

Shifting Priorities: Global Geopolitical Events and the EU's Foreign Policy Approach to Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

This research explores changes in the EU's priorities and its trend in multilateralism amid global transformations. The history analysis indicated that the EU had shifted its focus and tended to emphasize sustainability within the framework of its foreign policy. This foreign policy reorientation has transitioned primarily from economic foreign policy to a sustainable one that embraces sustainability as a guiding principle. One of the shifts that the EU has adopted as a strategic response to the changing international relations is multilateralism. EU has partnered with other international organizations, focusing on a multilateral approach to address multifaceted global issues. The findings stress the importance of further research to understand better and manage the interactions between geopolitics and sustainable development. This research adds to the current literature on foreign policy and, more specifically, to how global shifts affect the foreign policy of the EU and, as such, supports the need for a multi-dimensional approach where SDGs are intertwined with diplomacy.



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Introduction

The emphasis on normative power and soft diplomacy in promoting sustainable development differentiates the European Union (EU) from other global powers (Chen, 2022). It exemplifies how norms and soft power influence global agendas and shape other actors' behaviors (Fanoulis & Reveals, 2023). It uniquely positions itself among global actors and influences agendas and policies without depending on traditional power politics, as Gasper (2019) and Krzymowski (2020) indicated. The EU takes advantage of its internal structure and governance mechanisms to its uniqueness in addressing sustainable development in foreign policy. Research on how the EU engages with other countries and regions while fostering development cooperation and leveraging its global influence sheds light on its unique contribution to sustainable development efforts worldwide.

This is seen in policies such as the European Green Deal (Bruyninckx, 2023; European Commission, 2019), a comprehensive policy framework that aims to make the EU a climate-neutral continent by 2050. The Green Deal integrates strategies focusing on clean energy, circular economy, biodiversity, and sustainable agriculture, aiming to align economic growth with environmental sustainability and social progress (Paleari, 2024). These are the EU's efforts at linking economic development with environmental sustainability and social progress toward establishing a bedrock of their policy framework (Mentes, 2023).

The EU's Strategy for International Cooperation and Development aims to integrate sustainability and climate action into the EU's external relations (European Commission, 2017). The main focus of this strategy is sustainable development, such as poverty elimination, inclusive growth promotion, and addressing global challenges, including climate change (Leipold, 2021). It focuses on transitioning from security-focused strategies to more holistic policies integrating the interlinkages between geopolitical stability and sustainable development goals (Chidley, 2014; Fanoulis & Revelas, 2023). Paleari (2024) also observed that priorities in EU foreign policy have changed because of integrating sustainability and climate action into their external policies. This means that security-centric policies are laid aside, and the approach moves toward a holistic approach to sustainable development goals.

Global geopolitics and its relationship to sustainable development have been central to analyzing the EU's foreign policy dynamics (Kastrinos & Weber, 2020). Nguyen et al. (2023) and Novelli (2023) looked into how the transformation in global geopolitics affects agendas on sustainable development. The power dynamics and competition between the leading global actors such as the US, China, and Russia largely influence the EU's policies and partnerships to achieve sustainable development objectives (Weber, 2017). The policy directions of the EU often get dictated by the tensions of resource access, trade routes, and environmental issues, particularly when dealing with the global challenge of climate change. Geopolitical conflicts, as well as security concerns around the world, will directly influence the ability of the EU to make development policies sustainable (Gasper, 2019). Complexities arise in balancing development objectives and security interests at this stage (Chen, 2022).

The present study researches and analyzes how changing global geopolitics dynamics impact the EU's foreign policy priorities on sustainable development, focusing on shifting emphasis and increased dependency on multilateralism. This is an in-depth study of specific EU policies, such as the European Green Deal, the Strategy for International Cooperation and Development, and the European External Investment Plan, to understand how these fit in with the changing global geopolitics. With that backdrop of shifting geopolitics that drives this policy shift, research contributes to knowledge theoretically. It narrows the chasm between geopolitics and the factor of

sustainability in international politics. That is because these insights illustrate how shifts within geopolitics reshape what the EU decides to engage strategic priorities on about sustainable development overall diplomatic strategies to improve understanding of how their nexus becomes dynamically evolving.

