

**Joint Master in EU Trade and
Climate Diplomacy**

***Equal Partnership, CBAM & the
Carbon Leakage Trilemma in
Africa-EU relations***

Supervised by Prof. Marco Massoni

Wouter de Priester

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Statutory declaration

I hereby declare that I have composed the present thesis autonomously and without use of any other than the cited sources or means. I have indicated parts that were taken out of published or unpublished work correctly and in a verifiable manner through a quotation. I further assure that I have not presented this thesis to any other institute or university for evaluation and that it has not been published before.

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Abstract

When the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) was introduced, African states accused the EU of green colonialism. According to the EU, the CBAM aimed to avoid *carbon leakage* caused by its internal emissions trading system (ETS), referring to the moving away of companies, because of the lost competitiveness due to more stringent climate policies, resulting in economic backsliding and increased global emissions. This article explores the relationship between unilateral climate policy and equal partnership commitments between the AU & EU through a case study of the CBAM. We find that stakeholders incoherently understand equal partnership commitments but mainly interpret the principle as prescribing the avoidance of one partner imposing its agenda over the other. Following a Market Power Europe (MPE) perspective, CBAM showcases a general incompatibility of unilateral climate policies with this understanding of equal partnership commitments. Therefore, we propose the carbon leakage trilemma, which illustrates the trade-off for EU policymakers between climate pioneering, competitiveness, and respecting equal partnership in determining climate leadership. We conclude that the rationale of competitive sustainability through structural leadership will be decisive in this trilemma, though the trade-off can be mitigated through entrepreneurial leadership by enhanced consultation with genuine sensitivity and flexibility when considering African partners' interests and concerns.

Key concepts: CBAM, equal partnership, carbon leakage, Market Power Europe, Africa-EU relations, structural leadership, unilateral climate policy

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List of Abbreviations

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
EC	European Commission
EEAS	European External Action Service
EGD	European Union Green Deal
ETS	Emissions Trading System
EU	European Union
GHG	Greenhouse gases
JAES	Joint Africa-EU Strategy
LDC	Least Developed Country
MPE	Market Power Europe
MRV	Monitoring, Reporting, Validating
MS	Member State
NAO	National Authorising Officer
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
OACPS	Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
REC	Regional Economic Community
RAO	Regional Authorising Officer
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TFEU	Treaty on the Function of the European Union

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	6
Literature background.....	10
Africa-EU relations.....	10
EU Climate Leadership.....	15
Carbon leakage.....	16
The ETS & CBAM.....	17
Literature gap.....	20
Theoretical framework.....	21
Equal partnership.....	21
Market Power Europe.....	24
Unilateral climate leadership.....	26
Methodology.....	27
Chapter 1: Equal partnership.....	29
General insights.....	29
As cooperation framework.....	31
As constitutive framing strategy.....	33
Chapter 2: CBAM and equal partnership.....	37
CBAM & Market Power Europe.....	37
CBAM & the cooperation framework.....	38
CBAM & the constitutive framing strategy.....	40
Compatibility conclusion.....	41
Chapter 3: The carbon leakage trilemma & broader implications.....	43
The carbon leakage trilemma.....	43
Finding a balance.....	47
Conclusion.....	50
Discussion.....	52
References.....	55
Annex.....	61

Introduction

When the European Union (EU) proposed its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) to prevent carbon leakage, the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China & South Africa) were the first to argue that the system was discriminatory (Sud, 2021). The CBAM, imposing costs for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of imported goods from the aluminium, fertiliser, cement, steel, iron & electricity sectors in the EU's market, was labelled as green protectionist, accusing the EU of securing economic interests under the umbrella of climate ambitions (Engström, 2021). Many African states were especially exposed, being highly dependent on aluminium exports, while 80% of African electricity is still generated by fossil fuels (Bauer-Babef, 2021). As a result, President Sall of Senegal urged the EU to exclude Africa from the new instrument and to pursue a joint strategy to account for the level of African development (Fox, 2022). Tollmann & Pilsner (2021) hereby address the context of an “increasingly fractious” EU and AU relationship, emphasising the need for dialogue to prevent the perception of “green colonialism” by African states and acknowledge the different impacts of such a mechanism for various groups (p. 34).

The importance of Africa-EU relations, especially in the global transition, is essential due to the continents' high interdependence. While Africa is expected to have an enormous rise in its demographic and economy, while holding resourceful soil for essential raw materials for the global green transition, Europe currently possesses strong financial capabilities but also encounters high emissions. However, Africa currently focuses on further economic development, while the EU prioritises a green transition in all its policies following the paradigm of *sustainable competitiveness* through the EU Green Deal (EGD) (Bongardt & Torres, 2022). The relationship between the continents is delicate and has a long history of colonisation and inequality. Therefore, green cooperation between the continents is not only necessary but also highly sensitive and vulnerable to neo-colonial tendencies (Kotsopoulos & Mattheis, 2018). The EU and AU hereby aimed to institutionally shift away from an unequal relationship, which has for years been characterised by a donor-recipient relationship, by introducing the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) and including equal

partnership as a central aspect of future cooperation (Del Biondo, 2020). However, when the EU introduced CBAM, the African states accused the EU of neo-colonialism under a green umbrella, referring to the paternalistic European attitude that Africa-EU relations had expressed to have moved past (Engström, 2022). In this research, we will further examine the relationship between these equal partnership commitments and unilateral climate policies. Although the literature has covered AU-EU relations, equal partnership, and the EU climate policies distinctively, we will explore the dynamics between the external aspects of EU unilateral climate policy and equal partnership commitments through a Market Power Europe (MPE) lens. This research, therefore, aims to answer the following question:

How does EU unilateral climate policy relate to the equal partnership commitments made in the JAES, following the case study of CBAM explained through an MPE perspective?

We will first explore the concept of equal partnership further from stakeholder perspectives by conducting semi-structured interviews. Although previous literature has explained the principle by examining trends or implications on cooperation from a theoretical outside-in angle, we contribute by focusing on the internal interpretation by answering the question of *what role equal partnership plays in AU-EU relations following stakeholders' perspectives*. We aim to find what it means in practice and delineate the importance of the theoretically outlined aspects of equal partnership commitments. We will not come up with an exact definition but clarify what the partnership *de facto* entails for people involved in daily operations. We will use a theoretical framework that explains the principle in two ways, namely i) as a cooperation framework, focusing on explicit cooperation and negotiation commitments, and ii) as a constitutive framing strategy, explaining the more strategic use of the concept. We will contribute to these theories by exploring how stakeholders understand the topic and then organise our findings according to these two publications. Hereby, we will conclude that there is no clear uniform understanding of the concept, and general frustration of EU stakeholders with AU partners exists, risking the principle to ring hollow in high-priority and time-constrained EU policy areas. However, there is a common acknowledgment of the avoidance of the imposition of norms,

historically displayed by the European paternalistic attitude. This implication translates both in internal agenda-setting practices following the cooperation framework, as well as in the narrative for legitimising cooperation in a post-colonial context, following the constitutive framing strategy. The interviewees do not coherently recognise the other aspects outlined in the theoretical framework, suggesting them to be theoretical and strategic explanations of the concept instead of having clear *boots on the ground*.

Secondly, we will analyse *the effects of CBAM on the equal partnership concept*, following the same theoretical framework as in the previous chapter. We examine CBAM for its compatibility with the cooperation framework and its strengthening or weakening of the constitutive framing strategy. We find that the economically coercive aspect of CBAM, as explained by MPE, imposes EU climate ambitions on the AU member states, conflicting with all identified aspects of equal partnership. Namely, while it coercively exports a European mechanism, the transitional speed is controlled by the European Commission (EC), while hindering the achievement of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Most problematically, the imposition of the EU ETS through coercive conditionality illustrated the imposition of a European agenda on African partners. This confirms the limited commitments of the concept due to its incoherent understanding and application in a high-priority and time-constrained EU policy area. Therefore, this MPE approach weakens the credibility of the equal partnership narrative as a constitutive framing strategy in cooperation and is inherently incompatible with the cooperation framework.

Lastly, we widen the implication of the case study and introduce the *carbon leakage trilemma* that the EU faces. We find that competitiveness, climate pioneering, and equal partnership with Africa are incompatible, as long as the AU and African states strongly depend on the EU's single market for exports and have lower climate ambitions. Because we found that equal partnership runs the risk of becoming meaningless in high-priority and time-constrained policy areas of the EU, and the EC follows a sustainable competitiveness rationale, we expect equal partnership commitments to be the lowest priority. However, entrepreneurial leadership through enhanced consultation and genuine

sensitivity and flexibility to listen to partner's concerns, can mitigate the necessary trade-off. However, we conclude that equal partnership commitments are likely to become increasingly important in this trilemma, due to the shrinking economic power of the EU single market, and the rise of serious alternatives for the AU as illustrated in *the new scramble for Africa*.

This research aims to contribute to an increased understanding of the delicate relationship between the EU & AU as two asymmetric partners and explores how the EU can pursue its ambition as a climate leader regarding the African continent. Because of the delicate relationship, high interdependence, and great importance of addressing climate change together, this research provides essential insights into EU considerations for pursuing climate leadership vis-a-vis African partners. This research identifies the relationship between the EU as a unilateral climate pusher and the JAES' equal partnership commitments in policy-making processes. Therefore, this study does not aim to contribute to climate justice theory or make any claims of the fairness of CBAM but focuses on adding to consideration made in the policy-making process by clarifying the dynamics between AU-EU relations in equal partnerships and EU unilateral climate policies and leadership from an MPE perspective.

Key Findings

- There is no coherent understanding of the equal partnership commitments, which therefore runs the risk of ringing hollow in high-priority areas for the EU
- The importance of an equal seat at the table in agenda-setting is shared as a central aspect of equal partnership for actual cooperation and as legitimising narrative to constituencies
- CBAM through MPE, clashes with all identified aspects of equal partnership due to its coercive conditionality
- The EU faces a trilemma in which it has to prioritise between climate pioneering, global competitiveness, and equal partnership commitments
- Entrepreneurial leadership by consultation with flexibility and sensitivity for the other's interests would reduce the trade-off as proposed by the trilemma

Literature background

To contextualise our research on Africa-EU relations and EU unilateral climate policies, we will first outline the cooperation set-up between the African and European continents to then focus on AU and EU specifically. We find critique on the continental approach towards Africa, the post-colonial context, and previous donor-recipient dynamics. We continue by outlining how equal partnership commitments in the JAES between the AU and EU institutionalised the moving away from paternalistic dynamics. We will conclude our review of specific AU-EU cooperation by outlining critical literature on the equal partnership principle and emphasising the importance of this relation in the 21st century. The second part of the review will aim to contextualise current European climate policies in the EU Green Deal (EGD) and how they fit in the desired role of the EU as a climate pioneer and leader. We will then further outline the issue of carbon leakage in unilateral climate policy before introducing the case study of CBAM, the externalisation of the much earlier implemented ETS. Finally, we will outline the general critique of the CBAM and identify relevant literature gaps.

Africa-EU relations

Two leading agreements and African organisations shape Africa-EU cooperation, for which we will focus on the AU and the JAES because it most prominently shapes the partnership. However, besides the JAES, the Cotonou Agreement (2000) concluded by the Organisation of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States (OACPS), also strongly formulates the relationship between the continents, though other multilateral agreements exist between more specific regions of Africa and the EU as well (Massoni, 2019). The distinction between these main agreements illustrates the two African authorities concerning pan-African agreements and representation, whereby the Cotonou agreement lays down a framework in which the OACPS members and the EU can pursue Economic Partnership Agreements, which has proven to be generally unsuccessful as a central blueprint for cooperation (Massoni, 2019) Therefore, we will leave this agreement and the OACPS out of scope in this research and focus on the AU and the JAES, being the main cooperation framework and providing for equal

partnership commitments (Massoni, 2019). Based on this common strategy, Africa-EU meetings take place every six months between the African Union Commission (AUC) and the European Commission (EC). The cooperation focuses on i) peace and security, ii) democracy, good governance, and human rights, iii) human development iv) sustainable development and continental integration, and v) global and emerging issues (Massoni, 2019). As we will explain later, the JAES hereby specifically expresses the aim for a partnership on equal footing between both partners.

Critique Africa-EU cooperation

This contemporary intercontinental cooperation on climate change between Africa and the EU is complex, delicate, and often criticised in literature because of the different levels of institutional integration between the AU & EU (Strange & Oliveira Martins, 2019), an unclear African centralised mandate (Schefer, 2019), the development gap (Medinilla, 2021), and the shared colonial history (Kotsopoulos & Mattheis, 2018).

Firstly, considering the EU and the AU as counterparts is highly troublesome due to the unequal levels of institutional integration and the AU's weak continental mandate (Schefer, 2019). Strange & Oliveira Martins (2019) emphasise that the AU does not represent nor cover the plural interests and multiplicity between African states. Schefer (2019) further highlights this problem of a missing central institution with a clear mandate by illustrating how the OACPS and the AU conflict over the most legitimate representation of the continent. For the EU, this can cause problems in identifying the right interlocutor. Namely, the AU has a more centralised functioning but lacks trust and a clear mandate from its member states, while the OACPS is largely ignored by African governments as a centralised and independent authority (Schefer, 2019). This lack of a clear mandate, caused by the plurality and internal differences in the African continent, make "Africa" a problematic unit for analysis. However, because the EU pursues equal partnerships through a continental-wide approach and many Member states of the EU and the AU have a shared colonial history, the African scope provides the necessary unit for analysis of the dynamics between unilateral climate policies and equal partnership commitments in a post-colonial context.

