

# The Grand Bargain:

## Forming the Role of the European Union

By

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## Abstract

The international order is in transformation. The new global developments alongside economic, technological, and political dimensions generate security concerns that contribute to more fragmented, conflictual, politicized, and partially state-centered international relations. As these new structural developments lead to a more fragmented multilateralism that challenges the neoliberal order, of which the European Union (EU), in its self-understanding, is the avantgarde actor, I examine how the EU responds to this new international context. To answer this question, I conduct discursive and partially policy analysis evaluating the explanatory power of two sets of hypotheses – realist and constructivist – through which I evaluate the EU's global strategy. The research shows that while the EU aims to strengthen its relative economic power as well as to build up militarily usable technologies, their strength is still moderated and arbitrated through the normative identity of the EU that deflects the external pressures. Additionally, I also show that the expectation that the EU will double down on norms, its normative approach may be challenged even as norms are intertwined with relative gains concerns to manage policy adjustments within the EU that from both normative and realist perspective look suboptimal. Overall, the research points to a new hybrid character of the EU with both constructivist and realist elements combining interests and values that import relative power and universal norms and through which the EU bargains its global role.

“Three largest forces on the planet – technology, globalization, and climate change – are all accelerating at once. As a result, so many aspects of our societies, workplaces, and geopolitics are being reshaped and need to be re-imagined.”

Thomas L. Friedman

## 1. The Grand Bargain

The world's geopolitical, geo-economic, and geo-technological order is in transformation. The new trends in global politics connected with the pressures on liberal democracy, alterations of economic models, challenges to global governance, demographic changes as well as the rise of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and cyberthreats have made international politics more unstable and unpredictable.<sup>1</sup> In relation to these trends, we are experiencing shifts in long-standing foreign policies of countries. The United States (U.S.) is said to be turning inwards undermining long-standing alliances, and China becoming a more prominent actor in the world politics is often presented as a source of alternative form of governance, especially for developing nations. Given these developments, the European states are facing a new security and economic realities. Believed to be caught in-between regional orders of the U.S. and China, Europe is lagging behind and vulnerable to external threats which are bringing the regional dynamics to the forefront. Therefore, in the thesis I focus on the main research question, how does the European integration proceed within the context of broader this global change?

To outline the tensions that the European Union (EU) faces as an outcome of the changing international system, I build on the framework of contested multilateralism which is characterized by “competing coalitions and shifting institutional arrangements, informal as well as formal,”<sup>2</sup> which describes how practices contesting multilateralism have contributed to a more fragmented, politicized, conflictual, and in some cases, state-centered nature of international relations. Inherently, this new nature of the world uncovers a tension within the EU on how to address the current global change. Although the literature on EU and its global strategy has talked about the tension between norm and power reconciliation, the tension being different from the older norms versus interest argument,<sup>3</sup> I further unpack this problematic by looking at the concept of “principled pragmatism” as part of the EU's Global Strategy that has re-awakened the debate on how does the EU relate to the external world. Yet, while the concept has generated many assumptions, the actual execution of this principle that combines interests and values in the context of EU policies remained rather unknown.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ‘Global Trends to 2030: Challenges and Choices for Europe’.

<sup>2</sup> Morse and Keohane, ‘Contested Multilateralism’, 386.

<sup>3</sup> Youngs, ‘Normative Dynamics and Strategic Interests in the EU's External Identity’.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Resilience and the Role of the European Union in the World: Contemporary Security Policy: Vol 41, No 2’.

To grasp the nature of the fragmented multilateralism and the EU strategy to address the global challenges, I use four theory driven hypotheses – realist and constructivist – to evaluate their relative explanatory power. Concretely, considering the structural changes, I first look at realism that would lead us to expect that in order to prosper in the new world, the EU would abandon its normative approach and focus on strengthening of the transatlantic partnership and building up its internal military capabilities and economic power. Secondly, turning to the constructivist theory, I posit that the EU as a normative power promoting universal norms and values should respond to the structural changes challenging the liberal order by doubling down on its normative approach in order to keep the value-charged and multilateral order intact by playing its avantgarde role on a range of policy areas such as climate, and that the EU's response to these changes should be too shaped by its norms which deflect, but do not neutralize the external pressures. What is more, the juxtapositioning of these two theories as frames for understanding to outline the complexity of how the structural challenges influences European integration leads to two other secondary overarching questions:

- Do the “realpolitik” challenges to the neoliberal order, of which the EU, in its self-understanding, is the avantgarde representative, get channelled into the EU policy process by member states of the EU institutions?
- And relatedly, considering that the EU has become a significant economic player and agenda-setter, how do member states balance between their autonomy and integration efforts?

Given this, in the thesis, I argue that as the EU has found itself in the midst of rapid global change challenging its normative model, the EU tries to remain a liberal actor. In order to do so, the EU uses its economic agenda to advance and protect its normative regime. These efforts, driven by security motivations and endorsed by economic means are pursued by the member states to project the EU power to the outside world are shaped against two factors – the EU's normative identity and unwillingness to further deeper integrate in areas sensitive to security aspects.

To demonstrate the impact of structural factors on the European integration and their resonance within the broader EU polity, I decided to explore high EU policy level processes – European Green Deal and competition policy – which are high at the agenda of the new Commission and have been greatly influenced by globalization processes and technological development. By examining these relations in the context of geopolitical competition, I also contribute to a research gap in the literature on European integration literature with a focus on the security aspect

of the integration in the context of emerging technologies.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, although the tension between the structural factors and factors on the level of nation states, community institutions or elites within the regions is one of the central questions in the EU integration theories, in the paper I do not propose whether structural factors come first or second. Instead, I posit that external factors do influence and shape the regional cooperation on the state-level together with support coalitions that enable the process.<sup>6</sup>

The conclusions show that although it would be expected that the EU will try to refocus its policies away from its normative agenda and to strengthen its long-standing international alliances with the U.S. to gain relative power, this hypothesis is not clearly supported as the discourses point to ideational differences between U.S. and the EU. Instead, we may clearly observe that the EU is trying to strengthen its relative economic power as well as to build up militarily usable technologies, but their strength is moderated and arbitrated through the normative identity of the EU that deflects the external pressures. Relatedly, the discourse analysis shows that the expectation that the new structural challenges will prompt the EU to double down on the norms may be challenged even as norms are entangled with relative gains concerns to generate intra-EU policy adjustments that from both the realist perspective and the normative perspective look like being suboptimal.

The outline of the thesis is following. Firstly, using the concept of contested multilateralism I delineate the changing structure of the international system along the economic, technological and political dimensions which are shaped by security. Secondly, I present theoretical bases by juxtapositioning constructivist and realist hypotheses to structural change in relation to the EU and its normative identity. Consequently, I use the two case studies on the European Green deal and competition policy to demonstrate how the EU integrates its geopolitical considerations with economic interests to project its power. Lastly, emphasizing the role of the EU, the conclusions show how both realist and constructivism hypotheses interact. This interaction points to a new hybrid character of the EU combining interests and values in one strategy. The success of this strategy and policies represents a grand bargain for the EU because it is investing a lot of its political capital into policies positioning the EU as a competitive player on a global scale.

<sup>5</sup> Wiener, Borzel, and Risse, *European Integration Theory*, chapter 1.

<sup>6</sup> Wayne Sandholtz and John Zysman, '1992'.

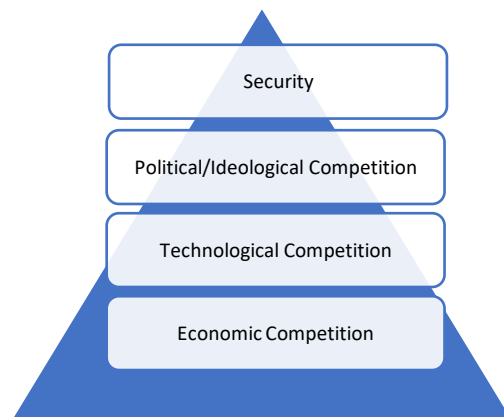


## 2. The EU in a Turbulent World: Contested Multilateralism

Contested multilateralism is an umbrella concept portraying the situation in which rules, practices, and missions of various standing multilateral institutions are challenged by other multilateral institutions. Specifically, this process ensues when “states and/or non-state actors either shift their focus from one existing institution to another or create an alternative multilateral institution to compete with existing ones.”<sup>7</sup> Although this may not involve the establishment of new multilateral institutions, there is always a conflict amid the rules,

institutionalized practices, or institutions.<sup>8</sup> Hence, considering the current state of global affairs, the contested multilateralism is present across, but not limited to, economic, political, technological and security dimension which as I demonstrate contributes to a more fragmented, conflictual, politicized and in some cases, state-centered nature of international relations with alternative forms of governance.

Figure 1: Dimensions of Contested Multilateralism



Firstly, the economic dimension is highly marked by the rise of economic nationalism which threatens global cooperation. The rebalancing of the economic relationships between the USA and China, trade protectionism together with skepticism toward multilateral organizations and agreements have increased substantially across all economies.<sup>9</sup> One of the most significant and longstanding changes in this regard concern the rapid increase in mega-regional and preferential trade agreements (PTAs). As the multilateral negotiations have become increasingly complex over the past decades moving from negative to positive integration, the PTAs have become the lynchpin of trade negotiations questioning the relevance of the WTO.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, given the culmination of other political problems connected with the U.S. abandonment of the WTO dispute settling mechanism due to its inefficiency,<sup>11</sup> as well as the development of digital infrastructure has triggered efforts to reform the WTO to ensure its openness and functioning.<sup>12</sup> Relatedly, the rise

<sup>7</sup> Morse and Keohane, 'Contested Multilateralism', 387.

<sup>8</sup> Morse and Keohane, 'Contested Multilateralism'.

<sup>9</sup> de Bolle and Zettelmeyer, 'Measuring the Rise of Economic Nationalism'.

<sup>10</sup> Bown, 'Mega-Regional Trade Agreements and the Future of the WTO'.

<sup>11</sup> United States Trade Representative, '2017 Report to Congress on China's WTO Compliance'.

