

**Multi-Level Reinforcement:
Explaining European Union Leadership in Climate Change Mitigation**

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The European Union has played a leading role in pushing for the establishment, ratification, and meaningful implementation of the Kyoto Protocol although it still has significant efforts to make to achieve its target of an 8 percent cut of greenhouse gas by 2008-2012 relative to the 1990 level. This article explores the political factors behind continued EU leadership in climate change. It argues that a few individual states (including Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, and the UK) played an essential role in establishing the EU's agenda in this domain. However, the decentralized governance structure of the EU has also encouraged a process of mutual reinforcement, whereby individual states, the European Commission, and the European Parliament are competing for leadership.

Introduction¹

The European Union (EU) has positioned itself as the international agenda setter in relationship to climate change mitigation. At several critical junctures, the EU and its members have adopted policies and programs that have put it at the forefront of international efforts to address climate change. In January 2007, with an eye towards the post-Kyoto First Commitment period, the European Commission under a German presidency published a communiqué calling for limiting global climate change to 2 degrees above pre-industrial times.² In March 2007, the European Council confirmed Europe's commitment to this approach announcing that the EU would cut its CO₂ emissions by 20 percent of 1990 levels by 2020, increasing this to 30 percent should other developed countries agree take action within the framework of an international agreement.³ Beyond this, the European Union adopted a number of other policies that have put it at the forefront of climate change mitigation policies. In its spring 2007 summit, for example, the European Council committed to the establishment of a binding target of 20 percent of renewable energies in the EU's overall total energy consumption by 2020 and a binding target of 10 percent for biofuels in the EU's total mix of transportation fuel (petrol and diesel) consumption by 2020.⁴ In its effort to find cost effective ways to reduce emissions, the EU has also implemented the world's first international carbon emissions trading system (ETS), modeled on the successful U.S. sulfur dioxide emissions trading system established by the 1990 U.S. Clean Air Act Amendments. The Directive mandated a system covering 10,500 installations representing approximately 40 percent of CO₂ emissions in the power sector (facilities over 20MW), oil refining, cement, glass, ceramics, iron and steel, paper and pulp sectors. In 2004, a Linking Directive was passed linking the joint implementation and clean development mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol to the ETS. The ETS was introduced in January 2005. While implementation is still a challenge, these policies and programs go far beyond anything proposed to date by the United States, Japan, or other major industrialized countries.

The EU and its member states have been agenda setters at a number of other junctures as well. In the early 1990s, several European countries took the lead in

¹ The authors would like to acknowledge the generous support of the Weyerhaeuser Foundation and the able research assistantship of Vanessa Meadu.

² European Commission, "Limiting Global Climate Change to 2 Degrees Celsius," MEMO/07/16, Brussels, 10 January 2007.

³ "Europe to Cut Greenhouse Gases 20 Percent by 2020," *Environment News Service*, March 8, 2007, <http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/mar2007/2007-03-08-04.asp>; Germany 2007—Presidency of the European Council, "The Spring European Council: Integrated Climate Protection and Energy Policy, Progress on the Lisbon Strategy," March 12, 2007, http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Press_Releases/March/0312AAER.html.

⁴ Council of the European Union, "Presidency Conclusions," 7224/1/07 Rev 1, Concl 1, Brussels 8/9 March 2007.

establishing voluntary domestic emission reduction targets. In October 1990, reacting to these national developments, the European Ministers of Energy and the Environment announced that the European Community as a whole would seek to stabilize its joint carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels by the turn of the century, a goal that the EU was able to achieve. In 1997 in the months leading up to the Kyoto Protocol negotiations, the EU set the tone for the international negotiations with its proposal that industrialized states commit to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent of 1990 levels by 2010. While in the end, the EU committed to a far more modest 8 percent reduction of 1990 greenhouse gas emissions by 2008-12, this was nevertheless, a substantial commitment.

The most significant instance of EU leadership is arguably its decision to move forward with ratification of the Kyoto Protocol after President George W. Bush made clear on March 28, 2001 that his intention was to withdraw the United States from the agreement. The U.S. pull-out left Europe in a conundrum. The U.S. accounted for 36.1 percent of the 1990 CO₂ emissions of industrialized countries. The EU as a whole was responsible for a somewhat smaller 24.2 percent. If the Kyoto Protocol was to survive, the EU would have to convince states representing another 30.8% of 1990 industrialized country CO₂ emissions to join it in ratifying the agreement in order to meet the Kyoto Protocol's somewhat arbitrary requirement that 55% of industrialized states' 1990 CO₂ emissions be represented by ratifying states in order for the agreement to go into effect. This meant that the EU would have to convince Japan (responsible for 8.5% of 1990 industrialized states' emissions), Russia (responsible for 17.4%), and a few others (such as the central and eastern European states) to ratify.

Despite these obstacles, the European Council formally agreed to the Kyoto Protocol on 25 April 2002.⁵ The 15 member states of the EU, represented by Jaume Mata Palou, Minister of the Environment of Spain (which held the EU presidency at the time), and the European Commission, represented by Margot Wallström, jointly presented their instruments of ratification to the United Nations on 31 May 2002.⁶

This article addresses a series of questions, but behind them all is the overarching puzzle of why the EU has taken on and sustained such a strong leadership role vis-à-vis climate change in the face of considerable US resistance and at substantial economic cost? Why did the EU push so hard for the industrialized world to adopt emission reduction targets during the 1997 Kyoto Protocol negotiations? Why did the EU decide to push for the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol even after the US, the

⁵ Council Decision 2002/358/EC of 25 April 2002, p. 4. Available at: http://www.climnet.org/EUenergy/ratification/EUCOM01579_en.pdf.S

⁶ European Commission, "EU Unanimously Ratifies Kyoto Protocol to Combat Climate Change," 30 May 2002, EC02-108EN, http://europa-cu-un.org/articles/en/article_1419_en.htm. "European Union Ratifies the Kyoto Protocol," 31 May 2002, Brussels,

world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, abandoned it? And, why now is the EU once again setting the high bar with its commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent of 1990 levels by 2020?

In this article, we argue that EU leadership in climate change is the result of a dynamic of competitive multi-level reinforcement among the different EU political poles within a context of decentralized governance. EU leadership has depended upon the actions and commitments of a group of pioneering states and the leadership roles played by the European Parliament (EP) and especially, the EU Commission.

Although the EU is now a body of 27 states, it is primarily the 15 states that comprised the EU prior to 2004 that are at the center of this study. While the new member states have also all ratified the Kyoto Protocol and have their own individual targets (except for Malta and Cyprus), they are not part of the EU burden-sharing agreement.