Secondly, the development gap in a post-colonial context makes EU-Africa relations a delicate matter, leaving a persistent asymmetrical mark in multiple facets (Kotsopoulos & Mattheis, 2018). After the independence of former colonial countries, economies were tailored towards the needs of European capital instead of those of local populations, resulting in a dynamic of dependence that is still illustrated by the EU being the most important trading partner for most Sub-Saharan African countries (Kotsopoulos & Mattheis, 2018). This Eurocentric shaping of economies is argued to have caused the underdevelopment of Africa by tailoring its producing capabilities to support European economies rather than aiming to provide domestic welfare and development (Kotsopoulos & Mattheis, 2018). Therefore, acting as a normative and value-based actor toward former colonies is criticised as representing an imperial moral superiority, which is, in the case of externalising climate policies, an important consideration to bear in mind, because there is still little agreement on who is responsible, who pays, and in what way the green transition should take shape globally (Medinilla, 2021). As we will explain later, this colonial past shapes the emphasis on the principle of equal partnerships in Africa-EU relations.

Equal partnership

The institutionalisation of this past has long been marked by an aid-driven donor-recipient relationship between the EU and Africa (Keijzer, 2020). The problematic aspect of this inequality and institutionalisation of power asymmetries was put on the agenda in April 2000 during the first Africa-EU Summit in Cairo (Keijzer, 2020). At this conference, the heads of state committed to pursuing cooperation in the mutual interest of both regions (Keijzer, 2020). The years following this summit have been characterised by the gradual search for a balance between development policy as a foreign policy instrument and an expression of solidarity (Keijzer, 2020). In 2007, the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, better known as the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES), institutionalised the switch from a donor-recipient dynamic toward a partnership of equal footing (Del Biondo, 2020). Namely, the strategy prescribes the need “to move away from a traditional relationship and forge a real partnership characterised by equality and the pursuit of common objectives” (European Union &

African Union, 2007). This agreement intended to end further eradicating asymmetries between the European and African institutions and to increase the acknowledgment of the growing importance of African partners in international relations (Massoni, 2019). This eradication of asymmetries was done by aiming for conditions of equality instead of subjection by pursuing a reciprocal relationship for cooperation between the continents (Massoni, 2019). Del Biondo (2020) explains this shift towards partnership by the increased international competition for influence in Africa and the expressed ambition of moving away from imposing the EU's will on partners. This soft power approach of equal partnership would be more feasible while it aligns with the EU's values in international politics (Del Biondo, 2020).

Previous literature discusses the concept of equal partnerships through a lens of the impact on international relations (Del Biondo, 2020), the possibility of equal partnership in strong power asymmetries (Haastrup, 2013; Kotsopoulos & Mattheis, 2018), the institutional insufficiencies to achieve these (Kaul, 2020) or in what regard equal partnership is instrumentalized to achieve continental cooperation (Strange & Oliveira Martins, 2019). The AU and EU presented the move away from the traditional donor-recipient relation as a shift to ensure reciprocal cooperation. However, literature has severely questioned the possibility of a truly equal partnership, arguing that the structural inequalities between the two continents in economic capabilities, human resources, and power imbalances inherently shape imbalances (Haastrup, 2013; Kaul, 2020). Furthermore, Kotsopoulos & Mattheis (2018) criticise that the JAES has not proven able to “erase the reality” regarding the limited financial and institutional capabilities of the AU and its member states (p. 453). Delputte & Orié (2020) attribute this lack of results to the absence of an actual necessary paradigm shift in Africa-EU relations. They argue that policies are still Eurocentric and modernist/colonial, described by Ziai (2016) as policies that “(1) define the problem in terms of global poverty, (2) the promise that this problem can be solved today through (3) technical solutions and economic growth and (4) the credo of harmonious objectives amongst all parties involved, developed and developing countries” (Ziai, 2016, as cited by Delputte & Orié, 2020, p. 239). Because this perception of cooperation and development between Africa and the EU has not changed, the necessary step away

from a Eurocentric partnership has not been made (Delputte & Orié, 2020). Kaul (2020) argues that the combination of the stronger EU mandate and its integrated institutional set-up with value-driven policies causes this everlasting Eurocentricity (Kaul, 2020). Namely, because of the capability of the EU “to put the money where its interests are”, it can better push for its agenda and values in cooperation than the AU (Kaul, 2020, p. 17). Therefore, the literature finds consensus that equal partnership commitments have not managed to create equal partners yet. However, we identify that think-thanks and academics generally overlook the actual interpretation and meaning of the term in cooperation as understood by stakeholders. Most sources hereby argue from a theoretical and external scope what steps should be taken to reach equal partnership without clearly defining what this goal entails for the people directly involved in Africa-EU relations. Del Biondo (2020) acknowledged this problem and took “a subjective interpretation of a partnership-based relationship” that still incorporates the asymmetries between the AU and EU.

The importance of Africa

The essential role and dependence of Africa in the global transition as well as the renewed contestation for power in the African continent, described by the Economist as *the new scramble for Africa*, illustrate the importance of equal partnership for the EU (The Economist, 2019). First, Africa is expected to double its population by 2050, have enormous rises in its GDP, and possess a high level of essential raw materials for the global green transition (Massoni, 2019). These factors make Africa not only a partner for development mainly based on a security narrative in the short term but also an essential partner in cooperation for the global green transition and economic progress in the long term (Massoni, 2019). However, Stahl (2011) identified the move away from Africa’s high dependency on Europe and its outdated image as *the European backyard* towards more alternative cooperative options, strongly presented by China. These alternatives mark the necessity for increased relational efforts. Furthermore, the fact that China does not share a colonial past with Africa, but merely a heritage of a joint struggle against Western imperialism, is hereby used as a justification for its significant increase in investments (Stahl, 2011). China’s approach in the form of the New Belt, New Road initiative is the best-known example, but geopolitical powers like India, Russia, and the United

States of America made renewed commitments to win influence by increased African cooperation as well (The Economist, 2019). Although these external projects and partnerships are not in the scope of our research, they highlight the importance for the EU to have strong AU relations due to lower African dependence caused by many presented alternatives without a colonial history. Exploitative or paternalistic value-driven policies can be detrimental to the sustainability of the relationship and decrease EU influence in Africa, highlighting the importance of this research for EU future relations.

EU Climate Leadership

To analyse the compatibility between this equal partnership, CBAM, and EU unilateral climate policy more generally, we will proceed by outlining the current approach of the EU in climate policies, the problem of carbon leakage it encounters by ramping up climate ambitions, and how CBAM is exemplary for this dynamic.

The EU's ambitions of being a leader in global climate governance is apparent since the founding of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change in 1992 and is even included in the Treaty for the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) in Article 191, which prescribes that the EU aims to promote measures at international level in combating climate change (Maat, 2022; TFEU, 2012). Accordingly, achieving climate change objectives and centering policies around the SDGs have become the defining trait of the EU as a global actor (Renda, 2021). Maat (2022) describes this as a form of leadership, driven by environmental aims, which harbours a conditional kind of guidance based on an economic rationale. Because we focus in this research on unilateral climate policies, following the definition of Maat (2022), we consider the EU's leadership in this case as that of a climate pioneer and pusher, with high internal ambitions. Climate pioneering illustrates an exemplary form of leadership by having comparatively high climate ambitions regarding other states or institutions (Maat, 2022). The EU acts as a climate pusher when externalising these internal ambitions of climate pioneering. We will elaborate on these types and objectives of climate leadership by the EU in the theoretical framework.

Currently, the EU Green Deal (EGD), as introduced in 2019, marks the acceleration of the EU's climate ambitions and the increase in the scale of its climate policies (Bongardt & Torres, 2022). The EGD is an all-encompassing road map to reconcile the EU's economic growth with environmental and climate ambitions (European Commission, 2019). The general rationale of the EU switched from a growth paradigm to a “competitive sustainability” discourse, ultimately aiming to internalise environmental degradation and climate costs into its single market functioning (Bongardt & Torres, 2022). The EGD provided a holistic approach that covers a broad range of society by introducing the *Fit for 55* legislative package (European Commission, 2021). In this package, the EU introduced the CBAM to compensate for the faster reduction of emission allowances in the Emission Trading System (ETS). To comprehensively understand the introduction of CBAM, we will further cover the problem of unilateral climate ambition by outlining the problem of carbon leakage in unilateral climate policy before covering the ETS. Afterward, we will explain the role of CBAM between the two.

Carbon leakage

Carbon leakage arises when high costs of GHG emissions lead to the moving away of producers, having detrimental effects on domestic economies and the global reduction of emissions (Böhringer et al., 2017). Historically, the problem of climate change has mostly been considered one of territorial emissions, reflecting the responsibility of states to bring these down (Grubb et al., 2022). However, because of the globalisation of supply chains, a large amount of emissions is now associated with the production of traded products, which created a divergence between carbon footprint and territorial emissions, creating the problem of carbon leakage (Grubb et al., 2022). Namely, this divergence creates an economic and effectiveness problem of unilateral climate policies. When a state puts unilateral constraints on GHG emissions, this will raise production costs for domestic carbon-intensive industries, reducing their competitiveness in the global market (Böhringer et al., 2017). This disadvantage induces companies and producers to leave states with high GHG emission prices to produce elsewhere, creating a two-fold problem from an environmental and economic perspective (Böhringer et al., 2017). Not only is the moving away of companies problematic due to

the domestic economic losses, but it also moves emissions across borders, instead of ruling them out, a double-edged phenomenon labelled as “carbon leakage” (Maat, 2022). Babiker (2005) identified this issue of carbon leakage in unilateral climate policies by pointing out that ambitious unilaterally executed climate policies can lead to a 130% leakage rate outside domestic borders. Therefore, according to Babiker’s (2005) research, there is a need to follow up on domestic measures to achieve actual global GHG emission reductions. Grubb et al. (2022) contribute by emphasising that “corporate claims to aspire toward net zero corporate footprints will ring hollow if they narrowly limit themselves to their direct operations and fail to address their supply chains“ (p. 755). Policies can address carbon leakage by involving supply chains through carbon adjustments, but effects can also be mitigated through the taxation of the consumption of high-emission products (Böhringer et al., 2017). Because both of these proposed measures to address the problem are politically contented, carbon leakage poses a challenge for raising the bar in unilateral climate policy. The paradigm shift of the EC by the Green Deal to focus on *competitive sustainability* seems to acknowledge that ambitious climate policies should also be feasible for the EU from a global economic perspective (Bongardt & Torres, 2022).

The ETS & CBAM

The Emissions Trading System

The EU’s ETS and the proposed CBAM to offset carbon leakage, provides a clear example of the externalisation of heightened internal climate ambition through unilateral policy. When the EU introduced the ETS in 2005, it was the world’s first multi-country emissions trading system and is based on a cap-and-trade scheme for high GHG emission sectors, aiming to eventually control the reduction of these GHG emissions (Rogge, 2016; Szulecki et al., 2022). The ETS provides for the allocation of a certain number of allowances per year, which give the right to emit a certain amount of greenhouse gases (Rogge, 2016). Operators can trade these allowances to cover the emissions caused by their activities the previous year (Rogge, 2016). The system gives the EC control over the total amount of emissions by deciding over the height of the cap, while market dynamics ideally ensure

that emissions are fastest reduced where it is cheapest to do so because all operators face the same abatement costs (Rogge, 2016). In 2021, the EC announced the Fit for 55 Legislative Package which aimed to accelerate the ETS by cutting down faster on allowances each year (European Commission, 2021). In this way, the EC tries to internalise the costs of emissions in the EU Single Market, which can be understood through its sustainable competitiveness rationale. Therefore, the proposed ETS aims to lower the cap faster, resulting in faster increasing prices of GHG emissions, putting companies in a competitive disadvantage with competitors that are not subject to an equally ambitious cap-and-trade system. Therefore, the EU and governments were concerned that the ETS would lead to carbon leakage. As aforementioned, this would result in the two-fold effect of ineffective reduction of global greenhouse gases, but could also lead to economic back-sliding and further decreased global competitiveness of the EU as a producing country. To address carbon leakage of the ETS and to create a level-playing field, the EU proposed the CBAM.

Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism

The CBAM was also introduced in the “Fit for 55” package and aims to prevent carbon leakage by putting a price on carbon-intensive imports on targeted products (Gergondet, 2021). These costs are equivalent to those incurred by EU producers in the cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity, and hydrogen sectors (Gergondet, 2021). The mechanism applies to all imports of these products from third countries that are not subject to the ETS or a comparable emission trading system (Gergondet, 2021). It requires importers to surrender CBAM certificates, which function as allowances in the ETS and provide the operator’s imports to emit one ton of GHG (Gergondet, 2021). This requirement puts the burden on European operators who need to obtain authorization to import certain products from its competent authority. The submission includes declarations describing the goods imported, the total embedded emissions and the number of CBAM certificates surrendered (Gergonder, 2021). Through this system, the EU aims to create a “level playing field” for

European producers with those in third countries (Overland & Sabyrbekov, 2022). Although the system puts a burden on EU importers and operators, it impacts the competitiveness of exporting third countries, which should offset the earlier loss of competitiveness of EU producers by the ETS (Overland & Sabyrbekov, 2022). Lastly, unlike ETS allowances, CBAM certificates will not be tradable and can only be purchased by the competent authority in each EU Member State (Gergondet, 2021). The EC aims to lower the number of certificates and eventually phase them out at a comparable speed as the ETS allowances (Gergondet, 2021). Between 2023 and 2025, importers already have quarterly reporting obligations, but from 1 January 2026, the CBAM will take effect completely (Gergondet, 2021).