<sup>12</sup> 'G20 Trade Ministers Renew Commitment to WTO Reform with "Sense of Urgency"'.

of platform economies or launched efforts to reform competition policies to address the large information technology companies also called 'big tech' or third part countries like China to remain competitive on a global scale. These efforts are also vocal in Europe which has started the reform of its competition policy by redefining the relevant markets and debates the development of European champions.<sup>13</sup> This economic aspect of the global relations is extremely critical to European economy as it is projected that the EU may lose the ground as the world's largest economy (Figure 2).<sup>14</sup>

Figure 2: Europe on the Wane

### EU countries are set to lose major ground in ranking of biggest global economies.

1960: percentage of total world GDP\*, by country



2020 GDP



2100 GDP



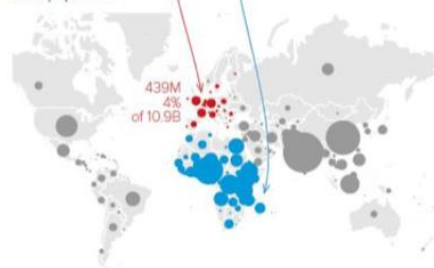
1960: number of citizens, by country



2020 population



2100 population



\*GDP calculations use constant 2011 US\$. Total GDP represents the sum of 196 countries analyzed. Population forecasts use median scenario values.  
SOURCE: Pardee Center for International Futures, University of Denver; United Nations Population Division  
This DataPoint presentation was researched and produced by POLITICO data analysts in accordance with the highest journalistic standards.

<sup>13</sup> 'The EU's Industrial-Policy Fans Want to Go Back to the '70s'.

<sup>14</sup> Guàrdia, 'Europe on the Wane'.

Relatedly to economic nationalism, technological and digital nationalism has come to the forefront. The rise of digital industrialization which brought up new technologies such as 5G, artificial intelligence, and opportunities connected within recently exposed the geopolitics of technology with China and the United States as mutual adversaries.<sup>15</sup> An exemplary case of this competition is the topical battle with the 5G technology. 5G with its potential in the area of connectivity, internet, and technological innovation generated “wireless wars” for standard-setting and leadership position in 5G telecommunication among companies as well as countries. Huawei, a Chinese telecom company, has become the center of this conflict with some states even banning the company’s technology. The conflict has arisen fears that if the political pressures were to escalate, it could lead to digital divide<sup>16</sup> which means a possible fragmentation of the technological industry in terms of standards, nationalization of networks, and diversification of supply chains that would endanger already established value supply chains.<sup>17</sup> Although in this particular case Europe’s reaction was rather lukewarm, Europe’s push for “technological sovereignty” is evident from new initiatives to boost the semiconductor industry<sup>18</sup> and set up a new production line for battery cells to be used by electric vehicle worth 3.2 billion euro.<sup>19</sup> The move is supposed to boost EU performance as an industrial player in the global economy where the EU has been losing ground despite its market size in general (Figure 3).<sup>20</sup> The latest EC’s Digital Economy and Society Index demonstrates that the digital sector represents 4.0% of the bloc’s GDP in contrast to 5.4% in the United States, 4.9% in China, and 5.8% in Japan. Still, the concerns are especially prevalent in regard to emerging technologies, such as quantum computing and AI, where there are fears that the EU could fall behind others.<sup>21</sup>

Thirdly, the geopolitical tensions around the economy and technology have moved to the political dimension. In this regard, the political dimension emphasizes the challenge to keep the economic players in the rule-based systems and presenting alternative forms of governance which may pose a challenge to the neoliberal order. The past few years have been a hard time for international organizations as multilateralism has been struggling on many fronts with the WTO and United Nations (UN) as well as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at the forefront. Most notably for the EU, the questioning of NATO by the US has strengthened concerns of European

<sup>15</sup> Villaseñor, ‘Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Geopolitics’.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Digital Divide? Transatlantic Defence Cooperation on AI | European Union Institute for Security Studies’.

<sup>17</sup> ‘G20 Trade Ministers Renew Commitment to WTO Reform with “Sense of Urgency”’.

<sup>18</sup> Hall and Milne, ‘Europe First’.

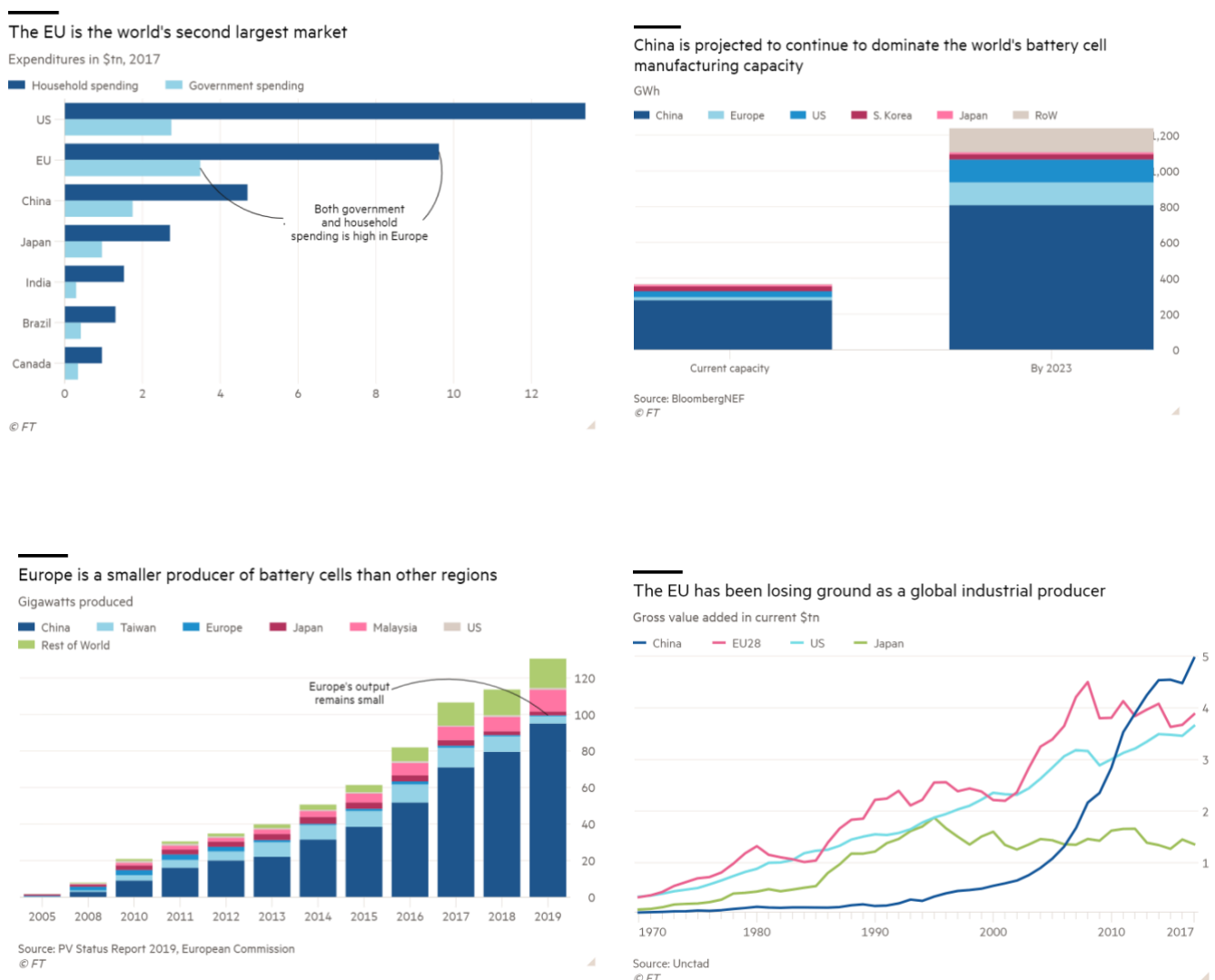
<sup>19</sup> Chazan and Espinoza, ‘EU Unveils €3bn Research Fund to Develop Batteries’.

<sup>20</sup> Romei, ‘Europe First’.

<sup>21</sup> malinja, ‘The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)’.

leaders regarding European security especially now due to Brexit which means that one-fifth of the military capabilities is leaving Europe together with the United Kingdom.<sup>22</sup> Relatedly, in terms of global governance, the struggling multilateralism poses a challenge on consensus-building regarding the uphold and establishment of norms and values in already mentioned areas such as cyberspace, AI, internet governance, use of big data, and climate. Consequently, as a result of this and generally slow adoption of norms emerging out of technological development by the international community, corporate actors find themselves alone at the vanguard of developing new “science, morality and laws” of the new technologies<sup>23</sup> redefining political role of business and the role of government in global governance what often retroactively creates political tension.<sup>24</sup>

Figure 3: EU Market Figures



<sup>22</sup> Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), ‘Strengthening the EU’s Cyber Defence Capabilities’.

<sup>23</sup> Benkler, ‘Don’t Let Industry Write the Rules for AI’.

<sup>24</sup> Eberlein, ‘Who Fills the Global Governance Gap?’

Lastly, all three previous dimensions are topped by security considerations. The security aspect of economic, technological and political dimension is being shaped by and retrospectively shapes all the mentioned dimensions. In context of the European security, these security considerations are reflected in concrete policies. For instance, in February 2019, the EC has introduced a new foreign direct investment (FDI) screening mechanism proposed by the member states. The mechanism is supposed to safeguard that foreign investment in strategic sectors does not harm Europe's interests and security. Arguably, the FDI regulation was motivated by the increasing Chinese FDI in Europe towards which the EU has ambivalent relations. Recalling the Commission's recent position paper on China, the EU has presented conflicting European perspectives in which China is perceived as a "Strategic Partner" in some areas while as a "competitor" and "systematic threat" in others.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, this and other recent developments in trade, politics, and advancements in technology prove that political economy plays a crucial role in and is often shaped by geopolitical security considerations.

In sum, nowadays, the EU is facing a less liberal world, which could be characterized by more fragmented, politicized and in some cases state-centered nature of international relations with alternative forms of governance. While some indications of this change are more present on the discursive rather than actual policy level, they are no less significant for understanding the changing practices and the long-standing security and geopolitical landscape. Moreover, with the resurgence of "realpolitik" exemplified by the transactional foreign policy in which bilateral state relations dominate, states are more focused on their narrowly defined interests. As a result of this, the consensus-building among states creating common values and interests on an international scale is endangered. This might have negative consequences for the international system because it will be harder to hold states accountable for violations of international law and agreements, aggressive behavior, etc.<sup>26</sup> Although the EU has proven to excel in a world marked by increasing global ideological, security and geopolitical competition unfriendly to international institutions or multilateralism, these developments urge the EU to adapt to the new realities to remain relevant on a global scale. It is a challenge for the EU, because the relevance of the international organizations like the EU, are nowadays often evaluated against their capacity to address new challenges and problems.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Scott L. Kastner and Phillip C. Saunders, "Is China a Status Quo or Revisionist State? Leadership Travel as an Empirical Indicator of Foreign Policy Priorities," *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2012): 163–77.

