

Disentangling leadership dynamics in the EU's external climate security policy

Collaborative leadership by the European Commission and
the EEAS

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Abstract

This study examines whether the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) exercise collaborative leadership in the European Union's (EU) external climate security policy. While the academic debate acknowledges that both actors are very engaged in addressing external climate-related security risks, it does not answer whether they exercise a leadership role. Theoretically, the study starts with new intergovernmentalism, which sees the leadership role of the European Commission threatened by the creation of the EEAS. The concept of collaborative leadership takes a more optimistic approach by assuming inter-institutional cooperation and leadership by multiple actors. To explore collaborative leadership by the Commission and the EEAS, a qualitative most-likely case study is conducted, which mainly relies on semi-structured interviews with EU officials. The analysis shows that the Commission and the EEAS can be described as collaborative leaders. In this regard, the collaborative leadership capacity of both actors is more pronounced in the process of the formulation of ideas on how to deal with climate-related security risks than when implementing these measures.

Key words: Climate security, European Commission, EEAS, collaborative leadership, new intergovernmentalism

Words: 19995

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I. List of Abbreviations

CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DG	Directorate-General
EEAS	European External Action Service
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
EUISS	European Union Institute for Security Studies
HR/VP	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
PRISM	Prevention of Conflict, Rule of Law/Security Sector Reform, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation, and Mediation
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UN	United Nations

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1 Introduction

The consequences of climate change, such as the reinforcement of existing social inequalities, threaten international security (Pérez de las Heras, 2020, p. 335). This so-called climate security is also increasingly recognised by international organisations such as the European Union (EU) (EU, 2016, p. 29).

In the EU, climate security refers to "[...] a cluster of different policy fields linked by the EU's declared ambition to better respond to and ultimately prevent climate-related security risks" (Bremberg, 2019, p. 3). While this ambition addresses also internal climate security, such as adapting the EU's infrastructure to extreme weather (Youngs, 2014a, p. 80), this study focuses on the external dimension. External climate security concerns the EU's capacity to reduce and adapt to climate-related security risks outside of the EU, for instance in its foreign and security policy (Stang & Dimsdale, 2017).

The gained relevance of external climate security in the EU is reflected in the literature. As EU actors could overcome the collective action problem of climate security through leadership (see Aggestam & Hyde-Price, 2020; Underdal, 1994, p. 178; Young, 1991, p. 285), this research angle received analytical attention. Various scholars examine the leadership role of the EU at the international level (Brown et al., 2020; Dupont, 2019; Fetzek & Schaik, 2018; Pérez de las Heras, 2020). However, the intra-European leadership dynamics have received little attention so far (Youngs, 2014c, 2014d). The literature argues that external climate security affects various European policy fields, such as development, diplomacy, foreign and security policy (Bremberg, 2019, p. 3), but the location of the formal responsibility for addressing the issue remains uncertain (Youngs, 2014c). Its institutional structure prevents the EU from capturing the multidimensional issue in an integrated manner (Lazard, 2021, p. 15; Michel, 2021, p. 25). Different actors and units in the EU focus on specific parts of climate security, but no structure combines them effectively (Lazard, 2021, p. 15).

The literature identifies, however, the most relevant EU actors to address external climate security issues. These are the European Commission (hereinafter referred to as Commission), the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Parliament (EP), and Member States (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021; Sonnsjö & Bremberg, 2016). As close cooperation between the Commission and the EEAS in external climate security policy is observable (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021), this study aims to contribute to this research gap by examining whether both actors are considered collaborative leaders in this policy field. Therefore, the following research question is asked:

Do the European Commission and the European External Action Service exercise collaborative leadership in the external climate security policy of the European Union?

This study seeks to answer the research question by departing from new intergovernmentalism (Bickerton et al., 2015a; Puetter & Fabbrini, 2016). New intergovernmentalism acknowledges the transfer of power to the newly established body EEAS (Bickerton et al., 2015a, p. 705). However, it assumes that this power transfer affected the leadership capacity of the Commission negatively (Bickerton et al., 2015b; Puetter, 2012, p. 168). By following Nielsen and Smeets (2018, p. 1235), this study argues that new intergovernmentalism underestimates “[...] inter-institutional collaboration [...]” between the Commission and the EEAS. As external climate security policy addresses the competencies of the Commission in climate policy and the EEAS’ mandate in foreign and security policy, this paper expects that both actors combine their competencies rather than compete for leadership. This assumption is captured by the concept of collaborative leadership (Beach & Smeets, 2020; Müller & Van Esch, 2020; Nielsen & Smeets, 2018; Smeets & Beach, 2020). In this regard, the Commission and the EEAS can either work together or perform individual actions in a coordinated manner (Nielsen & Smeets, 2018, p. 1236). To assess whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership, their fundamental room for maneuver is derived from their institutionally defined leadership tasks: *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* and *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* (see Müller, 2019b). When performing these tasks, the Commission and the EEAS are affected by their inter-institutional relationship (see Bligh, 2017; Müller & Van Esch, 2020), the institutional setting as well as situational factors (’t Hart, 2014; Blondel, 1987; Elgie, 2015; Endo, 1999; Müller, 2019a; Tömmel, 2013, 2020). Although these aspects reveal obstacles for the Commission and the EEAS, the enabling aspects dominate. Therefore, this study assumes that the Commission and the EEAS exercise *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* and *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership*.

To test the argument analytically, a most-likely single case study is conducted (Gerring, 2007; Levy, 2008). This qualitative approach allows an in-depth analysis of the circumstance as well as the assumed collaborative leadership tasks of the Commission and the EEAS in the EU’s external climate security. The qualitative case study is based on a written response and 14 semi-structured interviews with EU officials, e.g., from the Commission, the EEAS, and Member States. If required, the interview data is triangulated with primary and secondary literature.

The analysis reveals rather supporting evidence for the exercise of *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* by the Commission and the EEAS. In this regard, their inter-institutional relationship provides opportunities as well as the general agreement of Member States to address climate-related security risks. Their capacity to exercise *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* is more limited. When implementing policies, the interaction of the Commission and the EEAS is more challenging than when developing theoretical ideas. Moreover, the institutional setting defines the possibilities for their leadership, which can only be exceeded to a limited extent.

This study proceeds as follows: after presenting the conceptual understanding of external climate security in the context of the EU, the state of research on leadership in climate security is discussed. The theoretical framework clarifies how new intergovernmentalism underestimates inter-institutional cooperation, which is

captured by the concept of collaborative leadership. To assess collaborative leadership, the two leadership tasks of the Commission and the EEAS - *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* and *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* - are identified. Moreover, the respective relevance of the inter-institutional relationship, the institutional setting, and situational factors is discussed theoretically. After presenting the research design, which includes the method, the operationalisation of the variables, and the data collection, the analysis highlights opportunities and limitations for the Commission and the EEAS in fulfilling both leadership tasks. The conclusion provides an overview of limitations related to the theoretical framework, the applied method, and gathered data. An outlook on possible research opportunities regarding the leadership dynamics in the EU's climate security completes this study.

2 Literature review – the EU’s external climate security policy

The conceptual understanding of external climate security is the fundamental departing point for this study and is discussed in the following paragraphs. By considering the most common terminologies in the EU institutions, external climate security policy is understood as nexus between climate policy as well as foreign and security policy. The following state of the art shows that scholars have examined the EU’s leadership role in climate security policy at the international level while neglecting the intra-European leadership dynamics. Within the EU, however, the role of individual actors has been of analytical interest. It becomes apparent that the Commission and the EEAS are very active in external climate security policy.

2.1 Defining external climate security

As the analytical focus of this paper is on the external dimension of the EU’s climate security policy, it is distinguished from the internal dimension in the following.

According to Bremberg (2019, p. 2), climate security can be understood “as the social practices through which humans, societies, and states build capacity to manage, and ultimately prevent climate-related risks”. This definition includes both, human and state security. Human security refers to the capacity of communities and individuals to cope with immediate or long-lasting climate-related security risks, including diseases, starvation, and the violation of human rights (Dellmuth et al., 2018, p. 3). State security, on the other hand, concerns the capacity of states to deal with risks resulting from climate change, which could endanger their sovereignty and power position at the international level (Ibid.).

The implications of climate-related security risks on the economic, political, or social stability of societies are threefold: direct, indirect, and unintended (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021, p. 2). Direct implications result from immediate climate change, such as the increased occurrence of weather extremes in a specific region (Ibid.). Indirect implications have an effect beyond the affected region, such as price changes due to weather extremes (Ibid.). Unintended implications result from maladaptation to climate change (Juhola et al., 2016). All three implications can occur at regional, national, and international levels (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021, p. 2).

In the context of the EU, climate security can be divided into the internal and the external dimension. Internal climate security considers how the EU deals with climate-related security risks which occur in the EU itself. The reaction to direct

implications, such as domestic extreme weather leading to floods, could be internal military action (Youngs, 2014a, p. 80). Compensating the increased food expenditures of the European population caused by droughts and floods in cultivation areas presents an instrument to address indirect implications. The EU addresses unintended implications by increasing the resilience of its infrastructure (European Commission, 2021).

External climate security concerns the EU's capacity to reduce and adapt to climate-related security risks outside the EU (Stang & Dimsdale, 2017). A reaction to the direct implications of such risks could be immediate humanitarian aid, which the EU provided for the Horn of Africa after a drastic drought last December (European Commission, 17 December 2021). The EU addresses indirect implications, for example by ensuring human rights that are threatened by climate change (EP, 2021a). To address unintended implications of climate-related security risks, the EU develops targeted climate diplomacy as well as conflict prevention strategy (Youngs, 2014a). Although the development of policies to achieve intra-European climate security is of considerable importance for its social, political, and economic stability, the analytical focus of this paper is not placed on the internal but external dimension of climate security.

It needs to be considered that the term climate security for addressing external climate-related security risks is not used consistently across policy areas and EU institutions (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021, p. 7). Besides climate security and climate security nexus, common terms are environmental security or climate defence (Ibid., p. 8). While considering the policy dimensions of these terms, addressing external climate-related security risks mainly links climate policy as well as foreign and security policy (Pérez de las Heras, 2020; Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021; Youngs, 2014a).

To assess whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership in the EU's external climate security policy, this study follows the practice in the EU and understands external climate security as nexus between climate policy as well as foreign and security policy while considering related policy fields. While not discussed explicitly, policy approaches targeting direct, indirect, and unintended implications regarding both, human and state security, can be included (Pérez de las Heras, 2020, p. 340).

2.2 Leadership dynamics in the EU's external climate security policy

The remainder of the chapter unfolds the state of research on the leadership dynamics in the EU's external climate security policy. While the EU's international leadership on climate security has been thoroughly analysed (Brown et al., 2020; Dupont, 2019; Fetzek & Schaik, 2018; Pérez de las Heras, 2020; Zwolski & Kaunert, 2011), systematic research on the EU's internal leadership dynamics is lacking. External climate security affects various EU actors and policy domains (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021), which complicates the exercise of inter-institutional

leadership (see Youngs, 2014d). The limited, inconsistent, and rather outdated research on intra-European leadership (Sonnsjö & Bremberg, 2016; Youngs, 2014d; Zwolski & Kaunert, 2011) makes it difficult to draw conclusions. Research shows, however, that besides the Member States and the EP, the EEAS and the Commission are mostly active and cooperating in external climate security policy (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021).

Since the former High Representative Javier Solana and the Commission described climate change as a “[...] threat multiplier which exacerbates existing trends, tensions and instability [...]” in 2008 (High Representative & European Commission, 2008, p. 2), climate security gained scientific relevance. Research shows that the EU has been a crucial actor in promoting the link between climate change and peace internationally (Bremberg & Mobjörk, 2018; Brown et al., 2020; Dupont, 2019). For example, EU Member States are heavily involved in and drive discussions on climate security in the Security Council of the United Nations (UN) (Ibid.). Over time, the EU's unity has increased in this regard, as evidenced by its appearance in climate negotiations at the international level (Dupont, 2019, p. 368). But to extend the EU's leadership in climate policy to climate security, the EU needs to improve its capacity to translate measures that address climate-related security risks into practice (Bremberg et al., 2019; Dupont, 2019; Fetzek & Schaik, 2018; Pérez de las Heras, 2020; Zwolski & Kaunert, 2011).

At the European level, the exercise of intra-European leadership presents challenges as well. External climate security can be considered a policy field, which is not anchored to one European institution or policy domain (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021). Instead, it affects various policy areas, such as development, migration, or defence policy (Ibid.). Growing from its multidimensional nature, different institutions and units in the EU focus on specific dimensions of climate security (Lazard, 2021, p. 15). However, no developed structure combines these approaches in an integrated manner (Lazard, 2021; Michel, 2021, p. 25). Despite the development of different approaches by various EU actors aiming to address climate security, the institutional responsibility remains undefined (Youngs, 2014d, p. 37).

The research on intra-European leadership dynamics is rather limited (Sonnsjö & Bremberg, 2016; Zwolski & Kaunert, 2011). It indicates that a group consisting of experts in climate security and Member State officials, EU institutions, and Brussels-based think tanks are collaboratively driving the EU's external climate security agenda (Sonnsjö & Bremberg, 2016, p. 17; Zwolski & Kaunert, 2011, p. 21-43). Furthermore, there is evidence that during the Commission's 2014-2019 mandate, then Commission President Jean Claude Juncker and former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini were perceived by EEAS officials as available to take a leadership role in addressing climate-related security risks (Sonnsjö & Bremberg, 2016, p. 17).

While the intra-European leadership dynamics continue to raise questions, climate security is being addressed by a wide range of actors in the EU (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021; Youngs, 2014d). Remling and Barnhoorn (2021, p. 6) identify the Commission, the EEAS, the Foreign Affairs Council as well as the EP as being the most active in this policy field.

The EEAS is considered an important actor in dealing with climate-related security risks (Sonnsjö & Bremberg, 2016, p. 22-23). In the EU's external action, it performs a coordinating and supporting role (Council of the EU, 2010). As the EEAS does not only consist of a headquarters located in Brussels but also various delegations worldwide (Hedling, 2022, pp. 102-103), it can access an extensive network and thus develop knowledge on the local conditions regarding climate change and security in third countries (see Bicchi & Maurer, 2018; Jørgensen et al., 2022; Kettunen et al., 2018). To use the available resources efficiently, it is required that officials focusing on the affected policy areas, such as agriculture or development as well as experts with geographical expertise collaborate closely (Sonnsjö & Bremberg, 2016, p. 22). However, there is evidence that lacking resources are hampering the EEAS in addressing climate security sufficiently (Mobjörk et al., 2016, p. 45).