This policy implication is a valuable practice not only for policymakers but also to suggest recalibration of existing diplomatic strategies, resource inputs, and international partnerships accordingly as the dynamics of the geopolitical space are changing. Such findings from this research make informed strategic decisions about the EU's foreign policy needs while guiding the harmonization of the ever-changing global geopolitics. It fills a critical knowledge gap in the nuanced understanding of the influence of evolving global geopolitics on the approach toward foreign policy and sustainable development of the EU. Its theoretical implications and practical consequences can be helpful in policymaking processes and can expand the role of the EU to achieve sustainable development goals within changing global contexts. Due to this being a prominent global actor, research has implications beyond this region. The insights generated from this research can inform international debates regarding sustainable integration in foreign policy approaches. When making foreign policy, it helps form policies considering the environment, economy, and social needs, ensuring a more sustainable pathway for future global development.

Literature Review

The distinct feature of the EU foreign policy is its focus on norm diffusion and soft power (Krzymowski, 2020). The multifaceted approach characterizes EU foreign policy's sustainable development approach. One of these objectives is aligning the EU foreign policy action with the SDGs under the United Nations (Ahlström & Sjøfjell, 2023). The European Union aligns the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs and places emphasis on social, economic, and environmental dimensions to promote a more sustainable world. It indicates that the sustainable development policy of the EU evolves and is dynamic, as demonstrated by focusing on protection towards being broader and integrated from its environmental aspects to economic and social (Breuer et al., 2023; Chatzopoulou & Ansell, 2023). Table 1 below outlines these developments.

Table 1: Evolution of EU policy on sustainable development

Year	Development in EU Policy on Sustainable Development	Details
1973-2010	Six Environmental Action Programs	Focused on environmental protection, marking the initial stages of the EU's sustainable development efforts. These programs set objectives and targets for environmental conservation and management (Sikora, 2021).
1995	Evolution in transport and communications	Emphasized sustainable transport systems, reflecting the EU's growing concern for sustainable mobility and infrastructure development (European Commission, 2019).
2003	EU's Structural Funds programs	Integrated economic, social, and environmental dimensions, influenced by ecological modernization, demonstrate a holistic regional development approach (Argüelles & Benavides, 2014).
2006	ITCB initiative in the Balkans	Aimed at co-evolving environmental and industrial policies, enhancing EU integration requirements, and fostering sustainable development in the region (Laska & Draçi, 2022).
2008	Three-stage development of environmental policy and law	Transitioned from forming to developing stages, highlighting the EU's increasing commitment to sustainable development as a significant policy instrument (Davies et al., 2021).
2013	Expansion of CAP	Adapted to globalization and environmental concerns, emphasizing environmental protection and food security and responding to societal demands for higher environmental performance (Bruyninckx, 2023).
2015	"Greening" youth employment	It focuses on reducing youth unemployment through green economy initiatives, reflecting the EU's efforts to combine social and environmental goals (Sulich & Rutkowska, 2020).
2020	Integrated approach to sustainable urban development (ISUD)	Introduced in urban policy, showcasing a commitment to holistic and sustainable urban planning (Carpenter et al., 2020)
2021	Shift to green technologies	Transitioned from environmental protection to a strategy based on green technologies, with a focus on environmental economic growth, indicating a modern approach to sustainable development (Kastrinos & Weber, 2020; Xu et al., 2023)

Changes in the global power system and the growing influence of new significant players, like the ever-increasing powers of China in several regions, influence the EU's foreign policy for sustainable development (Altun & Ergenc, 2023). For instance, it was reported that China's Belt

and Road Initiative is shaping the economic and infrastructural topographies in developing nations (Khalid et al., 2022). The EU has rebalanced its development cooperation and assistance policies to stay relevant and influential in these regions (Bharti, 2023). Its sustainability, transparency, and governance policies make it different from other actors (Mentes, 2023; Paleari, 2024). Nonetheless, the EU has several challenges in implementing its Foreign Policy on Sustainable Development (Ahlström & Sjøfjell, 2023; Breuer et al., 2023; Can & Ahmed, 2023).