The article begins with a brief overview of the EU decision to try to bring the Kyoto Protocol into force after the US withdrawal from the agreement. It then examines how institutions, ideas, and interests came together in such a way to make it possible for the EU to champion the Kyoto Protocol. It proposes a framework of multi-level mutual leadership reinforcement for explaining how and why the EU has been able to sustain leadership for over a decade's time, culminating in the decisions to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and commit to a unilateral 20 percent reduction in CO₂ emissions relative to 1990 levels by 2020. It concludes by looking to the future and whether the EU will be able to be a leader not only in agenda setting, but also in implementation of emissions cuts.

The Institutional Set-up of the EU as a Facilitator for Mutual Leadership Reinforcement

The institutional structure of the EU has several peculiar features. First, it is in a state of perpetual transformation as a result of fundamental treaty-based reorganization. These were changes that were adopted and reinforced by several treaties (the key ones being the Single European Act of 1986, the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 and the Nice Treaty of 2001). Overall, the revisions have extended the jurisdiction of the EU to new issues and strengthened the powers of the EP and the Council. Second, the EU is in a state of gradual enlargement. The membership of the EU has changed significantly in the close to two decades that climate change has been on the international policy agenda. The EU went from a membership of 12 in the early 1990s to 27 today.

The EU has diversified its mode of decision-making, most recently with the adoption of the open method of coordination in 2000. Gradually, the EU is

characterized by a level of multi-level governance, where actors interact at the supra-national, national, and regional levels.⁷ In a classical analysis, Wallace, Wallace, and Pollack identified five distinct policy modes within the EU, according to issue areas: a traditional Community method (agriculture), a regulatory mode (competition regime), a distributional mode (regional cohesion policy), policy coordination (environment and justice), and intense transgovernmentalism (foreign policy).⁸ Within this constellation, environment has moved from a purely national policy arena to one of EU coordination with qualified majority voting. Under the coordination mode, the Commission plays a key role as developer of policy networks of experts and stakeholders. High-level groups are convened within the Council of Ministers where key decisions are made. The EP is involved in a dialogue with both institutions. Specialist committees within the EP have the opportunities to develop position papers. As a whole, this structure allows for multiple leadership points. Far from creating deadlock, this decentralized multi-polar structure has allowed for competitive leadership and mutual reinforcement to take place on climate change.

The EU is both an arena for member states to negotiate with each other and an actor in its own right in the international climate change negotiations.⁹ It can also be considered a dynamic arena in which over time, and in the cumulative decision-making process that characterizes EU climate change policy making, multiple leaders have worked to reinforce each other's goals and actions. This suggests a kind of logic that is the reverse of that of veto points or veto players. In the model of veto players developed by Tsebelis (2002), the presence of a large number of actors with the capacity to block a decision renders policy change unlikely.

The open-ended and competitive governance structure of the EU in an issue of shared competence such as global environment creates multiple and mutually-reinforcing opportunities for leadership. Climate change policy requires multiple, cumulative decisions taken at many levels. Institutionally, environmental policy is both an issue where the Commission and member states have joint competence and one where decisions in the EU Council are taken by qualified majority voting (no individual veto). Under these circumstances, a positive cycle of competing leadership among different poles can take place.

In the EU climate negotiations, there have been multiple times when different actors have taken up (or passed) the leadership ball. For example, the Dutch played this kind of leadership role when they held the EU presidency in 1992 and 1997. The Italians did so in 2005 when the Kyoto Protocol was ratified. The Germans and the British have consistently painted themselves as climate change leaders due to their

⁷ Gualini 2004; Hooghe and Marks 2001.

⁸ Wallace, Wallace and Pollack 2005, 79-86.

⁹ Liberatore 1997; Vogler and Bretherton 2006.

large domestic emissions reduction pledges. These are examples of states that have pushed European climate policy forward while at the same time winning credit for their actions domestically. In turn, the Commission has seized the ball at a number of occasions and used it to push forward climate-wide action and in order to maintain its mark over EU integration. An example has been the Commission's sponsorship of emissions trading. The EP has also demonstrated its relevance by passing resolutions calling for swift European action. Environmental NGOs have been able to press their concerns both with the Commission and the Parliament.¹⁰ The EU's environmental governance structure is particularly conducive to NGO actions.

Other member states have reacted to the moves of leaders. France, for example, has tried to reassert its imprint over EU integration by using the EU Council to advance sustainability legislation. This baton passing has continued over the years in a very dynamic and mutually reinforcing way.

Under these three conditions, multi-level governance has created not just multiple veto points, it has created numerous leadership points where competitive leadership can be initiated. This structure thus enables a policy direction to emerge from the cumulation of individual decisions taken by different actors at different levels. As in much of the process of EU integration, political interests played a key role in shaping the EU commitment to climate change. They often trumped economic interests. The institutional structure of the EU played a major role in the aggregation of these interests, by providing an arena in which leadership could be exerted at multiple levels and multiple times.

Explaining EU Leadership: Institutions, Interests, and Ideas

To explain the EU's decision to ratify the Kyoto Protocol it is necessary to consider how institutions, interests, and ideas have come together in such a way as to make it possible for Europe to do what the US could not: effectively champion the Kyoto Protocol. The EU and the US are both major economic blocks with entire sectors of the economy that would be heavily affected by mitigation policies. Why was it that in the EU economic interests (workers, firms, industries) or less-environmentally minded and economically developed states did not block the Kyoto Protocol's ratification as their counterparts succeeded in doing in the US?

The stakes were certainly high for European economic interests and they too had numerous ways to express their voice to the EU (through committees of the Commission and lobbying of Members of the EP) and at the national level.¹¹ Why was industrial opposition to Kyoto not stronger?

¹⁰ McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001.

¹¹ Michaelowa 1998.

EU policy toward climate change often has been couched in terms of an ideational agenda, namely the representation of the EU as a different kind of polity, one more concerned with international law, institution-building, and a normative vision.¹² While these normative arguments have some validity, they fail to explain why supporters of Kyoto were able to trump opponents within Europe. More persuasive is the explanatory power that is provided by a focus on institutions, ideas, and interests. In particular, we look at the divide within European industry and the weakening effect this had on potential veto players; the role of public opinion, green parties, and NGOs in promoting a precautionary approach to climate change; the role of national states in shaping community-wide policies; and the influence of the Commission and Parliament on driving community action. Ultimately, a critical structural variable has been the open and multi-level nature of the EU's institutional setup, which enabled a dynamic of competitive leadership reinforcement to take place.