In the EU's external climate security policy, the Commission stresses the importance of intra-institutional coordination to achieve a comprehensive approach (Mobjörk et al., 2016, p. 32). In this regard, the Commission collaborates closely with the EEAS (Pérez de las Heras, 2020; Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021). In external energy policy as part of climate security, for instance, Member States even asked for shared leadership by both actors (Youngs, 2014c, p. 49). Besides publishing various joint documents on issues related to climate security policy (see Mobjörk et al., 2016), close cooperation between the Commission and the EEAS in climate security is observable by their shared management of the Early Warning System (EWS) (European Commission & HR/VP, 2021, p. 9; Pérez de las Heras, 2020, p. 342). Established in 2011, the EWS aims to collect and analyse information to reduce violent conflict (EEAS, 2014). Even though the Council of the EU and the Member States are involved as well, the cooperative approach of the Commission and the EEAS dominates this collaboration (Pérez de las Heras, 2020). The 2017 creation of the division PRISM in the EEAS provides another opportunity for their cooperation (Pérez de las Heras, 2020, p. 342).¹ PRISM is tasked with the coordination of various Directorate-Generals (DGs) of the Commission to enable crisis response and implement an integrated approach (Debuysere & Blockmans, 2019). The capacity of PRISM to mediate and coordinate can improve the EU's position in identifying and addressing climate-related security risks (Fetzek & Schaik, 2018; Pérez de las Heras, 2020).

Besides the Commission and the EEAS, most of the Member States have climate security on their political agenda (Youngs, 2014d, p. 37). Member States are regularly discussing climate security in the Foreign Affairs Council (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021). This Council configuration adopted, for instance, a conclusion that aims to mainstream climate security into all dialogues on foreign policy (Youngs, 2021b, p. 6). Evidence for the interaction of the Commission and the EEAS with the Foreign Affairs Council is observable in the field of climate diplomacy (Pérez de las Heras, 2020, p. 430). Already in 2003, the European Council launched the Green Diplomacy Network to integrate climate policy into the EU's foreign policy. It is chaired by the EEAS and serves as a platform for

¹ PRISM represents the unit for Prevention of Conflict, Rule of Law/Security Sector Reform, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation, and Mediation (Pérez de las Heras, 2020).

Member States and EU diplomats to exchange perspectives on climate and environmental policy, while expanding the debate on climate-related security risks (Sonnsjö & Bremberg, 2016; Ujvari, 2016).

The literature reveals discrepancies between the EU's discourse on addressing climate security comprehensively and its actual actions in identifying and reducing risks posed by climate change (Bremberg et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2020; Michel, 2021; Youngs, 2014b). The 2019 Council conclusion on climate diplomacy can be considered a turning point concerning the political will to reduce this gap (Pérez de las Heras, 2020, p. 342). While recognising the negative consequences of climate change on the stability and security of the international system (Council of the EU, 2019, p. 2), the Council's conclusion encourages the Commission, the HR/VP as well as the Member States to improve and expand their efforts in tackling climate-related risks (Ibid., pp. 4-5). In addition to their engagement in the EU and the implementation of EU legislation, Member States are addressing climate-related security risks also at the national level (Youngs, 2021b, p. 6). The most active and ambitious in this regard are Denmark, Germany, and Sweden (Ibid.).

In addition, the EP is driving the discussion of external climate-related security risks forward (Bremberg, 2019). In 2012, the EP stressed that the consequences of climate change, such as natural disasters, must be considered in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) (Ibid., p. 630). The EP's contribution is positively influenced by regular exchanges of Members of the EP (MEPs) with parliamentarians in third countries who have local knowledge on how to address external climate security (Meyer et al., 2021). However, they are expected to increase their engagement with the UN and further convince Member States to address climate security policy, for instance in CSDP missions (Ibid.). Moreover, the EP debates regularly on how to develop an effective climate diplomacy strategy for the EU (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2021, p. 78).

The discussed state of research shows that, in contrast to the EU's leadership internationally, the intra-European leadership dynamics in the EU's external climate security policy are studied only to a very limited extent (Sonnsjö & Bremberg, 2016; Youngs, 2014d; Zwolski & Kaunert, 2011). However, it is apparent that, in addition to Member States and the EP, the Commission and the EEAS are strongly committed to addressing climate security (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021; Youngs, 2014d). In this regard, close cooperation between the Commission and the EEAS is observable (Pérez de las Heras, 2020, p. 341) and even expected by Member States (Youngs, 2014c, p. 49). Given the lack of analysis examining possible leadership of the Commission and the EEAS in external climate security, this paper aims to fill this research gap.

3 Theoretical framework

The following chapter presents the theoretical framework to examine whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership in the EU's external climate security policy. The theoretical approach is founded on new intergovernmentalism that explains the creation of the EEAS (Bickerton et al., 2015a, p. 705). It assumes, however, that this power transfer reduced the Commission's capacity to take a leadership role in the EU (Bickerton et al., 2015b; Puetter, 2012, p. 168). Since new intergovernmentalism lacks to explain inter-institutional collaboration of the Commission and the EEAS (Nielsen & Smeets, 2018, p. 1235), collaborative leadership is applied (Ibid.). Collaborative leadership is expected, as external climate security combines the Commission's competencies in climate policy with the EEAS's mandate in foreign and security policy. To assess whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership, their fundamental room for manoeuvre in external climate security policy is identified: *setting the agenda* and *interacting* with the other EU actors to implement developed policies (see Müller, 2019b). When exercising these tasks, the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS (see Müller & Van Esch, 2020), the institutional setting, and situational factors affect the Commission and the EEAS (see Tömmel, 2020).

3.1 Approaching intra-European leadership

The following section presents the assumptions of new intergovernmentalism on the exercise of leadership in the EU. It assumes that the establishment of the EEAS took place at the expense of the Commission's leadership capacity (Bickerton et al., 2015a). The concept of collaborative leadership, however, anticipates the exercise of intra-European leadership by various actors (Nielsen & Smeets, 2018). As the EU's external climate security policy combines the competencies of the Commission and the EEAS, it is expected that both occur as collaborative leaders.

Leadership in the EU is intended to achieve a defined goal and drive European integration forward (Beach, 2005).² For the post-Maastricht era, new intergovernmentalism identifies the European Council as the leading actor in the EU (Bickerton et al., 2015a; Puetter & Fabbrini, 2016), which catalyses European integration (Puetter & Fabbrini, 2016, p. 634). The Council of the EU functions as

² Leadership involves leaders and followers (Elgie, 2015; Nye, 2008) and is intended to solve a collective action problem (Aggestam & Hyde-Price, 2020; Underdal, 1994; Young, 1991), which is not achieved through coercion but purposeful influence (Avery, 2004; Blondel, 1987; Schoeller, 2020).

the central decision-maker (Puetter 2014). Due to increased intergovernmental coordination and the strengthened role of the European Council and the Council of the EU, decision-making through the Community method was weakened (Bickerton et al., 2015a).³ This observation is coinciding with the ‘integration paradox’, which implies that the Member States strive for European integration while avoiding power transfer to supranational bodies (Bickerton et al., 2015b; Puetter, 2012, p. 168). Instead, power is transferred to newly established bodies (Bickerton et al., 2015a, p. 705).⁴ While avoiding the empowerment of the Commission (Furness, 2013, p. 111), the EEAS was created to streamline the EU’s foreign and security policy (Bickerton et al., 2015a, p. 705). Although new intergovernmentalism identifies a link between the power of the Commission and the EEAS, it fails to explain their potential inter-institutional cooperation (see Nielsen & Smeets, 2018, p. 1235).⁵

The EU’s external climate security policy combines climate as well as foreign and security policy (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021). As the Commission has extensive competencies in climate policy and the EEAS has its mandate in foreign and security policy, inter-institutional collaboration between both actors is expected. In this regard, this study argues that the Commission could adapt to the new institutional structure by sharing its leadership capacity in climate policy (Skjærseth, 2017) with the EEAS to benefit from its competence and expertise in foreign and security policy. This inter-institutional cooperation is captured by the concept of collaborative leadership (see Nielsen & Smeets, 2018, p. 1235). It acknowledges that leadership in the EU is provided by multiple actors (Beach & Smeets, 2020; Müller & Van Esch, 2020; Nielsen & Smeets, 2018; Smeets & Beach, 2020). These actors can practice collaborative leadership by cooperating closely or coordinating the division of labour (Nielsen & Smeets, 2018, p. 1236). Consequently, the EEAS and the Commission are assumed to exercise collaborative leadership in the EU’s external climate security which requires and combines the respective competencies of both actors.

While taking a collaborative leadership perspective, this study does not challenge new intergovernmentalism regarding its assumption that the Member States are taking a leadership role in the EU (Bickerton et al., 2015a; Puetter & Fabbrini, 2016). However, it assumes that the inter-institutional cooperation of the Commission and the EEAS and thus their leadership capacity is underestimated. Therefore, the leadership efforts of Member States are not necessarily considered as limiting the collaborative leadership capacity of the Commission and the EEAS.

The theoretical discussion shows that new intergovernmentalism acknowledges the power transfer to the EEAS but assumes that this took place at the expense of the Commission’s leadership capacity (Bickerton et al., 2015a, p. 705). However,

³ The Community method requires the Commission's initiative and adoption by the EP and the Council of the EU, which decides by a qualified majority (Article 294 TFEU). In intergovernmental decision-making, the Commission mainly shares its right of initiative with the Member States, the Council of the EU decides unanimously. While the European Council is important, the EP acts only consultatively (EP, 2021).

⁴ These newly established bodies can act autonomously while controlling their resources to a certain degree (Bickerton et al., 2015a, p. 705). The EEAS is not an agency or institution (Hedling, 2022, p. 96), but ‘autonomous body’ (Hodson & Peterson, 2017, p. 318)

⁵ For further criticism of new intergovernmentalism see Schimmelfennig (2015).

it neglects the potential of inter-institutional cooperation that could be exercised by the Commission and the EEAS (see Nielsen & Smeets, 2018, p. 1235). To examine whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership in the EU’s external climate security policy, the concept of collaborative leadership is applied.

3.2 Conceptualising collaborative leadership

The following section presents the conceptualisation of collaborative leadership, which is based on a model proposed by Müller (2019c).⁶ In this regard, the ability of the Commission and the EEAS to lead collaboratively derives from their institutionally defined leadership tasks: *setting the agenda* in the EU’s external climate security policy and *interacting* with EU actors to implement these policies (Ibid.). The first task is defined as *collaborative agenda-setting leadership*, the second as *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* (see Müller, 2019b). When performing both leadership tasks, the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS, the institutional setting, and situational factors constitute opportunities and create constraints. For *collaborative agenda-setting leadership*, the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS is fundamental (see Bligh, 2017; Müller & Van Esch, 2020). The institutional setting is theoretically most relevant for *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* (see Müller, 2019b, p. 29) (Figure 1).

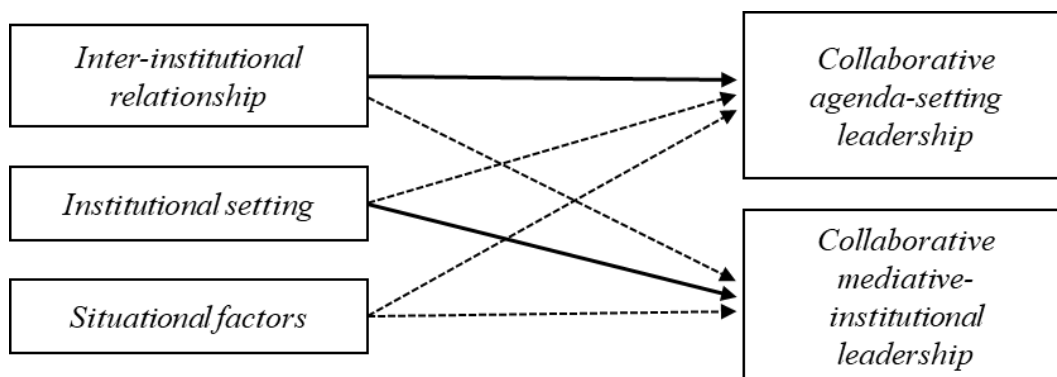


Figure 1: Collaborative leadership by the Commission and the EEAS (own depiction according to Müller (2019b)).

The fundamental ability of the Commission and the EEAS to exercise collaborative leadership is derived from their room for manoeuvre, which is based on their institutionally defined leadership tasks (Müller, 2019b, p. 24). Since not the individual but the collaborative leadership capacity of both bodies is considered,

⁶ By analysing the leadership of Commission Presidents, Müller (2019c, p. 24) identifies “agenda-setting leadership”, and “mediative-institutional leadership” as their leadership tasks. For this study, the terms, and their concrete exercise are adapted. Müller (2019c) combines these tasks with the interactionist approach, including the relevance of the institutional setting, situational factors, and personal qualities.

the focus is on responsibilities that enable both to cooperate or coordinate their respective tasks (see Nielsen & Smeets, 2018, p. 1235). Due to the lacking institutional clarity of the EU's external climate security policy (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021), the collaborative tasks of the Commission and the EEAS are derived from their responsibilities in climate as well as foreign and security policy.

In climate policy, which is decided through the community method (Article 191(1) TFEU)⁷, the Commission has the sole right of initiative (Article 294(1) TFEU). Due to its external dimension, the EEAS is involved in assisting the Commission (Council of the EU, 2010, Article 2(2)). In the EU's foreign and security policy, which falls within the scope of intergovernmental decision-making, the EEAS assists the HR/VP in initiating measures (Ibid., Article 2(1)). Additional support can be provided by the Commission (Article 30(1) TEU).⁸ In the EU's external relations, the Commission, with the support of the EEAS, develops and implements programs and financial instruments (Council of the EU, 2010, Article 2(2)). In general, the Commission and the EEAS are expected to "[...] consult each other on all matters relating to the external action of the Union in the exercise of their respective functions, except matters covered by the CSDP" (Council of the EU, 2010, Article 3(2)).

The described tasks of the Commission and the EEAS emphasise their relevance in two phases of the decision-making procedure. In the first phase, the Commission and the EEAS are expected to assess the situation in external climate security and develop a corresponding agenda (see Müller, 2019b, p. 29; Tucker, 1995, p. 31). Therefore, the first leadership task is considered *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* (see Müller, 2019b). In the second phase, the Commission and the EEAS are expected to coordinate the interests of the involved EU decision-makers to achieve coherence and implement the developed policies (see Müller, 2019b, p. 29). The second leadership task is declared *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* (see Müller, 2019b, p. 29).

When exercising both leadership tasks, the Commission and the EEAS are affected by three influencing factors. The literature identifies the personal qualities of a leader to be influential (Müller, 2019b; Tömmel, 2013, 2020). As the collaborative leadership capacity of the Commission and the EEAS and not of any individuals is analysed, the personal qualities are replaced by the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS (see Bligh, 2017; Müller & Van Esch, 2020). The inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS refers to whether both actors have a similar understanding of and expectations for external climate security policy (see Bligh, 2017; Müller & Van Esch, 2020). Other factors can be the working relationship of both (see Bligh, 2017) as well as how it is perceived externally (see 't Hart, 2014; Elgie, 2015; Nye, 2008).

Furthermore, the institutional setting and situational factors affect the ability to exercise leadership ('t Hart, 2014; Blondel, 1987; Elgie, 2015; Endo, 1999; Tömmel, 2013, 2020). The institutional setting results from the procedural and formal structures of the EU (Elgie, 2015; Müller, 2019b; Tömmel, 2013, 2020). It includes the distribution of portfolios, the procedure of decision-making as well as

⁷ TFEU = Treaty on the Functioning on the EU (EU, 2012a)

⁸ TEU = Treaty on EU (EU, 2012b)

the division of power between the European decision-makers (Müller, 2019b; Tömmel, 2013). Situational factors concern the attitude of the Member States towards European integration in climate security policy (Tömmel, 2013, 2020) or the occurrence of crises that might affect their position (Tömmel, 2013). Moreover, the expectations of followers posed to the leaders could be influential (cf. Barber, 1992, pp. 6-7).