Geopolitical tensions, power plays at the global level, and competition with other actors of the world influence the capacity of the EU to lead and determine sustainable development agendas (Kim et al., 2023; Weber, 2017). Liu and Shu (2023) argue that the Middle East and Eastern Europe conflict has halted development projects and setbacks toward sustainable goals. Khan et al. (2023) indicate that geopolitical changes affecting global environmental policies or cooperation agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, had a strong influence on the EU's strategy. The EU, therefore, redesigned its assistance programs, targeting conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and humanitarian aid to address root causes and create an environment conducive to sustainable development. The EU strengthened its commitments to establishing collaboration and cooperation agreements on climate change with similar countries or associations in promoting global environmentalism (Altun & Ergenc, 2023; Paleari, 2024). Ultimately, geopolitics changes critically through reorientation of agenda, shifting of alliances, and demands for adaptive means to manage new global changes and opportunities. Adapting toward such changes yet promising the pursuit of sustainable development objectives is a complicated yet quintessential task that the European Union must accomplish in today's changing world (Can & Ahmed, 2023; Fanoulis & Reveals, 2023; Mentes, 2023). Evaluation, adaptation, and cooperation will continuously be sought to boost the effectiveness and influence of policies adopted by the EU under sustainable development in the global arena.

Theoretical Framework

Geopolitical tensions and, in general, world-order power plays also give cues to the potential EU action to lead and provide agenda-setting for sustainable development (Kim et al., 2023; Weber, 2017). Liu and Shu stated that the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Eastern Europe caused abandoned project developments and even rollbacks toward the accomplishment of certain sustainable goals. Khan et al. (2023) suggest that geopolitical shifts in global environmental policies or cooperation agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, strongly impacted the EU's strategy. Therefore, the EU redesigned its aid programs to focus on the issues of conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and humanitarian aid to address the root causes and create an environment favorable to sustainable development. The EU intensified its agreements to establish cooperation and partnership agreements on climate change with similar countries or associations in promoting global environmentalism (Altun & Ergenc, 2023; Paleari, 2024). Geopolitics evolves dramatically through the realignment of agendas, changing alliances, and calls for adaptive means of managing new global changes and opportunities. It's an extremely intricate yet quintessential task the European Union needs to address in today's rapidly transforming world by adapting itself to such changes, promising still that it will pursue sustainable development goals (Can & Ahmed, 2023; Fanoulis & Revelas, 2023; Mentes, 2023). Evaluation, adaptation, and cooperation will consistently strive to further the effectiveness and impact of policies being adopted by the EU in light of sustainable development in the global scenario.

Normative power theory explains how the EU wields influence by encouraging norms, values, and standards related to sustainable development (Ahmad, 2015; Chen, 2022). As geopolitics evolve, the EU continues to exercise normative power through sustainability, human rights, good

governance, and environmental protection, thereby setting standards and driving global agendas through its commitments (Bharti, 2023; Siitonen, 2022). Králiková (2022) states that the EU uses normative power by promoting sustainable development, transparency, and inclusion in international development programs rather than using coercion. Fanoulis and Revelas (2023) state that the EU pushes the partner countries to adopt sustainability standards and practices by demonstrating benefits and incentive alignment. Similarly, Chen (2023) argues that the EU adapts its strategies to maintain the promotion of sustainable development norms in the new dynamics of the world. The influence of changing global geopolitics on the priorities of sustainable development for the EU is related to these theories (Altun & Ergenc, 2023; Espinosa, 2023; Woods, 2023).

Methodology

The study explores the trends and changes in the EU's foreign policy since the Paris Agreement 2015. Objectives: The study explores how globalization events on the global stage of geopolitics inform policy choices of the EU and examines changes in focus by the EU regarding sustainable development in changing geopolitical settings. The research approach would be predominantly qualitative, based on the analysis of historical data and review documents. It would include the collection of historical data, which would provide information regarding the decisions that the EU's foreign policy would have made regarding sustainable development, taking into consideration geopolitical events and global developments that might have led to a change in policy. The task entails the critical review of academic papers, policy documents, and literature related to the foreign policy of the European Union on sustainable development goals and how changes in global geopolitics influence historical shifts in policy priorities. At the same time, a wide range of documents are gathered, from official policy documents of the EU, reports, speeches, and diplomatic communications for a very long period. This analysis of documents can identify the most important themes, patterns, and shifts in the EU's foreign policy priorities regarding sustainable development over time (Mende, 2022). Comparative analysis techniques are employed to contrast and assess the EU's policy responses across different geopolitical scenarios and explain how priorities change about other global geopolitical dynamics. Ethical considerations about the proper citation, confidentiality, and ethical data handling apply throughout the research process (Mende, 2022).