European Industry

European industry has been divided on the idea of precautionary action. There certainly were voices of opposition. The Centre for the New Europe, a free market think tank that was set up in Brussels in 1993, for example, called upon members of the EP to rethink radically the EU's climate change policies beyond 2012. It has argued that curbing greenhouse gas emissions under the Kyoto protocol would dampen economic growth. The European Sound Climate Policy Coalition, a front organization funded by Exxon Mobil aimed to coalesce a powerful group of interests against EU support for Kyoto.¹³ Industrial lobbies, moreover, managed to gain the support of some key politicians who mainly argued that plans to implement cuts in greenhouse gas emissions pose a severe threat to industry. These included Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi; EU Commissioner for Transport and Energy Loyola de Palacio; EU Commissioner for the Internal Market and Services, Charlie McCreevy; and EU Commission Vice President and Commissioner for Enterprises, Günter Verheugen.

In contrast, many companies instead joined groups like the Business Council for a Sustainable Energy Future, the European Wind Energy Association, and the International Cogeneration Alliance that accepted the need for action. Even many fossil fuel firms started to follow the lead of BP, which in 1997 publicly accepted that precautionary action was necessary.¹⁴ In the lead-up to Kyoto, the oil firm Austrian OMV announced its support for the EU's 15 percent reduction target.¹⁵ During

¹² Manners 2000; Reid 2004; Rifkin 2004.

¹³ Source: *The Independent* (<http://news.independent.co.uk/environment/article331768.ece>).

¹⁴ Pew Center on Global Climate Change, "Business Environmental Leadership Council," http://www.pewclimate.org/companies_leading_the_way_belc/.

¹⁵ Kirsty Hamilton, "The Oil Industry and Climate Change," *A Greenpeace Briefing*, August 1998, Amsterdam: Greenpeace International.

2000-2002 Royal Dutch Shell Group introduced an internal emissions trading scheme. On the whole, in Europe where corporatist traditions are quite strong, the economic community accepted the need for action as long as it could influence the shape of policies and programs.

Many firms appeared cognizant of the strong public support for action as well as the high potential for regulatory action within some member states. Several states, such as Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Norway had already introduced carbon taxes. They also saw the potential to move into new business areas, such as BP's move into solar energy, Royal Dutch Shell Group's development of solar and wind energy, and Austrian OMV's embrace of biofuels. The potential to shape a global carbon ETS also attracted some firms.¹⁶ This does not mean that there were not still intense battles among corporations related to climate mitigation policies.

The Media and Public Opinion

A sampling of dozens of press reports appearing in European newspapers in the week after Bush's pronouncement show that the European press was highly critical of the decision. Perhaps not so surprisingly, left-leaning newspapers across Europe condemned the U.S. withdrawal. The left of center Belgian *Le Soir*, for example, called it "a real scandal" and then asked, "Today, the question is not whether the 15 must continue Kyoto without the United States...The real question is will the Europeans be smart and courageous enough to do it?" The center-left Danish *Politiken* lamented that the United States had "in one fell swoop, set back international efforts to address global warming by more than ten years..."

What is quite remarkable is that even more conservative European newspapers criticized the move. For example, the conservative-leaning Spanish *La Razon* wrote: "The American president is more concerned with the U.S. citizen's standard of living and their energetic spending, than with the future of the planet." The Irish *Times* concluded: "The rest of the world... has reacted with justifiable anger and outrage to the announcement." The conservative, populist Irish *Independent* commented: "[Mr. Bush's] stance will be attributed to breathtaking arrogance or his connections with the energy industry, or a combination of the two." The center-right Danish *Berlingske Tidende* of Denmark opined: "It is regrettable that Bush does not support the Kyoto agreement. It is particularly disappointing because it shows that the United States is in the process of running away from its international responsibilities." And, the independent Greek *Kathimerini* wrote: "The White House's presumptuous stance [is] truly unacceptable...The fundamental problem lies in the message the White House sends... Cynically supporting the interests of specific U.S. industries...is an extremely negative

¹⁶ Markussen and Tinggaard Svendsen 2005.

paradigm for international behaviour.”¹⁷

As suggested by the media responses, European public opinion was strongly behind Kyoto. A Pew Global Attitudes Project poll conducted in August 2001 in the four largest European states and the U.S. found strong disapproval of the Bush administration’s foreign policies in general, and especially in relation to the Kyoto Protocol. While 44 percent of US respondents disapproved of Bush’s decision to withdraw, almost twice that percentage disapproved in Britain (83 percent), Italy (89 percent), Germany (87 percent), and France (85 percent).¹⁸ Similarly, a Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) UK poll conducted in late May and early June 2001 found strong support for EU leadership in bringing the Kyoto Protocol into force even if the US did not participate. 82 percent of respondents in Belgium said the EU should play a leadership role, 91.3 percent in Spain, 88.7 percent in Italy, and 79.7 percent in the UK. There was also a strong feeling in Belgium, Spain, and the UK (but less so in Italy) that Canada, Japan, and other industrialized states should join the EU in tackling global warming rather than siding with the US and that their own governments should do more.¹⁹ According to a top official at the DG Environment, climate change is an issue that has reached such a level of social and political acceptability across the EU that it enables (indeed, forces) the EU Commission and national leaders to produce all sorts of measures, including taxes.²⁰

European Norms of Social Equity: Burden Sharing and EU Leadership

The EU’s ability to push through with the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol has been heavily dependent on the adoption of internal burden sharing agreements. Burden sharing in the European context is based on the social democratic notion of social equity. The European Union has as one of its goals, the promotion of economic and social equality among its member states and regions. There are a significant number of institutions and policy instruments, such as the Structural and Cohesion Funds, that have been developed in order to transfer wealth from richer to less well-off regions within the European Community. European environmental policy also takes into consideration the different economic status of member states. Faster implementation of environmental policies may be expected of wealthier states, member states are allowed to adopt measures which are more stringent than those mandated by the Community, and provisions are made for the establishment of differentiated

¹⁷ Irene Marr, ed., “US State Department Round Up of International Press Stories on US Withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol,” found at <http://www.climnet.org/news/bushroundup.html>.

¹⁸ Source: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, Pew Global Attitudes Project, “Bush Unpopular in Europe, Seen as Unilateralist,” August 15, 2001. <http://pewglobal.org/reports/print.php?PageID=39>.

¹⁹ WWF, UK, “British Public Supports the Kyoto Protocol,” 12 June 2001, http://www.wwf.org.uk/news/n_0000000292.asp.