<sup>26</sup> Mattelaer, "The Resurgence of Bilateral Diplomacy in Europe. Egmont Paper 104, January 2019'.

<sup>27</sup> Wiener, Borzel, and Risse, *European Integration Theory*.

### 3. Literature Review and Theoretical Perspectives

Having outlined the structural pressures facing the EU on the background of the contested multilateralism, here I anchor the debate theoretically by evaluating realist and constructivist theoretical approaches and apply them to the European integration. After a brief introduction of realism and constructivism as frames for the understanding of the EU policy, I test two realist and two constructivist hypotheses. First, focusing on the realist scholarship I propose that structural changes in terms of material power have an impact on the domestic policy and that the same structural-material forces might lead the EU to engage in the internal and external balancing. Then, turning to constructivism, I hypothesize that because of its normative identity, the EU would be expected to follow its identity script and double down on its normative actions in response to international material structural changes and that the EU's response to these changes should be, too, shaped by its norms which deflect, but do not neutralize the external pressures.

#### 3.1. Realism

Realism takes an explanatory rather than normative approach to international relations. It is based on the assumption that the world order consists of self-interested states operating under the state of anarchy.<sup>28</sup> Given the nature of the international system, realism recognizes national states as the only legitimate actors whose highest concern is security and security-seeking. For this reason, power, defined in military and economic terms, has become one of the core concepts of the realist scholarship. On the structural level, the distribution and concentration of power are most often used to delineate the relations among states.<sup>29</sup> Because realism describes things as they are, realism is often considered to be a useful epistemological framework to analyze international relations and for making predictions about states' behavior and international system.

##### 3.1.1. Realism and Structural Forces and the EU

Focusing on a state power, realist scholars posit that changes in the international relations distribution of power or general disruption in the balance of threats will have an impact on the calculations of domestic political leaders.<sup>30</sup> Drawing on the balance of power theory, there are two

<sup>28</sup> 'SIX PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL REALISM'.

<sup>29</sup> Mansfield, 'Concentration, Polarity, and the Distribution of Power'.

<sup>30</sup> Rosato, 'Europe's Troubles Power Politics and the State of the European Project'.

types of strategies that states may undertake to deal with major power changes – external and internal balancing.<sup>31</sup> External balancing describes a strategy of states forming an alliance to offset the power disparity against a (potential) hegemon or rising power. In contrast to this, in case of internal balancing states aim to enhance states power by building up military and economic strength internally that will enable them to act more independently of the hegemon on the international arena.<sup>32</sup>

In line with this theoretical proposition, Rosato's explanation of the emergence of European cooperation ascribed primary motivations that have driven the Western states to consider varieties of integration to the geopolitical challenges caused by the power disparity between them and the Soviet Union (SU) after and during the Cold War. Consequently, these structural reasons have motivated states to establish the European Coal and Steel Community for security reasons: "none of the state's east of the Elbe could balance Moscow by itself... the Europeans worried that the United States, which had stepped in to defend them after the war, would eventually withdraw its forces from the region."<sup>33</sup> Thus, seeing an economic coalition as a basis for military power, he contended that the economic coalition governed by a central authority was vital to their competitiveness and protection against the SU.<sup>34</sup>

Simultaneously to the domestic changes resulting in the closer EU integration processes, the same structural forces led by the U.S. have led the European block to strengthen international alliances and to build up military capabilities. In this regard, Taliaferro also argued that it was the European perception of the SU as a threat that led to the security cooperation between the U.S. and Europe, which was also institutionalized into NATO and become a cornerstone of security and stability in Europe.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, with the disappearance of the SU as a threat after 1990s, vivid discussions of the relevance of NATO and future US engagement in Europe have awoken fears over the U.S. departure from Europe causing a security dilemma.<sup>36</sup> However, these expectations have not fulfilled because as realist scholars like Mearsheimer point out, the U.S. has adopted the strategy of "offshore balancing" which used by superpowers to shift the burden of maintaining the power

<sup>31</sup> Waltz, 'Structural Realism after the Cold War'.

<sup>32</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 118.

<sup>33</sup> Rosato, Sebastian (2011): 'Europe's Troubles: Power Politics and the State of the European Project', *International Security*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 47.

<sup>34</sup> Rosato, 'Europe's Troubles'.

<sup>35</sup> Taliaferro, 'Neoclassical Realism and the Study of Regional Order'.

<sup>36</sup> Krotz and Maher, 'International Relations Theory and the Rise of European Foreign and Security Policy', 558.

balances among regions to others in order to prevent the rise of new regional hegemon.<sup>37</sup> On this basis it was explained why the U.S. and European interest continued to be interwoven even after the U.S. has become the world's single largest power after the fall of the SU and remained as a regional "pacifier" guaranteeing peace in Europe.<sup>38</sup>

### 3.1.2. Realism and Political Economy

Shifting the focus away from international security, realism is also relevant for the political economy as the state's hard power also depends on the countries' economic capabilities. However, while the pursuit of wealth has always been a crucial objective for states as economic it underlines political power, the capacity to build hard power has not always been a viable option for all states.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, in opposition to hard balancing which refers to advancement and use of military power, many states have been engaging in soft balancing as a non-military way of power balancing.<sup>40</sup> Soft balancing is usually undertaken by weaker states and involves non-military ways to undermine the hegemon or a more powerful state instead of challenging it in military terms. This strategy is usually based on a blend of use of "international institutions, economic statecraft, and diplomatic arrangements" which underline the importance of states' latent power capabilities as crucial for a state to survive and prosper in a world in which security is scarce.<sup>41</sup>

Here, coming back to Rosato's power politics explanation of European integration, it is worth recalling that historically the U.S. as a structural force has played significant role in forming European economic integration efforts.<sup>42</sup> But as the European economic integration has been gaining on traction over decades, it has been argued that EU started to counterbalance the US leadership in terms of security by engaging in soft-balancing.<sup>43</sup> Yet, considering the current structural pressures it can be argued that the EU has been trying to engage in the great power politics by trying to adapt to geo-economic competition rather than soft balancing.<sup>44</sup> In this regard, geo-economics may be recognized as a separate form of soft balancing in geo-economic competition that better describes the EU relations vis-à-vis U.S. and China. The concept of geo-

<sup>37</sup> Mearsheimer, J.J. and Walt, S.M., 2016. The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior US Grand Strategy. *Foreign Aff.*, 95, p.70.

<sup>38</sup> Mearsheimer, 'Why Is Europe Peaceful Today?'

<sup>39</sup> Wilson, 'E.H. Carr's The Twenty Years' Crisis: Appearance and Reality in World Politics', 117.

<sup>40</sup> Pape, 'Soft Balancing against the United States'.

<sup>41</sup> Pape.

<sup>42</sup> Rosato, 'Europe's Troubles'.

<sup>43</sup> 'Soft Balancing Between Friends: Transforming Transatlantic Relations'.

<sup>44</sup> Roberts, Choer Moraes, and Ferguson, 'Toward a Geoeconomic Order in International Trade and Investment'.



economic is broadly described as “the entanglement of international economics, geopolitics, and strategy.”<sup>45</sup> In other words, although the concept geo-economic competition has been used mostly in the context of trade and protection of industries, it examines transformation of relationship between market and security as well as economics and society as a result of structural pressures. Consequently, in the next part on constructivism, I show how these “realpolitik” pressures may be deflected by norms.

### 3.2. Constructivism

From the structural perspective, constructivism offers a normative approach to study international relations that diverges from the positivist and rationalist foundations of realism and emphasizes intersubjectivity as well as the processes of social productions of reality through which meanings are constituted.<sup>46</sup> To explore a mutually constitutive relationship between agents and structures, constructivism focuses on the study of social norms as an aspect of social structure. Defined as “appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity”<sup>47</sup>, norms serve as an analytical tool through which constructivist study how norms emerged from actions and beliefs but also how they direct the state’s behavior which in turn again shapes actors’ interests and identity.<sup>48</sup>

#### 3.2.1. EU as a Normative Power

Following the constructivist logic of co-determinative relation between structure and agency,<sup>49</sup> the (self)recognition of the EU as a normative power with the capability to shape what is “normal” imposes limitations on the EU and its policies.<sup>50</sup> Given this, the EU’s economic agenda is also bounded by its normative identity which is translated to its global economic strategy. In EU terms, the normative political economy is based on the notion that the EU seeks to shape the global political economy not out of self-interest, but it wishes to establish rules and regulations that appeal to significant market-oriented players through its set of regulatory norms that include openness to international trade, and limits on capital concentration. This EU’s capacity and legitimacy to shape

<sup>45</sup> ‘War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft | Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs’, 19.

<sup>46</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*.

<sup>47</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, ‘International Norm Dynamics and Political Change’, 891.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Norms and Social Constructivism in International Relations - Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies’.

<sup>49</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, chapter 4.

<sup>50</sup> ‘Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms? - Manners - 2002 - JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies - Wiley Online Library’.

what is normal is entrusted in a belief that the European norms and principles are universal and best practices for everyone that enables them to decide “what is normal” for the others too.<sup>51</sup>

Now, taking norms as “collective expectations about proper behavior for a given identity” or social knowledge about causal relationships, it is believed that norms do not only constitute the identity of actors but also regulate their behavior. In this regard, logic of appropriateness would make us expect that as actors’ behavior is regulated by its identities and tied to particular social environment, actors will try to “do the right thing”.<sup>52</sup> Hence, taking the collective normative identity of the EU, it is expected that the EU will respond to international structural changes by following its identity script, thus doubling-down on its value-based approach promoting universal norms to limit further sliding from the post-Cold war value order instead of maximizing or optimizing its given preferences (logic of consequentialism).<sup>53</sup> Yet, such expectations in the context of the EU have proven to be exaggerated as they are greatly influenced by material factors such as power distribution and threat perceptions.<sup>54</sup>

In respect to this, Wendt has argued that material world exists independently from the social world, and that those material factors attain meaning only through social interaction that replicates social norms, beliefs and ideas.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to material factors and how changes in material relations influence the ideational factors in the security and defense realm.<sup>56</sup> Considering this, Mayer and Strickmann, explained the evolution of European defense on the background of the interaction of material and ideational factors. To explain and forecast change, they hypothesized that structural changes in the material world or related shifts in the distribution and affordability of capabilities may lead to different types of change – ideational, normative or identity. Nevertheless, even in this case, the actor’s responses to the structural changes are still retroactively influenced by its identity. Hence, I hypothesize that the EU’s response to the structural changes related to the material world will be too retroactively influenced by the EU normative identity.

