reduced emissions, bringing about a positive result for the planet, this approach neglects alternative human–nature relationships. The document omits Indigenous or communitarian worldviews that reject this separation and have historically operated in a relationship of interdependence with the natural world.

The Regulation's system of control and penalties consolidates the imposition of a technocratic view on the natural environment. Article 18 dictates that declared emissions must undergo mandatory verification by accredited verifiers (European Union,

2023), thereby placing bureaucratic rigidity above the natural world and demonstrating that the relationship with nature is mediated through constant surveillance and technical scepticism. This conversion into data transforms nature into an object of bureaucratic auditing. Article 26 further strengthens this framework by establishing penalties for non-compliance with legal obligations (European Union, 2023), highlighting the power and rigidity of the EU's technocratic approach in enforcing environmental governance on a global scale.

An analysis of the CBAM through the lens of the human–nature dichotomy reveals that the EU, despite its pioneering role in mitigating climate change through emission reductions, operates within an anthropocentric management framework. This framework perceives nature merely as another mechanism to ensure the Union's stability and economic growth. The core of this relationship thus remains unaltered, as the Earth system continues to be exploited and incorporated into technocratic management. The exclusion of Indigenous and traditional knowledge, which rejects this separation between humanity and the biosphere in favour of a relationship of interdependence, deprives the Regulation of an opportunity to foster structural transformation. The CBAM represents the pinnacle of the modern attempt to rescue nature through bureaucracy. It reduces the climate crisis to a market failure to be corrected, actively promoting economic growth and profit expansion instead of addressing the total rupture of the planet's biophysical boundaries. Although the mechanism represents a practical advancement, it offers limited conceptual progress when evaluated against the human–nature dichotomy. It persists in safeguarding the economic system from the environmental crisis, rather than reintegrating humanity into the natural world.

4.3 Does Regulation (EU) 2023/956 recognise the agency of nature as a threat to the integrity of the Earth System and to humanity, or merely as a risk to the bloc's economic security?

The traditional concept of security in International Relations, as outlined in the theoretical framework, has historically focused on territorial integrity and state sovereignty against military threats, a paradigm now fundamentally challenged by the Anthropocene. Historically viewed as a passive object with infinite resources, nature assumes a material capacity for agency within the current climate crisis (Pereira & Saragamo, 2020). Nature thus shifts from a mere political background to an active force dictating the global agenda through climate urgency. An analysis of Regulation (EU) 2023/956 raises the question of whether the security pursued by the EU represents a response to a planetary existential threat or remains restricted to safeguarding economic stability.

Rather than appearing in explicit terms such as an existential threat, the recognition of nature's capacity for agency emerges through the necessity to mitigate climate change to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, as stated in Recital 2. Within the CBAM, this agency remains implicitly tied to the Agreement by stating that limiting the temperature increase to 1.5°C would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change (European Union, 2023), an acknowledgement that nature is no longer a passive element.

Although the EU's stated ultimate objective is climate neutrality, the security enforced through the CBAM protects the integrity of the Union's economic policy rather than climate or human survival. The scarcity of the term 'security' within the Regulation highlights this priority, as it appears on only two strictly technical occasions: Recital 13, which refers to the legal certainty and predictability required by businesses facing rising carbon costs, and Recital 55, regarding the security of electricity supply in third countries (European Union, 2023). In a legal document designed to tackle climate change and achieve climate neutrality by 2050, the failure to mobilise the concept of

security against existential risks to human and non-human life represents a fundamental flaw. This contradiction is further heightened given that the term is deployed solely to guarantee the stability of commercial transactions and regulations for economic actors.

Restricting the concept of security to technical and economic spheres becomes clearest when examining the core justification for the mechanism. Rather than framing risk as a direct threat to the integrity of the Earth system, the planet, or human and non-human life, the Regulation targets threats directed at the Union's industrial competitiveness and goals vulnerable to carbon leakage, as depicted in Recital 11. Describing the relocation of production to countries with weaker environmental policies as compromised exposes the primary focus of the CBAM, which is to address the loss of European regulatory efficacy and competitive disadvantage. Intergenerational justice, a critical pillar of the climate debate, remains absent from this economic perspective. The Regulation effectively treats the climate crisis as a financial problem of market stability, entirely omitting the security of future generations who hold an equal right to a stable Earth system. The document consequently safeguards a commercial legacy at the expense of the planet's biological future.