²⁰ Author’s interview in Brussels, June 16, 2005.

obligations. The concept of burden sharing has its roots in the 1987 Large Combustion Plant Directive addressing acid rain, which called for a reduction in European Community SO₂ emissions by 42 percent by 1998 and 57 percent by 2003. The largest cuts were expected of Belgium, Germany, France, and the Netherlands. Ireland, Greece and Portugal, in contrast, were allowed to substantially increase their emissions.²¹

In the period leading up to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, a number of European countries began to announce greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. In 1989, the Dutch government, for example, issued its First National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP); it called for stabilization of industrialized countries' CO₂ emissions at 1989/1990 levels by 2000 and "for the moment stabilization of CO₂ emissions on the average level of 1989 and 1990" for the Netherlands.²² In 1990 the Dutch government went a step further when it announced its intentions to cut CO₂ emissions by 3 to 5 percent of 1989-1990 levels by 2000.²³ The German government quickly followed suit. In June 1990, the West German government agreed to a target of 25 to 30 percent reduction in its CO₂ emissions relative to 1987 levels by 2005.²⁴ In 1990, the Danish government determined that it would be feasible to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 20% relative to 1988 levels by 2005; the Austrian government set a goal of 20 percent reduction of CO₂ compared to 1988 levels by 2005.²⁵

In October 1990, reacting to these national developments, the EC Ministers of Energy and the Environment announced that the EC as a whole would seek to stabilize their joint carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels by the turn of the century. The cohesion countries (Spain, Portugal, Greece), however, demanded that a burden sharing approach be employed. The basis for their argument was that as less developed states

²¹ Konrad von Moltke, "The Maastricht Treaty and the Winnipeg Principles on Trade and Sustainable Development," Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: International Institute for Sustainable Development, 1995.

²² Netherlands Tweede Kamer, 1989-1990. Nationaal Milieubeleisplan, p. 130. See also Josee van Eijndhoven, "A History of the Management of Global Environmental Risks in the Netherlands," Social Learning Group, "Learning to Manage Global Environmental Risks, Vol. 1: A Comparative History of Social Responses to Climate Change, Ozone Depletion, and Acid Rain, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001) and Norichika Kanie, "Leadership in Multilateral Negotiation and Domestic Policy: The Netherlands and the Kyoto Protocol Negotiation," *International Negotiation* 8(2), 2003, pp. 339-65.

²³ This was based on the assumption that in a business as usual scenario, emissions would be increasing by 2 percent per year and GDP would be growing by 2.5% per annum. Over the course of the next several years, as economic growth exceeded expectations and international negotiations moved slower than expected, the Dutch government dropped the 3 to 5 percent reduction goal to a simple 3 percent reduction.

²⁴ See Jeannine Cavendar-Bares and Jill Jäger with Renate Ell, "Developing a Precautionary Approach: Global Environmental Risk Management in Germany" in Social Learning Group, vol. 1, p. 69.

²⁵ "Executive Summary of the National Communication of Austria submitted under Articles 4 and 12 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change," FCCC/NC/3 30 June 1995.

within Europe, they could not be expected to make cuts in their greenhouse gas emissions comparable to those being proposed by the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, and Austria.²⁶ The EC target was, therefore, based on a rough assessment of what the ministers believed could be achieved based on a no-regrets strategy and the targets that had already been established by individual member states, Germany's target being the most important in this regard. The EC stabilization target, moreover, recognized that emissions in Spain, Greece, and Portugal would increase by substantial margins during this time frame and that other member states, like France, would not be able or willing to reduce their emissions very much.²⁷

Burden sharing was also at the basis of the 1997 negotiating strategy of the European Community going into the 1997 Kyoto Conference. The European Commission, and in particular DG XI, played a key role in pushing for an ambitious community-wide target while recognizing the need for differentiation in national targets. The Commission argued that given the national reduction targets established by Germany, Austria, and Denmark, and the expected emission reductions to be achieved by the British switch from coal to natural gas, a 10% reduction in European emissions could be expected by 2005 regardless of any actions by other member states. They argued that this therefore set a minimum beyond which the EC could not go under and be taken seriously internationally. After numerous proposals were introduced and debated, Danish Environment Minister Svend Auken, suggested that internally agreement be established on a burden sharing arrangement that would lead to a 10 percent reduction for the EC, but that a 15 percent external target be proposed. All involved doubted that the final outcome from Kyoto would require the sharper cut. The Danish proposal was accepted. The burden sharing agreement was renegotiated among member states after the Kyoto protocol negotiations ended (Table 2).²⁸ In Kyoto, the EU committed to an 8 percent reduction relative to 1990 emission levels of CO₂, methane, and nitrous oxide and of 1995 emission levels for HFCs, PFCs, and SF₆ by the averaged level of emissions in 2008-12. Significantly, only seven member states were expected to reduce their emissions: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Other EU member states either pledged to stabilize their emissions (Finland and France) or to work to reduce the

²⁶ Laase Ringius, "Differentiation, Leaders and Fairness: Negotiating Climate Commitments in the European Community," CICERO Report, Oslo: University of Oslo, 1997:8.

²⁷ Michael Huber and Angela Liberatore, "A Regional Approach to the Management of Global Environmental Risks: The Case of the European Community," in Social Learning Group, Learning in the Management of Global Environmental Risks, Vol. 1, pp. 295-322.

²⁸ The changes in position between the 1997 and the 1998 commitments suggest that several states had to accept sharper relative cuts (e.g. Portugal, Denmark, Germany, the UK) while others came off with lighter, but with still substantial burdens (e.g. Austria, the Netherlands).

rate at which they were growing: Spain, Greece, Portugal, Sweden, and Ireland. Sweden has since changed its position from a +4 percent growth to a -4 percent reduction by 2010 and -25 percent reduction by 2030.²⁹

Table 2. The EU Burden-Sharing Agreement before and after Kyoto: Change in Emission Reduction Targets of Individual EU Member States Going into the 1997 Kyoto Negotiations and After the Kyoto Protocol was Agreed Upon³⁰

Member State	1997 Targets	1998 Targets
Austria	-25%	-13%
Belgium	-10%	-7.5%
Denmark	-25%	-21%
Finland	0%	0%
France	0%	0%
Germany	-25%	-21%
Greece	+30%	+25%
Ireland	+15%	+13%
Italy	-7%	-6.5%
Luxembourg	-30%	-28%
Netherlands	-10%	-6%
Portugal	+40%	+27%
Spain	+17%	+15%
Sweden	+5%	+4%
United Kingdom	-10%	-12.5%

In sum, EU leadership was made possible in part because of changing underlying conditions in the three biggest polluter states (Germany, the UK, and Italy) that meant that even under business as usual scenarios there would be significant cuts in their emissions. It would not have been possible, however, without EC-wide acceptance of the principle of differentiated obligations.