As it is assumed that the institutional setting, the situational factors, and the inter-institutional relationship affect the exercise of leadership by the Commission and the EEAS, these are considered regarding both leadership tasks (see Müller, 2019b, p. 28). It is expected, however, that the respective relevance for the two tasks varies (Ibid.). To set the agenda, a consistent understanding of external climate security policy, as well as similar expectations on what should be achieved, is required (see Bligh, 2017; Müller & Van Esch, 2020). Therefore, the inter-institutional relationship needs special attention regarding *collaborative agenda-setting leadership*. The *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* is exercised during the implementation of policies that address the EU's external climate security (see Müller, 2019b, p. 29). The translation of the agenda into practical policies is defined by institutional rules. The analysis of the *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership*, therefore, highlights the relevance of the institutional setting (Ibid.). Although the inter-institutional relationship is of particular interest for *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* and institutional setting for *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership*, the remaining aspects nevertheless are each considered.

In practice, the exercise of leadership cannot be divided into different phases as explicitly as the model envisages. Moreover, all three variables can be relevant and interact with each other in both phases (Tucker, 1995). The theoretical differentiation enables the analytical examination of whether the Commission and the EEAS perform both leadership tasks (see Blondel, 1987). The conclusions are subsequently drawn based on these considerations.

In summary, the conceptualisation of collaborative leadership is derived from a model proposed by Müller (2019b). It implies that collaborative leadership by the Commission and the EEAS in the EU's external climate security policy consists of two leadership tasks, *collaborative agenda-setting*, and *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership*. The performance of these tasks is affected by the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS, the institutional setting, and situational factors (see Müller, 2019b).

3.2.1 Collaborative agenda-setting leadership

The following section discusses whether the Commission and the EEAS are expected to exercise *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* in the EU's external climate security policy. This first leadership task refers to the ability of the Commission and the EEAS to stress the significance of external climate security by formulating policies and putting them on the agenda (see Müller, 2019b, p. 27). The inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS (see Müller & Van Esch, 2020), the institutional setting, and situational factors create the

environment for exercising this leadership task (see Tömmel, 2020), while the inter-institutional relationship is most crucial (see Bligh, 2017; Müller & Van Esch, 2020).

First, the discussion focuses on the effects of the inter-institutional relationship. To exercise *collaborative agenda-setting leadership*, a shared understanding of external climate security, as well as similar expectations on how to address it, are fundamental (Bligh, 2017; Müller & Van Esch, 2020). Different units within the Commission and the EEAS have a varying understanding of climate security and thus the respective prioritisation of issues deviates (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021, pp. 8-9). However, there is general agreement that climate security needs to be addressed, which is reinforced by the current von der Leyen Commission (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2021). As the line can rather be drawn between thematic units than between both actors (Ibid.), this observation is considered as challenging but not hindering effect.

Moreover, the working relationship between both actors is considered (Müller & Van Esch, 2020). Although there is evidence of rather difficult cooperation between the EEAS and the Commission in the first years after the EEAS' establishment (Sus, 2014), it seems to be well integrated into the structures of the Commission after its organisational settlement (Riddervold & Trondal, 2017, p. 33). Initial mistrust and competition have resulted in cooperation and strong formal integration of the Commission's and the EEAS' entities (Ibid.). In this regard, the EEAS benefits from the extensive expertise of the Commission (Ibid., p. 42). In contrast to the new intergovernmentalist claim of power loss to the EEAS, the Commission intended to compensate for this by working closely with the EEAS from the beginning (Barroso, 2009a, 2009b, 2010). While the Commission has been able to retain wide-ranging competencies in Community matters such as climate policy (Furness, 2013, p. 112), close cooperation is also observable in policy areas that are related to the EU's security and defence policy (Riddervold & Trondal, 2017, p. 44).

Leadership does not only involve leaders but also followers ('t Hart, 2014; Elgie, 2015; Nye, 2008). Therefore, the external appearance of the Commission and the EEAS is considered. Followers can be other individuals or institutions that are involved in the process of decision-making, but also actors who are affected by the legislation, such as the European population (Kellerman, 1984; Müller, 2019b, p. 18). As climate security policy can be decided through both intergovernmental decision-making and the community method, the European Council, the Council of the EU, Member States, and the EP are potential followers. As neither the Commission nor the EEAS is directly elected, there is no direct relation to the European population (Tömmel, 2020, p. 1144). While the relationship between the Commission and the EEAS seems to be unstructured (Youngs, 2014d, p. 49), there both actors are perceived as working closely together (Riddervold & Trondal, 2017, p. 40).

In addition to the inter-institutional relationship, the institutional setting could enable or constrain the Commission and the EEAS when exercising *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* (see Elgie, 2015; Müller, 2019b; Tömmel, 2013, 2020). The indefinite institutional structure of external climate security policy (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021; Youngs, 2014c) allows to derive opportunities and constraints

regarding the institutional setting for the Commission and the EEAS. The main linking policy fields of climate security are climate policy as well as foreign and security policy. As climate policy is decided through the community method, the Commission is not required to share its right of initiative (Article 294(1) TFEU) but must consult with the EEAS only (Council of the EU, 2010, Article 3(2)). Legislation is adopted by the EP and the Council of the EU (Article 294 TFEU). As the Council of the EU decides under qualified majority voting (Ibid.),⁹ the support of all Member States is not required. Foreign and security policy is decided through intergovernmental decision-making (Article 30 TEU); thus, the EEAS and the Commission are expected to share their right of initiative with the Member States (Article 22(1) TEU). In line with new intergovernmentalism (Puetter & Fabbrini, 2016), the Member States use it extensively (Hedling, 2022, p. 108). However, there is also evidence that the establishment of the EEAS led to a transfer of agenda-setting power from the rotating Council Presidency to the EEAS and the HR/VP (Aggestam & Bicchi, 2019; Tallberg, 2010). As the EEAS supports the Member States in providing leadership in foreign and security policy (Hedling, 2022, p. 96), it can gain influence in this regard. While the EP acts only consultatively (Christiansen, 2016), the European Council takes a central role (Article 26(1) TEU). As the Council of the EU decides unanimously (Article 22 TEU), the Commission and the EEAS rely on the political support of the Member States (Tömmel, 2013).

Finally, the relevance of situational factors to exercise of *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* is considered (see 't Hart, 2014; Blondel, 1987; Elgie, 2015; Endo, 1999; Tömmel, 2013, 2020). In this regard, a supportive attitude of the Member States towards European integration in external climate security policy is beneficial (Tömmel, 2013, 2020). The attitude of large Member States, like France and Germany, is important (Schild & Krotz, 2013) as well as the position of the rather restrained Visegrad Member States in climate policy (Wurzel et al., 2019).¹⁰ In general, the support of Member States is not yet sufficient but increasing (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021, p. 11). In line with the assumption that Member States are rather hesitant in the decision of external affairs by supranational bodies (Morgenstern-Pomorski, 2018), some Member States pursue ambitious agendas nationally as well (Youngs, 2021b, p. 6). However, some Member States, e.g. France, expect the Commission and the EEAS to collaboratively take leadership in energy security policy (Youngs, 2014c). The general support of the Member States to drive climate security forward depends also on the occurrence of more urgent crises (Tömmel, 2013). There is scientific evidence that the acutely needed response to the Covid-19 pandemic has diverted attention away from the long-term achievements in climate security (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021, p. 11). As the current Commission prioritises climate policy, efforts in climate security are expected to resume quickly (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2021, p. 85).

In summary, the discussion of the impact of the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS, the institutional setting, and situational factors reveal various opportunities and constraints for the Commission and the EEAS to exercise *collaborative agenda-setting leadership*. The close cooperation

⁹ Some energy-related issues are decided unanimously (Article 194 TFEU).

¹⁰ These are Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia (Wurzel et al., 2019).

between the Commission and the EEAS not only in policy areas associated with the Community method, including climate policy but also in defence, foreign, and security policy (Riddervold & Trondal, 2017), is considered beneficial for the Commission and the EEAS to set the agenda in external climate policy. In this regard, they could define the climate security-related agenda in both policy dimensions. Although the Member States pursue their national agenda (Youngs, 2021b, p. 6), the collaborative leadership by the Commission and the EEAS to exercise is not necessarily affected. Despite the constraining conditions for the Commission and the EEAS to act as agenda-setting leaders, the enabling aspects prevail. Therefore, it is assumed that Commission and the EEAS exercise *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* in the EU's external climate security policy.

3.2.2 Collaborative mediative-institutional leadership

The remainder of this chapter discusses whether the Commission and the EEAS can be assumed to exercise *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* in the EU's external climate security policy. *Collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* requires the EEAS and the Commission to coordinate and align with other EU actors in the EU to implement the formulated objectives in the EU's external climate security policy (see Müller, 2019b, p. 27). In this regard, the inter-institutional relationship between both actors (see Müller & Van Esch, 2020), the institutional setting, and situational factors are relevant as well (see Tömmel, 2020), while the institutional setting is particularly important (see Müller, 2019b, p. 29).

First, the inter-institutional relationship affects the Commission and the EEAS when exercising *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership*. In practice, the EU delegations are tasked to implement the EU's foreign and security policy (Michalski, 2022). As they do not only comprise EEAS but also Commission staff (Hedling, 2022, p. 103), their close cooperation is beneficial for implementing policies. However, the quality of the interaction depends personal connections of EEAS and Commission officials (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2021, pp. 83-84). While the Commission and the EEAS are supposed to consult each other on all external issues besides CSDP (Council of the EU, 2010, Article 3(2)), the EEAS is tasked to implement missions and operations (Hedling, 2022, p. 103). As the EEAS relies on the Commission's expertise and organisational capacity, the Commission was able to increase its influence on CSDP (Riddervold & Trondal, 2017). Moreover, the capacity of the Commission to control the operational budget of the EEAS requires close interaction (see European Commission Secretariat-General, 13 January 2012). In general, there is close cooperation between the Commission and the EEAS, for instance in preparing projects in third countries (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2021, p. 78).

Second, the institutional setting as the most influential aspect for the exercise of *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* is discussed. The central task of the EEAS is to ensure the coherence of the EU's external policy (Council of the EU, 2010, Article 3(1)). In this regard, the EEAS and the Commission are not only required to interact closely with each other, but also with other EU actors. When the EEAS was created official of the Commission, the Council Secretariat, and

Member States were recruited (Hedling, 2022, p. 103). For the EEAS as a hybrid system, habits of national diplomacy remain important (Pomorska & Vanhoonacker, 2015; Spence, 2012). In climate policy, the EEAS cooperates closely with Member States (von Lucke, 2021, p. 7). Moreover, the expertise lies within specific Commission services, such as DG Climate Action, while the EEAS contributes an extensive worldwide network and coordinates the actions between the involved actors such as the Council of the EU, the Member States, the EP, and the Commission itself (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2021). As climate policy has developed into a foreign policy issue (von Lucke, 2021), these interactions are beneficial for the Commission and the EEAS to exercise *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership*.

In Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Member States can control the EEAS formally, as the EEAS supports the HR/VP who is in its role as chair of the Foreign Affairs Council responsible to implement the Member States' decisions (Riddervold & Trondal, 2017; Thym, 2011). However, the EEAS is considered as showing independence in the intergovernmental CFSP vis-à-vis Member States (Barbé & Morillas, 2019; Morillas, 2020; Riddervold & Trondal, 2017, p. 33, 39), which is strengthened by the delegations of the EEAS in third countries (Henökl & Trondal, 2015). Although the leadership role of the EEAS is limited (Aggestam & Johansson, 2017), it benefits from its coordinating role and cooperation with Member State diplomats in third countries (Bicchi & Maurer, 2018).

Third, the impact of situational factors on the *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* is discussed. Despite the general support of EU actors in external climate security policy (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021, p. 11), the capacity of the EU to transform the theoretical ideas on how to address climate-related security risks into practice is limited (Bremberg et al., 2019; Dupont, 2019; Fetzek & Schaik, 2018; Pérez de las Heras, 2020; Zwolski & Kaunert, 2011). However, there is evidence that the current von der Leyen Commission takes climate change as well as climate security more seriously (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2021; Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021). As discussed with *collaborative agenda-setting leadership*, crises like the Covid-19 pandemic can draw the attention away from translating formulated ideas into practice (see Tömmel, 2013). Due to the Commission's high priority of climate policy, crises are considered as less restricting the implementation procedure (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2021, p. 85).

In conclusion, *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* by the Commission and the EEAS is affected by their inter-institutional relationship, the institutional setting, and situational factors. The inter-institutional relationship provides opportunities, which increases the Commission's impact in CSDP (Riddervold & Trondal, 2017). The particularly important institutional setting is considered beneficial, as the Commission and even more the EEAS are in close interaction with other EU actors. However, the EU is implementing climate security policy to a limited extent only (e.g., Dupont, 2019). Despite restricting factors, the opportunities for collaborative leadership dominate. Therefore, it is expected that the Commission and the EEAS exercise *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* in the EU's external climate security policy.

4 Research design

The following sections present the applied research design to explore whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership in the EU's external climate security policy. A qualitative most-likely case study enables a detailed in-depth analysis of the leadership dynamics (see Gerring, 2007; Gerring, 2008; Levy, 2008). Following the theoretical framework, the two leadership tasks of the Commission and the EEAS – *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* and *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* – are assessed as dependent variables (see Müller, 2019b). As the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS, the institutional setting, and situational factors define the environment to exercise both tasks, they represent the independent variables (Ibid.). Both, the dependent and independent variables are operationalised in the following paragraphs. The empirical data studied is based on a written response and 14 semi-structured interviews with EU officials from the EEAS, the Commission, the EP, Member States, and an EU agency. Moreover, one unspecified EU official is interviewed. The list of interview partners is attached in Appendix 1 (*Table 2, p. vii*), and the interview guidelines in Appendix 2 (*Table 3, p. viii*) and Appendix 3 (*Table 4, p. xiv*). If required, the interview data is triangulated with primary and secondary sources.

4.1 Method

Conducting a qualitative single case study on collaborative leadership by the Commission and the EEAS in the EU's external climate security policy enables its in-depth examination (Gerring, 2017, p. 245). To increase the reliability of the data collected through the semi-structured interviews, the analysis focuses on the current leadership dynamics.¹¹

The exercise of collaborative leadership by the Commission and the EEAS' in the EU's external climate security policy is considered a most-likely case. A most-likely case refers to a case for which the theoretical assumption is very likely to explain a certain outcome (Bennett & Elman, 2009; Eckstein, 1975; Gerring, 2007; Levy, 2008). If the outcome does not occur, it is unlikely that the expected assumption occurs in any other case (Ibid.). External climate security policy is an exemplary case that combines the extensive competencies of the Commission in climate policy with the mandate of the EEAS in the EU's foreign and security policy

¹¹ Questions referring to the distant past could lead to biased data, as the memories are likely distorted (Schnell, 2019). The analysis considers earlier documents and experiences of the interview partners but does not examine an explicit development over time.

(Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021). Both are interdependent, as the EEAS assists the Commission in all issues that address the external action of the EU (Council of the EU, 2010, Article 2(2)). Moreover, the Commission is extending its relevance in the EU's CSDP (Riddervold & Trondal, 2017). The theoretical discussion shows that the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS, the institutional setting, and situational factors provide opportunities for both actors to exercise collaborative leadership. If both actors do not exercise collaborative leadership in this case, it is unlikely that they do in any other one. However, various challenges could occur, for instance, regarding the affected security and defence dimension that touches the high politics of Member States. Therefore, this most-likely case is not considered perfect. The resulting limited generalisability of the results is accepted.

In conclusion, the qualitative single case study enables to examine whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership in the EU's external climate security policy.

4.2 Operationalising collaborative leadership

This study assumes that collaborative leadership by the Commission and the EEAS in the EU's external climate security policy consists of *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* and *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership*. Therefore, these two leadership tasks are assessed as dependent variables (see Müller, 2019b, p. 29). Independent variables are the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS, the institutional setting, and situational factors, which define the environment when performing both tasks. According to the theoretical framework (see Bligh, 2017; Müller & Van Esch, 2020), the inter-institutional relationship is central for *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* (Figure 2, p. 20). For *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership*, the institutional setting is important (see Müller, 2019b, p. 29) (Figure 3, p. 22). However, the respective other independent variables can show relevance as well.

As this study aims to examine whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership, the focus of the analysis is to draw conclusions on the exercise of both leadership tasks. The independent variables are used to put the respective dimensions of the dependent variables into context. In this regard, the empirical data does not assess how each independent variable directly affects the dimensions of the dependent variables, but whether they provide a rather beneficial or restrictive environment for the Commission and the EEAS to exercise collaborative leadership. The analysis considers only coordinated and cooperative, but not individual behaviour of the Commission and the EEAS.

Due to the leader or follower perspective as well as their institutional affiliation, the interview partners have varying relevance for the assessment of the respective variables. In the following, the operationalisation of the dependent and the independent variables and the respective interview sources are discussed. If the

interview data is inconsistent or insufficient to draw conclusions, it is triangulated with primary and secondary sources.

4.2.1 Operationalising the dependent variables

As presented in *Figure 2*, the operationalisation of *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* as the first dependent variable includes mobilising supporters, arousing interest, building capacity, and claiming authority by the Commission and the EEAS (Princen, 2011). The second dependent variable *collaborative meditative-institutional leadership* aggregates the exerted influence by the Commission and the EEAS as well as their ability to mediate among the EU actors (Müller, 2019b) (*Figure 3*, p. 22). If the empirical data provides evidence for both leadership tasks, they can use their full potential to exercise collaborative leadership. Restrictive evidence regarding one or both leadership tasks the assumptions are partly or fully falsified.

First, the operationalisation of the *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* is discussed. The operationalisation is based on Princen (2011), who identifies four strategies for EU actors setting the agenda in the EU. When setting the agenda in the EU's external climate security policy, the Commission and the EEAS are expected to mobilise supporters (Ibid., pp. 932-933) and arouse interest in the issue (Ibid., pp. 933-935). Moreover, they need to build their capacity to address climate-related security risks (Ibid., p. 935-936) and claim authority for addressing the issue at the European level (Ibid., pp. 936-938).

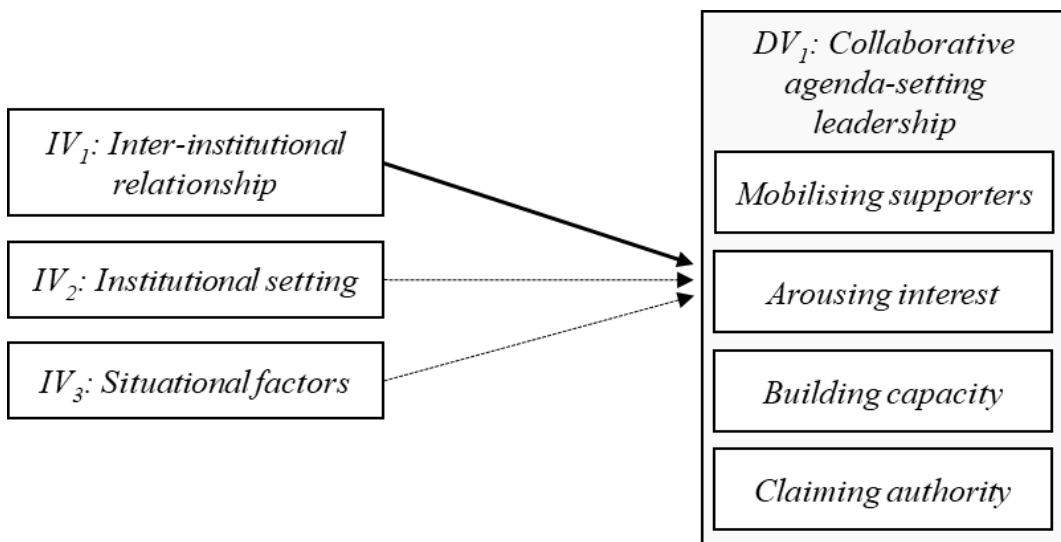


Figure 2: Relation of the independent variables and collaborative agenda-setting leadership (own depiction based on Müller (2019c)).

First, the Commission and the EEAS are expected to mobilise supporters by strengthening the support of EU actors to address the EU's external climate security policy (see Princen, 2011, pp. 932-933). In this regard, the Commission and the EEAS can either gather like-minded actors who are supporting the efforts to address climate-related security risks or can exclude potentially opposing actors from the

procedure of decision-making (Ibid., p. 929). In the decision-making procedure, the Commission and the EEAS rely on the support of the Member States and the EP. Therefore, the answers of interview partners affiliated with these EU actors are considered important (Interviews 9; 10-13). However, the other interview partners can also provide interesting insights.

Second, the Commission and the EEAS can arouse interest in the urgency to address external climate security policy by framing the issue of external climate security policy interestingly by using ‘big words’ (Princen, 2011, p. 933) or by connecting climate security to a policy priority of the EU (Ibid.). Moreover, the organisation of visible events can arouse interest (Ibid., p. 934). To assess the arousal of interest, the data gathered from all conducted interviews is used (Interviews 1-15).

Third, building capacity refers to the capability of the Commission and the EEAS to create an organisational structure that can address climate security (Ibid., p. 935). As the Commission and the EEAS are under consideration, their capacity to initiate proposals that address climate-related security risks as well as to implement them is of analytical interest. They can increase this capacity by the allocation of resources, such as responsible staff and expertise, as well as the establishment of expert networks in the EU that deliver ideas on how to address external climate security (Ibid.). The assessment relies predominantly on answers by Commission and EEAS (Interviews 1-9), while the follower dimension is considered as well (Interviews 9-15).

Fourth, the claiming authority refers to the ability of the Commission and the EEAS to promote the idea that external climate security policy is best dealt with at the EU level (Ibid., p. 936). In line with the theoretical framework, efforts of Member States at the national or international level are only considered limiting if they prefer these levels over the European one. The occurrence of this strategy is also measured by the interviews with all experts (Interviews 1-15).

In summary, to assess whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* in the EU’s external climate security policy, each of the four dimensions, mobilising supporters, arousing interest, building capacity, and claiming authority, is considered. When the empirical evidence is rather supportive for each of the dimensions, strong *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* can be accepted. If the general evidence is rather restrictive, this is not the case. Intermediate levels of evidence and inconsistent evidence for the four dimensions are considered. This operationalisation enables a differentiated assessment of the exercise of collaborative agenda-setting leadership by the Commission and the EEAS in external climate security policy.

Collaborative mediative-institutional leadership is assessed as the second dependent variable (Figure 3, p. 22). The operationalisation is based on two dimensions. First, it is of analytical interest whether the Commission and the EAS can exert influence on the other EU actors to their advantage (see Müller, 2019b, p. 44). Second, the capacity of the Commission and the EEAS to mediate among EU actors is considered (Ibid.).

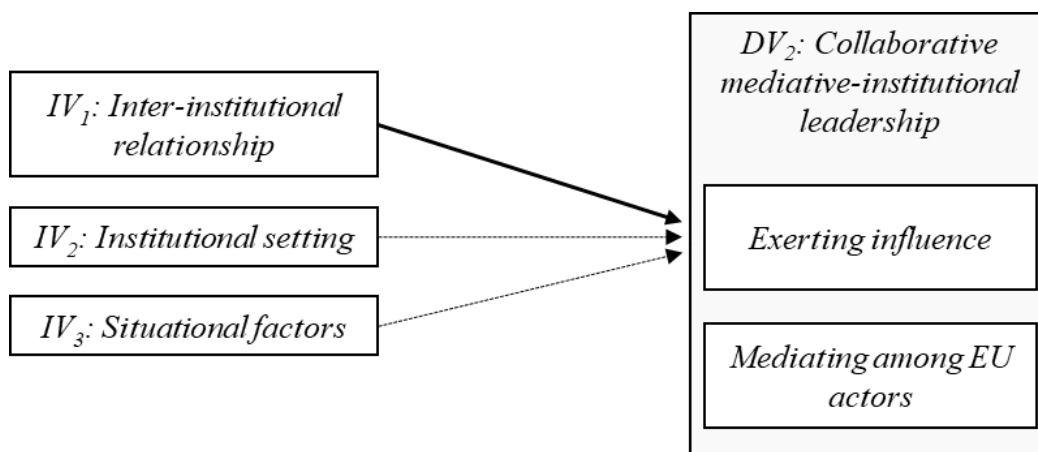


Figure 3: Relation of the independent variables and collaborative mediative-institutional leadership (own depiction based on Müller(2019c)).

First, exerting influence refers to the ability of the Commission and the EEAS “[...] to shape a decision in line with their preferences [...]” (Dür, 2008, p. 561). The other EU actors are free to make their own decisions and are not coerced but convinced through persuasion (Hollander, 1993, p. 31; Schoeller, 2020). It is of analytical interest whether the Commission and the EEAS are successful in influencing their potential followers (Ibid., p. 562). To assess whether the Commission and the EEAS exert influence on the EU’s external climate security policy, the perception of EEAS and Commission officials (Interviews 1-8) and the interview partners affiliated with the follower dimension are considered (Interviews 9-15).

Second, the Commission and the EEAS can be considered mediators when they show the capacity to find political compromises and consensus in the process of translating theoretical ideas on how to address climate-related security risks into practice (see Olsson & Hammargård, 2016, p. 552). While the perception of the interview partners from the Commission and the EEAS might provide interesting insights (Interviews 1-8), the perspective of the experts affiliated with the follower dimensions is of crucial importance (Interviews 9-15).

In summary, the two dimensions exerting influence and mediating among EU actors enable to assess the *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* by the Commission and the EEAS. Each dimension is assessed in this regard, whether the empirical evidence is rather supportive or rather rejecting.

If the overall evidence for each dimension is more supportive, strong *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* can be assumed and vice versa. If the evidence is rather ambiguous, this is considered in the assessment as well. Therefore, the operationalisation allows for a differentiated assessment of the *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* by the Commission and the EEAS in the EU’s external climate security policy.

4.2.2 Operationalising the independent variables

The theoretical framework assumes that the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS (see Müller & Van Esch, 2020), the institutional setting, and situational factors provide both actors with opportunities and obstacles in the performance of *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* and *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* by the Commission and the EEAS in the EU's external climate security policy (see Tömmel, 2020). Therefore, these three aspects present the independent variables. In contrast to the dependent variables, their operationalisation is less detailed.

The first independent variable considers the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS (see Müller & Van Esch, 2020). The variable captures the understanding of and expectations towards climate security (see Bligh, 2017; Müller & Van Esch, 2020). Moreover, the working relationship between the Commission and the EEAS can be relevant (see Bligh, 2017). To assess these dimensions, the analysis relies on the data gathered from interviews with officials of the EEAS (Interviews 1-5) and the Commission (Interviews 6-8). Moreover, the external appearance towards the potential followers of the Commission and the EEAS is assessed (see 't Hart, 2014). The perception of the followers relies on the interviews with actors affiliated with the follower dimension (Interviews 9-15).

The second independent variable institutional setting includes aspects that refer to the distribution of portfolios, the procedures of decision-making as well as the division of power between the European decision-makers in addressing climate-related security risks (Müller, 2019b; Tömmel, 2013). These dimensions are interrelated and depend on each other. To assess the institutional setting, the analysis relies on empirical data gathered by the conduction of all interview partners (Interviews 1-15).

The third independent variable situational factors aggregates the attitude of Member States towards European integration in external climate security (Barber, 1992; Tömmel, 2013, 2020) that can be affected by occurring crises (Tömmel, 2013). In this regard, the interviews with Member State officials are most important (Interviews 10-13), while the perception of the other interview partners is considered as well (Interviews 1-9; 14-15). Moreover, the expectation of the followers towards the leadership behaviour of the Commission and the EEAS is captured (see Barber, 1992, pp. 6-7), which is covered by the interviews with experts affiliated with the follower dimension (Interviews 9-15).

Although the operationalisation identifies various aspects that could be relevant for each independent variable, their relevance is not individually analysed regarding each dimension of the dependent variable. Instead, the general conditions posed by the three independent variables are of analytical interest, which are discussed in detail if they are considered very beneficial or very restrictive. As the first independent variable, inter-institutional relationship, is of crucial importance for *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* (see Bligh, 2017; Müller & Van Esch, 2020), its relation to the first leadership task is assessed in more detail than the impact of the other independent variables. The second independent variable, institutional setting, is mainly relevant for *collaborative mediative-institutional*

leadership (see Müller, 2019b, p. 29), which leads to a deeper assessment in this regard.

In summary, the operationalisation of the independent variables provides insights into the context in which the Commission and the EEAS are expected to exercise collaborative leadership in the EU's external climate security policy.

4.3 Collecting data

The following chapter presents the empirical data on which the analysis is based and explains its collection process. The qualitative analysis relies on 14 semi-structured interviews with experts working in various EU bodies on external climate security as well as on written answers of one expert. This data provides information that cannot be gathered by analysing public documents (Beach & Pedersen, 2019; Tansey, 2007). The list of interview partners (*Table 2, p. vii*) and the interview guidelines based on the operationalisation (*Table 3, p. viii; Table 4, p. xiv*) are attached in Appendix 1 and 2. To increase the reliability of the interview data, inconsistent and incomplete data is triangulated with evidence from primary and secondary literature (see King et al., 1995; Seawright & Collier, 2010).

To conduct the semi-structured interviews, the potential interview partners were contacted by email and informed about the general aim of the research as well as the interview procedure. 15 out of 40 contacted experts agreed to an interview, leading to a response rate of 37.5 %. The interviews were conducted in March and April 2022 and lasted on average between 10 and 40 minutes. To improve the internal validity, all interview partners were granted absolute confidentiality (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 48; Schoeller, 2020, p. 1101). Except for one interview, all were recorded and subsequently transcribed.¹² In case of interest, the interview partners received the transcript of the interview afterwards. All interview partners were requested for video calls by Zoom. Due to technical reasons as well as personal preferences of some interview partners, 10 of 14 interviews were conducted via Zoom, four by telephone. One expert was eventually not available for an interview but provided written answers.