In sum, emphasizing the structural changes and the dominance of the structure, I use realism and constructivism as frames for understanding of the EU’s responses to the material-structural

<sup>51</sup> Sjursen, ‘The EU as a “Normative” Power’.

<sup>52</sup> “‘Let’s Argue!’: Communicative Action in World Politics’.

<sup>53</sup> Wagnsson, ‘Divided Power Europe’.

<sup>54</sup> Meyer and Strickmann, ‘Solidifying Constructivism’.

<sup>55</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*.

<sup>56</sup> Meyer and Strickmann, ‘Solidifying Constructivism’.

changes. Now, in the empirical part, I examine proposed realist and constructivist hypotheses against the domestic and foreign policy adaptations in the EU. Concretely, I focus on the EU's security and defense policy as well as on the cases of the EU's Green Deal and competition policy as parts of its industrial policy to demonstrate how the EU combines the security and economic agenda in response to the security competition. The expectations are that while the material-structural pressures lead to incentives stimulating deeper security as well as economic cooperation, these policies fail to produce outcomes that would be impactful in terms of power. Similarly, it is anticipated that the EU does not engage in either internal nor external balancing that would prompt it to build relative power and form alliances, for instance with the US, to take up the existing order. Relatedly, the anticipations are that even though the EU will not follow the logic of appropriateness by doubling down on its normative approach, its response to the material-structural changes in world politics is shaped by EU norms.

#### 4. Brief Note on Method

Methodologically, the thesis draws on several personal interviews conducted with high and lower ranking officials from various institutions that helped me to frame the discussion on the EU and its global role. The interviewees were from following institutions: The European Council, European Commission Directorate Generals dealing with Competition and Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs; then Permanent Representations of Germany, and Digital Europe. Additionally, in the main empirical I draw on primary data which consists of relevant academic literature, policy documents, statements, white papers and reports produced by governments and government agencies produced predominantly in the past two years. The primary data sources are supplemented by other relevant material produced by various policy research centers and leading magazines and journals.

Furthermore, in terms of methodology, each case study consists of two-levels of analysis – discursive and policy analysis. The discursive part provides a snapshot of the EU discourse emphasizing the role of ideas and discourse in the process of European integration.<sup>57</sup> Hence, I will understand and focus on discourse as a system or regimes of “principles, knowledges, values and truths that circulate in the discourses’ material practices and disciplinary mechanisms” through which knowledge is produced.<sup>58</sup> Here discursive power lies in its ability to produce subjects,

<sup>57</sup> ‘The Role of Ideas and Discourse in European Integration, 1.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Davison, A. et al. ‘Discourse analysis’ in *Interpreting Politics*, Sloan Publishing, 2019.’.

subjectivities, and social orders represented in everyday social practices which constructs and constraints certain actions and social processes.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, the policy analysis part takes up multidisciplinary inquiry to look at policy creation and critically assesses the policy proposal as well as their alignment with the broader discourse.<sup>60</sup> Given the early stage of the formation of the European role, this distinction between discursive and policy analysis will better show that while some indications are more present on the discursive rather than actual policy level, they are no less significant for understanding the changing practices and the long-standing security and geopolitical landscape of Europe.

## 5. Common Foreign and Security Cooperation and Principled Pragmatism

It has been long believed that Europe is “the most important, if not the most important, normative powers in the world” as expressed by former Commission-president Barroso. Therefore, the question of the role of the military has always been examined against the “normative”<sup>61</sup> or “civilian”<sup>62</sup> identity of Europe which is generally not seen as compatible with military power in traditional sense. Despite these concerns, the efforts to build up common security and defense policy (CSDP) has been (re)emerging, but rather with a focus on actions that advance human rights, democracy, rule of law and market economic principles rather than military capacities.<sup>63</sup>

Systematically looking for patterns, the major developments in CSDP cooperation has been (re)emerging especially in the aftermath of the big structural changes altering European security landscape.<sup>64</sup> This pattern was also emphasized in the Saint-Malo Joint Declaration on European Defense which called on the Union to “have the capacity for autonomous action, backed by the credible military forces [...] in order to respond to international crises.”<sup>65</sup> Correspondingly, moving several decades forward the same need to address structural challenges and build up independent capacities remained as the new EU Global Strategy (EUGS) in 2016 presented by the European External Action Service (EEAS) demonstrated: “existential crisis, within and beyond the European

<sup>59</sup> ‘Davison, A. et al. 'Discourse analysis' in *Interpreting Politics*, Sloan Publishing, 2019.’.

<sup>60</sup> Dunn, *Public Policy Analysis*, 2–5.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms? - Manners - 2002 - JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies - Wiley Online Library’.

<sup>62</sup> Duchene, “‘Europe’s Role in World Peace” [in] *Europe Tomorrow*’.

<sup>63</sup> Whitman, *Normative Power Europe*.

<sup>64</sup> Tardy, ‘Does European Defence Really Matter?’, 121.

<sup>65</sup> Tardy, 121.

Union”<sup>66</sup> and the need for Europeans to take “greater responsibility for our security. We must be ready and able to deter, respond to, and protect ourselves against external threats.”<sup>67</sup>

Given this, the strategy has introduced the term of the concept of “strategic autonomy” which was supposed to symbolize the EU shouldering greater responsibility for its well-being and security.<sup>68</sup> Accompanied by Macron’s call for protection of Europeans in respect to “China, Russia and even the United States,”<sup>69</sup> by forming a “true European army”<sup>70</sup>, Europe’s will for security propelled shortly in the form of Coordinated and Annual Review on Defense, PESCO as well as the European Defense Fund worth 13 billion Euros for R&D projects in the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027<sup>71,72</sup> with a goal to build a more independent Europe.<sup>73</sup> Yet, once again the vision of the autonomous Europe in terms of security and defense seem to be struggling from there for several reasons – US opposition, member states unwillingness for security cooperation, and lack of actual capacities.<sup>74</sup> It just enough to consider that in the domain of cybersecurity, which importance has been acknowledged on all political levels, the EU’s cyber defense capabilities equal to 52 employees in European Cybercrime Centre while the only the US Cyber Command’s and Cyber National Mission Force Headquarters have close to 2,000 staff members.<sup>75</sup>

Nonetheless, despite the limits of the CSDP, the EU had to find a way how to address new global challenges and to develop its capacities: “If we do not develop a European approach to regulate new technologies, China and the U.S. will do it without us. They will also take the lead in global policies if Europe doesn’t change the way it thinks about defense, diplomacy and itself,”<sup>76</sup> the report on Global Challenges in 2030 by the European research agency argued. For this reason, the concept of “strategic autonomy” has migrated and been streamlined as a part of the new industrial strategy referring to decreasing dependency on the others in many industries and sectors, which should be

<sup>66</sup> “Shared Vision, Common A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy,” 7,

<sup>67</sup> “Shared Vision, Common A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy”, 19.

<sup>68</sup> “Shared Vision, Common A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy,” accessed November 10, 2018, [https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_review\\_web.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> ‘Macron Calls for “true European Army” to Defend against Russia, US, China’.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Macron Calls for “true European Army” to Defend against Russia, US, China’.

<sup>71</sup> ‘European Commission - PRESS RELEASES - Press Release - European Commission Welcomes First Operational Steps towards a European Defence Union \*’.

<sup>72</sup> ‘European Commission - PRESS RELEASES - Press Release - EU Budget: Stepping up the EU’s Role as a Security and Defence Provider’.

<sup>73</sup> Tardy, ‘Does European Defence Really Matter?’

<sup>74</sup> ‘Project MUSE - The European Common Security and Defense Concept: Opportunities and Challenges’.

<sup>75</sup> ‘Visegrad Insight: European Futures’.

<sup>76</sup> “Global Trends to 2030: Challenges and Choices for Europe”.

applied to sustainable economic initiatives only.<sup>77</sup> In this way, the EC has found a way how to basically bypass the member states unwillingness for security integration and build European autonomy through initiatives as a part of industrial policy and Digital Single Market that have the potential to increase European capacities.<sup>78</sup> Or as Julian King, Commissioner in charge of the Security Union, put it: “The resilience of our digital infrastructure is critical to government, business, the security of our personal data and the functioning of our democratic institutions....”<sup>79</sup>

This approach to structural challenges could be grasped through the concept of “principled pragmatism” which has become the new guiding principle of the EU foreign and security policy: “principled pragmatism will guide our external action in the years ahead.”<sup>80</sup> Given the pragmatic turn, it has been argued by scholars that this principle is a result of changing international environment and point to certain hybridization of the EU as an actor pointing towards “contingent liberalism” meaning that the will remain to be “guided by its liberal values, but then adapt its foreign policy actions to existing circumstances and power balances.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, Sven Biscop reasoned that the principled pragmatism indicates return to *realpolitik*. In this case, *realpolitik* was not to be comprehended as the Machiavellian end justifying means. Instead, the principle represented a “vision of the future and a guide for how to get there,” and was understood as a “*realpolitik* with European characteristics.”<sup>82</sup> Although the last evaluation may be too strong, the concept of principled pragmatism suggests a shift from promotion of moral or normative power aspirations to assertion that interest and values go together but it remained questionable what it actually means in actual policies.<sup>83</sup> Hence, although the EU has boosted its internal balancing via its rhetoric, the CSDP fails to deliver anything meaningful that would address its concerns in relation to China, for instance.

Summing up, while there are several instances over the EU history when the need for the common security and defense cooperation (re)emerged in response to structural changes, the CSDP never managed to fully materialize to considerable proportions. In this regard, although the European defense and security cooperation has been experiencing a resurgence in the form of PESCO and

<sup>77</sup> ‘Move Fast, Build to Last’.

<sup>78</sup> European Commission - PRESS RELEASES - Press release - Questions and Answers: coordinated plan for Artificial Intelligence “made in Europe”}

<sup>79</sup> ‘European Commission - PRESS RELEASES - Press Release - European Commission Recommends Common EU Approach to the Security of 5G Networks’.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Shared Vision, Common A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign And Security Policy’, 8.