Recital 19 reinforces this perspective through its deployment of the term environmental integrity, which operates not as a measure of ecosystem health or the maintenance of biophysical conditions, but as a metric to ensure the mechanism gradually replaces EU ETS allowances without disrupting the tariff system. This operational focus removes security from the realm of survival, anchoring it instead to the viability and maintenance of the Union's economic-environmental project. The CBAM redefines security as the protection of market stability against the pressures of a climate-disrupted world.

This systemic preservation logic extends directly into the Union's climate policy dimension. Recital 8 acknowledges that embedded emissions in imports are rising, threatening to undermine efforts to reduce the global carbon footprint, which serves as an admission by the EU that nature's agency ignores geographical borders. Instead of addressing this shared vulnerability, the response focuses on the responsibility to

maintain a position of climate leadership, projecting security as the preservation of European global influence and a defence against the economic risks of inaction. Recital 75 illustrates this dynamic by conditioning support for least developed countries on their adaptation to the obligations under this Regulation (European Union, 2023). The EU is primarily concerned that emissions increases outside Europe will neutralise local efforts, viewing such a scenario as a misallocation of resources and a weakening of internal policy integrity. The core concern centres on protecting past investments and efforts, rather than ensuring survival.

The CBAM processes nature's material agency not as a call to reshape the industrial system in solidarity with ecosystems, but as a risk of obsolescence for internal targets. Planetary security is thus mediated through compliance and bureaucratic rigidity, with assistance to third countries designed merely to ensure the certificate system remains effective. The Regulation seeks to manage nature's agency through bureaucratic metrics and financial obligations, converting the existential climate urgency of the Anthropocene into a technocratic and regulatory matter.

4.4 Does CBAM reinforce the state-centrism approach found in mainstream theories of international relations, or does it reflect the emergence of a planetary politics centred on nature?

The shift from mainstream International Relations theories toward a politics centred on the natural environment finds a complex paradox within the CBAM. While planetary approaches advocate decentralising the state to put nature and the Earth system first, Regulation (EU) 2023/956 does the exact opposite. It reinforces state centrality. The regulation directly crowns the state as the only agent capable of tackling the climate crisis. Article 11 underlines this centralization by leaving the sale and management of certificates entirely to the competent authorities of each Member State. Recital 42 drives the point home, stating explicitly that importers should only be allowed to import goods covered by this Regulation after authorization by competent authorities (European Union, 2023). International bodies, academia, NGOs, civil society, and indigenous communities are completely bypassed in helping to contain climate change. The state remains instead the sole authority and the core focus here. This fails completely as a move toward non-state-centric global governance. The CBAM simply places the planet's biophysical dynamics under administrative power, turning the state into a filter that validates or shuts out the climate reality of third countries through criteria predefined by the Union.

Planetary approach theorists like Eckersley maintain that the state is a vital agent against climate change, using its political and legal authority to regulate, manage, redistribute, and coerce (Eckersley, 2004). Climate policy, however, cannot rely solely on state-centric ideas. Under the CBAM, the state is not seen just as a mediator. It remains the principal entity defining the regulatory political existence of carbon. Planetary approaches demand nature as the central political subject, yet here it shrinks to an object of state verification and control. Article 18 establishes this dynamic, giving the state the power to validate emissions data and accredit verifiers (European Union, 2023).

This logic reiterates the state-centrism already seen in mainstream International Relations theories. While the problem is planetary, the presented solution remains regional, with the CBAM failing to produce any possibility of expanding policy to the biosphere and the natural environment as a whole. Far from it, the mechanism brings the biosphere and nature into the regulatory and accounting logic of the state, rather than prioritising a response that embeds ecological agency over bureaucratic authority.