The critical global response as introduced earlier received significant follow-up by think tanks and academic literature and can be better understood when analysing the asymmetric effects of the CBAM on third countries due to differentiating levels of vulnerability and exposure to the mechanism (Eicke et al., 2021). Namely, many developing states or Least Developed States (LDCs) in Africa are vulnerable because of a lack of the necessary monitoring, reporting, and validation (MRV) capabilities, limited infrastructure, high carbon lock-in industries, and low trade diversification (Eicke et al., 2021). Because the EU is still an important trade partner for these developing and LDCs, exposure is also relatively high (Eicke et al., 2021). Therefore, the significant number and strong language as a response to the CBAM is understandable by the negative impact on industries in the relevant sectors. Literature and think tanks have extensively covered this challenge of the disproportional effects of CBAM on developing countries and LDCs, recommending an exemption or differentiating treatment for these countries (Eicke et al., 2021; Gergondet, 2021; Hackenesch et al., 2021; Michaelowa et al., 2022; Venzke & Vidigal, 2022). In this argument, the notion of climate justice is a central critique of the CBAM, imposing a system and speed on third countries in their green transition, while African states are only responsible for less than 4% of current GHG emissions (Medinilla, 2021). This early transition in development is argued to slow-down general economic

development necessary for e.g. the alleviation of poverty and building of infrastructure (Engström, 2022). Therefore, especially in Africa-EU relations, CBAM is criticised for being paternalistic and imposing a form of green colonialism (Engström, 2022). This critique might indicate a more general problem of unilateral climate policies, which can be explained from an MPE perspective.

Literature gap

Our research aims to contribute by expanding the understanding of the meaning and use of equal partnerships by stakeholders, and analysing how general unilateral climate policy based on MPE relates to such partnership. First of all, we aim to contribute to better defining the definition and understanding of equal partnership by using two theoretical efforts to identify the contribution and meaning of the concept (Del Biondo, 2020; Strange & Oliveira Martins, 2019). The literature describes what cooperation should look like (Del Biondo, 2020), or what the strategic aims could be of the principle (Strange & Oliveira Martins, 2019), our research leaves this open and finds the interpretation of stakeholders concerning the added value of the concept to daily-operations from a stakeholder perspective. Secondly, we will analyse CBAM from an MPE perspective to generalise our findings on unilateral climate policies to address carbon leakage. Lastly, although research has addressed equal partnerships and carbon leakage, there has not been an analysis of how the two relate. Specifically, the question of whether the unilateral externalisation of unilateral climate policies to address carbon leakage based on MPE contradicts the principle of equal partnership and how these dynamics take shape, has not been addressed and will be the main contribution of our research.

Theoretical framework

Equal partnership

Previous literature mainly discusses the equal partnership principle from a critical or highly theoretical lens, explaining the concept from an external perspective. However, the substantial issue of what the term means for EU and AU stakeholders is less written about, while there seems a lack of agreement on the use and aim of the term in diplomatic relations. We will use two articles, one by Del Biondo (2020), approaching equal partnership as a cooperation framework, giving a more procedural lens, and the other by Strange & Oliveira Martins (2019), explaining the principle as a constitutive framing exercise, providing a strategic perspective. Both articles interpret the principle differently by approaching the meaning of equal partnership from different angles. Del Biondo (2020) answers *how* equal partnership works from a procedural perspective, while Strange & Oliveira Martins (2019) explain the *raison d'être* of the term from a political instrumentalization lens covering the *why*. Together they provide a more comprehensive framework to analyse the meaning of the principle in the context of climate cooperation.

Equal partnership as cooperation framework

Del Biondo (2020) describes the concept of equal partnership as a framework for prescribing conditions descending from a donor-recipient interaction to achieve “a situation where the more powerful partner does not impose its will on the less powerful partner” (p. 311). She starts from a position where she recognises that structural inequalities are “nearly impossible to deal with” (Del Biondo, 2020, p. 314). However, this equality principle is achieved by two procedural commitments, namely by respecting i) equality in dialogue and agenda-setting and ii) ownership (Del Biondo, 2020). First, equality in dialogues, or an equal seat at the table, between two parties is a situation in which the most powerful party does not impose its agenda on the other (Del Biondo, 2020). Although communications of the EU and AU in the JAES emphasise that the partnership is based on shared values, interests, and strategic objectives, both parties differ in their prioritisation of these subjects for

cooperation (Del Biondo, 2020). This aspect of equal partnership offers a perspective to analyse whether the EU imposes values or its own priorities on the AU. Secondly, ownership ascribes the prioritisation and independent use of finance to local agents, while the other party backs their efforts (Del Biondo, 2020). The other party breaches the principle of ownership when it attaches conditions to support based on its vision of its ideal economic or political model (Del Biondo, 2020). Therefore, ownership is a situation in which local actors have control over the execution of projects, while external partnerships can support their efforts without any normative implications (Del Biondo, 2020). Therefore, Del Biondo (2020) explains the principle of equal partnership as a practical framework for cooperation based on balanced agenda-setting abilities and ownership.

Equal partnership as constitutive framing

Strange & Oliveira Martins (2019) introduce a more strategic lens on equal partnership arguing it provides a framework for the EU that works as a legitimising tool in Africa-EU cooperation, while it also functions constitutively by distinguishing the AU as its counterpart. Although not focussing on the equal partnership commitment of the JAES specifically, they analyse partnership on equal footing as expressed in later strategies based on the JAES (Strange & Oliveira Martins, 2019). The authors focus on how successful cooperation is made possible by portraying equality in AU-EU relations in migration cooperation (Strange & Olivera, 2019). They argue that the equal partnership principle attributes "an expression guiding how those creating those institutions intend the relations to be seen" (Strange & Oliveira Martin, p. 236). Accordingly, they argue that equal partnership commitments function as frames, defined as perspectives in which ideas & ideologies are used to come together with specific situations, to construct ideative patterns through which the world can be understood (Strange & Olivera, 2019). Frames go further than rhetoric because they are constituted on an ideational foundation used in policy processes that can bring about institutional changes or strategies (Strange & Olivera, 2019).

This framing exercise between the AU & EU is two-sided, having an external function as the legitimisation of increased cooperation in a post-colonial context towards constituencies, but also a

constitutive function of creating agency for the AU by portraying it as a counterpart of the EU in intercontinental politics (Strange & Oliveira Martins, 2019). First, in the delicate context of power relations and institutional asymmetries, Strange & Olivera (2019) explain how the frame of equal partnership provides a strongly legitimising tool for more intensive cooperation for both sides. The increase in visibility for African states makes it easier for AU states to adhere to common AU-EU strategies and cooperation because it enables them to sell the policies to domestic constituencies by boosting international status (Strange & Oliveira Martins, 2019). For the EU, it functions as a strategy to overcome neocolonial critiques, when intensifying its external policies. An example given is the switch from the “EU-Africa summit” to an “AU-EU summit” in 2017, to frame the AU as being in control and having the lead (Strange & Oliveira Martins, 2019, p. 239). This example also illustrates the internal aspect of framing by identifying the AU as having a strong mandate over African states. Realistically, as aforementioned, the AU does not have a comparable mandate or representation of its member states like the EU has (Strange & Oliveira Martins, 2019). This phenomenon is called *constitutive framing*, creating an equal counterpart that *de facto* does not exist as depicted (Strange & Olivera Martins, 2019, p. 239). However, it enables the EU to find a common approach and a key partner concerning the African continent (Strange & Oliveira Martins, 2019). The EU benefits from this framing perspective of equal partnerships from a designated and more willing partner in continental cooperation, making them better able to cope with pressing problems like climate change or migration on a continental scale (Strange & Oliveira Martins, 2019). As Strange & Oliveira Martins (2019) argue, this is not only a rhetorical tool or instrumentalization of an institution for externalising policy, but it can eventually lead to a more integrated and improved agency for the AU, using framing as a *fake-it-till-you-make-it-instrument*. Although the internal divide in Africa might limit this effect, the achievability of a strong mandate for the African Union or single market as envisioned in the AfCFTA will not be in the scope of this research. In short, Strange & Oliveira Martins (2019) present equal partnership as a constitutive framing strategy by being a legitimising tool for increased cooperation and an agency-providing instrument for the AU, indirectly aimed to increase the latter’s mandate.

Authors	Del Biondo (2020)	Strange & Oliveira Martins (2019)
Equal Partnership as	Framework for cooperation	Constitutive framing strategy
Answers question of	How?	Why?
Scope	Procedural	Strategic
Contribution equal partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equal agenda-setting & voice at the cooperation table - Ownership over execution projects local agents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intercontinental cooperation by shaping equal actors - Narrative for domestic constituencies in post-colonial context

Table 1: Equal partnership theoretical framework

Market Power Europe

To understand the CBAM from the broader perspective of externalising climate policies unilaterally, we will contextualise this process in EU foreign policy by Damro's (2012) theory of Market Power Europe (MPE). This theory allows for an extensive explanation of how to interpret the EU's power basis and use of economic persuasion and coercion to move third countries towards European regulation.

In 2012, Damro introduced the concept of MPE, integrating the earlier normative and regulatory power perspectives in one comprehensive explanation of the EU's basis for external power. MPE consists of "three mutually reinforcing characteristics: material existence, institutional features, and interest contestation" (Damro, 2012, p. 686). Firstly, the material existence aspect of the EU's identity in foreign policy is based on the size of the single market and what externalised effects this has on third parties (Damro, 2012). The EU currently has the largest internal market in the world, creating an incentive for third countries to adapt their regulatory standards and empowering the EU to coerce states into changing practices through leveraging market access (Damro, 2012). The EU can use its

market size to externalise internal policies by i) incentivising governments to co-ordinate their regulatory standards to align with EU guidelines and ii) affecting actor perceptions of outcomes. Although these effects can occur unintentionally, the EU can intentionally attribute them by threatening third parties with closing down or raising tariffs for access to their internal market, when not complying with their regulatory standards (Damro, 2012). It is only because of its market size that the EU can influence third countries through material incentives and threats (Damro, 2012). Secondly, MPE is based on institutional features, referring to its regulatory capabilities (Damro, 2012). For the EU to successfully externalise its policies, it needs regulatory coherence and competent authority, including a sanctioning body to impose costs on third parties for non-compliance (Damro, 2012). Such a sanctioning authority can imply coercion by imposing fines or banning market entry on states or non-state actors (Damro, 2012). Lastly, the aspect of interest contestation between interest groups inside the single market determines the likelihood of the EU exercising its power in the international system (Damro, 2012). Interest groups may specifically push for the externalisation of internal measures, increasing MPE's intentional outcome by regulatory EU legislation, or unintentional MPE dynamics by third countries anticipating the former (Damro, 2012). Therefore, the power basis from an MPE lens is threefold, originating from incentives of its market size, its regulatory capacity, and the internal pressures from pro-externalisation groups.

When the EU externalises its policies through MPE it uses its market power and conditionality to incentivise or coerce third parties to adapt to European standards (Damro, 2012). This intentional externalisation process starts when there is an attempt to let third parties adhere to internal measures, through market-related policies and regulations (Damro, 2012). The means by which the EU externalises its Market Power can be coercive or persuasive. On the one hand, the coercive means have their basis in inflicting punishment for non-compliance, which translates in EU politics generally in negative conditionality, focused on increasing tariffs, implementing trade embargoes, or limiting aid (Damro, 2012). On the other hand, persuasive means are generally based on positive conditionality, promising benefits for compliance, translated into reducing tariffs, providing aid, or extending loans (Damro, 2012). However, for many third parties in a zero-sum environment, the

differences between persuasive and coercive policies are not directly clear because positive and negative conditionality often go hand-in-hand (Damro, 2012).

Unilateral climate leadership

To structure the broader implications of our case study of CBAM on EU climate leadership, we will use the climate leadership model, as outlined by Maat (2022), which differentiates climate leadership by types and aims. First of all, climate leadership is interpreted as promoting progress in the global transition. According to Maat (2022), who follows the framework of Liefferink & Wurzel (2017), there are four types of leadership, namely i) exemplary, ii) cognitive, iii) entrepreneurial, or iv) structural leadership (Maat, 2022). Exemplary leadership focuses on being the first mover, paving the way, and setting standards for others. Cognitive leadership is aimed at innovation and technology transfer to provide new pathways for a green transition, while entrepreneurial leadership relies on “negotiation strategies, coalition-building, and agenda-setting” (Maat, 2022, p. 58). Lastly, Maat (2022) outlines structural leadership, which is strongly associated with Market Power Europe, and relies on hard power through material coercion and incentives to move other states toward an accelerated transition (Maat, 2022). Although MPE is a clear example of structural leadership, we use this framework in Chapter 3 to explore what alternative forms of other unilateral leadership are possible for the EU. Beyond these types, Maat (2022) also differentiates leadership objectives between high internal and external ambitions. As illustrated in Table 2, these objectives distribute the roles of climate pioneers, pushers, laggards, or symbolic leaders. A climate pioneer hereby accidentally influences other states by its internal ambitions, while climate pushers intentionally aim at promoting high standards in third states as well (Maat, 2022). This framework provides a structure to outline the broader implications of our research for EU unilateral climate leadership.