<sup>81</sup> ‘Resilience and the Role of the European Union in the World: Contemporary Security Policy: Vol 41, No 2’.

<sup>82</sup> Biscop, ‘The EU Global Strategy: *Realpolitik* with European Characteristics’.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Resilience and the Role of the European Union in the World: Contemporary Security Policy: Vol 41, No 2’.

other initiatives that contributed to building of the European autonomy by building and strengthening common institutions, the common capacities remain limited also due to general unwillingness of member states for security cooperation. Hence, in the light of this, in the following chapters I establish how the EU is trying to pursue its strategy streamlining European sovereignty through other policies which belong to the supranational competencies of the EU and through which the EU has potential to shape global politics.

## 6. European Sovereignty as a Response to Geopolitical Challenges

The European “strategic sovereignty”<sup>84</sup> has become a brand of political and policy thinking. This thinking is also presented in the promise of the new EC President Ursula von der Leyen to lead a “geopolitical commission”<sup>85</sup> which mission is based on a premise that Europe must be more assertive in pursuing its interests globally, especially in its relation to the big powers like the U.S. and China and to be the “guardian of multilateralism.”<sup>86</sup> This strategy emerged as a response to tensions generated by globalization – part of which is the major twin digital and ecological transition.<sup>87</sup> However, leading the EU through this transition while trying to remain competitive as a global actor generates a lot of uncertainty considering the shifts in global markets and challenges to the rules-based system.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, lacking military capabilities to pursue this goal, the EU opted for trade as its most powerful policy tool to project its economic power to the geopolitical one.<sup>89</sup> Yet, this approach generates tension among some of the core EU values as we know them. Therefore, in the following subsections, I use the cases of the European Green Deal and the EU’s competition policy to demonstrate how in its efforts to protect its normative power and to respond to the geopolitical shifts and pressures, the EU is negotiating on some of its core principles.

### 6.1. Competition Policy

Competition policy has always been at the heart of the European economic integration.<sup>90</sup> It is an internal market tool safeguarding the proper functioning of the single market so that businesses

<sup>84</sup> ‘Strategic Sovereignty: How Europe Can Regain the Capacity to Act | European Council on Foreign Relations’.

<sup>85</sup> ‘The von Der Leyen Commission’.

<sup>86</sup> ‘The von Der Leyen Commission’.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Move Fast, Build to Last’.

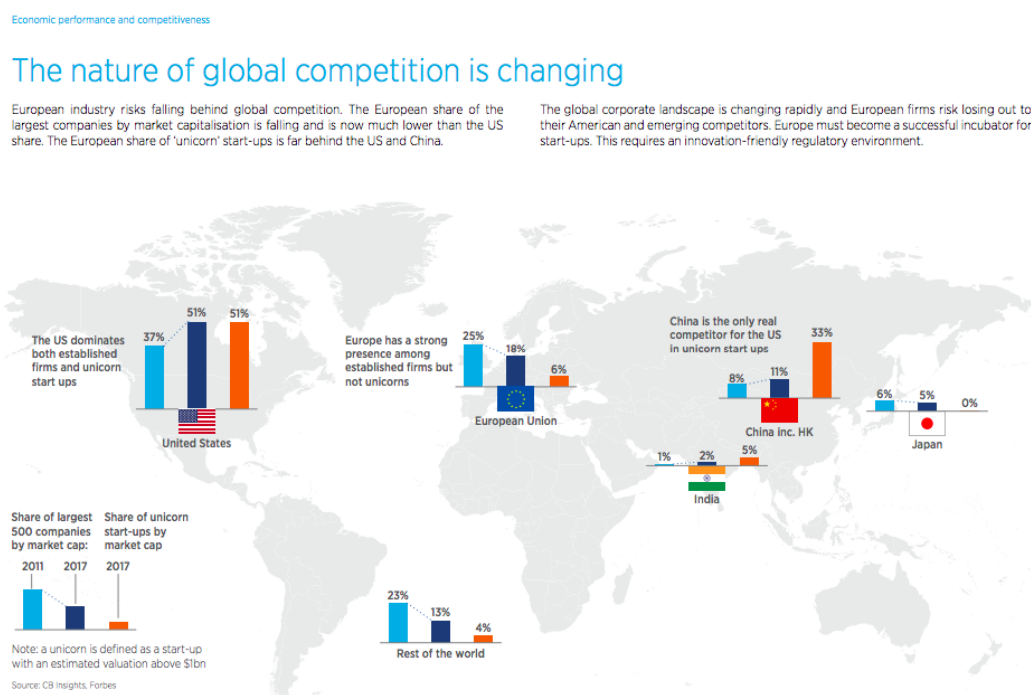
<sup>88</sup> ‘Keeping the EU Competitive in a Green and Digital World’.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Speech in the European Parliament Plenary Session, Ursula von Der Leyen President-Elect of the European Commission’.

<sup>90</sup> Damro and Guay, ‘European Competition Policy and Globalization’.

across all member states markets can compete on the equal terms as well as to gain global recognition by enabling the domestic actors to reach the international market while regulating the foreign firms within the single market.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, as the European market continues to lag behind in terms of competitiveness and innovations compared to global players like the U.S. or newly China (Figure 4), the commitment to ensure competitiveness among member states seem to be in conflict with competition which refers to the country's ability to be competitive on the global scale.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, in the light of changing global landscape, the EU's competition policy came under significant pressure. Given this, in this chapter I demonstrate how the EU is trying to strike a balance between competitiveness as a normative value and competition which refers to the country's ability to be competitive on the global scale.<sup>93</sup>

Figure 4: The Nature of Global Competition <sup>94</sup>



### 6.1.1. Putting European Companies on Global Markets

The global economic pressure that the EU is exposed to is best represented in the recent hallmark EU merger case of Siemens-Alstom. Resurfacing old arguments concerning industrial policy, the

<sup>91</sup> Szczepański et al., EU Competition Policy, 1.

<sup>92</sup> 'Why Europe Wants to Change Its Competition Policy'.

<sup>93</sup> 'Why Europe Wants to Change Its Competition Policy'.

<sup>94</sup> European Round Table of Industrialist, 'European Competitiveness and Industry'.



unsuccessful merger of these two rail transport companies, have triggered a discussion about the state-of-the-art of competition policy. The pro-merger France and Germany argued for the need of “national” or “European champions” that will improve European competition, and by extension European economy, against the global rivals.<sup>95</sup> Respectively, both companies, backed up by their governments, argued that the merger would enable them to compete on the global markets and become the rail equivalent of Airbus or Boeing. Specifically, they stressed that the merger of the railway companies was necessary to rebuff the Chinese competition posed by China’s largest train maker – CRRC Corporation Limited which sales present around EUR 30 billion doubling the revenue of Alstom-Siemens.<sup>96</sup> On this account, Bruno Le Maire, French Minister of the Economy and Finance, often argued that that Brussels “obsolete” competition rules did “not allow Europe to create its own industrial champions” and that obstructing the deal “would weaken . . . European industry against China.”<sup>97</sup>

This position strongly supported by France and Germany was faced with the opposition of the EC that blocked the merger. “We can’t build those [European] champions by undermining competition. We cannot build them with mergers that harm competition,”<sup>98</sup> said the M. Vestager, the EC Commissioner for the Competition. The EC reasoning behind this decision quoted that “the merger would have created the undisputed market leader in some signaling markets and a dominant player in very high-speed trains,”<sup>99</sup> thus reducing competitiveness instead of enhancing competition by creating a level-playing field in the interest of consumers. Following this blockage of the merger on the basis of its “incompatibility with EU’s internal market,” many member states were left dissatisfied.<sup>100</sup> German officials expressed that “they haven’t understood the way China works ... (it) is not a market economy. There’s this EU bubble thing, they haven’t seen the global tectonic shifts.”<sup>101</sup> Similarly, French President Emmanuel Macron who advocates for the “Europe that protects” sees the weakness of the EU in its rule-based system against the threat to job market in Europe from China.

Nonetheless, while China is often named directly as a challenger, the emergence of digital technologies and platform economies with roots especially in the U.S. but also China are

<sup>95</sup> ‘The EU’s Industrial-Policy Fans Want to Go Back to the ’70s’.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Explainer: Why Siemens-Alstom Rail Merger Is Creating European Tensions - Reuters’.

<sup>97</sup> Toplensky, ‘Alstom-Siemens Tie-up Hangs on EU Approach to China Threat’.

<sup>98</sup> Toplensky.

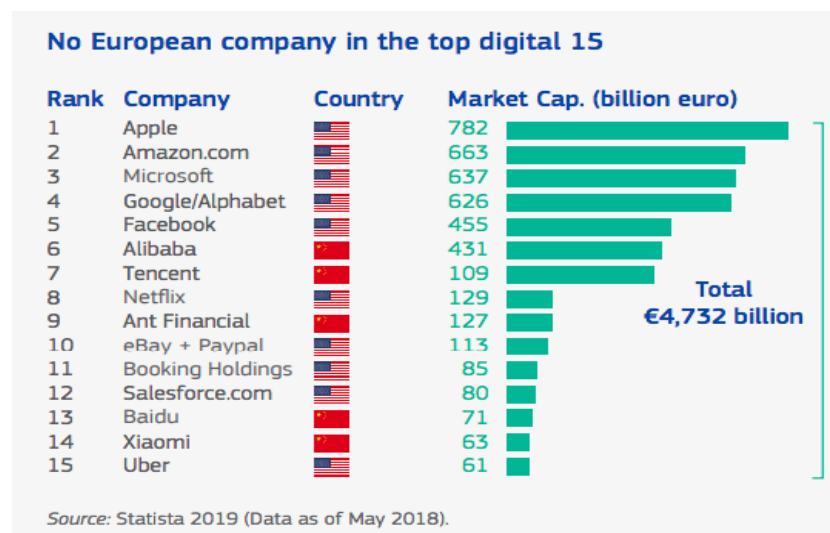
<sup>99</sup> ‘Mergers’.

<sup>100</sup> ‘Why Europe Wants to Change Its Competition Policy’.