Analysis of Global Geopolitical Events and Shifts in EU Priorities

Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement 2015 is a landmark global geopolitical event marking an important step in international action against climate change (Rao et al., 2024). It managed to bring nearly all nations together under a single accord on the critical issue of global warming and set ambitious goals for limiting greenhouse gas emissions. The agreement underlined the role of international cooperation and multilateralism in addressing environmental problems, such as climate change (Novelli, 2023; Rabinovych & Pintsch, 2023). The EU initiated and led the way through this agreement and promised ambitious climatic targets while promoting stronger international cooperation and further emphasizing its goal for sustainable development (Nguyen et al., 2023). The EU's ambitious climatic targets predate the Paris Agreement. Nevertheless, the agreement further strengthened the EU's moves. The EU committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030 from the 1990 level, aligning its targets with the international commitments agreed in the agreement (Can & Ahmed, 2023; Mentés, 2023; Paleari, 2024).

The EU unveiled measures such as the European Green Deal, an overarching strategy including initiatives under it, including the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Biodiversity Strategy, and the Circular Economy Action Plan (Domorenok & Graziano, 2023). These policies set a more sustainable and resilient economy alongside the Paris Agreement goals. The post-Paris deal scenario saw increased climate policy action across EU sectors. In such initiatives as the EU ETS, its scope was widened to embrace the reduction of emissions-cutting across various sectors while encouraging the application of novel green technologies. The European Union exercised diplomatic leverage and urged other nations to sign and implement the agreement to realize an everyday climate agenda of sustainability and multilateral cooperation (Fanoulis & Revelas, 2023).

The Paris Agreement catalyzed investments in innovation and green technologies within the EU to transform the economy and make it more sustainable. Projects like Horizon Europe, the EU's leading research and innovation program, have been geared towards innovative solutions for climate-friendly issues (Young & Clough, 2023). According to Xu et al. (2023), in developing renewable sources of energy, clean technologies, and sustainable infrastructure, the EU was notably investing much in research and development. The EU has been investing quite visibly in research and development regarding the development of renewable sources of energy, clean technologies, and sustainable infrastructure. Not only this, but the European Union also boosted its financing to the Green Climate Fund for project funding on climate resilience in the country's most vulnerable to climate-related impacts. The Paris Agreement served as a trigger to set the European Union on a course of sustainable development and climate action. It has influenced the policies, strategies, and diplomatic engagements of the EU with a stamp of the importance of a comprehensive global response toward climate change issues while focusing on sustainability policies.

US Withdrawal from Paris Agreement

The withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement in 2017 under the Donald Trump presidency had profound implications for international efforts on climate change and changed the geopolitics of the world. That made things very uncertain as to whether one of the world's largest economies was committed to the fight against global warming. This sent shock waves across the globe and set alarms ringing on the general global momentum of climate action, as Held & Roger (2018) argued. Sore diplomatic relations and the disruption of the alliances so dearly built on mutual ambitions of climate resulted in the jarring and challenging geopolitical landscape of global climate change governance, as Urpelainen & Van de Graaf (2018) asserted.

As much as the US withdrawal from climate action put the EU forward on climate diplomacy, it sought to strengthen its commitment to climate action that could call for more impactful moves about climate activities worldwide (Pickering et al., 2018). Several nations described The US decision in words of concern, even though they remained firm over their commitment to the Paris Agreement (Khan et al., 2023). The EU concentrated on strengthening partnership cooperation with like-minded countries, regions, and subnational entities on action for climate (Breuer et al., 2023). Cooperation between the EU and China, Canada, and other states was enhanced by promoting common agendas on climate change and moving ahead with sustainable development initiatives (Altun & Ergenc, 2023; Kostka & Zhang, 2018).

The US withdrawal further pushed the EU to accelerate its internal climate policies and enhance its ambition to achieve climate neutrality and leadership in sustainable development (Wu et al., 2021). In the "Fit for 55" Package, the EU presented a reduction of at least 55% of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 (Fitch-Roy et al., 2020). It triggered a wave of renovation to make buildings energy efficient, potentially lowering emissions and energy consumption

(Scheuing & Kamm, 2022). The EU also built its funding for climate finance mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, to help the developing world work against climate change impacts (Bhandary et al., 2021). It demanded increased funding for sensitive regions affected by climate change impacts.

Brexit

Brexit, or the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, is a global geopolitical event regarding its implications for international relations, economic dynamics, and geopolitical balances. It has dramatically changed the political landscape of Europe and affected world relations. That meant leaving one of the world's most substantial economic and political blocs and changing alliances, trade deals, and relationships with other countries. A vote for leaving the EU threw a serious question into Europe's integration future and even provoked arguments about the EU's position in world affairs, such as foreign policies and interaction with other states.