Administrative centralisation monopolises the interpretation of nature's actual needs. The Regulation simply ignores third-country ecological visions and local knowledge through the rigid, technical emissions criteria of Article 7 and Annex IV (European Union, 2023). It swaps ecosystem complexity for mathematical simplification. The CBAM structure exposes an issue far deeper than a mere colonial logic: invisibility. This is no simple imposition of power. The mechanism operates, fundamentally, on a flat denial that Global South communities even possess knowledge worthy of climate policy design. Ancestral and traditional plural forms of knowledge are silenced before they even enter the debate. This runs profoundly counter to non-state-centric planetary approaches. Governance and security do not belong to the diverse actors of the natural world, as state regulatory measures centralise control to perpetuate the economic system, turning the climate crisis into an instrument of market exclusion.

This silencing of ancestral knowledge aligns directly with the concerns of the BASIC countries, as noted in the literature review. From the perspective of these Global South nations, the CBAM threatens to violate fundamental principles of international law, such as CBDR-RC, and establishes trade barriers that ignore the economic realities of the affected states. Under the principle of equity (UNCTAD, 2021), the imposition of disproportionate costs on Global South economies disrupts international trade and penalises countries in their process of economic development. The UNFCCC (1992) remains explicit regarding climate action, demanding that mitigation policies account for differing socio-economic realities. Critiques of the Regulation from Global South countries align with anti-colonial academic works (Almeida et al., 2023, p. 2; Bassey et al., 2023). Seen through planetary approaches, a uniform carbon price carries an intrinsic flaw. It

ignores the historical reality of Global South nations, which endured colonisation and massive resource extraction despite their low historical greenhouse gas emission levels.

Imposing measures on developing economies without understanding their specific struggles establishes a clear hierarchy in climate policymaking. Forcing a uniform carbon cost onto both a developing nation and an industrialised state demonstrates a total blind spot regarding these distinct realities. Gu et al. (2023) exemplify this injustice, criticizing models that dump equal economic burdens onto countries historically damaged by colonialism while letting major emitters off the hook. True climate justice mandates that Global North nations bear a heavier onus, proportional to their historical responsibility for destabilising the Earth system. Far from seeking to overcome historical inequalities or promote a genuinely fair planetary climate policy, the CBAM merely feeds a technocratic management of natural resources. The Regulation shields the industrial competitiveness of the Global North, actively ignoring vulnerabilities and deepening the historical wounds of the Global South. In doing so, it entirely excludes the traditional, ancestral plural forms of knowledge from communities that once lived in perfect harmony with nature.

The CBAM operates a capture of ecological agency by administrative sovereignty. Acknowledging this does not deny the Regulation's positive aspects, but rather aims to squeeze the text for critical insights on potential improvements, without disregarding milestones like the effective reduction of emissions within Europe. Yet, when viewed through the non-state-centric lens of planetary approaches, a core problem emerges. The state leverages the environmental crisis to legitimize its expanding influence, acting as a "trade police" through what is characterized here as green soft power. This constructs a "green sovereignty" that, under the pretext of protecting nature, reinforces traditional hierarchies and mainstream International Relations theories. The complete silencing of non-Western knowledge and the reduction of nature to an accounting metric, as seen in Annex IV, prove that the Regulation prioritizes environmental control over ecological emancipation. For a planetary, transboundary, and complex crisis, maintaining the exact state-centric and economic rationality that triggered the ecological imbalance is simply insufficient to alter our climate trajectory. The CBAM ultimately acts as a

mechanism that merely mitigates symptoms, despite possessing the intrinsic potential to transcend this very logic.

In essence, the CBAM demonstrates that in the Anthropocene, the state has not ceded ground to nature. Instead, it has converted the natural world into a new domain of bureaucratic control, reaffirming state-centrism against the aspirations of a genuinely planetary politics.

5. Discussion and Results:

Examining the CBAM through planetary approaches and the premises of the Anthropocene exposes a substantial ambivalence in crisis management. Granted, the Regulation marks pragmatic advances, such as institutional recognition of the climate emergency under the Paris Agreement and an incentive for third-country decarbonisation, backed by a 36% cut in net emissions from 1990 levels (European Environment Agency, 2025). Yet, its core structure remains deeply insufficient to tackle the systemic roots of this crisis. The Union clearly leverages the climate emergency pretext to legitimize its environmental policies and economic influence. By translating the Earth system's biophysical decay into an accounting and market-based language, the EU ultimately reinforces a logic of natural exploitation subordinated to profit.