<sup>101</sup> ‘Explainer’.

challenging the economic competitiveness of the European industry on the global and European scale as well. Platform economies like Alphabet, Amazon, and Facebook with large user base generating vast amount of data present a new type of challenge to competition because of their capacity to act as gatekeepers to certain markets and distort competition. It is notable that none of the European companies are represented in the top 15 digital companies worldwide (Figure 5). Hence, given the growing pressure to manage the platform economies on a broader scale and create space for new potential European digital companies, the new EC is preparing a new EU Industrial Strategy facilitating “more digital, clean, circular and globally competitive EU industry” by boosting EU’s regulatory powers that will overcome the single market challenges such as market fragmentation and scaling. The harmonization of such rules for single market in a digital age was also outlined in von der Leyen’s speech titled the “Union that strives for more” which introduced the concept of “technological sovereignty” defined as “Europe’s ability to define its own rules and values in the digital age [...] European technological sovereignty is not defined against anyone else, but by focusing on the needs of Europeans and of the European social model. The EU will remain open to anyone willing to play by European rules and meet European standards, regardless of where they are based.”<sup>102</sup> Thus, the concept integrates competition aspect together with digitalization by emphasizing the necessity to build a resilient infrastructures and communication networks in order to enhance the EU as a “strong, independent and purposeful digital player” that has the capacity to shape digital solutions globally.<sup>103</sup>

Figure 5: Top 15 digital companies in the world has no European company <sup>104</sup>



<sup>102</sup> European Commission, ‘Communication Shaping Europe’s Digital Future’.

<sup>103</sup> European Commission.

<sup>104</sup> European Political Strategy Centre, ‘EU Industrial Policy After Siemens-Alstom: Finding a New Balance after Protectionism’.

### 6.1.2. Technological Sovereignty: Levelling the Playing Field

Initial moves toward the EU's so-called technological sovereignty started to emerge on ministerial conference in December 2018 when a group of nineteen member states pushed for a new industrial strategy that will enable European industry to be more competitive on the global market. In the plan, they urged the EU to adopt “comprehensive and assertive industrial strategy that takes into account the specific needs of industries and regions”.<sup>105</sup> The proposal called upon the EU to select specific European industries that prioritize those that “most directly linked to improving global productivity, fighting climate change, and enhancing technological development”.<sup>106</sup> Selected industries will then not only have its own action plan, but they will receive aid in the form of EU funds and policies from competition to taxation. The appetite for adaptation of competition policy to contemporary global changes has transformed into concrete policy proposals and measures have been outlined during the Juncker's Commission in a document presenting strategic priorities for the next five years to the European Council.<sup>107</sup> Apart from priorities emphasizing the importance of boosting the research and innovation in relation to artificial intelligence and digitalization in general, the report presents non-binding recommendations on new rules regarding competition, foreign direct investment, and corporate taxation in the digital economy out of which some like the FDI Regulation have already been adopted. Nonetheless, as it became clear that the block is not able to duplicate hyperscale platforms like Google, Facebook and Amazon, it is believed that the EU can protect and advance the European industry rather through different market measures that ensure the level playing field for European businesses. In this regard, the competition law came into the game as a tool which may contribute to the level playing field by its application to online businesses as well.

Given this, the von der Leyen's Commission also urged by the member states has also started to act. The Commission launched an evaluation and review of the aptness of EU competition rules for the digital age (2020-2023) and launched a sector inquiry (2020). These include a review of rules for horizontal and vertical agreements, state aid rules as well as the “fitness” of the market definition notice.<sup>108</sup> Here, the biggest challenge for defining the market power has become digitalization and data (access, pooling and sharing) as the key production factor. The relevant

<sup>105</sup> ‘19 EU Countries Call for New Antitrust Rules to Create “European Champions” – EURACTIV.Com’.

<sup>106</sup> ‘19 EU Countries Call for New Antitrust Rules to Create “European Champions” – EURACTIV.Com’.

<sup>107</sup> European Commission, ‘Preparing for a More United, Stronger and More Democratic Union in an Increasingly Uncertain World’.

<sup>108</sup> ‘Defining Markets in a New Age’.

market definition is essential when identifying products and undertakings that may compete directly in the business either on the supply or demand side and in recognizing potential competition. This has become problematic for identifying competitive restraints as a part of relevant market definition especially in businesses that offer “free” services to the customers in exchange for their data. Hence, this review process has become crucial for member states because it may influence the conditions under which certain key member state-led projects under the Commission’s 2014 Important Projects of Common European Interest may continue. As a result of this, many member states including France, Germany, Italy and Poland wanted to speed up the process, so they wrote a letter to Vestager not to obstruct the competition law reforms. Again, reasoning with a change in global competition, the countries called for the modernization of the competition to rules to address the threat posed by the countries outside of the EU. Seeing the big digital platforms as market disruptors, in the letter they urged Vestager to go after them “without unnecessary delay, in order to avoid irreversible distortions in competition on digital markets.”<sup>109</sup>

In parallel to this, the EU developed a new policy strategy named A Europe Fit for a Digital Age which was introduced as a part of the von der Leyen’s geopolitical agenda in charge with the Competition Commissioner Vestager who has become an executive president of this portfolio. The portfolio streamlines the importance to Europe’s “technological sovereignty” out of which the most notable strategies are the Digital and Data Sharing strategy. The Digital Strategy that aim to strike a balance between competition and competitiveness – enabling firms to reach scale to be competitive on a world markets and defending European consumers and businesses. One of such key strategy documents is the EU strategy called “Shaping Europe’s Digital Future” that introduces concrete policy proposals in line with the technological sovereignty that try to tackle the competition problem and objects to establish “European data space based on European rules and values.”<sup>110</sup> The Digital Strategy introduces measures that encourage competition in digital markets by reinforcing the oversight and harmonization of rules and standards governing platform economies and information service providers within the EU. Broadly speaking this will include measures in the areas of cybersecurity, taxation, finance (digital currencies), media, and climate neutrality of circular electronics. Additionally, the new European Data Strategy presents data related policy measures that aims to make Europe a world leader in an agile data economy. The most notable measures include a plan to introduce legislative framework for data governance and Data Act that aim to manage the data usage rights and fashion voluntary data sharing among

<sup>109</sup> ‘Letter to Vestager on Behalf of the German, Italian, Polish and French Ministries’.

<sup>110</sup> European Commission, ‘Communication Shaping Europe’s Digital Future’.

businesses. Then, the EU revision of competition rules in a fashion that they would directly target the big tech companies by adjustment of Horizontal Cooperation Guidelines by providing guidance on data sharing and pooling provisions. Thirdly, the data strategy aims to boost the European technological sovereignty by building “High Impact Project on European data spaces and federated cloud infrastructures” that would lead to integration by establishment of European governance systems for cloud infrastructures. Lastly, the strategy promotes creation of the “common European data spaces” in strategic sectors that will be available to use in order to contribute to the leveraging of playing field and incentivizing innovation.

In sum, the Commission’s proposals on how to advance the European competition and competitiveness by Digital and Data Sharing Strategies balance between the EU as a normative power and the need to remain competitive on global scale. Here, coming back to the Siemens-Alstom case, we may observe that the Commission’s policy strategy is not limited to mergers and competition policy but approaches the competition from a much broader perspective. The Siemens-Alstom merger would not enhance competitiveness nor provide European firms an access to expanding markets in China or enable them to be on the same level as state-subsidized firms. Instead, the Commissions strategy targets market fragmentation by approaching the single market with a goal to deepen and widen the European internal market in line with the European values by increasing standardization and harmonization of the obligations of relevant actors in order to “allow for the deployment of interoperable technologies respecting Europe’s rules, and promote Europe’s approach and interests on the global stage.” What is more, in this regard we may understand the need to remain competitive on the global scale also as a security imperative that enables the EU to address the security concerns through deeper and wider integration leading to more comprehensive single market.

## 6.2. The European Green Deal

The EU has established itself as the global leader on climate action.<sup>111</sup> In December 2019 the new EC presented and adopted the European Green Deal (EGD) outlining its ambitious plan to become climate neutral by 2050, making the EU the first to adopt the Paris Agreement climate objectives.<sup>112</sup> What is more, this deal has also become the first major policy of the new EC signaling the integration of geopolitical considerations with economic interests. Nevertheless, while the deal

<sup>111</sup> Dupont, ‘The EU’s Collective Securitisation of Climate Change’.

<sup>112</sup> European Commission, ‘The European Green Deal’.

is built on the discourse of climate action and protection, the protectionist policies hidden in the EU climate agenda aim to leverage the EU position against the U.S. and China, the two largest polluters. Given this, in this part I show how due to increasing security competition, the EU has decided to boost its competitiveness on the global level by doubling down on their environmental standards and using them as trade barriers, thus moving away from being the “poster state” of climate action.

With the emergence of the climate change as a security concern at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the EU started to play a prime role as a “collective agent of securitizations”.<sup>113</sup> Postulating climate change as a threat through speech acts, the EU has established itself as a significant discursive power on climate agenda by successfully securitizing climate change as a security threat and placing it on the agenda of international politics.<sup>114</sup> Naturally, the EU leadership has experienced setbacks, especially in the aftermath of UN Climate Change Conference<sup>15</sup> in Copenhagen when the block failed to form coalitions for a new agreement.<sup>115</sup> However, as the block abandoned its normative strategy and later switched to more pragmatic strategies, EU’s recognition climbed again and was able to compete with the U.S. and China which often dominated the policy creation advancing their alternative institutional models.<sup>116</sup> In this regard, the EU’s fundamental decision implement the Paris agreement climate goals marks a shift in the energy policy and puts the EU climate diplomacy on the map as a disruptor of the status quo on trade and climate policy.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, given the nature of the climate change which calls for a unified and collective action, the securitization of climate has not only led to international climate action but also to the advancement of the EU as an international actor and linking climate action to market competencies.<sup>118</sup>

In this spirit, the recent adoption of the EGD has ascertained the EU as the discursive leader of the climate agenda. The deal aspires to “transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use.”<sup>119</sup> Illustrating the importance of the goal, in her official remarks, von der Leyen, has compared the deal to the “Europe’s man on the moon moment.”<sup>120</sup> The goal of reconciliation of the “economy

<sup>113</sup> Dupont, ‘The EU’s Collective Securitisation of Climate Change’.

<sup>114</sup> Dupont.

<sup>115</sup> ‘Leader, Bridge-Builder or “Hobbled Giant”?’

<sup>116</sup> ‘The European Union as a Global Climate Leader’, 445.

<sup>117</sup> Dupont, ‘The EU’s Collective Securitisation of Climate Change’.

<sup>118</sup> Dupont.

<sup>119</sup> European Commission, ‘The European Green Deal’, 2.