Parliamentary Structures and Environmental Interests

While green parties are by no means the only measure of the support of the public for environmental measures, they are one such indicator. Green parties have been quite influential at changing the political direction of numerous governments in Europe both directly and indirectly. They have exerted pressure on the larger, more

²⁹ <http://www.internat.naturvardsverket.se/index.php3?main=/documents/issues/climate/climate.htm>.

³⁰ Source:

established parties to green their policy platforms and to take climate change seriously.³¹ In a number of member states, green parties were in power or had a sizeable presence in parliament during the 1990s and 2000s. At the time of the US pull-out, green parties were in coalition governments holding ministerial posts in Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, and Italy. They also had quite strong representation in parliaments in Austria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

Particularly significant was the role played by Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen after the 1998 election when the Social Democratic Party invited the Greens to join them in a Red-Green coalition. The Greens used their position to push through ecological tax reform (reducing the tax burden on workers, while increasing it on energy consumption), a nuclear phase-out plan, active promotion of renewable energies through special feed-in tariffs, and an aggressive climate change policy.³² The green movement in Europe has helped create a milieu conducive to environmental leadership. Interestingly, though, it is not just green parties or social democratic parties that have accepted the need for action on climate change, but also the more conservative parties, as has been the case with the German Christian Democratic Union.

Non-governmental Organizations

There is an active environmental NGO community in Europe.³³ Under the right conditions, NGOs can take advantage of windows of opportunity to induce policy change.³⁴ The Climate Action Network Europe, the leading NGO network working on climate change, has over 100 members. They have been ardent supporters of climate action.³⁵ At the EU level, the so-called Green 9 Group of environmental NGOs (BirdLife International, Climate Action Network Europe, European Environmental Bureau, EPH Environmental Network, the European Federation for Transport and Environment, Friends of the Earth Europe, Greenpeace, International Friends of Nature, WWF European Policy Office) has gained advisory status in EU decision-making and all members (except for Greenpeace) receive funding from the Commission to do this work.

European NGOs often receive financial support from state governments and the Commission and as a result are less dependent on membership contributions. Possibly because of this, they were quicker to take on climate change campaigns that called for changes not only in corporate, but also consumer behavior than their American counterparts. American NGOs have found themselves having to increasingly

³¹ Information on green parties at the national level is drawn from Papadakis and Schreurs forthcoming.

³² Source: European Greens, National Elections, <http://www.europeangreens.org/info/archive/results.nat.archive.html>

³³ Andresen and Gulbrandsen 2004.

³⁴ McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001.

³⁵ Climate Action Network Europe, <http://www.climnet.org/index.htm>.

depend on European NGOs to help them lobby the US government.

Institutions: Multi-Level Governance and Mutual Reinforcement

There are also several key facilitating institutions in the EU. EU institutions have served both as actors (Commission and EP) and as mechanisms for coordination among multiple actors.

The European Commission

At numerous critical points, the Commission and its environmental Directorate General (DG) have wielded their agenda-setting power, developing and promoting new policy ideas and blueprints of agreements or reinforcing other actors' demands. The Commission has followed three main goals. At one level, it has sought to respond to public opinion with outcomes thereby showing its relevance. At a second level, the Commission has used climate policy as a means to push EU integration forward and empower the Commission with new regulatory tools and monitoring powers. Finally, the Commission has used climate change to build the EU's foreign identity, especially relative to the US. As a top official of DG Environment put it, the environment is a great unifying issue for EU integration (an issue of predilection), one where everyone expects that the EU must act and must lead.³⁶ Within the reinforcement model, it is also noteworthy that the Commission is often pushed into a reactive mode by national leaders in key countries or the EP. Thus, the Commission must propose ambitious blueprints in order to retain its agenda-setting role.

At the EU Council in Gothenburg, on 15-16 June 2001 the heads of state of member governments called on the Commission to prepare by the end of the year a proposal for the rapid ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by the European Community with the goal of having Kyoto enter into force in 2002. The proposal was issued on October 23, 2001 and noted that greenhouse gas emissions in the EU had declined by 4 percent between 1990 and 1999 but were rising in the transport sector. The conclusion of the proposal was that "the EU on the whole is firmly on the road to meeting its targets for 2008-2012."³⁷ The proposal did note, however, that meeting the targets would require not only new measures in the sectors of transport, energy, housing, agriculture, households, and research, but also the adoption of an emissions trading system. The Commission thus took the initiative to also prepare a separate proposal for greenhouse gas emissions trading.³⁸ This represented a major shift in European attitudes towards

³⁶ Author's interview at the EU Commission, June 16, 2005.

³⁷ Commission of the European Communities, "Proposal for a Council Decision: Concerning the Conclusion, on Behalf of the European Community, of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Joint Fulfillment of Commitments Thereunder," Brussels, 23.10.2001, COM(2001)579.

³⁸ Commission of the European Communities, "Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council Establishing a Scheme for Greenhouse Gas Emission

emissions trading. When the Kyoto Protocol initially was negotiated, the Clinton Administration had been pushing for maximum flexibility in how states reached their Kyoto Protocol targets, including use of joint implementation and emissions trading. The EU had strongly opposed this idea arguing that emissions reductions should primarily be done through domestic policies and measures. Europeans had little real understanding of how emissions trading worked; European states were more used to regulatory than market-based approaches to pollution control and they viewed U.S. calls to permit emissions trading under the Kyoto Protocol framework with much skepticism. The idea that a price could be put on pollution was not an idea that was well accepted in social democratic Europe.

Over the course of several years, however, interest in emissions trading began to build in Europe as well. A March 2000 Commission Green Paper on greenhouse gas emissions trading in the EU helped to initiate greater debate on the potential benefits of an emissions trading system. The October 2001 Commission proposal for Europe to adopt an emissions trading system may have been as much an attempt by Europe to try to win the United States back into the negotiation process as it was a recognition of the potential cost effectiveness of an emissions trading system for reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

In 2004-2006, the Commission let its leadership slip when new Commission President Jose Barroso put a higher priority on growth and competitiveness. Partly in response to new initiatives launched by the UK (the Stern Report in September 2006) and France, the Barroso Commission again launched major initiatives.³⁹ The Commission recently proposed to introduce the legal notion of “crimes against the environment” that can be punishable under criminal law. In doing this, the Commission was strategically shifting a key reform from the justice arena (where unanimity is the rule) to the environmental arena (where decisions are taken according to qualified majority voting).⁴⁰

The European Parliament

The European Parliament (EP) has provided another channel for green interests to influence policy outcome. On July 5, 2001 the European Parliament passed a resolution calling on the COP-6 Bonn Conference “to maintain the central place of the Kyoto Protocol as the driving force in the fight to concentrate attention on, and find

Allowance Trading Within the Community and Amending Council Directive 96/61/EC, 23.10.2001, COM(2001)581 final. Available at <http://www.ghgprotocol.org/DocRoot/tiDTB03cD5tqLLZ5a0iX/European.Emissions.Trading.pdf>.