	Low Internal Ambitions	High Internal Ambitions
Low External Ambitions	Laggards	Pioneers
High External Ambitions	Symbolic Leaders	Pushers

Table 2: Climate Leadership Objectives (Maat, 2022)

Methodology

Our research consists of three chapters, covering i) the perception of equal partnership, ii) the compatibility of CBAM with this principle, and iii) the wider implications for EU unilateral climate policy. We will first define what is meant and emphasised by the institutionalisation of equal partnership according to EU & AU interlocutors, to then consider to what extent the CBAM aligns, clashes, or stands apart from the principle and eventually outline the broader implications. For this research, we have interviewed six people, of which four EEAS officials, a DG INTPA policy officer, and the former president of Niger and CEO of AUDA-NEPAD. Because of this composition, we recognize that our analysis will be Eurocentric and mostly illustrates the EU's line of reasoning.

First, we will examine stakeholder perceptions regarding equal partnership commitments in Africa-EU cooperation through semi-structured interviews. We will first identify general findings and then continue by structuring our analyses following the theoretical framework by Del Biondo (2020) and Strange & Oliveira Martins (2019). This approach allows for two perspectives to equal partnerships, as a cooperation framework and as a constitutive framing strategy. The former identifies the need for equal agenda-setting capabilities and ownership in cooperation. We will find to what extent our interviewees identify these two aspects as major parts of the principle. Hereby, we explicitly keep the questions as open as possible in the beginning, to see how the personal interpretation of stakeholders is concerning these equal partnerships. Secondly, we will analyse the constitutive framing explanation of the equal partnership principle. This perspective allows for a differentiation between framing as a legitimising tool for intensified cooperation and as a constitutive strategy. In short, we assess the emphasis and recognition by our interviewees of the aspects of the cooperation framework, attributing i) equal agenda-setting power and ii) ownership to the concept, and the constitutive framing strategy, consisting of the iii) legitimising narrative, and iv) constitutive value for interregional cooperation aspects. We will first discuss general findings that do not fall under two explanations and their four accessory aspects.

In Chapter 2, we will assess the CBAM's compatibility with the defined meaning of equal partnership, by combining our semi-structured interviews with an analysis of the working of the CBAM itself. Before we assess the relation of the mechanism with equal partnership, we will contextualise it in an MPE framework, which allows us to uncover the power basis of this unilaterally imposed mechanism. We will structure the compatibility of this mechanism according to the structure in *Chapter 1*. Namely, we will use the CBAM's compatibility with the equal partnership as a cooperation framework and as a constitutive framing strategy, with the accessory four aspects. The approach of a mixed method of interviews and literature enables us to find inherent incompatibilities with the cooperation framework and *de facto* problems with the narrative and constitutive value. In this way, we can find whether there are problematic aspects of the CBAM and MPE that are significantly incompatible with the understanding of commitments made in the JAES. Although none of our interviewees might mention one of the four aspects of equal partnerships, we will still analyse the dynamics with the CBAM, because it can indicate a sensitive point in cooperation that is deliberately avoided by stakeholders or describe a dynamic with the more theoretical or strategic aims of the principle that are valid, but not recognised. This chapter aims to conclude whether CBAM contradicts equal partnership as it is understood by its stakeholders in daily operations.

To arrive at the broader implications for the compatibility of CBAM with equal partnership commitments, we will use the Market Power Europe perspective combined with insights from our interviewees and results from *Chapters 1 and 2*. We will explain the problematic issues of CBAM through this lens of MPE to eventually arrive at relevant considerations for the EU for further unilateral climate policies. Because we expect the MPE to be a problematic form of unilateral climate leadership regarding equal partnership, we will use the leadership types and roles to discover what alternatives of leadership provide better alignment with equal partnership commitments. We will conclude by outlining the considerations for the EU that have to be made when pursuing unilateral climate policy and leadership vis-a-vis African partners.

Chapter 1

Equal partnership

General insights

The two most widespread findings outside our theoretical framework are the lack of a uniform understanding of the concept between stakeholders and the acknowledgment of problematic institutional differences between the EU & AU, expressed most by European interviewees. These two factors make equal partnership a vulnerable concept that risks becoming hollow in cooperation topics that are time constrained and prioritised on the European agenda.

An immediate and obvious finding was the inability of stakeholders to uniformly define the role, contribution, or meaning of the concept of equal partnership. For most of the interviewees, *equal partnership* differentiated between “transparency in information sharing” (I2), while others argued that equal partnership is “an expression of ambition” (I1), or “construction process” (I3). Although all the interviewees mentioned the aspect of mutual respect, there was no central line in the meaning and contribution of equal partnership of what this *respect* entails. The lack of a clear conceptual understanding makes equal partnership a potentially overly broad and hollow principle in cooperation considering concrete commitments.

Secondly, most interviewees agreed that equal partnership does not express the equality of partners concerning development, priorities, and challenges (I1, I2, I4). They explained that equal partnership is merely a manner to prescribe how to treat each other based on cooperation, rather than the pretension that the two continents have the same capabilities and agendas. Although this distinction seems obvious, structural concerns in the AU as a player in cooperation are expressed by EU stakeholders, marking it as a reason why equal partnership can be problematic (I2, I4, I5). Although an equal partnership does not mean a partnership between exact equals, the lack of capabilities

between the EU & AU is problematic for the resilience of the principle in high-stakes politics. Frustrations are high with EU stakeholders vis-a-vis the AU because of the slow process, unclear central authority, and unreliability (I2, I4, I5). Therefore, the EU tends to refrain from equal partnership commitments, because of the lack of trust in the capability of their “counterpart” institution (I2, I4). Therefore, EU partners tend to keep prioritised and time-constrained policies in their control rather than outsourcing them to African partners. This finding fits well with the explanation given by Kaul (2020) that the stronger EU mandate and integrated institutional setup lead to euro-centricity in Africa-EU relations. We will elaborate on this issue when analysing the agency formation for intercontinental cooperation as a constitutive framing strategy.

These two findings illustrate the vulnerability of the equal partnership principle when important or fast decisions for the EU come up. Due to the lack of a clear definition and implication of the principle in cooperation, and by a general frustration vis-a-vis the African central capabilities, equal partnerships might be a *de iure* institutionalisation of different dynamics between the continents in cooperation, while *de facto* still incorporating a strong Eurocentric asymmetry. These differences in mandates and incoherent understanding of equal partnership make the principle vulnerable and little stress-resistant because its commitments are practically unclear and can therefore be put aside easily when issues are of high priority for the EU. This insight is of value in European climate policy, because this area of international cooperation tends to be drastic, time-constrained, and encompasses a wide range of areas in global economies, running a high risk of overthrowing equal partnership commitments. This fragility of the principle is important to consider in the following analysis, showing that the concept of equal partnership has meaning, but seems to have little resilience in high-priority policy areas for the EU.

As cooperation framework

Agenda-setting

First of all, equal partnership prescribing equal agenda-setting capabilities in cooperation is well recognised by the interviewees through their emphasis on mutual respect and willingness to listen to each other as starting points for genuine partnership (I1, I2, I4, I5, I6). This equal seat at the table prescribes a balance in identifying priorities and values between parties, as stressed by I4, who argues for the necessity of the absence of imposing norms while defining ourselves together (I4). I2 emphasises that the participatory element in partnership is necessary to make cooperation sustainable in the long term. The broadening of the agenda away from development cooperation has resulted in increased listening to African interests and illustrates a willingness to treat the continent as equals (I1). This has also introduced a more reciprocal way of cooperation, in which a common interest and strategy should be found (I6). I3, being a prominent AU & NEPAD interlocutor, expressed his positive experience on this front in the last 10 to 15 years as well. He had noticed that consultation has increased between the EU & AU, exemplifying the inclusion of African experts in shaping the strategy for the new presidency of the Council of Spain later this year. This recognition of African interests illustrates a renewed consideration of Europe's southern neighbours, which was unimaginable at the start of this millennium (I3).

Although there is consensus that equal partnership includes increased acknowledgment of another's interests and values, the EU interviewees also expressed concerns about equality in agenda-setting. First, the African partners have difficulty providing a united front because of a lack of internal agreement about agenda points (I4 & I5). Therefore, the EU generally becomes dominant in agenda-setting, because they are further integrated into this regard, highlighting the problem of institutional inequality between equal partners again. Secondly, it requires caution whether the voice at the table is the voice of Africans or one of a "particular outsized group of individuals" (I1). Therefore, the question of corruption, autocracy, and whose voice at the table should be heard, is a

moral question that EU stakeholders should at least be aware of (I1). However, this might again be emblematic of the paternalistic European democratic attitude toward African partners, which contradicts the equal seat at the table aspect of equal partnership. In short, besides the concerns over the ability of the AU to come up with priorities and of the outsized individuals' interests represented at the cooperation table, the interviewees coherently acknowledge the goal of genuine listening to the other's issues and pursuing balanced agenda-setting capabilities as an integral part of equal partnership commitments.

Ownership

Although most interviewees described the agenda-setting and prioritisation process as a major factor, they generally neglected the independent execution of policies, investments, and projects as directly related to equal partnership. However, only I2, an EEAS delegate in a West-African state, described ownership as the central basis and most important factor for the equal partnership principle. She explains how the shift from a donor-recipient relation toward equal partners was exemplified by the move away from grants toward concessional loans (I2). Although not directly referring to ownership, the shift in finance is also explained by I6, who describes how the “development landscape has changed” in working together by helping to increase investment through de-risking, in which blended finance assigns a responsibility to successfully use the funds. This understanding of I2 and I6 significantly differs from that of Del Biondo (2020) that would argue that grants and loans can fulfil the ownership principle as long as there is no normative intervention by the party that financially backs the projects. I2 argues that ownership means that the AU, RECs, or states have “skin in the game” in projects which results from this move to loans. Namely, African stakeholders now have to ensure that investments will eventually be profitable so these loans can be satisfied. The assignment of responsibility and burden through ownership illustrates a shift towards a more business-oriented cooperation method. This move towards more emphasis on profitability creates a necessity for African stakeholders to ensure that investments are promising and of high quality. Therefore, ownership takes into account the absence of the financial donor in the management and attribution of money in the

process by including the aspect of ownership of risk to create a more business-oriented dynamic between the continents (I2).

However, the interviewee also explained how this ownership is not respected in infrastructural cooperation (I2). She describes how in 2020, the EC decided to cut out the signing of financing agreements by the Regional Authorising Officer (RAO) and the National Authorising Officer (NAO), to speed up the implementation of certain projects (I2). This shows how the EU disregards the principle of ownership by leaving out African institutions in the execution of projects and follows the strategy of “building together, without signing together” for efficiency reasons (I2). This development leaves the EU in sole charge of the process (I2). Again, this is a result of the EU's frustration with the multi-layered and slow process of getting regional projects from the ground due to the less developed and integrated regional governance. As aforementioned, this illustrates the problematic aspect of two very different animals that aim to work together on the principle of equal footing and shows how time constraints might be enough reason to neglect equal partnership considerations and fall back on paternalistic tendencies.

As constitutive framing strategy

Legitimising tool

The function of equal partnership as a legitimising tool for cooperation for both parties was mentioned by all interviewees, recognising the colonial history and the rhetorical value of the concept to overcome this shared past (I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I6). First, I1 expresses that equal partnership is an expression of willingness to treat each other respectfully within a context of a long and painful history of slavery and colonialism. This delicate relationship marks the importance of equal partnership as a rhetorical tool, described by I5 as “the new thing to talk about” in Africa-EU cooperation, strongly suggesting a use according to the framing strategy explanation of equal partnership. Moreover, I1, I5, and I6 recognise the change from DG DEVCO, an abbreviation for Directorate General on Development Cooperation, as the main body of the EC in international relations with Africa, to DG

INTPA, Directorate General of International Partnerships, illustrating how the framing aspect is further institutionalised in the EC to overcome the post-colonial institutional set up of Africa-EU cooperation. I6 emphasises that this shift from donor-recipient has been important to “legitimise ourselves” in increased cooperation and investment.

Although this framing aspect is recognised, I2 argues that “the reasons why this [equal partnership] is promoted as a term, might be different than what it daily serves”. She pleads that an integral aspect of equal partnership as a factor in AU & EU communications is the simple fact that it is "catchy" while expressing a more sceptical view on the practical implication (I2). Furthermore, the equal partnership narrative as a legitimising tool also frustrates EU policymakers, arguing that Africans use it as leverage to push the EU in certain directions (I4, I2). I4 explains his annoyance with the African use of the equal partnership narrative by expressing how it offers a way to push back responsibility for things going bad in one’s country to others. I2 also strongly criticises the use of equal partnership by her African counterparts, expressing her frustration about the lack of African engagement in the global green transition and arguing against the argument that developed countries should take up most of the financial burden. “We cannot be equal, and then be unequal wherever we want” by emphasising that equal partnership also includes equal responsibility and non-preferential treatment. I3, coming from the African perspective, opposes this view, reasoning that Africa has a lot to learn from its European partners and needs climate finance and technology transfer. These frustrations and misalignments indicate the lack of consensus between parties on what the principle should entail and how it relates to justice principles between asymmetric partners. A misalignment between the partners on the inclusion of a justice perspective will make the concept prone to conflict and is potentially detrimental to the narrative of equal partnership to the outside world. However, we keep this potential clash between AU and EU stakeholder perceptions out-of-scope but suggest future research to explore this misalignment between partners further.