The UK's non-inclusion in the EU's budget and decision-making processes affected financial allocations and policy priorities, including sustainable development (Murphy, 2023). It impacted EU unity and policy coherence, forcing it to adjust foreign policy strategies and cooperate on sustainability. The exit of a superpower in the EU necessitated policy review and reorientation on what to prioritize, including policies on sustainable development (Scheuing & Kamm, 2022). The EU aimed at redefining its international partnerships and collaborations, among them climate diplomacy and collaborations on sustainability initiatives (McMaster & Vironen, 2023). It made efforts to strengthen alliances and engagements with global partners, moving ahead with common sustainability objectives despite the challenges of Brexit (James & Quaglia, 2023).

Brexit has influenced talks on CAP reforms and environmental regulations in the EU, changing agricultural and environmental policies (Greer & Grant, 2023). The EU reformed its policies on sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, and ecological protection to cater to the various needs of its member states while meeting sustainability targets (Paleari, 2024). The EU recovery plan, such as Next Generation EU, focused on greener technologies, renewable energy, and sustainable infrastructure, which are central to the post-Brexit economic recovery effort (Mentes, 2023). After Brexit, the EU changed its funding priorities in the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to include sustainable actions, such as the Just Transition Fund for regions affected by the green economy shift to help them transition in a resilient and green way (Argüelles & Benavides, 2014). Therefore, the EU aimed to maintain cohesion with the remaining member states and ensure continuity in achieving sustainability objectives.

Regional Geopolitical Tensions

Geopolitical tensions in Syria, Ukraine, and other parts of the world have compelled the EU to change its focus on foreign policy from security and humanitarian crisis management to conflict prevention and resolution (Krzyszowski, 2020; Liu & Shu, 2023). The EU grappled with humanitarian crises, security challenges, good governance, democracy, and the implications for sustainable development goals (Dubský et al., 2024; Fanoulis & Revelas, 2023). In light of this, the European Union's sustainable development endeavors gradually focus on dealing with fundamental sources of instability, promoting peacebuilding, and humanitarian support in conflict regions (Ahlström & Sjøfjell, 2023; Can & Ahmed, 2023; Rabinovych & Pintsch, 2023). For example, in Sahel, the EU takes sustainable development seriously to eradicate security issues through education, job opportunities, and a resilient community (Ahmad & Ullah, 2023; Idahosa et al., 2021).

Global power shifts, especially the rise of China, besides the resurgence of geopolitical competition, have made the EU reconsider its priorities. The EU, hence, has started to stress its focus on sustainable development so as not to be left aside in the race for the influence of regions like Africa or Southeast Asia, which are an object of competition for influencing powers. For instance, the EU's investment in sustainable infrastructure projects in Africa presents an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative, especially regarding sustainability, governance, and social development. The EU has announced several agreements with African countries under the Global Gateway framework—a project worth more than US\$340 billion. These are critical raw materials for the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia and clean energy for Cape Verde, Namibia, Moldova, Georgia, and Tanzania. Recently, the EU has expanded to adapt to climate change, collaborate on renewable energies, and contribute to resilient development in the most vulnerable countries. In this concept, ecological sustainability has entered foreign aid agendas.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic affected countries, economies, societies, and international relations worldwide in many ways (Drezner, 2020). It brought disruptions in sectors, reshaped geopolitical dynamics, and spurred policy responses at the global level (Alhammedi, 2022; Davies & Wenham, 2020). It required a shift in priorities, thereby rechanneling resources to meet urgent health and economic challenges (Barbier & Burgess, 2020; Khalid & Ahmad, 2021). This change influenced the EU's direction in sustainable development policy initiatives. The EU continues to maintain a commitment to sustainable development; however, during the pandemic, there has been a temporary reorientation of finances and resources towards immediate health responses, economic recovery, and other sectors hit hard by the crisis (Bargués et al., 2023; Winn & Gänzle, 2023). This realignment temporarily impacted the speed and extent of some of these sustainable development programs.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) of the EU provided money for digital infrastructure, citing technology as a tool for sustainable development (Bekker, 2021). The RRF has an allocation of €723.8 billion, both loan and grant, to be used in financing reform and investment packages of the ambition presented in the national recovery and resilience plans of the Member States. Loans are to begin being repaid in 2028, and their payback will be stretched over 30 years till 2058, with the EU budget repaying the grants. These digital innovations are also investments towards making sustainability possible, such as smart grids that integrate renewable energy or digital solutions that can support circular economy practices (Xu et al., 2023). The EU has initiated discussions of reshaping supply chains toward ensuring resilience and less reliance on external sources with an increased focus on sustainability and the environment (Capati, 2023). More attention is drawn toward local production, implementing circular economy principles, and sustainable sourcing.