³⁹ See Parker George and Fioney Harvey, “Newly Green Barroso Pushes Europe to Act on Global Warming,” *The Financial Times*, November 20, 2006, p.2.

⁴⁰ See Peel, Quentin. *The Financial Times*. February 9, 2007, p. 4.

ways of combating, climate change” and reiterating “its criticism of the unilateral US decision to reject the Kyoto Protocol as a way forward”. It stressed “that, after nine years of international negotiations, the Kyoto Protocol remains the only effective instrument for combating global warming”, expressed its “hopes that the current US policy review will lead to a reassessment by the US administration of its position”, and called “for further strenuous efforts by all parties to bring it back into the Kyoto Protocol.” Finally, the resolution urged “the European Union to take the lead in careful discussions with the other members of the umbrella group, the developing countries and other parties, in order to devise an appropriate strategy for further progress in the absence of a renewed US commitment of the Kyoto Protocol and in order to ensure sufficient participation to meet the thresholds for entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol before the Rio +10 Conference in 2002.”⁴¹

The EP played a key role in January 2005 when it passed a resolution translating the goal of keeping global warming at +2°C into concrete targets for industrialized countries. The EU Council adopted these goals in March 2005, responding positively to the EP’s leadership.⁴²

The EP’s proactive role is not surprising given the growing representation of green parties. After the 1999 EP election, the European Green Parties-European Free Alliance held 36 seats and after the 2002 elections 42, making it the fourth largest political grouping in the EP. The EP has picked climate change as a strategic issue through which it can gain more legitimacy and power relative to the Council and the Commission.

National Interests and Lead States

The study of interests as a driver of EU climate policy requires a focus on national interests. In the EU context, countries are in many ways like sub-state actors in a federal system. Many climate change initiatives have been pioneered by individual states. Several key countries stand out.

Germany

No other country has been as important to establishing and achieving the EU burden-sharing goal as Germany. The vast majority of the Community’s emission reduction target is dependent on Germany.⁴³ Germany has been a leader in other ways as well. It offered to host the secretariat to the UNFCCC in Bonn and organized the first

⁴¹ European Parliament, “Bonn Conference on Climate Change,” B5-0473/2001 “European Parliament resolution on the European Union’s strategy for the Bonn Conference on Climate Change (COP-6, part 2), Official Journal of the European Communities, March 14, 2002, pp. C 65/E/380-2,

<http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2002/ce065/ce06520020314en03800382.pdf>.

⁴² Hassi, Satu, “EU Leadership or Another Planet?,” *The Parliament Magazine*, May 31, 2005, pp. 55-56.

⁴³ Ringius 1997, 37.

and second Conferences of the Parties (COP) to the convention. Germany again played a crucial role in the establishment of the Berlin Mandate of 1995, calling upon Annex 1 parties to formulate a protocol outlining how they would go about reducing their greenhouse gas emissions beyond the 2000 period.⁴⁴

Under both conservative (Christian Democratic Union/Christian Socialist Union) and left-leaning administrations (Social Democratic Party/Green Party), there has been strong support for German and EU leadership. The biggest difference in the positions of German administrations on climate change has been on how to meet emissions reduction targets, not whether or not to establish or fulfill them. It was under Helmut Kohl's leadership (and his Environment Minister Klaus Töpfer (1987-1994)) that Germany first formulated its national emissions target. The current Chancellor, Angela Merkel, was Helmut Kohl's environment minister from 1994-1998 and helped negotiate the Berlin Mandate and the Kyoto Protocol. She visited Japan in 1997 to persuade its leaders to agree to bold measures.⁴⁵ And despite Merkel's statements regarding the need to improve ties with the US left shaky by Gerhard Schroeder, she has indicated her strong commitment to Kyoto. She has also indicated her intentions, at least for the time being, to accept the environment and energy legislation introduced by the SPD/Green Party coalition that came into power in 1998.⁴⁶

Germany's ability to be a leader is also in part a result of its domestic economic situation. Unification in 1990 strongly affected Germany's, and by extension, the EU's possibilities. While the heavy costs that Germany has had to pay for the environmental clean-up of the former German Democratic Republic are frequently over-looked, the shut-down of many heavily polluting industries strengthened Germany's chances of achieving major emissions cuts.

Moreover, despite the windfall, Germany recognizes the need for further additional cuts. The Red-Green coalition announced a goal of reducing CO₂ emissions by 40 percent relative to 1990 levels by 2020 if other EU member states agree to a 30 percent reduction of European emissions over the same time frame.⁴⁷ The Grand Coalition under Angela Merkel has not rescinded this goal.

The United Kingdom

For domestic political and economic reasons, the UK went from being relatively skeptical about reducing its emissions in the early 1990s to being a strong supporter of action. The UK initially presented a rather modest proposal in June 1990 to

⁴⁴ Earth Negotiations Bulletin, "Ad Hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate," ENB: 12:28, <http://www.iisd.ca/vol12/1228003e.html>.

⁴⁵ Author's interview with Angela Merkel in Germany Embassy in Japan, 1997.

⁴⁶ Schreurs 2002.