Constitutive value

Continental agency formation and the enabling to uniformly address the African continent is recognised as a challenge for equal partnership but generally not interpreted as an aim of the principle itself. However, I3 expresses that the definition of an equal partnership is a “construction process” that should aim at defining shared long-term all-encompassing objectives instead of short-term cooperation on several distinct subjects. Namely, "seeking cooperation in bits and pieces" will not help to find a broader solution for equal partnership because it is unsuitable for the AU’s mandate. However, pursuing a more universal and long-term approach while acknowledging the future African importance and the current European abilities will lead to a sustainable partnership. Namely, via regional cooperation based on a broad and long-term shared vision that relies on equal partnership, short-term decisions can be made accordingly, allowing the AU to structure its lack of internal consensus on cooperation issues and enabling it to overcome them (I3). Therefore, he described the constitutive value of the equal partnership as a "construction process” that should start from broad lines defining regional cooperation and objectives that can eventually offer a centralised mandate and shared voice for the AU in its EU partnership.

Although this constitutive framing might be a strategic reason for the shift towards equal partnerships from the AUC and EC, EU stakeholders in daily operations do not seem to recognise it as a *raison d'être* of the concept. More so, this approach of framing the AU as a counterpart of the EU leads to problems in the process. When committing to equal partnership, it mostly limits the EU in pursuing its interests to avoid negative rhetoric, rather than boosting the AU’s coherence and alignment in expressing its priorities (I4). The plurality of differentiating interests in the AU seems insurmountable in the short term and severely limits the organisation's ability to pursue its interests as an equal partner. However, as I3 argues, the constitutive value of framing the AU as the EU’s counterpart might prove more significant in the long term, explained by the interpretation of equal partnership as a construction process.

Overall, the understanding of equal partnership as respecting balanced agenda-setting but also as a legitimising tool for enhanced cooperation is broadly recognised. On the other hand, the aspects of ownership and constitutive value were only identified, by two interviewees. The fact that agenda-setting and the more rhetorical framing aspect were both clearly understood can be explained by the fact that they are both based on respecting the other party by not imposing one's agenda to pursue a genuine partnership, although one aspect with a more internal scope and the other explanation more aimed toward overcoming neocolonial critiques for constituencies. However, in all aspects, the lack of coherence in the AU has led to frustration on the European side, illustrating that equal partnership between very different actors can still result in restraint and unequal cooperation.

Chapter 2

CBAM and equal partnership

CBAM & Market Power Europe

To understand how the introduction of the CBAM clashes with the cooperation commitments, we will first structure its functioning from an MPE perspective as outlined by Damro (2012). CBAM bases its power on the EU's single market size in incentivising third countries to align their emissions trading systems with the ETS applied in the EU (Venzke & Vidigal, 2022). Because high emissions would result in higher prices on the European market, not complying with the measure would result in reduced competitiveness and the moving away of production towards more sustainable alternatives (Venzke & Vidigal, 2022). The sanctioning authority of the ETS is the EC, which decides the cap of internal allowances, while EU MSs will decide on the attribution of CBAM certificates based on this cap of the ETS (Venzke & Vidigal, 2022). These caps aim to create a level-playing field with third-country producers in supply chains, with producers exposed to the EU ETS (European Commission, 2021). The CBAM bases its strength on coercive conditionality by punishing external producers for not sufficiently cutting back or reporting on emissions through a loss of competitiveness in the EU market due to additional costs of CBAM certificates for EU operators (Teevan et al., 2021). Eventually, when a state introduces a comparable system to the ETS, persuasive conditionality reduces the costs for EU operators with the domestic emission pricing of the third country. However, this illustrates the thin line between the persuasive and coercive conditionality of MPE and how it is difficult to differentiate between the two. In short, the working of the CBAM is based on the significant size of the EU single market and the potential loss of competitiveness of exporting producers to this market by coercive conditionality, translating into higher costs imposed by CBAM certificates, when not making the transition to greener production and GHG reporting of several commodities. Now CBAM is contextualised in an MPE framework, we continue by assessing its

compatibility and coherence with equal partnerships as found in Chapter 1, to find the broader implications these findings entail in Chapter 3.

Before analysing the two interpretations and the four accessory aspects as identified in the theoretical framework, we consider the dependence of African states on exports to the EU market as an essential factor for the incompatibility of CBAM with equal partnership. One could argue that African partners are free to adapt or refrain from acting according to CBAM and accept the fallback in sales and revenues of exports to the European market due to their lowered competitiveness. However, many African states are vulnerable and highly exposed to the mechanism because of their dependence on exports to the EU and limited infrastructure (Eicke et al., 2021). This pressures the relevant industries to accelerate their transition to keep access to the EU market, while they are not always capable of doing so independently. Therefore, the *de facto* conditionality of CBAM induced by internalising costs of GHG emissions strongly contradicts the principle of partnership according to Del Biondo (2022). Namely, we argue that the stronger partner doesn't respect the position of the weaker partner and imposes its agenda on the other (Del Biondo, 2020). Therefore, African states have a *de jure* free choice of better compliance by reducing GHG emissions and increasing MRV capabilities, however, the dependence on MPE of African states for exports creates a *de facto* coercive conditionality enforcing adaptation to EU standards. This important consideration allows us to further assess the CBAM's compatibility with the specific identified aspects.

CBAM & the cooperation framework

Agenda-setting

CBAM clashes with balanced agenda-setting capabilities as a central part of equal partnership for stakeholders, in the sense that the EU decides on the speed of the green transition in Africa through this MPE approach (Szulecki et al., 2022). Although there is consensus that climate change is a global problem in which each state should play its part, there is also a differentiated responsibility and transitional process defined through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in the Paris

Agreement (Jenkins et al., 2020). Because of the EU's ambition of being a climate pioneer, by accelerating their ambition while also aiming to prevent carbon leakage caused by the ETS through CBAM, the EU pushes its transitional priority on the agenda of African states. It clearly expresses this goal of the CBAM as “we already have the ETS, and we have a carbon tax. Now, we are just making sure that it is everywhere else as well”. The European ETS is hereby a system that translates the priority of the EU in transitional pace and importance, while African partners do not share this exact agenda (Medinilla & Sergejeff, 2023). In this case, the stronger party uses MPE to impose its priorities on the weaker partner, the AU, which is currently more concerned with developing their economies instead of committing to a transition in this phase (Medinilla & Sergejeff, 2023). More so, this early transition as posed by the EU on African states can lead to hindering their agenda of development. Therefore, this coercive MPE externalisation of the EU climate ambition contradicts the equal partnership commitment of balanced agenda-setting powers.

Ownership

The proposed CBAM is also incompatible with the ownership principle since it creates a *climate club* of emissions trading systems controlled by the EC and prescribes a transition with MRV requirements that is still highly contested. First of all, when states adapt to the CBAM by introducing a comparable system to the ETS, these systems should adapt to the carbon prices of the CBAM to maintain unrestricted access to the EU market by not subjecting exports to CBAM certificates (Szulecki, 2022). This requirement means the EC controls carbon prices of a third country's emission system, taking over ownership of its transition through this MPE approach (Szulecki, 2022). Secondly, CBAM introduces standards for third countries to comply with that force them to follow the same path, although this pathway by the ETS is contested. The clearest example is MRV because its standards are not agreed upon (Marcu et al., 2021). This standard-setting means that adapting to a comparable system following CBAM requirements results in the EU shaping the norms of the process. Again, this illustrates how the CBAM paternalistically lets AU states adapt to the direction of the EU transitional pathway instead of letting them independently execute it in their own envisioned way (Marcu et al., 2021). Therefore, EU control over comparable carbon emission trading systems and specific standards

illustrates how CBAM does not align with the ownership principle of backing up endeavours, while letting national authorities decide how to shape their transition.

CBAM & the constitutive framing strategy

Legitimising tool

When analysing the dynamics between CBAM and equal partnership as a constitutive framing strategy, it is not a matter of inherent compatibility but one of coherence between the two. Firstly, equal partnership as a legitimising tool for states towards constituencies in Africa-EU cooperation can lose credibility with the introduction of the CBAM. The logic of MPE of introducing a mechanism for African economies that the continent economically is forced to abide by fits in a *Global North-South* or *neo-colonial* narrative, detrimental to the credibility of the opposing equal partnership narrative. The understanding of equal partnership as a rhetorical tool to legitimise cooperation can also be used as a defensive tool for African stakeholders to appeal to their European partners to include climate justice considerations in their policies. Therefore, climate justice and fairness principles are relevant from this perspective because they are used in equal partnership rhetoric to emphasise the need for solidarity in such cooperation. The unilateral externalisation of European policies based on market power opposes such solidarity, especially because many African states cannot make the transition or monitor their production processes (Eicke et al., 2022). Therefore, CBAM can be explained as a return to a paternalistic attitude of the EU towards its southern neighbour disregarding local needs, priorities, and level of development. However, equal partnership as a rhetorical tool is not only a legitimising mechanism but also allows for a defensive use to shape public opinion and European policy for more solidarity towards developing partners. Therefore, unilateral policy based on MPE limits the credibility towards equal partnership, inherently coming from the earlier mentioned breach of equal agenda-setting capabilities, showing the relation between the cooperation framework. We will further elaborate on these implications when broadening the scope in Chapter 3.

Constitutive value

The aim of equal partnership to enable the EU to address Africa on a continental scale by constitutively framing the AU as the central institution with the necessary mandate contradicts CBAM in two aspects. Namely, i) the different impacts of CBAM on African states call for a bilateral, instead of a continental, approach, and ii) the system might work as a precedent for African states to increase indirect tariffs and barriers, hindering the achievement of the AfCFTA, and essential aspect of further Africa integration (Massoni, 2019). Firstly, Delbeke & Vis (2023) argue that CBAM encourages a bilateral scope for negotiations to increase mutual recognition of another's domestic climate policies. In these bilateral negotiations, the EU can extend its understanding of other carbon pricing systems and outline the nation-specific effects of CBAM on exports and the green transition (Delbeke & Vis, 2023). This shift towards bilateral negotiations contradicts the aim of the framing strategy to improve continental agency for the African continent, possibly moving away from more intensive continental cooperation. Secondly, the concern expressed by I3 is that this return of bilateralism and the showcase of indirect trade barriers might be an example for African countries to introduce comparable measures, especially because CBAM promotes the introduction of comparable systems as the EU ETS (Galiffa & Bercero, 2022). Raising national indirect trade barriers would severely hinder the attainment of a single market as envisioned under the AfCFTA project. In short, because equal partnerships are used to constitutively frame the AU to increase the continental mandate, by introducing CBAM, internal differences between the AU seem to be enlarged rather than reduced.

Compatibility conclusion

CBAM clashes because its MPE power basis functions on taking advantage of being the strong market through conditionality, imposing a transition speed and system on African partners which contradicts equal partnership commitments. The climate justice critique on CBAM does not have implications for the agenda-setting or ownership criteria, rather it limits the credibility of the narrative of moving beyond the donor-recipient or neo-colonial dynamic. Although this justice perspective is a rhetorical argument instead and is not contradictory to the working of equal partnership as outlined by

Del Biondo (2020), it does limit the credibility of the EU's legitimization narrative of cooperation and solidarity, which should be taken very seriously. Lastly, CBAM pushes toward more bilateralism between African states due to the need for negotiations and the promotion of comparable systems such as the EU ETS. This defeats the constitutive framing purpose and limits one of the aims of equal partnerships as laid down in the theoretical framework. Therefore, CBAM illustrates a problem for externalising EU policies from an MPE approach in all aspects within the equal partnership.

Chapter 3

The carbon leakage trilemma & broader implications

The carbon leakage trilemma

The lack of coherence between CBAM and equal partnership illustrates the difficulties of unilaterally heightening climate ambitions while preventing carbon leakage through market power. Namely, the CBAM approach does not base its effectiveness on "being receptive to interests, needs and opinions" but on the market and regulatory capabilities of the EU (Szulecki et al., 2022, p. 5). Oppositely, this receptiveness of African interests, needs, and opinions, is expressed as the main contribution of equal partnership, translated into balanced agenda-setting capabilities and used for legitimising cooperation in a sensitive post-colonial context. Therefore, we argue that the EU faces a trilemma in the global climate transition, between competitiveness, climate pioneering, and respecting equal partnership, as the lack of imposing its agenda on African partners. Namely, as illustrated in Figure 1, the competitive sustainability rationale of the EU, prescribing climate pioneering while remaining globally competitive, inherently results in structural climate pushing through MPE to address the issue of carbon leakage. Therefore, as long as the AU and African states have lower climate ambitions than the EU, while still highly exposed to MPE in trade and economic functioning, equal partnerships cannot be fully respected while strictly committing to a sustainable competitiveness paradigm. Therefore, the EU faces a trilemma that can be mitigated through increased consultation and focus on entrepreneurial leadership based on sensitivity and flexibility in involving Africa's interests and concerns. It is important to consider that leadership styles are generally blended but each side of the trilemma contains a dominant form of climate leadership that is the basis for the EU's externalisation of the climate agenda in that scenario. Therefore the trilemma contributes to clarifying the internal dynamics between unilateral climate leadership vis-a-vis Africa, by illustrating the inherent problematic dimension of climate pioneering and equal partnerships commitments from an economic perspective.