To conduct interviews by Zoom (Archibald et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020; Oliffe et al., 2021) or by telephone (Robson & McCartan, 2016) offers various advantages in comparison to face-to-face interviews. Besides the possibility to interview geographically distant experts without considerable expenditure of time or money (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 1297), interview partners can feel more comfortable answering sensitive questions when being in their familiar environment (Jenner & Myers, 2019; Oliffe et al., 2021). Like in face-to-face interviews, video calls by Zoom increase the personal connection with the interviewer and enable to draw conclusions from non-verbal communication (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 1297). In contrast to video calls, facial expressions and gestures are not distracting the interviewer in telephone interviews (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

¹² To ensure anonymity, the transcripts are not published.

The selection of potential interview partners is based on the official directory of the EU, which provides information about the staff of each EU institution.¹³ Member State officials were selected based on information available on the websites of the respective Member State Representation to the EU. In addition, the snowball procedure was applied, building on recommendations from contacted and interviewed experts (Lynch, 2013, pp. 41-42).

To assess whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership in the EU's external climate security policy, not only the perception of the potential leaders but also of the potential followers is required (t Hart, 2014, p. 11). Therefore, the selection of interview partners follows the logic of institutional affiliation (see Appendix 1, *Table 2, p. vii*). Based on the theoretical framework, the Commission and the EEAS are considered potential leaders, which is covered by interviews 1 to 5 (EEAS) and 6 to 8 (Commission). Based on the decision-making procedure, the Council of the EU, the European Council, and the EP are potential followers (see Kellerman, 1984; Müller, 2019b, p. 18). Interviews 10 to 13 cover the positions of large Member States (Schild & Krotz, 2013), the Visegrad Group (Wurzel et al., 2019) as well as other small Member States.¹⁴ Interview 9 represents the position of an MEP and interview 14 an EU official affiliated to the follower who was not willing to disclose its institutional affiliation. The concluding interview 15 enables insights from the perspective of an official of an EU agency. As climate security in the EU is addressed from various policy areas (Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021, p. 6), the EU officials are affiliated with different units. Although the sample of representatives of the respective EU actors under consideration is unbalanced and very limited, which reduced the generalisability, this does not apply to the experts affiliated with the leader or follower dimension.¹⁵

Conducting semi-structured interviews allows the interviewer to adapt the prepared interview guide to the interviewee's knowledge or to directions that are theoretically not expected (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 70), while maintaining a certain degree of objectivity, which increases validity and reliability (Diekmann, 2016, p. 438). The systematic analysis of the collaborative leadership by the Commission and the EEAS requires the establishment of coding rules (Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2021). While conductive coding generates the coding categories during the data gathering process, deductive methods derive the categories from the theoretical assumptions (Miles et al., 2020). This study derives the codes deductively based on the operationalisation of the variables. Lune and Berg (2017, p. 71) propose to start with an outline, which includes the potentially relevant categories. The categories are in line with the operationalisation of collaborative leadership (*Table 1, p. 26*). The operationalisation identifies *Collaborative agenda-setting leadership* and *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* as dependent variables, which are aggregated by four and two dimensions respectively. The inter-institutional relationship, the institutional setting, and situational factors as independent variables are aggregated as rather beneficial or rather restrictive (Müller, 2019b). Derived from the dimensions of these variables,

¹³ See <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/who-is-who/>.

¹⁴ To guarantee anonymity, their Member State affiliation is not disclosed.

¹⁵ For a detailed discussion of the limitations and their implications see chapter 7.1, page 51.

corresponding items are collected that serve as basis for the formulation of the interview questions (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 72).

Dependent variables	Independent variables
DV ₁ : Collaborative agenda-setting leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilising supporters • Arousing interest • Building capacity • Claiming authority 	IV ₁ : Inter-institutional relationship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rather beneficial • Rather restrictive
	IV ₂ : Institutional setting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rather beneficial • Rather restrictive
DV ₂ : Collaborative institutional-mediative leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exerting influence • Meditating among EU actors 	IV ₃ : Situational factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rather beneficial • Rather restrictive

Table 1: Outline for the interview guidelines (source: own depiction according to Princen (2011), Lune and Berg (2017), and Müller (2019b)).

Following the affiliation with the leader and follower dimension of the interview partners, two interview guidelines are drafted (Appendix 2 and Appendix 3). Both guidelines are slightly adapted to consider the respective affiliation of the interviewees with the different EU actors. The first conducted interview with an EEAS official was not only used for gathering data but to evaluate and improve the developed guideline. To reduce the error rate, the questions are structured as simply as possible, address only one topic in a question, and are worded neutrally to avoid affective words (Lune & Berg, 2017, pp. 75-76).

Between each set of questions targeting the different variables, a transition sentence is included that enables the interview partner to concentrate on a specific field of interest (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 73). Each set of questions consists of essential, extra, probing as well as throwaway questions (Ibid., pp. 73-74). Essential questions are required to draw conclusions to answer the research question (Ibid., p. 73). These questions relate to the respective dimensions that emerge from the operationalisation of *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* and *collaborative mediative institutional leadership* and are, for example, “whether the Commission is engaged in bringing other EU actors to the table”. In a more general manner, the independent variables are addressed like this as well. The reliability of the given answers is increased by extra questions that aim to answer the same issue as essential questions while changing the formulation (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 73). Addressing the mobilisation of supporters, a question is “whether there is any other actor who can be considered as the driving force for climate security in the EU”. Probing questions, such as “could you elaborate a little further” are used as a follow-up to essential questions to achieve deeper insights into the interviewee’s perspective (Ibid., p. 74).

To ease the atmosphere, throwaway questions are asked if a sensitive topic for the interviewee has been touched (Ibid.), such as “could we clarify a previous

statement or yours?’. In some cases, it might be more goal-oriented to address the sensitive issue directly (Ibid.), for instance by stating that “I have the feeling that you are not comfortable with providing these insights”.

In general, the conduction of interviews with experts who are involved in external climate security policy increases the potential to produce data that cannot be gathered by the analysis of official documents (Beach & Pedersen, 2019; Tansey, 2007). Although the wording of the questions aims to reduce the effect of social desirability, which leads to biased answers due to expectations placed on the respondents (see Diekmann, 2016, p. 448), it cannot be completely avoided. Moreover, not all interview partners are able or willing to answer all questions. In case of inconsistencies in the answers of the interview partners or if these are not sufficient for an assessment, the generated data is triangulated with primary sources, such as official documents of various EU institutions, as well as with secondary literature. However, this is not feasible to draw conclusions from data that is based on the personal experience of interview partners. In general, the use of several data sources increases the validity of the results (King et al., 1995, p. 479; Seawright & Collier, 2010, p. 356).

In conclusion, the collection of data based on one written answer and 14 semi-structured interviews, as well as primary and secondary sources, allows for drawing conclusions on whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership in the EU’s external climate security policy.

5 Analysing collaborative leadership by the Commission and the EEAS

The following analysis examines whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership in the EU's external climate security policy. First, the analytical focus lies on the *collaborative agenda-setting leadership*, which is divided into the mobilisation of supporters, the arousal of interest, the building of capacity, and the claiming of authority by the Commission and the EEAS. Second, the *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* is assessed, which consists of exerting influence and mediating among EU actors. Respectively, it is discussed whether the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS, the institutional setting, and situational factors favour or hinder the exercise of both leadership roles (see Müller, 2019b). In line with the theoretical framework, the inter-institutional relationship is most important for the exercise of *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* (see Müller & Van Esch, 2020). For the analysis of *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership*, the institutional setting is essential (Müller, 2019b). The Commission and the EEAS can exercise both leadership tasks either by closely cooperating or coordinating their tasks in the EU's external climate security policy (Nielsen & Smeets, 2018, p. 1236). The code list aggregating the analysis based on the conducted interviews is attached in Appendix 4 (*Table 5, p. xx*).

5.1 Analysing collaborative agenda-setting leadership

To set the agenda in the EU's external climate security policy, the Commission and the EEAS can apply four strategies. Both actors can mobilise supporters and arouse interest in climate security, build their capacity to address the issue, and claim authority that external climate security should be addressed at the European level (see Princen, 2011). The following analysis of the *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* focuses on all four strategies consecutively. As the inter-institutional relationship is of particular importance to exercise *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* (see Bligh, 2017; Müller & Van Esch, 2020), its analysis is more detailed. The inter-institutional relationship captures the Commission's and the EEAS' understanding of external climate security and their objectives in this regard (see Bligh, 2017; Müller & Van Esch, 2020), their working relationship (see Bligh, 2017), and external appearance (see 't Hart, 2014; Elgie, 2015; Nye, 2008).

However, the environment created by the institutional setting and situational factors is considered as well.

5.1.1 Mobilising supporters

The following section analyses whether the Commission and the EEAS mobilise supporters for external climate security by gathering like-minded EU actors and excluding potential opponents from the decision-making process (see Princen, 2011, pp. 932-933). As the empirical evidence reveals that in the EU no opponents can be identified (Interviews 1-15), the analysis focuses on the ability to gather supporters.

First, the relevance of the inter-institutional relationship on the mobilisation of supporters by the Commission and the EEAS is analysed. The interviews with experts of the Commission and the EEAS indicate that the most occurring discrepancies between both actors but also within them refer to the use of terminology (EEAS-2, EEAS-3, EEAS-5, Commission-6, Commission-8). While these are usually resolved (Ibid.), the general aim to address climate-related security risks as soon and as effectively as possible is shared by both actors fundamentally (EEAS-2, EEAS-3, Commission-6). Externally, the Commission and the EEAS are mainly perceived as unified (EP-9, Member State-10, Member State-12, EU agency-15), while being attributed with extensive expertise in dealing with climate-related security risks (Ibid.). The inter-institutional relationship provides a beneficial environment for the Commission and the EEAS to mobilise like-minded actors in general (Commission-7), in the Member States (Member State-12), and in the EP (EP-9).

Second, the institutional setting could channel the ability to mobilise supporters. The interviews indicate that in practice it is very important that climate security is decided through the community method and intergovernmental decision-making. The agenda-setting role in the EU's foreign and security lies not only with the Commission and the EEAS but with the Member States, which makes the Foreign Affairs Council an important actor. The Foreign Affairs Council, consisting of the Member States' foreign ministers, adopts Council conclusions on external climate change issues such as climate security (Council of the EU, 2018, 2021). Despite its formal initiating role, the capacity of the Member States to set the agenda in climate security is rather limited in practice (Member State-12). Instead, the EEAS uses the Foreign Affairs Council to mobilise supporters for its interests, which are mainly aligned with the Commission (EU agency-15), in climate security (EU Official-14). Although Member States introduce ideas on how to address climate-related security risks to some degree as well, the initiatives originate in practice from the Commission and the EEAS (Member State-12). Due to unanimous decision-making in the EU, the position of the Member States should not be neglected (Member State-13). Therefore, the Commission and the EEAS mobilise the Member States in advance (EEAS-3, Commission-6, Member State-12).

When decided under the community method, the Commission and the EEAS mobilise supporters among the Member States and MEPs (EP-9) before presenting

a proposal (Commission-8). The mobilisation of supporters by the Commission and the EEAS is linked to the institutional setting that both actors make use of.

Third, the situational factors could be relevant for the ability of the Commission and the EEAS when mobilising supporters. Overall, all Member States agree on the need to address climate-related security risks (Interviews 1-15). While the Member States of the Visegrad Group are considered complicated negotiating partners in decision-making on the EU's internal climate security, this is not the case for the external dimension (Commission-8, EU official-14; Member State-13). As the climate crisis is expected to exacerbate social conflicts, for example by making regions uninhabitable, they are willing to financially support third countries to reduce the potential risk of migration flows to the EU (Ibid.). The general support of the Member States and other EU actors, such as the EP, simplifies the efforts of the Commission and the EEAS to mobilise supporters. In this regard, they are not required to reduce the impact of opposing actors on the decision-making procedure.

Member States are engaged in mobilising supporters for external climate security policy as well. Particularly engaged in this regard are Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany (e.g., EEAS-3; Member State-11; Member State-12; EU official-14) as well as Belgium and Luxembourg (EEAS-3, Member State-13).

While the general support among the Member States is beneficial, the current invasion of Russia in Ukraine has a mixed impact (EP-9, Member State-11, Member State-12, Member State-13, EU official-14). On the one hand, it reduces the support of mobilised actors regarding the efforts to reduce the negative impact of the EU's civil and military missions, which is emphasised in the EU's current Climate Change and Defence Roadmap (EEAS, 2020; EP-9, Member State-13). On the other hand, stakeholders of energy policy are mobilised (Commission-8, Member State-11, Member State-12, Member State-13). Since the beginning of the war, the importance of energy security has gained momentum in the debate on climate security (Commission-8, Member State-11, Member State-12). Both, the Commission and the EEAS aim to mobilise supporters who consider the production of renewable energies in the EU as the most compelling way to reduce the dependence on Russia while mitigating the effects of climate change (Borrell, 6 February 2022; European Commission, 8 March 2022; Commission-8, Member State-13, EU officials-14).¹⁶ However, the interviews show that they are only partially successful in their efforts (Commission-8, Member State-13, EU official-14). For instance, the large countries Germany and Italy have other priorities (Commission-8). Although Germany is aiming to expand renewable energies through increased hydrogen cooperation with the United Arab Emirates, new dependencies are emerging that are also based on fossil fuels (tagesschau, 21 March 2022). While Germany has agreed on a long-term energy partnership with Qatar (tagesschau, 21 March 2022), Italy wants to increase its gas supplies from countries like Algeria and Libya (Straub, 12 April 2022). However, the Commission and the EEAS are expected to mobilise supporters that address this new dimension (Member State-12).

¹⁶ In March, the Commission (8 March 2022) proposed REPowerEU, which aims to achieve independence of Russian fossil fuels before 2030.

In summary, the empirical evidence suggests that the Commission and the EEAS are mobilising supporters for external climate security. In this regard, the environment created by their inter-institutional relationship and the institutional setting is rather beneficial. The conclusion on situational factors is less clear. While the supportive Member State facilitates the efforts of the Commission and the EEAS to mobilise supporters, the current Russian invasion of Ukraine changes the dynamics. On the one hand, the mobilisation of the security community regarding a greener defence policy is negatively affected (EP-9, Member State-13). On the other hand, the war could serve as an impetus for the EU to become independent of fossil fuels and third countries. While some Member States create new dependencies based on fossil energies, it remains to be seen whether the Commission and the EEAS can mobilise them again.

5.1.2 Arousing interest

In the following, it is analysed whether the Commission and the EEAS arouse interest in external climate security policy by using ‘big words’, linking external climate security to a policy issue in which the EU is already active, or organising visible events (see Princen, 2011, pp. 933-934).

First, the relevance of the inter-institutional relationship is under consideration. As already discussed, the use of terminology for climate security between the Commission and the EEAS as well as within each of them varies (EEAS-2, EEAS-3, EEAS-5, Commission-6, Commission-8). For arousing interest, however, this is not considered a disadvantage but enables both to address a broader audience. Since the Commission and the former High Representative firstly declared climate change a threat multiplier in 2008, the Commission and the EEAS, after its establishment, use this term to arouse interest in climate security (EEAS-2, Commission-8). To address not only the climate but also the security community, the Commission President von der Leyen and climate action Commissioner Frans Timmermans are occasionally using security language that rather represents the understanding of climate security by security-focused units in the EEAS than the Commission (Commission-8; see Timmermans, 9 November 2021; von der Leyen, 19 February 2022).