The pandemic underscored the interlinkage between health security and climate resilience and shaped conversations about preparedness for future crises (Davies & Wenham, 2020). The EU has floated the idea of the EU4Health program as a tool to fortify health systems and combat cross-border health risks, such as climate-related health risks (Brooks et al., 2023). This fits into the broader context of sustainable development goals, focusing on the necessity of resilient health care for long-term sustainability (Sokolović & Belcher, 2022). By 2024, the funding will rise to €752.4 million and is primarily digital, focusing on, among other things, the European Health Data Space as defined by Brooks et al. in 2023.

New Alliances and Partnerships

New alliances and partnerships change the geopolitical landscape of the world, affecting diplomatic strategies and policies toward different global issues, including sustainable development (Espinosa, 2023; Woods, 2023). In sustainability, the EU must cooperate with other countries, regions, and international organizations (Kim et al., 2023). For instance, the TTIP agreement with the United States offers an all-encompassing trade agreement between the EU and the US, relevant to many policy fields, such as environmental standards and sustainable development (Downie & Williams, 2018). The EU's interaction with Pacific Island countries is accompanied by climate resilience, environmental protection, and sustainable development in the region (Can & Ahmed, 2023; Chatzopoulou & Ansell, 2023). Increased EU development aid and technical assistance specifically focused on the Pacific, targeted at local priorities of sustainable development with climate resilience, in line with global sustainability goals; Hoekman & Sabel, 2021.

The EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) negotiations focused on economic cooperation and access to each other's markets between the EU and China (Zhao, 2022). This deal, announced in December 2020, saw the EU achieve its objectives of getting China's commitment to climate change and labor rights. It includes efforts at tackling climate change under the Paris Agreement and efforts towards ratifying conventions banning forced labor by the International Labor Organization (ILO) (Zhao, 2022). However, it is also the evolution of international relations, the attitude of the EU vis-à-vis China's policies in places like Hong Kong and Xinjiang, and its broader transatlantic relationship with the United States as administered by President Biden that considerably contributed to the CAI taking its present course (Turcsányi, 2020). In March 2021, the EU and China relationship worsened after Beijing sanctioned people and entities within the EU in response to EU sanctions due to human rights concerns (Puglierin & Zerka, 2023). It resulted in a very significant change of heart in the EU regarding China, which came to a vote in May 2021 when the European Parliament decided to freeze the ratification of the CAI until China lifted the sanctions. The road traveled by CAI highlights the complexities in international trade agreements and global politics' role in their making (Nguyen et al., 2023; Rao et al., 2024).

Conclusion

Such significant events as the Paris Agreement, the withdrawal of the United States from the agreement, Brexit, rising geopolitical tensions, and the COVID-19 pandemic have shaken the landscape of global geopolitics in which the European Union develops its sustainable development strategy. These events prompted the EU to strengthen its position regarding climate action and the policies in pursuit of sustainability. The Paris Agreement has been a turning point, where the EU has set ambitious climate goals and implemented comprehensive strategies such as the European Green Deal. Despite the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement for a while and Brexit, the EU has proven resilient and leadership in climate diplomacy at the global level, proactively forming new alliances, adjusting to shifting priorities, and advocating for sustainability in international trade and cooperation.

The shifting priorities reflect the dynamic and adaptive approaches of the EU's foreign policy on sustainable development following global geopolitics. The intensifying geopolitical tensions and shifts of power in the world, particularly the recent rise of China, have made the EU opt for sustainable development as a more strategic tool in foreign policies. Through programs like Horizon Europe and the Green Climate Fund, the EU has led the charge in embedding aspects of sustainability into all things governance, from economic revival to peacebuilding. Focus on COVID-19 ebbed temporarily but ultimately culminated in the reinforcement that resilient,

sustainable economies needed programs like the EU4Health initiative and the focus on greener recovery strategies. In these changes, the EU is addressing global challenges in an integrated manner, where sustainability is incorporated into its foreign policy objectives, and a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable world is shaped. This reflects a holistic understanding of how the environment, economics, and social factors can be intertwined to build a resilient, equitable, and sustainable global community.

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