⁴⁷ Federal Ministry for the Environment 2005.

stabilize CO₂ emissions at 1990 levels by 2005.⁴⁸ In subsequent years, however, as the country continued with its transition away from coal to natural gas, it ratcheted up its goal. In 1992, it changed its national goal to stabilization of 1990 CO₂ levels by 2000, and in 1997 to 8 percent below 1990 levels during the same time frame.⁴⁹ When Tony Blair was elected prime minister in May 1997 he campaigned on a pledge to reduce CO₂ levels by 20 percent of 1990 levels by 2010, a commitment that was written into the country's climate change program in February 2000.⁵⁰ He designated responsibility for the subject at the highest of levels, giving it to Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott. In a February 25, 2003 joint letter, Tony Blair and Goran Persson called on their European Council counterparts to agree to take the lead in becoming a low-carbon economy by reducing carbon emissions by 60 percent by 2050. They also supported establishment of an EU-wide target for renewable energy of 12 percent of total energy production by 2010.⁵¹

What are the origins of the UK's strong leadership in climate change? Several interests stand out: rising public concerns about global warming; the sharp drop in emissions from the switch to natural gas for electricity; and in more recent years, the UK leadership's concern about being seen as being too closely tied to the US given the UK's central role as a member of the "coalition of the willing" in Iraq. It has been important for Blair to show policy leadership in an area where he can prove his independence from the US and gain a degree of leadership in EU decision-making. To Tony Blair personally, climate change policy is also a tool to regain legitimacy within his own Labor party. Finally, the UK position may reflect the historical role played by the British state as protector of the people from high danger. Climate change is now viewed by the public as a very real danger.⁵²

Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Sweden

As medium to small-sized states within the EU, the political and economic influence of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Sweden is limited on an individual basis. Combined their greenhouse gas emissions in 1990 were less than two-thirds those of Germany. In the area of climate change, however, these states have often formed coalitions in support of aggressive action. While space constraints limit our discussion of these countries, their role in internal negotiations has been crucial. The Netherlands, for example, has been a particularly

⁴⁸ Churchill 1991.

⁴⁹ Secretaries of State for the Environment and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1997

⁵⁰ John Gummer and Robert Moreland, "The European Union and Global Climate Change: A Review of Five National Programmes," prepared for the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, <http://www.pewclimate.org/docUploads/pol%5Freview%2Epdf>, p. 22.

⁵¹ See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/business/envtech/pdf/blair-persson.pdf>.

⁵² Valantin 2005, 76-78.

strong advocate. It was perhaps fortunate coincidence that the Dutch held the presidency of the Commission both at the time of the UNCED negotiations in 1992 and the EU burden-sharing negotiations in 1997. Luxembourg was EU president both at the time of the Kyoto Conference and the Kyoto Protocol's ratification. Denmark, a pioneer in the development of renewable energies, took on some of the most aggressive emission reduction targets within the Burden Sharing Agreement. Austria, which has a strong environmental movement, has been a strong supporter as well. And Sweden has been recognized as the state that has done most to protect the climate according to a new Germanwatch Climate Change Performance Index.⁵³

France

France is a relatively small emitter compared to its economic size; it emits less than half the CO₂ levels of Germany. This is largely a consequence of decisions made in the 1970s to become less dependent on energy imports. Fifty-nine nuclear reactors produce 78 percent of the country's electricity and account for the bulk of the 50 percent energy autonomy boasted by France.⁵⁴ Another 12 percent of electricity is produced in hydroelectric plants. Owing to this situation and to a less active environmental community,⁵⁵ France played a limited role in the international negotiations up to 2005. France has a strong bureaucratic focus on economic competitiveness and close links between organized business groups and elite bureaucrats and politicians (both on the right and left). Economically, France has powerful oil, chemical, public works, and automobile sectors, which have been able to thwart major initiatives. The rapid ratification of Kyoto in 2000 was based on the assumption of a massive investment in wind power (15,000 additional MW). Yet, energy lobbies quickly killed the plan.⁵⁶

At the same time, France has been undergoing some major transformations in its national interests that have helped make possible greater leadership in recent years. First, the bureaucracy has realized that Kyoto can serve to buttress the role of technocratic elites, playing up to their strengths in the nuclear and automobile sectors. Second, under the influence of adviser Nicolas Hulot and with the aim to create a new political image, President Chirac has seized upon climate change as a major entrepreneurial issue.⁵⁷ In 2005, he forced his reluctant conservative parliamentary majority to vote for a constitutional amendment that enshrined the precautionary principle and fundamental environmental rights at the pinnacle of the French legal system. In 2007, he made the environment his key priority and called for the establishment of a UN Environmental Organization. Third, public opinion became

⁵³ Source: <http://www.germanwatch.org/rio/ccpi2006.pdf>

⁵⁴ Source: <http://www.iaea.org/inis/awes/eedrb/data/FR-npsh.html>

⁵⁵ Valantin 2005: 139.

⁵⁶ Author's interview with key Member of French Parliament, August 2005.

⁵⁷ Author's interview with presidential adviser on environmental issues, June 2005.

more supportive in 2006-2007 in the wake of erratic climate occurrences. This was demonstrated by the sudden rise to prominence of Nicolas Hulot, a TV presenter and environmental activist who proposed an ecological pact to all presidential candidates and threatened to become a candidate himself if they did not accept the pact.⁵⁸ Leadership on climate change has also come from parliament, where Jean-Yves Le Deaut (Socialist) and Nathalie Kosciusko-Morize (Conservative) have used the

There were often lengthy domestic debates regarding emissions allocations and reduction targets. Within Germany, for example, there were harsh debates between the Environment and Economics ministers regarding what the reduction targets for the first (2005-2007) and second (2008-2012) periods should be. Chancellor Schroeder had to step in in order for Germany to meet a deadline set by the EU for turning in reports on national allocation plans. In the end, the German government set a target of reducing CO₂ emissions from 505 million tons to 503 million tons by 2007 and an additional 8 million tons thereafter (Environment Minister Jurgen Trittin had been calling for a much larger total reduction by 2012 to 488 million tons but Economics Minister Wolfgang Clement was opposed to the idea arguing it would hurt an already stagnant German economy).⁵⁹ Eventually, the Commission refused the government proposal and forced Germany to settle for 495.

European Efforts to Sustain Climate Change Leadership through Policy Innovation

Even as Kyoto was being ratified, there were signs that it would be very difficult for the EU to meet its commitments. European Environment Agency research showed that 10 of the 15 member states were “way off” their EU-burden sharing targets. To remedy the emerging gap between the Kyoto target and reality, a first batch of implementation measures was introduced under the European Climate Change Program (ECCP) adopted in June 2001. With this mandate, the EU Commission developed several directives, while individual states also developed their own action plans. The key directives on energy, waste management, transport, and agriculture were all adopted between 2001-2003. The Emissions Trading System Directive (2003/87) was formally adopted by the Council and EP in October 2003. Other key directives include the promotion of electricity production from renewable sources (2001/77), the energy performance of buildings (2002/91), higher efficiency in heat and power generation (2004/8), and green energy taxation (2003/96). Other significant directives were the

⁵⁸ Hulot 2006.