This approach is not new in the environmental trajectory of the EU. As noted in the literature review, the strategy initiated at the Stockholm Conference (1972) and the Action Programme (1973) already aimed to reconcile economic development with environmental preservation (Papadaki, 2012). The CBAM is the evolution of this perception, transposed to the reality of the twenty-first century.

The Regulation's deployment of urgency carries a depoliticizing potential, as the goal is not to alter existing structures or the system itself, but to secure their legitimacy. The CBAM removes the political nature from the Anthropocene and climate change, reframing them as problems of economic efficiency. This urgency consequently becomes the commercial safeguard and the engine of European soft power.

The climate crisis management promoted by the mechanism is deeply marked by state-centrism, a concept that the Anthropocene seeks to overcome. As demonstrated in the critical analysis, although the nature of the challenge is planetary and possesses transboundary characteristics, the solution presented by the CBAM is market-based, anchored in state administrative authority. This technocratic centralisation excludes nature's capacity for biophysical agency (Pereira & Saramago, 2020), a determining factor regarding the climate crisis, and reaffirms the state's role as the sole legitimate manager of climate policies. This process of expanding the state's role as the manager of a "green sovereignty" finds legal backing in the Lisbon Treaty (2009). By granting the

EU the legal mandate to combat climate change globally, exerting influence across the planet (Boasson & Wettestad, 2013), sustainable development was incorporated into foreign policy. This gave legitimacy for the Union to promote its image as the primary climate actor exercising political influence through its regulatory mechanisms. Climate crisis management was thereby restructured and placed into the EU's diplomatic conduct, which used the energy transition and decarbonisation as strategies for projecting global leadership (Graziano, 2024; Haroche, 2023; Kyriazi & Miró, 2023; Siddi, 2021).

The state's exclusivity in crisis management is not merely an administrative and regulatory choice, but reflects the silencing of plural forms of knowledge in favour of rising market-based, technocratic policies. By establishing purely mathematical criteria for calculating emissions in Article 7, the CBAM operates a simplification of the biophysical complexity of ecosystems, replacing the diversity of ancestral ecological and indigenous knowledge with an accounting metric. This state-centric logic drives the decline of healthy coexistence practices with nature, stemming from the exclusion of these individuals from the orchestration of climate policies. Through the lens of planetary approaches, the issue transcends the mere perpetuation of a colonial logic, or a green colonialism, that structures the productive division and maintains the imposition of power over the other. What emerges, in reality, is the complete invisibility of traditional knowledge in the eyes of bureaucrats, occurring both implicitly and explicitly through omission. In this case, such plural forms of knowledge are not even considered worthy or legitimate in the climate policy debate, exposing a certain technocratic arrogance. Not even NGOs or academia were included. The bureaucratic sovereignty of the EU thus invisibilizes alternatives to the current economic system, as there is no intention to change it, given that profit is the preponderant factor present in CBAM certificates.

This sovereignty is frequently projected beyond European borders, manifesting what is termed the "Brussels Effect" (Bradford, 2020), a tool of power that regulates markets, influences political actors, and determines the conditions for accessing the European consumer market. By stipulating the value of emissions for market access, the EU exerts an influence that forces countries to adopt a "mirror logic". Many of them, to maintain trade viability, are compelled to adapt to the Union's regulatory guidelines.

This influence is projected through leadership by example (Kulovesi & Oberthür, 2020), with the Union leveraging the premise of having reduced emissions by 25% while its economy grew by 60% since 1990 (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2018). The EU thereby justifies its political influence through the credibility of these results, integrating industrial production as an important pillar of a foreign policy driven by high sustainability standards (Carlson, 2025; Puetter & Terranova, 2025).

Admittedly, should the mechanism prove successful and net emissions decrease worldwide, the "Brussels Effect" will have operated positively. Nevertheless, its potential is infinitely greater. The CBAM could aim for a profound restructuring of productive bases, which would inherently reduce emissions. Pragmatically, however, it is frequently used merely to ensure that external actors adapt to European competitiveness standards, securing both profit and political influence. A dialectic consequently emerges between the declared environmental purpose and the preservation of political-economic hegemony, where the "Brussels Effect" acts as the agent shaping how the CBAM functions within the Union's climate diplomacy.