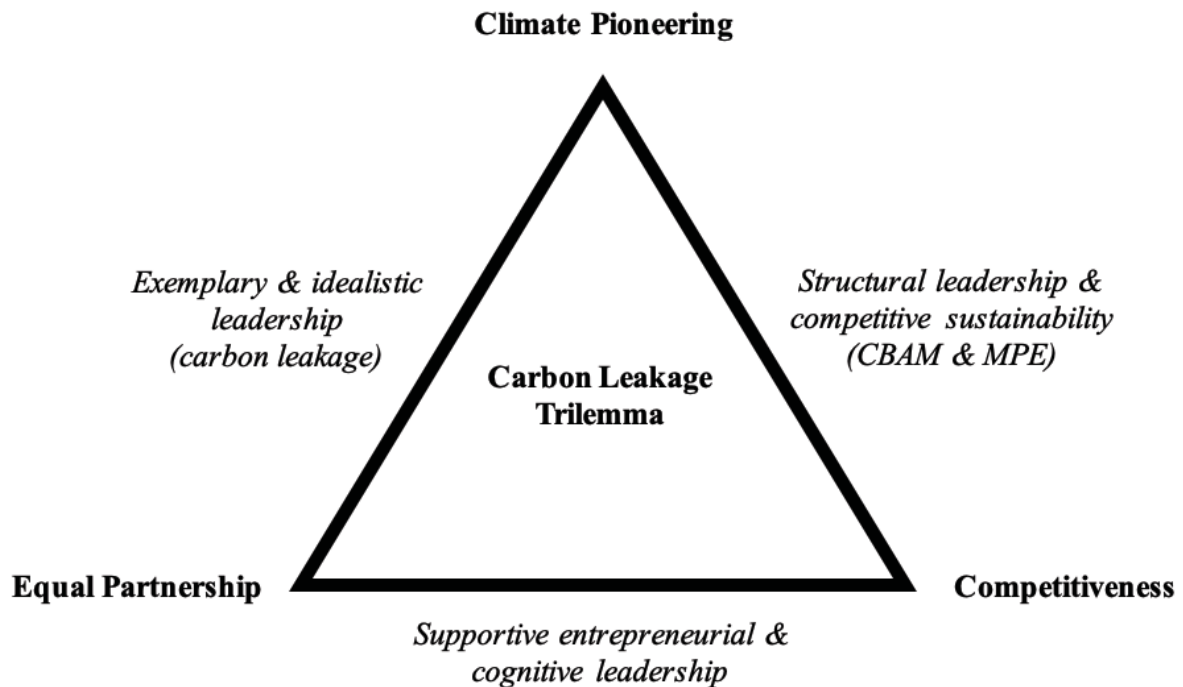


Figure 1: The Carbon Leakage Trilemma

Structural leadership & MPE

On the first side of the trilemma, the EU prioritises its competitiveness and climate pioneering over equal partnership commitments to the AU. This unilateral approach based on MPE makes the EU a climate pusher following the competitive sustainability rationale, as currently pursued and illustrated by CBAM. The EU acts as a structural leader, which has the advantage for the EU of keeping control over its transition by allowing for accelerating comparatively ambitious climate policies as envisioned in the EGD (Maat, 2022). Namely, by MPE, the EU can address carbon leakage by levelling the playing field between imported and EU-produced goods. As explained, the EU can do so because of its significant market, making states adapt to standards instead of moving away from the market because of these increased conditions (Damro, 2012). Externalisation mechanisms, like CBAM but also e.g. the EU's Corporate Responsibility Regulation, Deforestation Regulation, or Conflict Mineral Regulations, function to the end of *levelling the playing field*. However, the critique of the MPE approach is also its strength, namely the fact that the EU decides on the type, size, and attitude of the playing field in the first place. As argued, this control results in policies being criticised for being

protectionist, which opens up concerns about neo-colonialist and paternalistic attitudes vis-a-vis exposed and vulnerable African states. Therefore, Szulecki et al. (2022) argue that this structural leadership approach maximises control but results in legitimacy problems vis-a-vis partnering countries. This legitimacy aspect is increasingly sensitive in a post-colonial context and questions the sufficiency of demonstrating the motive of addressing carbon leakage from the desire of reducing global emissions, instead of being motivated by the economic incentives to protect the internal market (Szulecki, 2022). Therefore, the double-edged sword of carbon leakage makes this side of the trilemma vulnerable to the critique of green protectionism and colonialism when climate concerns seem to cover up the underlying agenda of protecting its economy. The trade-off on this side of the trilemma could be mitigated when the AU raises its climate ambitions comparatively to the EU, without any coercive influence of the EU to get them there. Furthermore, when the EU single market would not be significant enough to affect African economies towards adopting regulations, MPE would not be as effective nor contradict equal partnership commitments because of the EU's inability to impose its agenda through coercive conditionality. Both scenarios seem not likely to emerge soon, although the shrinking economic power vis-a-vis other global superpowers like China and India will impact the effectiveness of MPE by providing alternatives for the African continent for necessary finance and investment in the long term (The Economist, 2019).

Exemplary & idealistic leadership

When the EU prioritises climate pioneering and respecting equal partnership to the fullest, it cannot address carbon leakage effectively and will lose competitiveness. In this scenario, the EU functions as a climate pioneer by illustrating high internal climate ambitions and policies, mainly acting as an exemplary leader. However, through a soft-power approach in an entrepreneurial and cognitive fashion, the EU could push for higher AU ambitions by diplomatically aiming to increase the importance of climate change on the AU's agenda or providing technological solutions for Africa's transition. However, the EU cannot level the playing field for its climate pioneering because it would have to force its agenda on African partners, leading to carbon leakage. This trade-off provides legitimacy through respecting commitments of not imposing the EU climate agenda on African

partners and supporting the African transition, illustrating an exemplary and entrepreneurial climate leadership style (Maart, 2020). Concretely, the EU can support African NDCs and the AU in achieving its Agenda 2063 by helping with technological transfer or infrastructural projects by providing investments and concessional loans. African localities provide the execution and priorities of projects while being backed by the EU. Meanwhile, the EU would be pioneering by accelerating its climate ambitions as a *climate pioneer* in its internal market, which would result in the moving away of high GHG emitting industries outside its borders. In this case, the EU does not limit global emissions but rather increases them (Babiker, 2005). However, the EU acts as an exemplary climate pioneer and promotes others to do likewise. This scenario is unlikely because of a misalignment of the EU mandate towards its MSs and the effective mismanagement of emissions. Because the EU's *raison d'être* has been to protect and pursue the interest of the single market, a measure that harms the own market while not effectively contributing to lower emissions, would be *idealistic leadership* that can only pay off in the long run (Bongardt & Torres, 2022). *Idealistic* in the sense that the EU could tell a fitting narrative and promote itself as the benevolent superpower while *de facto* lowering the competitiveness of its market and raising emissions. Therefore, we argue that EU MSs and citizens would not be likely to accept such exemplary and idealistic leadership with significant carbon leakage as a result. An exemption of CBAM to limit the economic burden of the mechanism on developing countries and LDCs in Africa falls under this side of the trilemma. Namely, it would address the imposition of the EU's climate agenda, therefore respecting equal partnership, but would lead to a loss of competitiveness regarding these states. The more technical issue of whether carbon leakage would be as severe if only developing states and LDCs are exempted is left out of the scope of our research.

Supportive entrepreneurial and cognitive leadership

When the EU prioritises equal partnership and competitiveness, it prevents carbon leakage by lowering its playing field to one comparable to that of the AU and its MSs' economies. Because the EU has to lower its climate ambitions until the external ambitions of African partners rise, it would act as a climate laggard, or symbolic leader, when showing high external efforts in a soft-power leadership style. In this scenario, the EU would increase its endeavours following a cognitive and

entrepreneurial leadership style and increasing constitutive efforts to push for higher climate ambitions in the AU. However, as extensively explained in the previous chapter, the AU is an organisation that will most likely not be able to come up with higher ambitions on behalf of the African continent because of the significant internal differences in the organisation and its unclear mandate. Therefore, this side of the trilemma would imply the role of the EU in supporting states to fulfil NDC commitments while also trying to contribute to Agenda 2063 in an entrepreneurial and cognitive leadership style. Because equal partnership and competitiveness on this side of the trilemma are prioritised, the EU can only move as far as the AU is willing to go, disabling it to pursue its climate pioneering by addressing its competitiveness disadvantages with other economies through MPE. Therefore, the EU should increase partnership efforts in an entrepreneurial style on climate change and accept lower-level commitments than those currently made unilaterally. However, the boosting of partnerships in intercontinental relations has a limited chance of being effective in a heavily divided AU with a low priority of shaping their economies. As we found that the concept of equal partnership does not have a resilient weight in high stakes and time-constrained policies, we argue that the EU is not likely to adapt its climate policies and MPE externalisation to the needs of its Southern Neighbour anytime soon.

Finding a balance

To limit the trade-off in the trilemma, we look at how legitimacy through respecting equal partnership relates to the EU having control over its transition. Szulecki et al. (2022) illustrate the issue of how to facilitate non-EU countries to have a say in unilateral climate policies, without creating a mechanism that enables them to undermine the EU climate ambition. This trade-off between control and legitimacy in the process highlights the importance of international cooperation. Namely, currently, the EU will bring other partners a board through its market power, where the source of its legitimacy is its climate ambition because it pursues a common good (Szulecki, 2022). However, because implemented unilaterally, addressing carbon leakage can raise the perception of acting protectionist and driven by trade concerns

(Szulecki, 2022). This delicate line of externalising internal policies marks the importance of international persuasion to minimise the trade-off between control and legitimacy by emphasising climate ambitions instead of economic benefits and trade protection. However, in Africa-EU relations, legitimacy through solely addressing *a common good* opens up painful neocolonial wounds, showing that more collaboration and consultation are necessary for all issues, including climate change.

Although conditionality is theoretically incomprehensible with equality in an international environment, genuine and increased consultation can result in beneficial policies for both parties that can offer the EU its unilateral climate leadership role. This way-in-between, through increasing efforts on consultation, described by one of the interviewees as having the capability to hear the other's concerns and the actual flexibility to take them into account, can help incorporate Africa's agenda and needs in the formation process of policies, but also after the proposal. Based on this consultation, a better balance between the legitimisation aspect of equal partnership, and the unilateral control of MPE for ambitious European climate policies, can be better achieved. The support of the AU's mandate, to increasingly enable intercontinental consultation and cooperation is essential. I1 emphasises that it is inevitable in a complex world that things are overlooked, but that there is a need "to have the sensibility and flexibility, that when we hear certain criticism, we reconsider our policies". Necessary commotion is part of the policy-making process and is in the nature of democratic governance (I1 & I6). For CBAM the EU has proven to consider exempting LDCs, not solving the equal partnership problem for Africa as a whole, but including a climate justice perspective in its policies that can strengthen the legitimising narrative of equal partnership. Although this is an example, it illustrates how the EU should be flexible and listen to its

partners, especially to a continent with which it shares a long and problematic history, to bring equal partnership as close as possible to its central competitive sustainability paradigm.

Lastly, the importance of finding a balance in the context of *the new scramble for Africa* illustrates how Africa is not as dependent nor has the EU as their only partnering option as before (The Economist, 2019). This *new scramble for Africa* describes the current competition for influence in Africa between multiple global powers (The Economist, 2019). China deployed its One Belt One Road initiative, Russia is severely increasing its military presence, the US has recently joined the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), and the EU launched its Global Gateway project (Bociaga, 2023). Furthermore, as aforementioned, in this geopolitical power struggle, the relative economic power of the EU market is shrinking, making MPE a decreasingly effective basis for externalising policies. In this context, keeping diplomatic ties strong by respecting equal partnerships seems vital. Therefore, this new scramble for Africa, illustrates how the concept of equal partnership is growing in importance for cooperation vis-a-vis Africa in climate policies to prevent exploiting the contemporary dependency of the weaker on the stronger and damaging relations. We argue that, as Dr. Mayaki expressed, the EU should acknowledge the interdependency in the global climate transition and for economic cooperation to pursue a genuine partnership in the long run, essentially revolving around the current EU capabilities and Africa's potential.

Conclusion

We found in this research that equal partnership is an ambiguous concept directed at the avoidance of the imposition of the dominant partners' will on the weaker, which inherently clashes with the MPE approach of externalising EU unilateral climate policies as a structural leader.

First, we concluded that stakeholders in Africa-EU cooperation do not have a uniform understanding of what equal partnership means and how it shapes cooperation, besides a directional idea of avoiding a dominant and paternalistic EU in its narrative and daily cooperation. The formation of African agency and ownership in project management, and the execution of (development) cooperation, was not broadly recognised as an integral aspect of the commitment. Furthermore, the aim of creating agency for the AU and addressing Africa as a continent was touched upon by one respondent. The latter proved problematic in the execution of equal partnership commitments, since the AU struggles to come up with a united front for points on the agenda and has no adequate mandate, leaving to the frustration of EU interlocutors. Therefore, we found that equal partnership is an ambiguous concept, regularly neglected in time-constrained and high-priority measures for the EU, making the added value of the principle limited. However, it contributed by highlighting commitments to overcome neo-colonial and paternalistic attitudes.