⁵⁹ “Germany Makes EU Deadline for CO₂ Plans,” 31 March 2004, *Deutsche Welle*.

landfill directive (2001) and the biofuels directive (2003).⁶⁰ It is also important to note that all EU 15 states except Greece and Spain have resorted to taxation of energy products (based on Directive 2003/96).⁶¹

An October 2006 Commission report presented data on progress achieved to date. The overall picture is mixed. Emissions at the end of 2004 were 0.9 percent below 1990 levels. As shown in Table 6, only two countries were fully on track to exceed their targets without extra measures (the UK and Sweden). Six were on track assuming additional measures (Finland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, France, Germany, and Greece), but the others were falling behind, some by a large margin. Yet, most states have plans in place for reaching their targets.

Target achievement will rely heavily on Kyoto mechanisms and carbon sinks (for 3.4 percent of the 8 percent reduction). This achievement will only be possible if there are over-achievers (Luxembourg, the UK, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, and maybe Germany and France) that can offset the huge gaps created by laggards: Denmark, Austria, Ireland, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, and in particular, Spain which is expected to have a final corrected gap of 27.4 percent.⁶² The 12 new EU members are all on track to over-achieve their individual targets due to the collapse of their socialist economic structures. The EU is expected to significantly reduce emissions from waste (projections of -47 percent by 2010 compared to 1990 with additional measures), agriculture (-16 percent), and industrial processes (-10 percent). But energy (-7 percent) and above all, transport (+27 percent) may be harder to control.⁶³

⁶⁰ Source: European Environmental Agency 2006, 34-35

⁶¹ Source: *ibid*, 36.

⁶² Source: *ibid*.

⁶³ Source: *ibid*, 38.

Table 6 Gap to 2010 Target (percentage points relative to base-year emissions) for the EU 15 based on data from end 2004⁶⁴

Member State	Kyoto Target	Projected Gap to target with existing measures	Gap to target with additional measures	Gap to target with additional measures, Kyoto mechanisms, and carbon sinks
Austria	-13.0%	+27.8	+16.3	+6.5
Belgium	-7.5%	+8.7	+6.8	+0.9
Denmark	-21.0%	+25.2	N/A	+18.0
Finland	0%	+9.9	-1.9	-4.0
France	0%	+6.4	+0.5	0.0
Germany	-21.0%	+1.2	0.0	0.0
Greece	+25.0%	+9.7	-0.1	-0.1
Ireland	+13.0%	+16.6	N/A	+6.4
Italy	-6.5%	+20.4	+10.6	+0.7
Luxembourg	-28.0%	+5.6	N/A	-18.0
Netherlands	-6.0%	+9.6	+6.7	-2.8
Portugal	+27.0%	+19.7	+15.7	+3.1
Spain	+15.0%	+36.3	N/A	+27.4
Sweden	+4.0%	-5.0	N/A	-7.9
UK	-12.5%	-6.3	-10.7	-11.3
EU-15 TTL	-8.0%	+7.4	+3.4	0.0

Conclusion

Why did the European Union feel so strongly about preserving Kyoto? What were the factors motivating the Europeans to be so disapproving of the Bush administration's actions? The U.S. pull out could have provided Europe with an easy way out of a treaty that few states in Europe would find easy to fulfill. As of 2000, many states were already far off their Kyoto targets. Why then was European reaction so strongly opposed to Bush's abandonment of the agreement?

Without the role played by various EU institutions and leading nations, it is doubtful that the Community as a whole could have reached an EU-wide stabilization target at 1990 levels by 2000, formulated a 15 percent emissions reduction target going into Kyoto, worked out an EU Burden Sharing Agreement of -8 percent, or pushed

⁶⁴ Source: European Environmental Agency 2006, 22.

through ratification. EU institutions were crucial moreover to the adoption of two fundamental ideas that have shaped European action on climate change: the precautionary principle and burden sharing.

EU leadership has been driven by a combination of factors. While public opinion and the presence of green parties were certainly important to creating a milieu supportive of action, EU leadership resulted from a process of mutual leadership reinforcement by different actors involved in the EU's process of multi-level governance. The leadership roles played by several member states (especially Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, and Denmark but also Austria, Finland, Luxembourg, and Sweden) were important. In turn, the Commission, especially in the period leading up to the Kyoto Conference, at the time of the US-withdrawal from Kyoto, and now in the implementation phase has wielded much influence. The EP has also been a frequent champion of EU leadership, supported by green parties and environmental NGOs.

If the EU succeeds in meeting its burden sharing target, then the EU will have achieved something of a moral victory vis-à-vis the US. If the EU fails, then cynics are likely to charge that while Europe is good at setting lofty goals, it is poor at actually implementing them. If this ends up being the case, it could hurt European credibility in any future global environmental negotiations. On the other hand, it could be argued that even if the EU fails to fulfill its goals completely, it will still have influenced policy change and innovation both at home and internationally through the power of example in the areas of energy efficiency improvements, renewable energy development, carbon emissions trading, energy taxes, and joint implementation. The EU, moreover, will have made a strong case for international cooperation in addressing a serious threat to the planet. The signing and ratification of the Kyoto Protocol has helped to put a variety of new policies and measures in motion. It has also helped to initiate joint projects among developed and transition countries. As a result of these policies, many of which have only recently been implemented, there should be greater progress in emissions reductions across the EU in the coming years.

Support for the Kyoto process internationally remains fragile despite EU efforts to keep the agreement going. With exploratory meetings and negotiations already underway regarding how to proceed once the first Kyoto Protocol commitment period ends in 2012, the EU will have to continue its search for innovative solutions if it is to remain a leader.

Climate change is arguably the single most important issue for EU foreign environmental policy and among its most important foreign policy areas overall. Although it remains uncertain whether or not the EU will be able to fully meet its commitment to reduce its combined greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulphur

hexafluoride) by the 8 percent of 1990 levels by 2008-2012 that it committed itself to in Japan, EU environmental emissions would certainly be considerably higher were it not for the Kyoto Protocol. Indeed, among major developed economies, the EU still stands as the most likely to fulfill its commitment, a commitment that represents a cut in the order of 15-20 percent from the business-as-usual trendline to 2008-12.

As of late 2006, the 15 EU countries reported that they have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 0.9 percent from the 1990 level (based on 2004 data). Counting the inventory of all measures taken so far, the projections to 2010 show a remaining gap of 7.4 percent relative to the 2010 target, a gap that they are planning to fill through additional measures, use of the Kyoto mechanisms and carbon sinks.⁶⁵ The measures include the world's most stringent regulations on vehicle carbon emissions (130 grams per kilometer by 2012),⁶⁶ a strengthened emphasis on renewable energy production, and an EU wide carbon emissions trading system (ETS).

⁶⁵ Source: European Environmental Agency 2006.

⁶⁶ A decision made in February 2007.

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