<sup>120</sup> ‘President von Der Leyen on the European Green Deal’.

with our planet,”<sup>121</sup> should be achieved by generating the “green investment wave”<sup>122</sup> worth 1 trillion euro. Although the primary benefactors of the deal are the general public, the deal has become an integral part of the new EU industrial strategy which a goal is also supposed to ascertain the future of the European economy – “We will help our economy to be a global leader by moving first and moving fast.”<sup>123</sup> Consequently, this should lead to stronger Europe, where “we [Europeans] will be the exporters of knowledge and the technology and will be the frontrunner then.”<sup>124</sup>

### 6.2.1. Green Protectionism

This incentive to build up the European climate policy as a part of the industrial policy has emerged not only to make the European economy more competitive internally, but to address the structural changes within the system. Built around the twin transition – digital and green – the strategy aims to boost the European competitiveness while also upholding the European values.<sup>125</sup> Thus, linking the competitiveness to European sovereignty, Commission has started to talk about “strategic autonomy” also as a means of industrial protectionism.<sup>126</sup>

On the policy level, the EGD boils down to concrete and comprehensive measures. Under this framework, the EU put forward two critical protectionist-like conditions on its trading partners which are likely to shape global trade. Firstly, the EU aims to implement a “Border Adjustment Mechanism” that is supposed to tackle the EU concerns regarding “carbon leakage” related to companies in the carbon industry that outsource their production outside of the EU due to the costs imposed by the EU. To avoid this, the proposed mechanism would inflict import charges on the goods coming from countries that did not implement corresponding climate policies.<sup>127</sup> Secondly, another policy proposed under the EGD requires EU trade partners to adopt stricter provisions towards climate policy. Ostensibly, this will require the EU trading partners to acknowledge the Paris Climate Accords as a part of the mutual deal.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>121</sup> ‘President von Der Leyen on the European Green Deal’.

<sup>122</sup> ‘President von Der Leyen on the European Green Deal’.

<sup>123</sup> European Commission, ‘The European Green Deal’.

<sup>124</sup> ‘EU’s Von der Leyen to Pose a Climate Challenge to China, U.S.’

<sup>125</sup> ‘Move Fast, Build to Last’.

<sup>126</sup> ‘A New Industrial Strategy for Europe’.

<sup>127</sup> European Commission, ‘The European Green Deal’, 5.

<sup>128</sup> European Commission, 20.

Hence, in an effort to persuade its trading partners to adhere to the EGD, the current EU climate diplomacy strategy aims to leverage on reality that as the world's largest economy it has the potential to shape the global economic rules. This strategy has been also presented by the executive Vice-President of the EC for Green Deal, Frans Timmermans, during European Parliament hearings where he noted that “as an economic giant we have tremendous leverage in our trade relations,” and that the instruments like the carbon border tax are here “to level the playing field for European products if other countries do not go as far as us or refuse to go in the right direction” and follow the EU in becoming less depended on the carbon.<sup>129</sup>

### **6.2.2. International Response**

Considering global relations, the concept of “strategic autonomy” is crucial as many recent events have greatly exposed European vulnerability to exercise their sovereignty.<sup>130</sup> This is particularly true for the transatlantic relationship that have shown to challenge the EU. There has been a long animosity between the EU and US believing that their relationship will lead to security community disintegration.<sup>131</sup> Especially, the hostility of Trump administration towards multilateralism, international institutions, divergence on the policy questions as well as the US inclination to restrict European sovereignty by leveraging the common alliance<sup>132</sup> has triggered reactions on the European side putting down the Trump “stupid” and calling for “true European army”.<sup>133</sup>

While this move away from the US would invalidate the realist claims on international cooperation and external balancing, however, the EU-US relations are showing to be much more complex and based on the exchange between interests and values. Despite that, in contrast to the previous EU Commission, von der Leyen takes more transatlantic view as in her statement she stated that: “I am looking forward to working with President Trump on the opportunities and challenges ahead of us. I am convinced that we can engage in a positive US-EU agenda in trade, as well as on technology, energy and much more besides.” In terms of the EGD this includes doubling the import of liquefied natural gas (LNG) as of 2020 from the U.S. which shows rather pragmatic von der Leyen's approach towards the U.S.<sup>134</sup> Yet, despite the higher cost of LNG, this still goes with

<sup>129</sup> ‘Questions & Answers’.

<sup>130</sup> Leonard and Shapiro, ‘STRATEGIC SOVEREIGNTY: HOW EUROPE CAN REGAIN THE CAPACITY TO ACT’.

<sup>131</sup> Koschut, “‘Unsuccessful’ Disintegration’.

<sup>132</sup> Leonard and Shapiro, ‘STRATEGIC SOVEREIGNTY: HOW EUROPE CAN REGAIN THE CAPACITY TO ACT’.

<sup>133</sup> ‘Macron Calls for “True European Army” to Defend against Russia, US, China – EURACTIV.Com’.

<sup>134</sup> Simon, “‘Freedom Gas’”.



the idea of Europe running on sustainable energy rather than importing energy from Russia for instance: “There is no point in only reducing greenhouse gas emissions at home, if we increase the import of CO<sub>2</sub> from abroad.”<sup>135</sup>

In contrast to the US, emerging states as new global players present a more straightforward challenge to the European economy. In relation to them, the new industrial strategy emphasized the “distortive effects caused by foreign subsidies within the single market”<sup>136</sup> as one of the driving reasons behind the proposed policies. Referring to the impact on emerging economies and China in particular,<sup>137</sup> Franc Timmermans in a press conference again emphasized that the EU is willing to double down on its value-based approach in order for the EGD to succeed:

“...if we [Europe] do not address the potential issue of carbon leakage, then you do not get to higher goals and you weaken the competitive edge of the European industry so [...] the best way to avoid the Carbon Adjustment Mechanism is to make sure you are going in the same way that you also may take measures that take you to conformity with the Paris agreements [...] but if it isn’t done, I think we are absolutely right and absolutely in conformity with international rules to protect European industry if we do take those measures [...] but we will protect the European industry if it takes the historic step of decarbonizing in the next generation.”<sup>138</sup>

Hence, considering the new state global economy which cannot be separated from security competition, the EU is also trying to build up capacity to stand up to more centralized powers, such as Russia and China by doubling down on the environmental standards aimed at the reduction of carbon dioxide which they know is extremely hard to realize. These policies include regulations on energy, air quality and water, finance and must be streamlined across all policy domains. Considering the challenges connected with their implementation, von der Leyen emphasizes that Europe needs to “lead by example” in order to “convince others like India or China to join, we have to be a role model [...] We have to be united and bold, step forward and prove that change is possible, and that it is of benefit for the people and for the economy.”<sup>139</sup>

<sup>135</sup> ‘Davos 2020: Ursula von Der Leyen Warns China to Price Carbon or Face Tax | Financial Times’.

<sup>136</sup> ‘European Industrial Strategy Package’.

<sup>137</sup> von Lucke, ‘Principled Pragmatism in Climate Policy?’, 24.

<sup>138</sup> #CarbonBorderTax - Timmermans Says That Europe Will Protect Its Industry.

<sup>139</sup> ‘Von Der Leyen Presents the Green Deal to European Council’.

Nevertheless, this strategy brings up tension right at the core of the EU's trade policy. Build on the principles of openness and multilateralism expressed in its ambitious trade agenda, the EU has been working with the WTO to ensure openness and fair based rules.<sup>140</sup> But now, the EU's climate agenda challenges these values by putting forward protectionist policies wrapped in a green paper: "Emissions must have a price that changes our behavior. To complement this work, and to ensure our companies can compete on a level-playing field, I will introduce a Carbon Border Tax to avoid carbon leakage [...] This is the European way: we are ambitious. We leave nobody behind. And we offer perspectives."<sup>141</sup> Because of this, many leaders of emerging economies who do not want to lose the access to the European market has translated discourse of the "climate emergency" in Europe and the EGD into a trade protectionism and oppression. Some of them went as far as calling the new "environmental stewardship" as "colonialism".<sup>142</sup> However, in order for the EGD succeed internationally, the EU will need the recognition of major countries as well as to be at the forefront of this change.

What is more, the intensity of the security competition is also underpinned by the reality that the EU is doubling down on becoming standard setter in environmental policy domestically. Recently, the EC introduced a proposal for European Climate Law which aims to write the EGD into the law, thus making the climate transition potentially irretrievable despite the internal difficulties among member states and exemption of Poland from EGD<sup>143</sup> on what von der Leyen insisted that: "It is acceptable for a country that has come a long way and has many coal-dependent regions, [...] but it will not change the timeframe of the Commission."<sup>144</sup>

### **6.2.3. EU as a Climate Leader: Boosting Internal Capacities**

To anchor its position as the leader of climate agenda and to boost its competitiveness, the EU is also undertaking other cross-portfolio initiatives integrating its geopolitical considerations with economic interests. These include investments in renewable technology where EU companies own 40 percent of patents, then issuance of the green bonds which are used to fund environmentally oriented projects in which the EU is leading (Figure 6) as well as projects like Just Transition Mechanism that unlock investments in a total of at least 1 trillion euro to ensure transition from

<sup>140</sup> 'EU Position in World Trade - Trade - European Commission'.

<sup>141</sup> 'Opening Statement Ursula von Der Leyen European Parliament'.

<sup>142</sup> 'MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on the European Green Deal'.

<sup>143</sup> 'European Climate Law | Climate Action'.

<sup>144</sup> Morgan, 'EU Leaders Claim Victory on 2050 Climate Goal, despite Polish Snub'.

coal industry to green economy. Some of these supporting actions are rather non-traditional, they are seen as critical for the European companies that “must not be penalized by unfair competition. In this chain of transition, we must not see our competitiveness collapse,” Thierry Breton, the Internal Market Commissioner said.<sup>145</sup>

Simultaneously, several projects of strategic interests took a green turn and were put under the framework of Projects of Common European Interest what enabled the member states to disregard the EU competition and state aid rules in order to strengthen the Europe’s industrial power. One of the most ambitious action plans representing this goal of promoting clean energy in the technological sector is the European Batteries Alliance worth 3.2 billion euro.<sup>146</sup> The Battery alliance consists out of cross-border manufacturing projects which goal is to construct a competitive value chain within Europe producing battery cells as it is believed that they “can become a key driver for the EU’s industrial competitiveness and leadership.”<sup>147</sup> Hence, this example shows how the EU managed to combine dilemmas previously described competition policy with the green agenda so that Europe may limit its dependency on the competitors such as China that produces about 70% of lithium-ion batteries<sup>148</sup> and become the leader in clean tech companies among which the EU is well represented (Figure 7).