Second, the analysis discusses how the institutional setting defines the ability of the Commission and the EEAS to arouse interest. By engaging in the security debate, the Commission extends its institutionally defined relevance in the EU’s security policy (Commission-8). Arousing interest by linking external climate security policy with already established policy issues is defined by the institutionally defined competencies of the Commission and the EEAS. Due to the Commission’s extensive competencies in climate policy, it has made attempts to link external climate security to this policy field. However, the interview data indicates controversial success (Member State-12, EU agency-15, Member State-12). On the one hand, there is evidence that the current Commission has been successful in arousing interest in climate security by launching the Green Deal and thereby committing to increased climate mainstreaming, for instance in the EU’s defence policy (EP-9, EU agency-15). In this regard, the EEAS aims to play a

central role in developing the Green Deal diplomacy (Borrell, 2019). On the other hand, a Member State official emphasised that the Green Deal addresses the EU's internal climate resilience rather than the external dimension (Member State-13). Research shows, indeed, that stronger internationalisation of the Green Deal is required (Leonard et al., 2021; Youngs, 2021a).

With the Concept for an Integrated Approach on Climate Change and Security, the EEAS was very involved in linking climate security to the general promotion of peace and security (EEAS-3). The same applies to the development of the Climate Change and Defence Roadmap (Ibid.). To arouse the interest in the roadmap and thus climate security even further, the EEAS organised an event in cooperation with the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) (EEAS-2). Caused by the institutional structure, the contribution and agreement of the Member States were fundamental to defining these strategies (Member State-11, Member State-13). Moreover, the Commission was able to extend its competencies by contributing to the documents (EEAS-3). This cooperative collaboration by the Commission and the EEAS as well as the Member States could arouse interest in climate security in the security community, which is increasing in general (EP-9).

Moreover, the previous HR/VP Frederica Mogherini hosted the high-level event "Climate, Security and Peace: The Time for Action", which was organised under the leadership of the EEAS (EEAS-2). The event gathered presidents and prime ministers of the whole world as well as climate security experts from institutions such as the UN. The EEAS is also arousing interest in cooperation with the EUISS, which is chaired by the HR/VP (Commission-8). Since 2020, the EUISS and the EEAS are co-organising annual conferences on climate change and defence, in which representatives of the Commission, Member States, and other experts participate (see for the report on the conference in 2021 EEAS & EUISS, 2021). When publishing documents on climate security, the Commission is hosting events as well (Commission-8). For example, it organised a high-level conference on the European Climate Law, in the drafting of which the Commission was supported by the EEAS (Ibid.).¹⁷

Third, the analysis examines whether situational factors rather promote or hinder the Commission's and EEAS's efforts to arouse interest. The ability of the EEAS to arouse interest in climate security by linking it to security and defence policy was affected positively by the interest of Member States to increase the sustainability of missions and increase their resilience towards the climate crisis (EP-9, Member State-11, Member State-13). Moreover, not only the Commission and the EEAS are arousing interest in the EU's external climate security, but also the Member States. Among the most active is the Netherlands (EEAS-2, Member State-11, Member State-12). The Planetary Security Initiative, which was launched by the Dutch Foreign Ministry in 2015, arouses interest in climate-related security risks by organising roundtable discussions, seminars, and conferences (EEAS-2).

In summary, the analysis of the collaborative efforts of the Commission and the EEAS provides rather supportive evidence for both actors arousing interest. While there is strong evidence for the use of 'big words' and the organisation of public

¹⁷ The Climate Law captures the aims of the Green Deal legislatively, such as achieving climate neutrality in the EU by 2050 (European Council, 28 June 2021).

events, arousing interest by linking climate security to the Green Deal is controversial.

5.1.3 Building capacity

The following section discusses whether the Commission and the EEAS are successful in building capacity to address the EU's external climate security, which refers to the establishment of resilient organisational structures by allocating resources within their institutions, including capable staff, expertise, and budget, or creating a European network (Princen, 2011, p. 935).

First, the conducted interviews reveal an ambiguous environment created by the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS. The Commission, and even more so the EEAS, has insufficient human resources overall to adequately address climate-related security risks (EEAS-3, Commission-8). Due to their good working relationships, they compensate for limited resources through close cooperation (EEAS-3, Commission-8) and division of labour (Commission-8). Furthermore, the internal structures of the Commission and the EEAS are continuously adapted to the increasing importance of climate security (EEAS-2, Commission-8, EP-9).

The external appearance, however, indicates a healthy competition in the division of tasks between the Commission and the EEAS (EU official-14). The current HR/VP Josep Borrell, in his capacity as Vice-President of the Commission and President of the Foreign Affairs Council, is perceived as supporting the position of the Council rather than the Commission (EU official-14). While this dynamic is driving developments in the EU's external climate security policy, it does not necessarily indicate a pooling of competencies (Ibid.). In contrast, a Member State official perceives Borrell clearly as part of the Commission while not observing any discrepancy between the Commission and the EEAS (Member State-12). Further empirical data shows that while cooperation at the technical level depends on individuals (EEAS-2, EEAS-5) but is close in general (EEAS-2, EEAS-3, EEAS-4, Commission-8, EU official-14), the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS at the high level is rather competitive (EEAS-2, EEAS-5, EU official-14).¹⁸

Second, the relevance of the institutional setting for the building of capacity is under consideration. Despite their respective mandates and the lenses through which they perceive climate security (Member State-11), the Commission is not only focusing on climate change and the EEAS not only on foreign and security policy (Commission-6). However, experts in the Commission and the EEAS perceive climate security rather from their field of expertise than taking a holistic approach (EEAS-3). Due to the relatively recent relevance of the EU's external

¹⁸ Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's first international visit after her appointment was to Ethiopia, which was seen as a signal that the Commission President wants to be active also in the EU's external relations. In general, the President of the Commission, the HR/VP, and the President of the European Council are all rather active in external relations which can sometimes look competitive rather than a coherent external policy (see EEAS-1).

climate security, the learning curve in climate security is still steep (Member State-10, Member-State-11) and the competence to translate the theoretical knowledge on how to address climate-related security risks into practical ideas and projects not yet sufficient (EEAS-3, Commission-6, Member-State-11, Member State-12). Moreover, it remains uncertain whether the few current policies being pursued are going to be effective eventually (EU agency-15). A beneficial institutional characteristic is the EU delegations, which provide both, the EEAS headquarters in Brussels and the Commission with valuable information from third countries (EEAS-4, EEAS-5, EU agency-15).

Third, the analysis examines whether the situational factors are beneficial or restraining for the Commission and the EEAS to build capacity. Member States' expectations of the Commission and the EEAS are rather positive, as they attribute far-reaching expertise to both actors (EP-9, Member State-12, EU official-14). The Commission and the EEAS are expected to use these competencies by proposing ideas on how to address climate-related security risks (Ibid.). In addition to assigned staff and expertise, budgetary resources determine the capacity. In this regard, the increasing interest of Member States in climate security affects the EU's budget positively (Commission-8), which provides the Commission and the EEAS with more financial resources. The budget that can be used to develop country-specific climate security projects (e.g., EU budget for Sustainable Development Goals) is considered a strong basis (Member State-12).

The Member States' interests in climate security are also reflected in the establishment of networks that deliver ideas on how to address climate-related security risks. While the Green Diplomacy Network, chaired by the EEAS, brings Member State and EU diplomats together (Sonnsjö & Bremberg, 2016; Ujvari, 2016), the Dutch Planetary Network is relevant (EEAS-2). Various Member States are also engaged in the UN Group of Friends on Climate and Security, which is mainly driven by Germany (EEAS-4).

In summary, while the Commission and the EEAS are building capacity to deal with external climate security, it is not yet sufficient. To compensate for limited human resources, they are using their close inter-institutional relationship. Moreover, the EU delegations provide useful knowledge to address climate-related security risks. The generally positive development is influenced by the increasing interest of Member States in climate security, which tend to be the driving forces of the networks.

5.1.4 Claiming authority

The following section discusses the Commission's and EEAS's efforts to claim authority, whereby both actors need to convince the EU stakeholders involved that climate security should be addressed at the European rather than at the Member State or international level (see Princen, 2011, p. 936).

First, the relevance of the inter-institutional relationship is under analytical consideration. The Commission and the EEAS are attributed to extensive expertise in climate security policy; thus, Member States welcome ideas on how to address climate-related security risks (EEAS-3, Member State-12). The close interaction of

the EEAS and the Commission but also with the Member States enables the EU to speak with one voice at the international level (EEAS-4, Commission-8). A Commission official emphasises the aim to “[...] show the partner countries that we take the problem seriously and that we want to take action to help them” (Commission-8).

Second, the environment created by the institutional setting is discussed. The current von der Leyen Commission's focus on climate policy and its far-reaching competencies prepared the ground for the Commission, with the support of the EEAS, to derive the European Climate Change Act from the EU Green Deal. As the EU “[...] is the only continent which has agreed on the Climate Law”, it is best equipped to address climate-related security risks (EU agency-15). Although the EU is the world's largest contributor to climate finance (Commission-7, Commission-8, Academia-15) and the general budget is growing, more needs to be done (Commission-7).

Third, situational factors show relevance for the claiming of authority by the Commission and the EEAS. Even before the EU was engaged in climate security policy, various Member States, like Germany and France, had already implemented related programs (Commission-6). When Member States have specific interests regarding their relation to countries outside the EU, they address climate-related security issues bilaterally (EU agency-15).

The capacity of the Commission and the EEAS to claim authority must be considered not only concerning the bilateral interests of Member States but also regarding the involvement of Member States with activities of other international organisations, such as the UN and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The interviews reveal that the commitment of Member States to climate security at the UN-level is strong (EEAS-2, EEAS-4, Commission-7, Member State-10, Member State-12). In December 2021, the UN Members voted on a UN Security Council resolution on climate security (EEAS-4; UN, 13 December 2021). Although the resolution failed to be adopted, the voting behaviour of the EU Member States shows that there was strong support for it (EEAS-2; International Crisis Group, 22 December 2021). Moreover, Member States are strongly advocating for climate security when chairing the UN's Security Council (EEAS-2, Member State-11). In this regard, not only the Member States but also the Commission and the EEAS are involved to drive climate security at the international level forward (EEAS-2, EEAS-4).

Besides the actions of the UN, NATO has practical relevance to the EU. In the last years, NATO published various strategic papers in which it emphasises the relevance of the environment for security policy and vice-versa (NATO, 2010, 2014, 2021). In comparison to the EU, NATO is further ahead in reducing the impact of defence policy on climate change (EP-9, Member State-13). To avoid any security risks, the positions of the EU and NATO need to be aligned, which influences the EU policies (Member State-13).

In conclusion, the analysis reveals that the EU is a very important level to address climate security policy, which is consolidated by the efforts of the Commission and the EEAS to claim authority. While the Member States are also engaged bilaterally, the EU in general, including the Commission, the EEAS, and the Member States plays an important role at the international level. However, not

in any aspect of climate security. For example, NATO is a leader in addressing the impact of defence policy on climate change.

The analysis of the four dimensions of *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* shows that the Commission and the EEAS perform this leadership task. The empirical data provides strong evidence for mobilising supporters, arousing interest, and claiming authority. The Commission and the EEAS are also building capacity, but it is still insufficient. In general, the relational important inter-institutional relationship between both actors provides the foundation to exercise this leadership task.

5.2 Analysing collaborative mediative-institutional leadership

Collaborative mediative-institutional leadership refers to the capacity of the Commission and the EEAS to interact with the involved EU actors to implement formulated objectives on external climate security by making use of the existing resources (Müller, 2019b, p. 27). The exercise of this leadership task is based on the capacity of the Commission and the EEAS to exert influence and mediate among EU actors (Ibid., p. 44). The following analysis of *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* focuses on both dimensions separately. Although the impact of the institutional setting on *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* is theoretically considered most influential, situational factors and the inter-institutional relationship are addressed as well (see Müller, 2019b, p. 29). The institutional setting captures the decision-making procedure, the division of power, and the distribution of portfolios (Müller, 2019b; Tömmel, 2013). The code list summarising the interview data is attached in Appendix 4 (*Table 5, p. xx*).

5.2.1 Exerting influence

The following section analyses whether the Commission and the EEAS exert influence on the EU's external climate security policy by convincing other EU actors of their ideas on how to address the issue (see Dür, 2008, p. 561).

First, the environment created by the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS is discussed. The interaction of the Commission and the EEAS is more challenging than in the agenda-setting phase. In general, the Commission takes the role of the machinery that develops legislative ideas, and the EEAS is considered its external arm (Member State-12). When implementing climate security programmes in third countries, the quality of the cooperation depends on personal relations and whether Commission officials show the expertise and willingness to cooperate with EEAS officials in the EU delegations (EEAS-5, Commission-6). In general, the interaction of the EEAS headquarters, the delegations, and the Commission is necessary. As the Commission administers the financial instruments for the EU's external action, the EEAS needs to cooperate

closely with the Commission to be able to implement policy (EEAS-2, EEAS-5, Member State-12, EU official-14). In this regard, the Commission officials try to gain influence by allocating funds for specific programmes (Commission-6) but also “[...] like to use their power [towards the EEAS] to show that they are the ones who have the budget“ for the EU delegations (EEAS-5). However, the EEAS benefits from its local knowledge in third countries (EEAS-5) and is usually preparing the first draft, which empowers the delegations (Commission-6).

The EEAS and the Commission are perceived as having clear goals on how to address climate security, which Member States follow (EEAS-2, Member State-12). In this regard, the position of the Commission and the EEAS is not perceived as identical but aligned (EU agency-15). However, the interviews reveal evidence that the Commission and the EEAS agree on ideas easily, while their implementation is more challenging (EEAS-2, EEAS-5). In general, both actors have more extensive knowledge in developing ideas than translating them into concrete projects (EEAS-3, Commission-6, Member-State-11, Member State-12).

Second, the analysis focuses on the relevance of the *institutional setting* for the ability of the Commission and the EEAS to exert influence. In general, the Commission and the EEAS are bound to regular Council conclusions that address climate security (EEAS-4). However, they can exert a limited degree of influence when implementing policies (EEAS-2, Member State-12, EU official-14). In contrast to domestic climate policy, the European Council defines the general direction of the EU but is otherwise barely involved in external climate security policy (EU official-14). Moreover, the EEAS and the DG for International Partnership are jointly responsible for the multiannual planning of financial instruments for development and international cooperation (European Commission, 2018, p. 5). This budgetary power enables the Commission and the EEAS to exert influence when allocating money to policy measures (Member State-12).

Although decision-making in foreign policy takes mainly place in the Foreign Affairs Council, the Commission is trying to exert influence, as with any sectoral issue (EU official-14). Its close cooperation with the EEAS and making information available for other actors such as the Member States or the European Council exceeds its institutionally defined power (EU official-14, Member State-13). According to a Member State official, the Commission could affect external climate security, for instance in terms of expenditures. But with dimensions of the CSDP, such as military missions, the competencies lie and should lie with the Member States only, with the EEAS sitting at the table (Member State-13).