Climate diplomacy instrumentalises the urgent situation of the Anthropocene to legitimize the transfer of responsibilities, without considering nature's capacity for agency or the biophysical existential boundaries of the Earth system. In this context, decarbonisation abroad becomes less of an environmental imperative and more a condition for market access. Future analysis must determine whether this impact will prove positive for the planet, given that the CBAM entered its definitive phase in early 2026. Another problem within this diplomacy is the retreat in the meaning of the concept itself, as it ceases to be a space for cooperation and debate seeking the preservation of the Earth system, transmuting instead into a mechanism for promoting European soft power through political-economic pressure. Although Joseph Nye's (1990) term is anchored in influence without the use of force, the CBAM materialises as an instrument of the EU's coercive soft power. This influence limits, through exclusion from the European market if standards are not met, the economic and productive activities of other states without relying on military force. The CBAM thus acts as a regulatory and bureaucratic tool that extends beyond the borders of the Union itself (Leal-Arcas et al., 2022).

Analysing the CBAM through planetary approaches demonstrates that the Regulation operates as a strategic tool of European soft power, even though it has the potential to be much greater than that. It represents an attempt to consolidate the EU as a political actor acting as the planet's "Green Regulator". The power stipulating the rules that must be followed by those seeking access to the Union's economic space simultaneously transfers environmental costs to external actors.

The second question of the critical analysis addresses the human-nature dichotomy, a foundational pillar of planetary approaches and the underlying logic behind the climate crisis. The Regulation fails completely to dismantle this dichotomy, reaffirming it through its utilitarian worldview. The only relative progress on this topic lies in the inclusion of "embedded emissions" (Article 3, no. 22), acknowledging that the industrial goods covered by the CBAM carry a physical trace of the biosphere, just as indirect emissions recognize the electricity used in production. This recognition, nonetheless, remains insufficient, as the concepts do not aim to protect biological integrity, but rather to maintain the Union's economic development, which becomes evident through the use of the term "natural capital". Nature thus consolidates as a quantifiable commodity, suggesting that the degradation of the biosphere can be compensated or managed through financial transactions. This logic reinforces the view of nature as a passive object, deprived of agency and subjugated to capital accumulation, elevating the dichotomy to a bureaucratic and regulatory level.

This reduction of nature is reflected in the security semantics adopted by the Regulation. Document analysis reveals that the concept of security in the CBAM lacks a planetary and human existential dimension entirely, remaining restricted to economic competitiveness. Although conventional International Relations theories treat security as a central premise, this safety is territorial and tied to national sovereignty. In the Anthropocene, the focus shifts to the security of humanity and the Earth system itself. Rockström et al. (2023) demonstrate that transgressing terrestrial tipping points irreversibly destabilises the entire system. Since human survival depends on this system for water, food, energy, and climate, failing to prioritise planetary integrity becomes inherently contradictory. The Regulation, nonetheless, completely overlooks this priority.

Crucially, tipping points operate in geological time, not within the temporality of CBAM certificates and financial operations. While bureaucrats focus on administrative effectiveness or new contracts, the Earth system may cross irreversible limits that no economic mechanism can ever recover.

Focusing legal protection on combating the risk of carbon leakage allows the EU to prioritise market stability, commercial transactions, and bureaucratic efficiency over the biological security of the Earth system and future generations. The Union thus goes beyond merely preventing this carbon leakage from occurring (Magacho et al., 2024), deliberately utilizing the threat to condition internal market access based on sustainability standards, protecting its industrial base and projecting political power.

Highlighting this issue does not deny that economic security is a highly important factor. It becomes secondary, however, when addressing humanity and the climate and biophysical integrity of the planet, without which it would be impossible to develop or sustain an economic system that caused the entire problem. Such an approach converts emission reductions into a financial asset that must be insured against capital losses. In light of the Anthropocene, the mechanism consequently fails by not recognizing nature's material agency as a force threatening human living conditions and security, thereby treating climate change as a risk of obsolescence for industrial goals.

6. Conclusion

This dissertation sought to examine two central topics: first, how the EGD and, namely, the CBAM operate as a tool for the propagation of European soft power within the Union's climate diplomacy. Second, it aimed to analyse the official CBAM Regulation through the lens of planetary approaches to International Relations, determining whether the document can break with the logic that triggered the Anthropocene crisis or if it acts merely as a market tool.