Putting it altogether, the brief snapshot of the EU discourse shows that the goal of the EGD goes beyond the established discourse on climate securitization and introduces the deal also as a tool integrating EU’s geopolitical considerations with economic interests. Linking the European sovereignty with competitiveness shows the underlying security competition driving policies that aim to uphold the EU as a global actor. Therefore, in the absence of stricter global rules on climate, the EU is using its market size to push through protectionist policies that will also serve their own interest. However, in essence, such measures create a friction within the EU’s normative identity as the leader of the free trade agenda and the EU as a global leader on climate action.

<sup>145</sup> Robert, ‘EU’s Breton Looking into “non-Conventional” Measures to Finance Green Deal’.

<sup>146</sup> ‘European Battery Alliance | Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs’.

<sup>147</sup> ‘Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank’.

<sup>148</sup> Helveston and Nahm, ‘China’s Key Role in Scaling Low-Carbon Energy Technologies’.

Figure 6: Green Bonds Issuance and Sustainability-linked Loan Volume

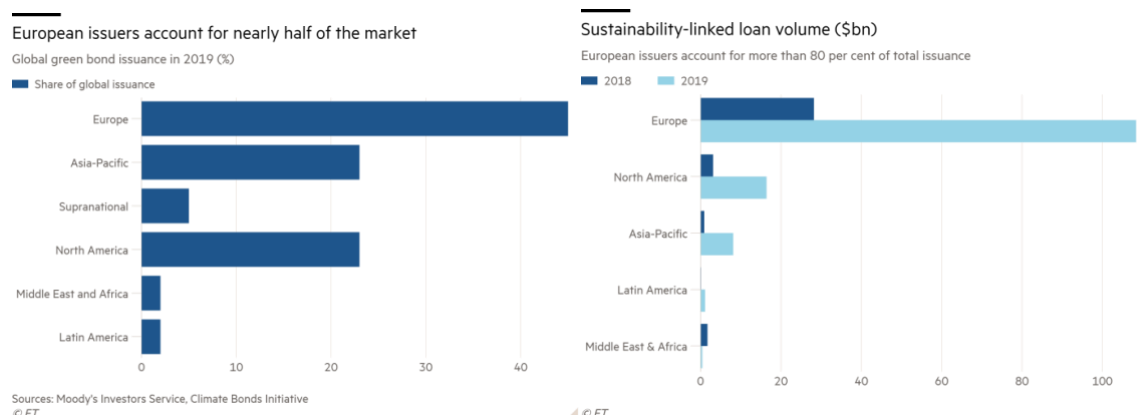
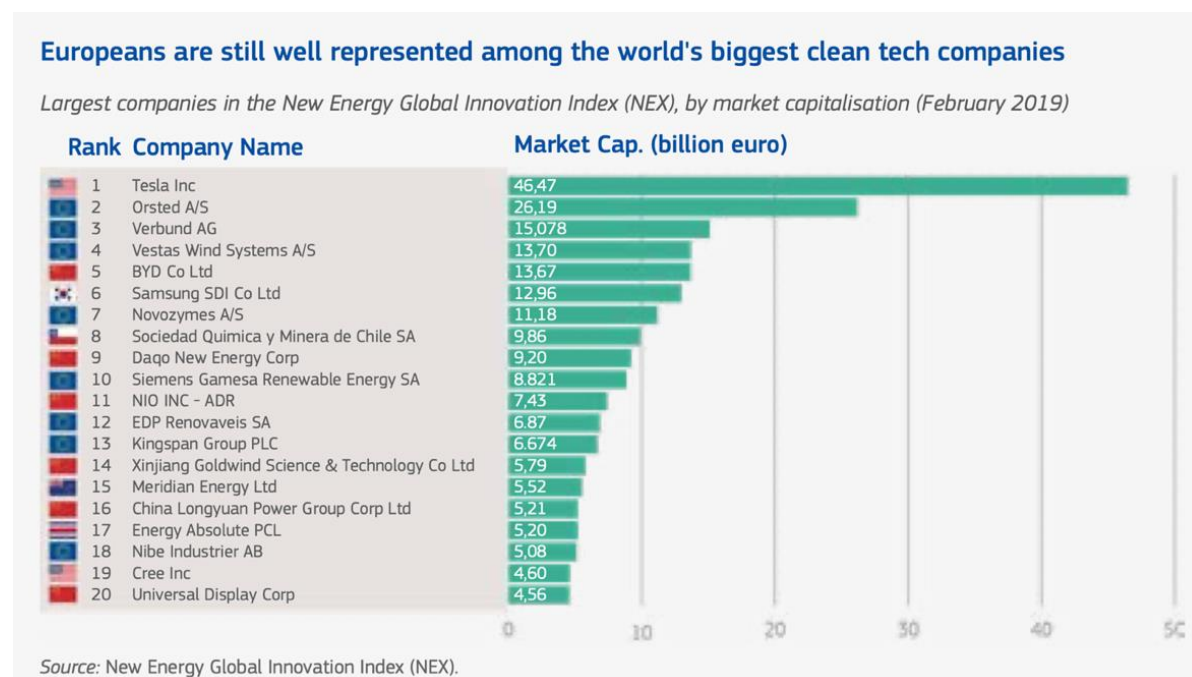


Figure 7: World's Biggest Clean Tech Companies



## 7. Hybridization of the EU: Combining Interests and Values

Today, Europe seems to be often absent from the talks on global competitiveness. This perception has been intensified with changing global relations generating new pressures alongside economic, technological, and political dimensions that generate security concerns. Through the thesis, I argued that as the EU found itself in midst of rapid global change challenging its normative model, the EU uses its economic agenda to advance and protect its normative regime while trying to become more competitive on the global market. Examining these EU efforts to remain a liberal actor, I contrasted realist and constructivist theories as frames for understanding and put forward a theoretical hypothesis through which I examined the EU's response to the structural changes. The discourse and policy analysis have shown that: First, the realist expectation that the EU will focus on the coalition and alliance building with the U.S. is not clearly supported as the discourses point to ideational and value differences that create a rift in the longstanding alliance. Second, shadowing the realist expectations, the empirical evidence has demonstrated that the EU is trying to strengthen its relative economic power as well as to build up militarily usable technologies to become more competitive vis-a-vis other global actors. However, bringing in constructivist lenses, we may observe that their strength is moderated and arbitrated through the normative identity of the EU that deflects the external pressures, thus making them powerless in terms of material power. On the other hand, even the constructivist assumption that the new structural challenges will prompt the EU to double down on the norms may be challenged considering that norms are entangled with relative gains concerns to generate intra-EU policy adjustments that from both the realist perspective as well as the normative perspective are suboptimal.

Here, coming back to the discussion on the concept of “principled pragmatism” as a part of the strategic sovereignty and within related changing character of the European policy, the observation of both realist and constructivist characteristics points to a hybridization of the character of the EU that permutes import of relative power and universal norms for the EU and world politics. Yet, as Biscop pointed out, while this may be perceived like a return to “realpolitik”, the contemporary EU approach based on realist and constructivist elements is not based on the rejection of liberal ideas themselves, but liberal utopianism.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, this tension between the norms and interests within the EU also relates to contested multilateralism which shows that this concept is not limited to international environments only.<sup>150</sup> In this regard, the tension within

<sup>149</sup> Biscop, ‘The EU Global Strategy: Realpolitik with European Characteristics’, 92.

<sup>150</sup> Morse and Keohane, ‘Contested Multilateralism’, 387.

the EU as an international institution marks an extension of contested multilateralism as a framework for understanding that show that actors may be equally contested and conflicted on the basis of the rules and institutionalized practices within an institution.

Relatedly, emphasizing interinstitutional relations, the thesis also exposes the dynamics between the member states and the European Commission. The empirical analysis has shown that it is the member states channel more “realpolitik” pressures into the EU policymaking. This was first done by delegating more power to the EC in the area of security and defense integration which has been long considered the *domaine réservé* of the EU member states. Nevertheless, facing the enduring problems with the EU integration on security issues and mounting structural pressures, the empirical case on the competition policy nicely demonstrates how the debate on security has expanded to other areas, like economy. Hence, given structural factors and the fear of being left behind, it was often the member states that have prompted the EC to put forward certain strategies and action plans to address the rising challenges related to the new geopolitical challenges which try to make the EU more competitive and true to European norms and values at the same time. In this regard, the EC has shown to be great institutional entrepreneur in areas related to digitalization, which lacked high-level political attention and progress by some member states while leaving the EU vulnerable to the external pressures.<sup>151</sup>

The limits of this paper lie in the biases of theoretical and methodological conceptualization of my research that favor structural analysis over other sub-level analysis on national or unit level. The paper marginalizes the inconsistencies and conflicts on the national levels of the EU member states which have shown to be divided across many lines in the past decade – creditors and debtors, East versus West, North versus Southern member states. In this regard, for instance, the EGD has shown to be extremely conflictual and divergent for some member states in Central Europe which demanded concessions for its adoption. Moreover, the paper also does not pay attention to interinstitutional dynamics within the EU institutions themselves, nor to the personal dynamics among leaders. Additionally, in terms of political developments, this paper does not yet account for the consequences of coronavirus pandemic and how it may change the EU or potentially reconfigure the world order. Yet, as initial plans demonstrate, the EU is following its pattern of never letting “serious crisis to go to waste”<sup>152</sup> and seizing the moment by consolidating powers

<sup>151</sup> ‘Export Controls and the US-China Tech War | Mercator Institute for China Studies’.

<sup>152</sup> Bregman, ‘The Neoliberal Era Is Ending. What Comes Next?’

that will enable the EU to become better equipped to face global challenges as well as to shape global politics.

In closing, the world is in geopolitical, geo-economic, and geo-technological transformation – and inevitably so is the European Union. The new hybrid character of the EU with both constructivist and realist elements combining interests and values underpins that the EU is a dynamic institution that is in constant evolution. What is more, this strategic approach indicating the import of relative power and universal norms into the EU's policymaking is not limited to the economic policy only, but may be applied across other foreign policy domains, such as cybersecurity through which the EU engages with the world. As we may be returning to great power politics, Europe's future depends on how it can rise up to its challenges and position itself vis-à-vis other actors on a global level through its policies now, while not knowing how it pays off – it is a grand bargain.

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