In the community method, the interaction of the Commission with the Member States is very close (Member State-13). In intergovernmental decision-making, this is not so much the case (Member State-13). The Commission might express its opinion, but the Member States decide themselves (Member State-13). While the EEAS’ position is informally agreed with the Commission, some Member State officials are in interaction with the EEAS only (Member State-12, Member State-13). In general, the EEAS benefits from having one foot in the Council and one foot in the Commission (Member State-13). The EEAS is involved especially regarding the strategic orientation of the EU, for instance during the development of the EU’s strategic compass for security and defence (EU official-14). However, from a CFSP and Member State point of view, the strategic compass was initiated by the Member

States and the EEAS had rather a coordinating than an influencing role (Member State-13). Due to its limited institutional role, the Commission was not able to exceed its institutional power in this regard (Member State-13).

The EP is vocal in keeping "[...] climate security high on the EU agenda" (EEAS-1) and aims to combine the various approaches (EP-9). However, it is not perceived as a very influential actor in the EU's external climate security policy (Member State-10, Member State-12). The efforts of the Commission and the EEAS to exert influence are thus not suppressed by the interests of the EP. While the EEAS and the Commission exert influence by developing ideas on how to address climate-related security risks, this is less evident in their implementation (EP-9).

Third, situational factors could determine the scope for the Commission and the EEAS to exert influence. The interviews reveal that some Member States have high ambitions and concrete aims on how to address the climate-related security issues (Member State-11, Member State-12). The Member States are also careful not to surrender their competencies, especially in security policy (Ibid.). Therefore, the situational factors are rather constraining the capacity of the Commission and the EEAS to exert influence on the EU's external climate security policy. Due to their knowledge of climate security policy, both actors are expected to act as driving forces in the climate security discussion (EU official-14) and propose ideas on how to implement climate security policies (EEAS-3, Member State-12), which the Commission and the EEAS fulfil (Ibid.). In general, Member States support the ideas of the Commission and the EEAS in this regard (EEAS-5, EU official-14), which is beneficial for the Commission and the EEAS to exert influence.

In summary, the analysis of the empirical data shows that the Commission and the EEAS aim to exert influence, which is supported by their financial power and knowledge. However, their practical knowledge of implementing measures is less extensive than their theoretical knowledge. Moreover, the relationship between the Commission and the EEAS is more conflictual. Whether they are successful in this regard depends on the issue under consideration (Member State-10, Member State-11, Member State-12, Member State-13).

5.2.2 Mediating among EU actors

The remainder of this chapter analyses whether the Commission and the EEAS find political compromises and consensus by mediating among the EU actors in the EU's external climate security policy (see Olsson & Hammargård, 2016, p. 552).

First, the relevance of the inter-institutional relationship on the ability of the Commission and the EEAS to mediate is under consideration. The expertise of the Commission and the EEAS in external climate security benefits their mediating efforts. Although the Commission and the EEAS exercise the mediating role individually, their respective positions are aligned by informal or formal agreements (Member State-13), which is facilitated by their working relationship. However, their more complicated relationship when implementing policies restricts this opportunity.

Second, the institutional setting shows relevance for the Commission and the EEAS to mediate, as the extent depends on the issue under consideration (EEAS-3). In principle, the mediating role lies with the owner of the legislative text under consideration (EU official-14). For instance, the positions of the EU on discussions such as the UN's Climate Change Conferences need to be adopted by the Council of the EU (see e.g. Council of the EU, 6 October 2021). Due to its technical expertise in climate policy, the Commission supports the Council Presidency to agree on a position by mediating among the Member States (EU official-14). Council conclusions that address the EU's external climate security policy are adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council. In this Council configuration, the EEAS assists the HR/VP in its chairing role. Therefore, the mediating role lies with them or the Council Presidency (EU official-14).

A Member State official makes a deviating observation regarding the interaction in the Political and Security Committee that consists of Member State representatives and is chaired by the EEAS (Member State-13). The EEAS does not mediate in general, but like-minded Member State coalitions do. Moreover, the Member States that are accepting an even marginal agreement often mediate among the involved representatives (Ibid.). A Member State official emphasises the expectation that not the EEAS or the Commission, but the chair of the negotiations is expected to mediate (Member State-11, Member State-13).

Second, the analysis presents empirical evidence that allows drawing conclusions on whether situational factors are relevant for the Commission and the EEAS to mediate among EU actors. According to various EU officials, only insignificant disagreements occur in the discussions on how to address climate-related security risks among the Member States (Commission-6, EEAS-3, Member State-11, Member State-12). Therefore, no mediator can be identified or is even needed (EEAS-3, Member State-11, Member State-12). „We haven't really had any issues with the Member States when it comes to discussing this topic. There hasn't been a need for mediation. So, I cannot really find a mediator (EEAS-3). However, if any disagreements occur, EEAS considers itself as such (EEAS-2, EEAS-3). As there is variance regarding the urgency of addressing climate security among the Member States, divisions and thus room for mediation are still observable (Member State-13). Therefore, the Member States that are aiming to achieve agreements are taking on the mediating role, it is not the Member States with the strongest interest in climate security (Member State-13). As large Member States are rather blocking a decision than the small Member States so, their support is of crucial importance (Ibid.). In addition, as the Member States have a more extensive budget for climate finance than the EU (Commission-8), aligning with them regarding international negotiations is important for both, the Commission in multilateral climate diplomacy and for the EEAS in bilateral climate diplomacy.

In conclusion, the analysis reveals that the Commission and the EEAS are mediating only to a limited extent. While their positions are aligned, the Commission benefits from its extensive expertise in climate change when mediating and the EEAS from its access to the EU's foreign and security policy. Although the general engagement of Member States is not considered as reducing the leadership capacity of the Commission and the EEAS, the perceived lack of disagreement reduces the ability of both actors to mediate.

In summary, the analysis of the empirical data regarding the capacity of the Commission and the EEAS to exert influence and mediate among actors shows evidence. However, it is rather limited. While they are bound by the institutional setting as relational important independent variables, both extend their competencies only fractionally. Therefore, the Commission and the EEAS exert *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* to a less extensive degree than *collaborative agenda-setting leadership*.

6 Discussion

This study examines whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership in the EU's external climate security policy. To address this research problem, a most-likely single case study based on one written answer, 14 semi-structured interviews as well as primary and secondary literature is conducted. The analysis reveals that the Commission and the EEAS show collaborative leadership to a limited extent.

The room for manoeuvre of the Commission and the EEAS to exercise collaborative leadership is based on their institutionally defined tasks in climate security: exercising *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* and *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* (see Müller, 2019b). In fulfilling both tasks, the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS, the institutional setting, and situational factors may prove to be facilitating or hindering (see e.g., Bligh, 2017; Tömmel, 2020).

First, exercising *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* requires the Commission and the EEAS to mobilise supporters, arouse interest, build capacity, and claim authority (see Princen, 2011). In this regard, the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS is of great theoretical interest (see Müller & Van Esch, 2020), while the other two show relevance as well. The analysis provides convincing evidence for Commission and the EEAS to mobilise supporters, arouse interest, and claim authority. Although both actors are building capacity to address climate-related security risks, their efforts are not yet sufficient (Commission-7). Therefore, the study provides rather supportive evidence for the first assumption that the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership in agenda-setting.

Conforming to previous research (Riddervold & Trondal, 2017), the inter-institutional relationship is rather close and mainly perceived as such externally (EP-9, Member State-10, Member State-12, EU agency-15). This observation benefits the Commission and the EEAS to apply the four strategies of the first leadership task. Even differences in the perception of climate security can be used by addressing a broader audience (Commission-8). In addition to the theoretical relevance of large (Schild & Krotz, 2013) and Visegrad Member States (Wurzel et al., 2019), the Member States are in general supporting the efforts of the Commission and the EEAS to address external climate security policy. In line with new intergovernmentalism, the Member States are in general very engaged in applying the respective strategies of agenda-setting leadership as well. However, the European Council as the expected leader is only relevant in defining the general direction of the EU.

The current Russian invasion of Ukraine modifies the efforts of the Commission and the EEAS to put climate security on the EU's agenda (Commission-8, Member State-11, Member State-12). The debate on climate

security increasingly includes energy security (Ibid.) but constrains the efforts of a climate-friendly defence policy (EP-9). While the EU is in general prioritising “[...] more immediate security crises” over climate change (Member State-12; Youngs, 2021a), the emphasis of the current von der Leyen Commission (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2021; Remling & Barnhoorn, 2021) raises expectations that climate security remains on the agenda and the mobilisation of supporters continues. At the international level, the EEAS, the Commission as well as the Member States are a driving force in advancing discussions on climate security (EEAS-4, EU agency-15). Other international actors, such as NATO and the UN are taking climate security are becoming increasingly concerned about climate security as well, while especially NATO is ahead of the EU in making defence policy greener (EP-9, Member State-13).

Second, *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* refers to the ability of the Commission and the EEAS to exert influence and mediate among the involved EU actors (see Müller, 2019b). The empirical data provides less convincing evidence than for the first leadership task. Both, their ability to exert influence and mediate among the EU actors is limited. Therefore, the study reveals only limited but rather supportive evidence for the second assumption on whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership*.

While the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS is cooperative when developing theoretical ideas on how to address climate-related security risks (EEAS-2), it is rather challenging when implementing them. In this regard, the role of the Commission to administer the budget and EEAS’ expertise through the EU delegations in third countries reveal conflicts (EEAS-2, EEAS-5, Member State-12). Although these aspects complicate their relationship, both can use them to exert limited influence when implementing policies (EEAS-2, Member State-12, EU official-14). However, they are only to a very limited extent able to exploit the institutional setting to their advantage.

The empirical evidence indicates that the ability to mediate depends on the issue itself. Although the Commission and the EEAS mediate in separate arenas, their positions are aligned (EU agency-15). When discussing climate security issues in the EU’s foreign and security policy, the mediation role is exercised by the Council Presidency, like-minded Member States, or the Member States that are striving for an agreement (Member State-13). The EEAS is not dominating as a mediator. When preparing the EU’s position in climate security for the international arena, the Commission supports the Council Presidency with its mediating role (EU official-14). There is also broad evidence that climate security is not a difficult subject to negotiate, as the EU actors are appreciating any idea that helps to translate the policy ideas into practice (EEAS-3, Member State-11, Member State-12). Therefore, the mediating role is less required than in domestic climate policy (Ibid.).

The analysis shows in general that the Commission and the EEAS are important actors in the EU to address climate-related security risks (Commission-7). This engagement is complemented by some very active and ambitious Member States. Therefore, the study provides evidence for the stated argument that new intergovernmentalism underestimates the inter-institutional interaction of the Commission and the EEAS. Both actors combine their competencies and exercise collaborative leadership, at least to a certain degree. Although the current war shifts the focus on external climate security, it stresses the urgency to address climate-related security risks. The ongoing climate crisis is likely to pose an even greater threat to international security in the future (EEAS-5, EU agency-15), which will also threaten the internal stability of the EU (EU official-14). Therefore, intensified leadership in the EU but also at the international level is a tool to address the collective action problem of climate security.

7 Conclusion

This study aims to address the research puzzle of whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership in the EU's external climate security policy. The current state of research paints a very ambiguous picture of the intra-European leadership dynamics. As no EU actor is attributed the responsibility to address external climate security policy (Youngs, 2014c), various actors and units address climate security from their policy perspective as a coherent structure is lacking (Lazard, 2021, p. 15). Leadership would provide the opportunity to integrate various policy areas and approaches effectively (Mobjörk et al., 2016, p. xi).

Theoretically, this study departs from new intergovernmentalism that attributes the Commission reduced leadership capacity as a result of the EEAS' creation (Bickerton et al., 2015b; Puetter, 2012, p. 168), and neglects their inter-institutional cooperation. In this regard, the concept of collaborative leadership is applied, which anticipates cooperative or coordinative interaction among EU actors to exercise leadership (Nielsen & Smeets, 2018). To assess the collaborative leadership of the Commission and the EEAS, their institutionally defined room for leadership manoeuvre is identified: exercising *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* and *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership*. Both leadership tasks are affected by the inter-institutional relationship between the Commission and the EEAS, the institutional setting, and situational factors.

The conduction of a qualitative most-likely case study which is based on empirical data gathered by 14 semi-structured expert interviews with EU officials, one written answer as well as primary and secondary literature reveals the leadership dynamics in the EU's external climate security policy. The analysis shows that the Commission and the EEAS exercise *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* and *collaborative mediative-institutional leadership* to a certain extent, while the empirical evidence is more convincing regarding the first leadership task. Member States support the Commission and the EEAS in general, but the discussion on climate security is currently shaped by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Although the EU is the most dominant actor to address climate security, the capacity of the Commission and the EEAS needs to be improved.

Therefore, the research question posed, whether the Commission and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership in the EU's external climate security policy, can be answered with yes, albeit with limitations. This study contributes to the literature in two ways. Empirically, it provides an in-depth analysis of the ambiguous leadership dynamics in the EU's external climate security policy by focusing on the leadership capacity of the Commission and the EEAS. Theoretically, it sheds light on the concept of collaborative leadership in the EU, about which little knowledge exists so far (Beach & Smeets, 2020; Müller & Van Esch, 2020; Nielsen & Smeets, 2018; Smeets & Beach, 2020).

7.1 Limitations

Although this study provides interesting insights into collaborative leadership by the Commission and the EEAS, various limitations related to the theoretical framework, the applied method, and the empirical data can be identified.

First, limitations result from the theoretical framework. This study assumes that the room for manoeuvre to exercise collaborative leadership is based on their institutionally defined tasks (see Müller, 2019b). However, the model is very simplified and does not consider that both leadership tasks cannot be divided easily in reality (Tucker, 1995). The same applies to the three independent variables, which are expected to be interrelated (see Müller, 2019b). While collaborative leadership includes cooperative and coordinated interaction (Nielsen & Smeets, 2018), the literature provides a stricter definition that does only allow the actor's equal involvement (Müller & Van Esch, 2020). The application of this definition is expected to lead to more reserved results.

Second, the research design reveals limitations. The application of a most-likely case study is controversial and lacks general acceptance (Sekhon, 2004). As collaborative leadership by the Commission and the EEAS in external climate security is not considered a perfect most-likely case, the generalisability is limited. Most-likely cases are also used to reject a theory for which the case under consideration would have been most probable (Bennett & Elman, 2009; Eckstein, 1975; Gerring, 2007; Levy, 2008). As the study provides rather supportive evidence for collaborative leadership, it could occur in other, more perfect cases.¹⁹

Moreover, the operationalisation of the variables needs to be discussed. The operationalisation of *collaborative agenda-setting leadership* is based on Princen (2011). As the author identifies even more relevant strategies to mobilise supporters, arouse interest, build capability, and claim authority, a deviating operationalisation based on Princen (2011) or other authors cannot be excluded. Although the independent variables are not central to this study, the not exhaustive dimensions could miss other relevant factors.

Third, further limitations result from the analysed data. Although the number of interviewees affiliated with the leader and follower dimension is similar, the sample of representatives of each EU actor is very limited. Therefore, a generalisability on the whole actor is not possible. Moreover, the positions of heads of state could not be gathered. While contacting interview partners it became clear that the number of climate security experts in each EU body is limited, which mitigates this limitation. In addition, the conduction of semi-structured interviews by telephone and video comes with various limitations (Archibald et al., 2019; Lune & Berg, 2017), such as the reduced willingness to disclose sensitive information when not being in a protected environment (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 1298).