These two questions merge directly based on the direct relationship between the Union's climate diplomacy and the legally institutionalised goals of the Climate Law. Since the EU projects itself as the primary climate actor, a position supported not only by the comprehensive strategic plan of the EGD but also by data confirming successful decarbonisation across the European continent, it is vital to understand how the Union's climate policy integrated these goals into foreign policy. Official legal documents thus become instruments that justify political actions within climate diplomacy. In the context of the current Anthropocene crisis, it remains crucial to understand if the Union's political articulation seeks first to recognise and then transcend the conditions that triggered the climate crisis. Alternatively, the development of European climate policies may be driven by regulatory and bureaucratic mechanisms designed to maintain and expand the Union's role as a leading climate actor on the international stage, while simultaneously targeting economic growth and profit expansion.

The first chapter of this dissertation, split into two sections, establishes the literature review by investigating the evolution of European climate policy. Understanding contemporary climate policy in the context of the Anthropocene, or how EU climate diplomacy was designed, requires studying how the debate evolved at the continental level. Publishing and integrating the EGD, and consequently the CBAM, into EU foreign policy required a complex, structured progression of climate policies legally institutionalised through European Treaties. The Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties received special focus in this chapter. They raised the environment to a transversal component across all public policies, adding fundamental principles that became the solid foundation for European environmental legislation and granting the legal personality needed

to integrate sustainable development goals into foreign policy. Academic discussions were thus institutionalised within the Union's diplomacy, as environmental protection had to be promoted globally rather than just on the European continent.

The second section of the first chapter continued the literature review by examining the restructuring of European strategy within foreign policy under the von der Leyen Commission. Changes in the international geopolitical context drove this turn in the EU's goals and priorities, reconfiguring how the climate crisis was managed. Following this, the environmental dimension was raised to a foundational pillar of EU foreign policy, which developed the EGD as a strategic plan to restructure the European economy amid the escalating climate crisis. This reformulation of diplomatic conduct involved setting goals for decarbonisation, energy transition, and expanding global power projection and leadership within climate diplomacy. Legal instruments and regulations thereby became highly important tools for the pragmatic application of the Union's climate goals under the EGD.

The second chapter of the dissertation, also split into two sections, analysed the introduction of the EGD into EU climate policy through the literature review. The EGD clearly reorients the Union's foreign policy by institutionalising significant political-climate paradigm shifts and expanding the scope for environmental governance through binding legal frameworks. Beyond restructuring the European productive system across multiple sectors, the EGD transformed challenges into lucrative opportunities to target economic growth. Instead of altering the conditions that created the Anthropocene crisis, it reinforced the central role of the EU as the primary political actor in combating climate change. Since the climate crisis is a global issue rather than a merely regional one, any supposed solution demands a shift at the planetary level. The Regulation, however, proposes this shift by deploying trade as an instrument of influence within foreign policy, integrating sustainability as a market-based strategy.

The literature review is finalised through the implementation of the CBAM as a European legal Regulation, the central text analysed in this dissertation. Aiming to contain the transfer of productive activities from the EU industrial sector to other coun-

tries that possess less stringent environmental laws, that is, carbon leakage, the Regulation assigns a price to carbon through electronic titles linked to the EU ETS. These titles, called certificates, correspond to one tonne of carbon emissions embedded in the goods and can be purchased starting in January 2026. This allows the EU to use the financial market as a tool for influence and interference in the politics of other countries, targeting the mirror effect explained in the Discussion section. The CBAM has the capacity to influence third countries to adopt measures that the EU desires regarding emission reductions, which can be positive if such a decrease materialises. Nevertheless, it represents an ambivalent landmark in climate governance because it does not aim to alter the conditions that caused the climate crisis. Far from changing this reality, the CBAM can also be interpreted as a tool that seeks the expansion of EU profits through strong political-economic coercion, expanding economic development using the premise of sustainability.

This ambivalence in the Regulation enabled the use of the theoretical-conceptual framework of planetary approaches, which were fundamental to conducting the analysis in this dissertation. The complexity of the topic does not allow for a simple yes-or-no answer. For this reason, some important criteria that form the theoretical aspect of planetary approaches were extracted and used as an analytical lens for the official European document.