Secondly, the proposed CBAM contradicts all the identified aspects of equal partnership, illustrating the problematic dynamic of the MPE approach of EU unilateral climate policy. Although there is a defensive point that CBAM does, *de iure*, not impose anything on Africa, the high vulnerability and exposure of many states for the CBAM force them to adapt to an EU-led system. We argue that CBAM is incompatible with equal partnership as a cooperation framework, not because of climate justice or fairness considerations, but because it forces the speed and system of the transitional process on African partners, neglecting the ownership and agenda-setting aspects of equal partnership. Further, it weakens the credibility of its framing strategy and most likely results in extrapolating differences between African states rather than reducing them, defeating the constitutive function of

the AU-EU equal partnership. Lastly, the MPE approach is criticised for being paternalistic or neo-colonial due to its coercive conditionality of market access, relying on the size of the market and the economic dependence of the weaker state. Therefore, we argued that this approach is incompatible with the prescribed equal partnership commitment because it illustrates how the EU uses its dominant position to push its agenda on the weaker.

Therefore, the EU faces the carbon leakage trilemma, in which it has to choose its two priorities between competitiveness, climate pioneering, and equal partnership. Because we found that equal partnership runs the risk of becoming hollow as soon as EU policies are of high priority or time-constrained while following the dominant paradigm of sustainable competitiveness, we argue that the EU will further pursue its role as a structural climate pusher according to the MPE approach to follow its climate-pioneering ideals and unilaterally push for an international transition. However, the balance can be found in the trilemma by mitigating the trade-offs, by significantly increasing the involvement of African partners through consultation and entrepreneurial leadership while having a genuine sensitivity and flexibility to take their concerns into account. In this way, equal partnership as defined in Chapter 1, will still not be fulfilled to its fullest extent but will function as a guiding principle for the EU to pursue more sensitive policies toward the African continent by increasing consultation. Hereby, the equal partnership principle does not only imply an ethical commitment for the EU when considering its colonial past but also has an increasingly strategic importance, considering the EU's shrinking economic power and dependency on Africa in its green transition in a *scramble for Africa* context.

Discussion

Implications

This research provides a new perspective on MPE approaches in externalising EU climate policies toward Africa. Although the trilemma is unsolvable until the AU is an organisation similar to the EU with comparable climate ambitions, the EU should acknowledge the trade-off proposed by the trilemma to give the principle of equal partnership value in Africa-EU cooperation. This acknowledgment starts with the awareness that concessions inevitably have to be made between the three factors of competitiveness, climate pioneering, and equal partnerships. This highlights the importance of consultation to mitigate the effects on the Africa-EU partnership when prioritising a competitive sustainability rationale. This link between the competitive sustainability rationale and the inherent clash with equal partnership commitments with Africa has not been made and is our main contribution to the literature. Although the implications of this finding do not prescribe a radical change in pushing for the global and European transition, they present a new consideration for the EC in unilateral climate policy, highlighting the importance of increased consultation efforts to mitigate trade-offs as presented by the *Carbon Leakage Trilemma*.

Another clear implication is that equal partnership does not present a clear-cut institutionalised replacement of the earlier donor-recipient dynamics because the concept remains ambiguous and is open to interpretation. If the EU and AU want to make a credible commitment, they should outline the meaning and contribution of the concept to clarify its purpose and delineate commitments. We argue that at this moment, the EU pursues an equal partnership of convenience, but whenever there are topics of high priority with time constraints, the principle seems to be exchanged for the old paternalistic attitudes of the EU, which might be detrimental to sustainable forms of cooperation in the long run with a decreasingly dependent African continent.

Limitations

Time constraints caused most of the limitations in this research. First of all, the list of interviewees was of high quality, but lower quantity, making the result susceptible to possible individual opinions, which could obscure broader agreed-upon perceptions. However, because the purpose of this research was to find what the people *on the ground* believed equal partnership entails, a distorted opinion does not lack validity but could have been presented as of greater generality than stands the case. Secondly, to have a comprehensive view of equal partnership, the research would have been improved by having higher parity between AU & EU interviewees. Although we have approached AU officials and African stakeholders in multiple manners, they were generally less responsive and harder to find via official AU channels or databases. This lower approachability might illustrate that the AU is not an integrated, big, and transparent organisation like the EU yet. Therefore, we acknowledge that this research is mainly presenting a Eurocentric perspective. However, because the research question allows for Eurocentrism in the analysis, providing for an extra consideration in unilateral policies for consultation by the EU, this does not limit the validity either. Lastly, our research does not make normative implications about trade-offs in the carbon leakage trilemma. This balancing has to be done through consultation, in which EU officials should find their optimal balance between MPE and respect for equal partnership commitments.

Recommendations

The limitation of African interviewees in our research did not allow us to explore a difference between the EU & AU perception of equal partnership. We recommend future research to study whether these perceptions are well aligned. Such examination could potentially explain misunderstandings or tensions coming about in international relations. Further, the constitutive value explanations of Strange & Oliveira Martins (2019) have not been tested outside the security narrative in their article. Therefore, assessing whether the EU applies this strategic approach to climate policies would contribute to the literature significantly. Lastly, we touched upon the geostrategic aspect of equal partnerships, while the diplomatic conceptual importance in such a context has not been

addressed. It would be interesting for future research to find whether AU stakeholders value this as essential in considering partnering up with the EU, or prioritise other factors of cooperation and investment when pursuing partnerships for development or transitional projects.

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Annex

Transcript Interviewee 1	62
• Senior Advisor - Policy Planning and Strategic Foresight Division at EEAS	
Transcript Interviewee 2	74
• Delegate EEAS to Nigeria	
Transcript Interviewee 3	88
• Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki	
• Former Prime Minister Niger	
• Former CEO AUDA-NEPAD	
Transcript Interviewees 4 & 5	96
• I4: Head economic, digital, environmental and digital issues at the EEAS	
• I5: Principal administrator for Managing Directorate for the Global Agenda of the EEAS	
Transcript Interview 6	105
• Policy Officer at DG INTPA on Southern Africa and Indian Ocean	

Transcript Interviewee 1

Conducted 26/04/2023

Function

- Senior Advisor - Policy Planning and Strategic Foresight Division at EEAS
- Former head of delegation EEAS to Eritrea
- Former Deputy Special Representative to Somalia

Interview

Interviewer

Good morning. Thank you very much for waking up that early in Portugal. I didn't realise when I suggested the time that it would be so early there.

Interviewee 1

No problem. I always get up early.

Interviewer

Thank you very much for your time at least. Well, I've of course, sent you the questions. Are you okay with it that I record it, so I can listen back to it? So I can use it in my thesis, if you want, we can also make it anonymous.

Interviewee 1

Sure. No problem.

Interviewer

Amazing. Thank you very much. Shall we just dive right into it?

Interviewee 1

Let's do that.

Interviewer

So well, as I explained by mail, I'm writing my thesis about unilateral climate policy and taking a case study of the CBAM, to see how this relates to the EU and AU commitments made through equal partnerships. And, therefore, I have these three main topics that I want to explore a little bit further. First of all, how it's actually perceived, what it actually means in the field of diplomacy, and what equal partnerships actually entail. So this is my first question to you. How would you define the concept of equal partnerships in this relation?

Interviewee 1

Well, first of all equal is an ambiguous word, equal sometimes implies the same, and sometimes implies dealing with somebody at the same level, which is the case, of course, in this case. I mean, it's like equal before the law in any decent system of law. Countries are obviously different. They have different development trajectories, they have different priorities, they have different challenges between Africa and Europe. And even within the two continents, there are a number of differences. But it's a way of saying, we want to treat each other on equal footing, because of course, the relationship between Africa and Europe has a long and complicated and sometimes painful history with slavery and colonialism. And then for a long time, we were talking about development aid or development assistance, which implied a donor-recipient relationship that the Africans didn't like. And which of course, also has become less important than it used to be. I mean, a number of countries take South Africa, Nigeria, or Kenya, for them, the money they receive from European Development Cooperation funds, is almost insignificant compared to investments compared to remittances compared to other sources of income. So it doesn't have the same importance as it used to have, but in some countries it still has, but not in all of them. And we are now discussing a broad range of issues, not just development. Also interesting, for example, in the past, the EU delegations used to be delegations of the commission. And they were dealing, I wouldn't say exclusively, but primarily with implementing the rotation of development cooperation, projects and programmes. There is talking

about migration policy, we are talking about Environment Policy, we are talking about climate policy. We are talking about security, about investment, so it's a much broader range. And I think the change from development cooperation, which it was previously called, including the DG of course to the commission for international partnership reflects that change, but it also reflects the willingness on the European side to treat the Africans on equal footing. I think that that is what the concept implies.

Interviewer

So how is it that a shift in, of course, it's a shift in the rhetoric of going from a donor recipient to more equal partnerships, and it's a clear ambition that is being said, but how does it translate itself in the daily lives of AU and EU stakeholders?

Interviewee 1

It's difficult to say it really, it depends on the people involved. For many people, it has become common sense, it has been common sense for a long time. Whereas others, including some of our colleagues, still tend to have a condescending view towards Africa and Africans. But it's changing. And of course, the question is, what the general population thinks and how they see it. Unfortunately, a number of people in Europe do not travel to Africa, in particular, to Sub Saharan Africa, and they have somehow distorted view of what life is there and how things are, partly because of the media because of course, usually focussing on things that don't work or catastrophes on wars and diseases and all these things. And yes, that is at least part of the African reality in a number of countries, but it's only part of it. There are also a lot of other things, more positive things, positive developments, very strong dynamics in certain countries or cities and certain areas and certain sectors. So it is sort of in between, for some people, it has become a reality. And for others, it remains a name, I would say,

Interviewer

Some writers that I found describe equal partnership as a clear commitment made on ownership, which is one of the essential parts according to this writer, and an equal seat at the table when

deciding what investment goes to, for instance. Would you say that the EU successfully implemented that or that there's still a long way to go there?

Interviewee 1

No, by and large, I would say, yes, yeah, the shift has happened. And I think broadly speaking, it's quite successfully implemented, not least also, because we do recognise in particular this in these times the importance of Africa in the multilateral agenda. Africa has 54 member countries, it's a huge bloc in terms of voting in the UN system. And the European Union has always had a very strong commitment to the UN and to multilateralism. And of course, we need Africa in that respect. The multilateral system is in trouble, in particular, due to the war in Ukraine, but also to a more polarised international environment with the US China rivalry. So realising also, in that respect, in terms of multilateralism Africa has become more important, and we do recognise that. Okay.

Interviewer

And, for instance, if there's trade and investments going from the EU, to Africa, to what extent are local stakeholders questioned in their priority setting? How does that work in general?

Interviewee 1

I have less experience in that area in terms of investment and business relationships, but I can imagine that it would be very difficult to try to impose anything nowadays on Africans. The major problem, I think, that we have, is in terms of corruption, because there is a lot of corruption in Africa, not only in Africa, but in particular in a number of countries. And, of course, that means that the particular interests of certain individuals play an outsized role as opposed to the general interest of the population in particular of the poor people and that requires a certain caution on our side in terms of what we do. And that imposes a dilemma because we have to try and identify the interests of the people in these countries and act on their behalf without always having the possibility to actually ask them due to the nature of the regime, and so on. And that sort of pushes us in some cases into a paternalistic role, which, of course, is criticised by the very people who are trying to abuse their own

populations and misuse our money. And that's a tricky question. That's a particular challenge. But apart from that, I think in most countries, if you want to do business operations, you have to work with the local realities, you have to try to understand them. And yeah, you have to work through local partners.

Interviewer

Thank you for those insights already. I have a question about the African Union specifically, because in earlier interviews, I encountered problems with that, because why did the EU designate the AU for these negotiations, because there's not a clear mandate for the AU nor there is a clear mandate for the OACPS. who is actually representing a multiplicity of African states in, on the continent. So why would you say that the EU was, was the strategic partner in this case,

Interviewee 1

Well, the African Union is a natural choice, because it's the only organisation that represents the continent as a whole that represents all countries, all other organisations are representing only part of it one region or the other. So there wasn't really a choice, as is in the African Union. And I think it's also, I mean, we have a strong partnership between the European Union and the African Union with regular summits and regular meetings. And so there wasn't really another choice, in my view. Do you think who else could have taken up this role on the African side?

Interviewer

There are some, some say that it's an institution lacking a mandate that they are trying to cooperate regionally or multilaterally, with the African Union as a whole might be problematic, because it's not well integrated. It doesn't have any power inside the African Union, because there's so many different interests there.

Interviewee 1

So that's also the case in the European Union, isn't it?

Interviewer

That's true, but the European Union has a lot more competences in that regard. So that's that, or that's the critique. Maybe this can actually make sure that the EU can grow as a common voice of the African continent, which I can imagine as well.

Interviewee 1

I mean, it is the declared intention of the African countries to strengthen the African Union, and gradually resolve the problems that this entails in the process. And I think choosing regional organisations, which really would have been the other alternative would have been cumbersome because we would have to have four or five dialogues instead of one, and it would undercut the African Union, which is not really in our interest, I think.

Interviewer

Okay. That's, that's very clear. Thank you for that. Then we move to the CBAM and I, of course, I know that you're not an expert, exactly on the mechanism itself. I'm not going to technically in about it, but it's more to principle that happens, is it because it beautifully illustrates how the EU makes unilateral policy to make sure that they're not actually losing competitiveness in the world, which then, of course, can hit developing countries or countries that trade a lot with the EU or are dependent on trade with the EU quite hard. So how would you say the implementation of the CBAM.

Interviewee 1

Well, you can repeat and for me, know the principles but I'm sure you know more about it than I do.