¹⁹ The security dimension also allows arguing for a least-likely case (Gerring, 2007; Gerring, 2008). If collaborative leadership occurs in this challenging case, it likely occurs in other cases.

7.2 Future research opportunities

The analysis of collaborative leadership by the Commission and the EEAS in the EU's external climate security policy draws attention to future research opportunities that result from the discussed limitations and a general lack of research in this policy field.

A quantitative approach including the positions of many climate security experts would increase the generalisability of the results (Gerring, 2017). As the awareness to address climate security increased over time (EU official-14), the analysis of the collaborative leadership development would be interesting. The separation of the leadership tasks into the agenda-setting and implementing phase considers time-related aspects, which enables a process-oriented perspective (t Hart, 2014; Müller 2019c, p. 19). Moreover, research could focus on whether the Commission and the EEAS apply specific leadership types respectively (Wurzel et al., 2019).

The state of the art (Pérez de las Heras, 2020; Youngs, 2021b), as well as the empirical evidence of this study, emphasise the important role of Member States in addressing external climate security. It is therefore of analytical interest to test new intergovernmentalism and the collaborative leadership concept in this regard whether the Member States, the Commission, and the EEAS exercise collaborative leadership. As collaborative leadership is not only exercised by institutions but also by individuals (Müller & Van Esch, 2020), the role of the Commission President, the HR/VP as well as the President of the European Council could clarify the leadership dynamics further.

Resulting from the broad approach of the state of research and this study on climate security, the focus on leadership in specific areas, such as climate diplomacy would be of scientific interest. Due to the close relation of various areas of climate security, leadership dynamics could be evaluated by taking a functionalist approach which could identify spillover effects. While this study focuses on the external dimension of climate security, the internal dimension will gain relevance in the future (EEAS-5, EU agency-15).

In conclusion, it becomes clear that many questions remain open scientifically, but also in political reality. As the climate crisis will further threaten international security, intensified implementation of theoretical ideas at the European but also at the international level as well as leadership could address these security risks.

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IV. Appendix

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Appendix 1 Interview partners

Interview number	Affiliated EU Actor	Leader/follower dimension	Date	Communication type
1	EEAS (Head Quarter) ²⁰	Leader	16 March 2022	Telephone call
2	EEAS (Head Quarter)	Leader	4 April 2022	Zoom call
3	EEAS (Head Quarter)	Leader	7 April 2022	Zoom call
4	EEAS (Delegation of the EU)	Leader	11 April 2022	Telephone call
5	EEAS (Delegation of the EU)	Leader	12 April 2022	Telephone call
6	Commission	Leader	5 April 2022	Telephone call
7	Commission	Leader	15 April 2022	Written answers
8	Commission	Leader	21 April 2022	Zoom call
9	EP	Follower	19 April 2022	Zoom call
10	Member State	Follower	7 April 2022	Zoom call
11	Member State	Follower	13 April 2022	Zoom call
12	Member State	Follower	13 April 2022	Zoom call
13	Member State	Follower	21 April 2022	Zoom call
14	EU official ²¹	Follower	19 April 2022	Zoom call
15	EU agency	Follower	8 April 2022	Zoom call

Table 2: List of interview partners (own depiction).

²⁰ This interview was also used to test and improve the developed interview guideline.

²¹ For data protection reasons, this interview partner should only be quoted as EU official. The person can be assigned to the group of potential followers of the Commission and the EEAS.

Appendix 2 Guideline expert interviews – Leader dimension

Introduction	Personal presentation	Before starting with the interview, I would like to briefly introduce myself. My name is Stefanie, and I am currently writing my master’s thesis at Lund University in Sweden. My aim is to disentangle the leadership dynamics in the field of climate security in the EU. In this regard, I am focusing on external aspects, such as development, migration, and defence policy. Internal security aspects are not considered.
	Data security	Thank you very much that you are available for an interview. I would like to record our conversation to avoid mistakes in the transcription. Your data will be treated confidentially, the recording will be deleted immediately after transcription, and the transcript will not be published. In the published thesis, your statements cannot be traced back to you. Do you agree to this procedure? Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

Variable	Code	Transition sentence	Essential question ²²	Extra question ²³	Probing/ throwaway question ²⁴
DV1: Collaborative agenda- setting leadership	Mobilising supporters	First, I would like to learn more about whether and how external climate security, or the motivation to address climate-related security risks, has gained importance in the EU.	Is any EU actor opposing the EU's efforts to address climate-related security risks? (<i>filter question</i>)	Is there any institution or actor in the EU that can be considered as driving force in addressing external climate security in the EU?	Probing question Could you elaborate on that a bit more?
	Arousing interest		Is the Commission engaged in bringing other EU actors to the table? Is the EEAS engaged in bringing other EU actors to the table?	Are the Commission and the EEAS working on this together?	
			Is the Commission trying to arouse interest for external climate security issues in the EU? Is the EEAS trying to arouse interest for external climate security issues in the EU?	Are there any other actors engaged in this regard? Is the Commission organising events on climate security?	Throwaway question I have the feeling that you are not comfortable with providing these insights.

²² The essential questions addressing the dependent variables are more important, not all questions addressing the independent variables are posed to all interview partners.

²³ This is the full range of questions which are asked depending on the knowledge of the interview partner or whether they provide the answers by generally talking about their experience and perceptions. Thus, not all interview partners are asked all extra questions.

²⁴ These questions are used as needed.

				<p>Is the EEAS organising events on climate security?</p> <p>Which tool does the Commission use to arouse interest?</p> <p>Which tool does the EEAS use to arouse interest?</p> <p>Are the Commission and the EEAS working on this together?</p>	<p>Could we clarify a previous statement or yours?</p>
	<p>Building capacity</p>		<p>Could you give me an insight into the resources of the Commission to address climate-related security risks?</p> <p>Could you give me an insight into the resources of the EEAS to address climate-related security risks?</p>	<p>Does the Commission have sufficient expertise/ staff/ funds to address climate security?</p> <p>Does the EEAS have sufficient expertise/ staff/ funds to address climate security?</p>	

				<p>Is the Commission expanding its resources to address climate security?</p> <p>Is the EEAS expanding its resources to address climate security?</p>	
	Claiming authority		Should climate security be addressed at the EU level?	Is climate security also addressed in other areas than at EU level?	
DV2: Collaborative mediative- institutional leadership	Influence	Now I am interested to hear more about the implementation of policies that address external climate-related security risks.	<p>Is the Commission trying to convince other EU actors of its ideas to address climate security?</p> <p>Is the EEAS trying to convince other EU actors of its ideas on how to address climate security?</p>	<p>Do you have the feeling that the ideas of the Commission are implemented?</p> <p>Do you have the feeling that the ideas of the EEAS are implemented?</p> <p>Are ideas shared by the Commission and the EEAS</p>	

				being implemented?	
	Mediation		Imagine any disagreements occur during the discussions on how to address climate security. Which actor is most likely solving the issue?	Is the Commission considered as mediator? Is the EEAS considered as mediator? Are the Commission and the EEAS acting together as mediators?	
IV1: Inter-institutional relationship	Understanding/ expectations climate security		Could you describe how you deal with external climate security in your daily work?	Do the Commission and the EEAS address climate security differently?	
	Working relationship		How would you describe the working relationship with your colleagues from the Commission/the EEAS?	Is there any disagreement with your colleagues from the Commission/the EEAS?	
	Division of portfolios		Which policy areas are affected?	Could you provide me an insight on who is most active	

IV₂: Institutional setting				in which policy area?	
	Decision-making procedure		Which actors are most involved in the decision-making procedure?	Could you provide an insight on the decision-making procedure?	
	Division of power		Who is the most influential actor?	How relevant is the Commission/ the EEAS?	
IV₃: Situational factors	Position of Member States		How would you describe the position of the Member States towards addressing external climate security policy?	Is there any Member States rather not agreeing to address climate security policy?	
	Occurring crises		Are there any crises that affect the procedure of addressing external climate security policy?	Is there any change in the discussions now?	
Conclusion		Thank you very much for your answers. Now I have asked all my questions.	Is there anything you would like to discuss regarding the role of the EEAS in achieving climate security in the EU's external relations? Does anything else cross your mind which could be important?	Is there any person who could provide further useful insights into the intra-European leadership dynamics in the field of climate security?	

Table 3: Interview guideline for interviews with experts affiliated with the EEAS and the Commission (own depiction according to the theoretical framework).

Appendix 3 Guideline expert interviews – Follower dimension

Introduction	Personal presentation	Before starting with the interview, I would like to briefly introduce myself. My name is Stefanie, and I am currently writing my master’s thesis at Lund University in Sweden. My aim is to disentangle the leadership dynamics in the field of climate security in the EU. In this regard, I am focusing on external aspects, such as development, migration, and defence policy. Internal security aspects are not considered.
	Data security	<p>Thank you very much that you are available for an interview. I would like to record our conversation to avoid mistakes in the transcription. Your data will be treated confidentially, the recording will be deleted immediately after transcription, and the transcript will not be published.</p> <p>In the published thesis, your statements cannot be traced back to you. Do you agree to this procedure?</p> <p>Dou you have any questions before we start the interview?</p>

Variable	Code	Transition sentence	Essential question ²⁵	Extra question ²⁶	Probing/ throwaway question ²⁷
DV1: Collaborative agenda- setting leadership	Mobilising supporters	First, I would like to learn more about whether and how external climate security, or the motivation to address climate-related security risks, has gained importance in the EU.	Is any EU actor opposing the EU's efforts to address climate-related security risks? (<i>filter question</i>)	Is there any institution or actor in the EU that can be considered as driving force in addressing external climate security in the EU?	Probing question Could you elaborate on that a bit more?
	Arousing interest		Is the Commission engaged in bringing other EU actors to the table? Is the EEAS engaged in bringing other EU actors to the table?	Are the Commission and the EEAS working on this together?	
			Is the Commission trying to arouse interest for external climate security issues in the EU? Is the EEAS trying to arouse interest for external climate security issues in the EU?	Are there any other actors engaged in this regard? Is the Commission organising events on climate security?	Throwaway question I have the feeling that you are not comfortable with providing these insights.

²⁵ The essential questions addressing the dependent variables are more important, not all questions addressing the independent variables are posed to all interview partners.

²⁶ This is the full range of questions which are asked depending on the knowledge of the interview partner or whether they provide the answers by generally talking about their experience and perceptions. Thus, not all interview partners are asked all extra questions.

²⁷ These questions are used as needed.

				<p>Is the EEAS organising events on climate security?</p> <p>Which tool does the Commission use to arouse interest?</p> <p>Which tool does the EEAS use to arouse interest?</p> <p>Are the Commission and the EEAS working on this together?</p>	<p>Could we clarify a previous statement or yours?</p>
	<p>Building capacity</p>		<p>How do you perceive the resources of the Commission?</p> <p>How do you perceive the resources of the EEAS?</p>	<p>Does the Commission have sufficient expertise/ staff/ funds to address climate security?</p> <p>Does the EEAS have sufficient expertise/ staff/ funds to address climate security?</p>	

				<p>Is the Commission expanding its resources to address climate security?</p> <p>Is the EEAS expanding its resources to address climate security?</p>	
	Claiming authority		Should climate security be addressed at the EU level?	Is climate security also addressed in other areas than at EU level?	
DV₂: Collaborative mediative-institutional leadership	Influence	Now I am interested to hear more about the implementation of policies that address external climate-related security risks.	<p>Is the Commission trying to convince you of its ideas to address climate security?</p> <p>Is the EEAS trying to convince you of its ideas on how to address climate security?</p>	<p>Do you have the feeling that the ideas of the Commission/ the EEAS are implemented?</p> <p>Are ideas shared by the Commission and the EEAS being implemented?</p>	

	Mediation		Imagine any disagreements occur during the discussions on how to address climate security. Which actor is most likely solving the issue?	Is the Commission considered as mediator? Is the EEAS considered as mediator? Are the Commission and the EEAS acting together as mediators?	
IV₁: Inter-institutional relationship	External appearance		How do you perceive the relationship of the Commission and the EEAS?	Are the Commission and the EEAS approaching you united or separately?	
IV₂: Institutional setting	Division of portfolios		Which policy areas are affected?	Who is most active in which policy area?	
	Decision-making procedure		Which actors are most involved in the decision-making procedure?	Could you provide an insight on the decision-making procedure?	

	Division of power		Who is the most influential actor?	How relevant is the Commission/ the EEAS?	
IV₃: Situational factors	Position of Member States		How would you describe the position of the Member States towards addressing external climate security policy?	Is there any Member States rather not agreeing to address climate security policy?	
	Occurring crises		Are there any crises that affect the procedure of addressing external climate security policy?	Is there any change in the discussions now?	
	Expectations towards Commission/ EEAS		Which role should the Commission take in the process of addressing climate security? Which role should the EEAS take in the process of addressing climate security	Which roles is the Commission taking? Which roles is the EEAS taking?	
Conclusion		Thank you very much for your answers. Now I have asked all my questions.	Is there anything you would like to discuss regarding the role of the EEAS in achieving climate security in the EU's external relations? Does anything else cross your mind which could be important?	Is there any person who could provide further useful insights into the intra-European leadership dynamics in the field of climate security?	

Table 4: Interview guideline for interviews with experts affiliated with the other EU actors (own depiction according to the theoretical framework).

Appendix 4 Code list interviews

Variable	Code	Interview partners														
		Leader dimension								Follower dimension						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
DV₁: Agenda-setting power	Mobilising supporters	✓	✓	✓	0	✓	0	✓	-	0	0	0	✓	0	✓	-
	Arousing interest	✓	✓	✓	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	0	0	✓	0	-	-
	Building capacity	-	0	0	✓	0	✓	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	✓	0
	Claiming authority	0	✓	-	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	✓	✓
DV₂: Mediative-institutional power	Exerting influence	✗	0	✓	0	✓	0	0	0	0	✗	✗	✓	0	-	-
	Mediating among EU actors	-	0	0	0	-	0	-	-	-	✗	-	✗	0	0	-
IV₁: Inter-institutional relationship	Rather beneficial/ rather restrictive	0	0	✓	✓	0	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	0	✓	0	✓
IV₂: Institutional setting	Rather beneficial/ rather restrictive	0	0	0	0	0	✓	-	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
IV₃: Situational factors	Rather beneficial/ rather restrictive	0	✓	0	0	✓	✓	-	0	0	✓	0	✓	0	0	0

Table 5: Code list of the conducted interviews and written response (0 = ambiguous evidence; - = no assessment possible/not relevant²⁸; DV₁/DV₂: ✓ = rather supporting evidence; ✗ = rather rejecting evidence; IV₁/IV₂/IV₃: ✓ = rather beneficial; ✗ = rather restrictive).²⁹ The numbers of the interview partners are in line with Table 2, p. vii (source: own depiction based on the conducted interviews).

²⁸ The impossible assessment result from the reluctance of interview partners to answer the respective question, lacking knowledge about it or because the question was not addressed to the respective interview partner when the answer was not necessary for the analysis.

²⁹ The three independent variables are generally assessed as being beneficial or restrictive for the exercise of both leadership tasks. The detailed relevance for each of them, is discussed in the analysis.