First, regarding the dimension of urgency in the Anthropocene, the articles and recitals of the document were analysed to understand if the Union perceives this urgency or not. This analysis examined if integrating targets into the goals to be achieved by the EU aims to alter the conditions that degraded the Earth system, or merely to build political legitimacy for transferring environmental costs to third countries to expand profits. Clearly, the EU understands the importance and seriousness of mitigating climate crisis effects. However, the CBAM ultimately acts much more as a market tool that exploits current planetary conditions than as an instrument seeking significant change. Despite emission reduction targets, including net-zero goals by 2050, the EU projects itself as a global climate leader using bureaucracy and regulatory devices to

dictate right and wrong in climate actions. Consequently, it neutralises the competitiveness of third-country industries, exerting strong influence over the production of goods such as cement, electricity, fertilisers, iron and steel, aluminium, and hydrogen.

The EU consequently controls industrial production and dictates the conditions under which countries can trade with the Union. For this exact reason, the answer to the question raised at the beginning of this section does not involve altering the conditions that generated the climate crisis. In light of the Anthropocene, despite the positive aspects of incentivising decarbonisation, transferring costs to third countries demonstrates a market-based strategy of profit expansion that converts planetary vulnerability into an economic strategy. Political influence is heavily exercised, and climate diplomacy is developed through the coercive soft power of the EU. At no point is the climate urgency defended in the Anthropocene linked to the issue as a driving force to alter the conditions that generated the crisis. This indicates that economic objectives remain central to the articulation of European policies.

Regarding the relational dimension between humans and nature, the CBAM does not promote a rupture with the existing dichotomy. Instead, it classifies nature as potential natural capital, perpetuating the same logic previously employed by the productive economic system. The reduction of the Earth system's complexity is easily perceived through the use of accounting metrics. Nature is transformed directly into a commodity, completely excluding its capacity for agency. The integrity of the biosphere would be compensated, through the CBAM and this analysis under planetary approaches, by financial transactions and market agreements. At no point is the logic of the human-nature dichotomy broken. It is raised to a level that targets further profit through the use of natural capital.

This purely market-driven view of nature is corroborated by the third topic addressed, which analyses the dimension of security and agency capacity. The threat that climate change poses to humanity is never mentioned as a priority to be combated. Instead, a total distortion of the concept of security in the Anthropocene takes place. The pursuit of profit expansion and the safeguarding of economic stability are the only

priorities of the document regarding the security dimension. Human and climate survival are relegated to a lower tier of importance. Economic security thus becomes the most crucial component of climate policy. The direct priorities are the sales of CBAM certificates, the maintenance of industrial competitiveness, and the defence of economic goals that could be compromised by carbon leakage, which also places this issue as a priority to be combated.

The political dimension represents the final analysis under the Anthropocene. State centrality expands, as the state remains the sole agent managing the bureaucracy derived from the CBAM and capturing climate policy. While planetary approaches seek to place nature at the core of the debate, the CBAM makes no progress on this matter. The state continues to dictate allowed climate actions, securing profit expansion and the political influence exerted over third countries. Plural forms of knowledge are excluded, and the Regulation safeguards only the economic interests that the state can directly defend through its technocratic, centralising role.

The investigation demonstrates that the CBAM is ambivalent, successfully promoting international emission reductions while projecting the EU's role as the most important political-climate actor, yet representing a considerable setback when analysed through the lens of planetary approaches. The Regulation fails to challenge the foundational roots of the crisis, keeping intact and even expanding the primacy of capital over nature. The Brussels Effect explained in the Discussion section is deployed successfully, but aims at a purpose that fails to seek genuine improvement. It could, however, be deployed alongside the mirror logic as a driving force for structural change. While irreversible limits are passed, the logic of economic expansion remains the priority.

Important theoretical implications for planetary approaches can consequently be derived from this dissertation. Since the CBAM classifies the planetary as a technocratic extension of the market, instead of a natural entity whose equilibrium forms the essential foundation for our species' existence, it becomes necessary to advocate for expanding the discourse on the intrinsic dependence between humans and nature. Re-

turning to the evolutionary history of our species remains fundamental to the Anthropocene debate, as it helps build the understanding that societal survival and evolution deeply depend on the natural environment. Without biophysical system equilibrium, the economic and social development of societies is impossible. Achieving this requires advocating for the integration of other disciplines, such as natural and earth sciences, into the social sciences. Resolving the problem must compel planetary approaches to defend and expand methodological interdisciplinarity, incorporating concepts from geology, biology, and physics into the humanities. If the stability of global climate conditions was the historical turning point that enabled the emancipation of our species, planetary approaches must expand the study of geological epochs and intensify the intersection with political science and international relations.

Climate urgency represents another distinct theoretical implication, as it is captured by technocratic frameworks viewing nature as natural capital while simultaneously reinforcing the state-centrism of political actors. Planetary approaches must advocate for restructuring the current economic system, which perceives the natural world merely through this financial lens. Theoretically, preserving the environment remains impossible while profit maximization drives public policy. If this restructuring is not put into effect, the ontological conflict will not be overcome, and the international perception that the climate crisis can be resolved through technocratic management will continue to prevail, as observed in the CBAM. Sector-specific decarbonisation policies may be efficient if emissions actually decrease, yet they fail to resolve the crisis as a whole. Instead, they serve only as palliative measures that superficially mitigate symptoms without addressing the root cause of the imbalance. Consequently, profound environmental catastrophes continue to occur, disrupting millions of lives and inflicting devastating human, social, and economic losses.

Resolving a complex problem with extensive destructive potential for societies leaves no room for individual solutions. This dissertation demonstrates that planetary approaches need to consider international political cooperation to resolve the issue, primarily through climate diplomacy based on the reality and concrete possibilities of each political actor. Expanding the intersection of public policies jointly with other

states should consequently be defended. The evidence from the CBAM shows that, otherwise, pressure will be exerted by a political actor with vast economic power, risking the subjugation of or further profit from globally developed policies, which directly harms third and underdeveloped countries while failing to tackle the problem radically. If the materialisation of the climate crisis is transboundary, the process of resolving these problems has to be as well. The solution will not come individually. For this reason, planetary approaches fundamentally require the participation of all the planet's political actors in addressing this systemic challenge.

The Union's leadership thus relies on the coercive soft power deployed within its climate diplomacy. Climate serves as a primary vector for managing the Anthropocene, where security is defended through a market lens, urgency is tied to maintaining industrial competitiveness, and nature is the natural capital that generates profit. It remains necessary to advocate, under planetary approaches, for the emergence of a planetary policy that recognizes the tragic contemporary reality of the Anthropocene crisis and seeks to reconnect humans with nature, returning to the understanding that both are intrinsically linked. Humanity depends on nature's equilibrium to prosper, but such balance is not achieved through state bureaucracy, however.

As the CBAM took effect in its definitive phase in early 2026, the existence of several gaps to be filled regarding the study of the document is clear. Intellectual honesty requires acknowledging certain limitations in the development of this dissertation. The study focused on reviewing the CBAM literature, developing arguments surrounding EU climate diplomacy, and applying planetary approaches framework to analyse the Regulation. Interviews and official discourse analyses were excluded, which could have captured the subjective and pragmatic interpretations of the issues discussed. Due to time and space imperatives, however, it was not possible to pursue this methodological path. Furthermore, since the CBAM officially took effect in 2026, conducting a deep analysis of the consequences it presents for international trade proved unfeasible. For this exact reason, this dissertation does not seek to exhaust the theme. Instead, it serves as a solid foundation for future studies on the topic, encouraging discourse analyses and interviews with key figures in European politics.

Future research can enhance the understanding of the operation of the Regulation. Such studies can determine whether EU influence resulted in a real reduction of global emissions, or if European coercive soft power merely served as another tool of climate diplomacy targeting profit expansion and the maintenance of political-climate leadership. Other investigations can also focus on the practical consequences of the CBAM for the economies of South Global countries, drawing from long-term empirical data to evaluate the impact since its entry into force. This dissertation consequently hopes to contribute to a deeper comprehension of the CBAM, the EU's current geopolitical context, and European climate policy, exposing their contradictions and objectives, particularly through the planetary approaches framework.

7. References

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