Interviewer

At least I hope so. By now. I did a lot of research in it. But it's basically an extension of the emission trading system that's already internally happening at the moment in the EU. And what they're afraid of is that because they're taxing emissions, that hard in the EU that companies would move away, and

then still pollute outside the EU and then export their products to our markets. So what they did is now they have this carbon border adjustment mechanism to make sure that as soon as you want to export to the EU, you have to prove how much the emissions aren't your products in a few still in a few categories, but they want to expand that. And then you have to pay emission or basically pay for those emissions. But there's a problem because in a lot of states, like in Africa, in a lot of African states, they are very dependent on carbon locked in industries, which they are very, it's very hard for them to get out, while also a big trading partner of them is exporting to the EU. So there was quite some chaotic anger about this, because they said, like, it's green protectionism. So basically doing this making sure that you're protecting your own industries, while not actually taking care of that we can actually make the transition and export to you. That was the critique. I'm not sure how valid the critique is. I heard some clarity on the critique as well. So this is actually my question to you. Would you say that the CBAM aligns with the concept of equal partnership, can you say that this is compatible? Or would you say this is something that goes right into each other basically?

Interviewee 1

Well, it is a challenge for many African countries, obviously, for one, because often they don't have the technologies that we have. And we are proud that we are on the cutting edge in terms of environmental technologies, and often also, they do not have the control mechanisms and institutions that we have. So I can well understand that many African countries consider this as what you call a green protectionism and criticise it. And that has to be taken into account. Whether that was the case and how we did engage with African countries, which I think is one of your questions, is something that I think you really should find out by writing to the European Commission, they would know better. They do normally respond to such requests. In terms of academic research, you would have to find out I would, I would try both sides climate and the international partnership directorate, these questions, but I can well imagine and of course, I know that there has been quite a bit of irritation, because on the one hand, I think it was a year or two ago, the European Investment Bank, the EIB issued a rule that they would not finance hydrocarbon projects in there, what is called the external financing window, through which they do a lot of investments in Africa. So they said no more carbon

investments, not nothing for gas, nothing for oil, and of course, nothing for coal. Now, with the problems that we have had, because we want to be now ourselves from the dependency of Russian gas and oil, Europeans and top European leaders, including from the EU institutions have been travelling around the world to find new sources of gas, there is obviously a degree of hypocrisy in that and that really needs to be refuelled. We cannot go to Nigeria or to Angola or, or other countries and asks them to step up their deliveries of oil and gas and at the same time, say we're not willing to finance any investments for you in that area, that that is incompatible and that needs to be refuelled. So, these policies do run counter to each other and we have to find compromises as is often the case. You have competing objectives in different policy areas and then you have to see how you will reconcile them. But definitely not naturally reinforcing. I would say the contrary.

Interviewer

Yeah. Okay. Yeah, these are some questions that are coming later that I think are not for this interview. Very relevant and something that I will ask the Commission more about the procedure. More questions, how are stakeholders involved? What is it important to make sure that we actually respect these equal partnership commitments? Or is there actually no obligation of the EU to think of that first? And just say, as soon as we implement that, then we should start negotiating with others, for instance?

Interviewee 1

I would be careful about saying “negotiating”. I would call it consulting. I mean, obviously, if we have a partnership, and we will claim that we do, we have to consult our external partners on all issues that concern them. That's, that's the nature of any partnership, and we have a moral obligation to do so. I would say, I trust that this is being done. First and foremost, this is part of the responsibility of the delegations, and we have delegations in almost all African countries. But then, of course, there has to be clear guidance from headquarters. And I mean, in the end, it is, as you know, the council and European Parliament that takes the decision. So it's a bit of a complex process, sometimes they take a decision in a certain policy area, and then suddenly, we find out that this collides with other interests

or interests of our partners, and we have to review and revise it. But of course, it is our right as it is any right of any state or group of states to take policy decisions that are essential for their own, in their own interest. And everybody is doing that. But yes, we do have an obligation, a moral obligation to consult with our partners and take into account our views. I said in the beginning, I will be cautious about negotiation, or negotiating because that implies that they have a right to object or veto decisions that we are taking. And that's not the case. That's different sovereignty, that exists in international politics, but you have to have a legal basis for that, which I don't see in this case. For example, if a country wants to develop nuclear weapons, there is an international treaty, which prohibits that. Some sound do nonetheless, as we know, but there is a legal obligation, and there will be an obligation to negotiate. And there are other areas, and I'm sure, but in terms of climate policy, I don't see at first the legal basis, perhaps within the climate treaty. Now, this is something that will take a decision that runs clearly counter to the Paris objectives that would perhaps imply the need for negotiations with us, the CBAM falls into that category. I don't know that that's a complex question that you would have to ask the legal experts of the commission.

Interviewer

I think that even WTO compliance seems to be fine. But this is something that goes a bit further to the responsibility of the EU. Because the EU is also described. It's a famous I think, I don't know if you've heard about Market Power Europe. So the EU is such a big market that it can actually externalise quite a lot of policies because third countries want to keep access to the European Union.

Interviewee 1

And we are proud of this power. Actually, we are proud of being a regulating power. It's the Brussels effect, except we claim that we have a positive effect internationally because we are more or less obliging other countries around the world in complying with our standards. Not simply out of business interests, but also with environmental standards, labour standards, human rights standards and so on. So it is a role that we want to play

Interviewer

Okay. And this ended and this is exactly the question that we want to play this role. To what extent does it also provide us with the responsibility of making this standard setting? Because the market power is so big, it imposes things on other states without them actually consulting, of course, to enter the market. So this is something I don't know yet, but it's how it relates to equal partnership commitments, in which people actually say you have ownership to make your own decision to make the transition on your own base. But we also should recognise it as a market, our Europe, we, the things that we do inside also matter outside, so

Interviewee 1

The imperative of consulting as a partner is common sense. Because otherwise it wouldn't work. If we will just implement our policies without regard to the interests of anybody else, it would not have the same influence. It is because we are consulting, that we have been so successful, we take the interests of others into account as much as possible. And that obviously, sometimes causes frictions and controversies, but because we are doing that, it is for that reason that we have been so successful in the reach of our policies. It's common sense. It's also a moral responsibility if we want to have partnerships, but there is no other way to do it really.

Interviewer

I think the last question, because this rounds it up quite nicely. So when the CBM was actually published and proposed, there was quite some commotion, especially from African partners. But they have probably been consulted before. Why would you think that they are still reacting in this way of framing the EU as an entity that doesn't care about the rest of the world? When it happened, then hell broke loose, basically. So what would you say? Why was the reaction so strong?

Interviewee 1

I can't give you a definitive answer on that. I mean, you would really have to ask the people who were concerned with this directly, but I could imagine that there was an element of surprise on both sides,

because of course, the people in Europe, who have been pushing this agenda, at various levels, from the NGOs, to the people in the climate DG, the people who are dealing with climate issues, and the Parliament and the Council and in the member states are not necessary people who are very familiar with external policies, and we see the interests of our international partners. And they probably haven't taken these interests into account simply because they didn't know that, and on the other side, obviously, the people in the EU are dealing with internal versus external policies and are working in delegations. I've worked in delegations for a number of years, you cannot follow all the details of our policies, we get a lot of information from headquarters, we are sometimes flooded with information. And it is simply not possible because of course, you have to follow the politics in your country of assignment, you have to manage the implementation of development cooperation, you have to conduct the various dialogues, on migration, on security, on environmental policy, and so on. So you can't be an expert on all these things. And sometimes you find out when something has happened, and then of course, you have to deal with it. Once it's there, and I imagined that this was the case here as well.

Interviewer

Yeah, that might very well be true. Well, let's see if I have any other questions. Do you have any general remarks about because I think you see a little bit now, what I'm trying to find out. Is there a contradiction there? Or is it going to go together? We have 10 minutes, I think it should be fun to see how they perceive this whole process. And if it's actually well aligned, what would you say? Do you have any general remarks about what we just talked about?

Interviewee 1

Well, a general remark I would make is, we shouldn't get to stressed if there is commotion about one or the other issue. This is in the nature of things, we live in a complex world with different strands of policy making and different people dealing with things. It is inevitable that in this situation things are overlooked and of course people protest afterwards. And this then has to be corrected. We need to have that sensibility and flexibility, that when we hear this criticism that we reconsider our own

policies. I know that this is complicated, because it takes a while to adopt ourselves in policies in the EU but there is really no other way of doing it. You cannot foresee everything at any level, it is just impossible. Sometimes you have to deal with criticism when it comes.

Interviewer

Is that happening enough or is it too little at the moment?

Interviewee 1

I think it is happening enough. I mean this is policy, if you are unhappy with something you have to make noise, this is the nature of democracy.

Interviewer

And there is enough space in the EU institutional set-up to take into account this noise in the end?

Interviewee 1

Usually yes. Problem is that sometimes it takes time because we are in a slow machine, it is like a big ship that you can't turn around easily. So yes, the space is there I believe.

Interviewer

Thank you very much then.

Interviewee 1

Pleasure, if you have additional questions don't hesitate to send me a message.

Transcription Interviewee 2

Interview conducted on 20/04/2023

Function

- Delegate EEAS to Nigeria
- Former policy officer at DG INTPA, formerly known as DG DEVCO

Interview

Interviewer

How would you define the concept of equal partnership in the context of the Joint Africa *EU Strategy*?

Interviewee 2

There is no equality as long as one of the two partners is in a much weaker position. On the other hand, it is our African partners request to be treated as equal partners. It is the EU's interest to pursue equal partnerships. Why? Because this is a business, because we have been doing business a lot, using mostly subsidies, so using mostly grants. Byt since a decade, or even a bit more, the development cooperation, which is not anymore development cooperation, but it is international partnerships, is mostly using blending. I don't know if you know how this goes?

Interviewer

No, I do not to be honest.

Interviewee 2

Okay, so let's say that so far we were giving grants to our partners, so we were giving non revolving funds. So you were telling me, I want to study. And I was telling you okay, take about 20000 per year and you study. I give you the money and you study. This has been almost eliminated from our current form of cooperation. And has been completely illuminated in infrastructure. So I am not giving you a grant to build a bridge, I am giving you a concessional loan, giving you a loan at interest rates that are

comparable with commercial loans, so they are much less. The grants however, you need to see here, most of the technical assistance is indeed a grant. So it is a non-revolving technical assistance.

Interviewer

Okay thank you, may I ask in what sense does equal partnership play a role in this cooperation? What role is it playing in daily operation, you still see this dynamic of a donor-recipient for instance? What is the meaning of equal partnership commitments in this context?

Interviewee 2

Look, the whole thing started based on ownership. So the case very very often was that I was giving you money to study, during four years in Holland, and actually in the fourth years you telling me “I had a couple of failures last years, so I will extent my studies for another two years which you need to pay”. This was 99.9% of the cases. Which to us proved an unsustainability in the way we were working. Because we were seeing that it was “I take the money as long as you pay it”, but “as soon as you leave, there is nothing that is left behind, because everything leaves together with you”. Or I built a bridge for you, which I fully subsidize, which in ten years from now is completely destroyed because there was no maintenance, which was the case in the transport sector. So the equality here comes in with the increase of ownership, because usually what you pay, theoreticall speaking, we are not there yet, you also take of in a better way.

Interviewer

So ownership is then in a sense that, as soon as help is given, and correct my if I’m wrong, it is their responsibility to take care of it.

Interviewee 2

You understand it wrongly. Ownership means that, let’s say “If I was giving you money, you would spend the money and nothing will be left behind. But now I am leaving you a loan that you are paying back to me, this is the element of ownership. That you have skin in the game, that you have an own

contribution. Then it is their ownership.” So equality has been reflected in the implementation modalities, and implementation modality is the way the funds will be implemented by the partner party.

Interviewer

Because they are loans now and not grants, it gives a certain responsibility or burden that the money is actually invested in the right way, and making it more business oriented?

Interviewee 2

Exactly, exactly. This is making it more sustainable.

Interviewer

So would you say, that for instance, are the loans given beforehand or after a project is proposed by African partners? Or is it together decided where that loan should go to? Or how does that process go?

Interviewee 2

Look now, we speak freely right?

Interviewer

Yes, I can guarantee your anonymity.

Interviewee 2

The EU has been so far in certain cases criticized about the participatory element in building things, which also effected ownership and sustainability. Which, if I come to your house and put on the wall a wallpaper which you don't like and spend a lot of money, probably as soon as I go, you will take the wallpaper off. And afterwards use even more money to paint it. However, I am an energy expert and I do transport and infrastructure therefore, so I speak in this case for these two sectors. What I mean is that we are greatly improving. What is usually done, we have provided technical assistance to the

African continent, to authorities that will pick up to create a pipeline of prioritized projects for them, while we do exactly the parallel process, so we also create a pipeline of projects but we have to see interest in investing in. And then, we give the money, we outsource the money to financing institutions, development financing institutions, you may have heard of. They practically manage the millions we make available for the implementation of a particular infrastructure project. So it is a parallel process and there is not always convergence between what we want and what the Africans want, and this is exactly what we have greatly improved on in my opinion by taking into consideration more and more... Because we simply see that, they won't facilitate it, and we need them to facilitate it, if we want them to get done. The final decision of the European Union, European Commission in 2020 to eliminate the terms of NAO and RAO, the national authorizing officer and the regional authorizing officer from the project signing procedure has been a step, in my opinion and in the opinion of many other colleagues... But this has not been, I mean the decision of the hierarchy was to eliminate these roles. What does this mean? Until now, with the 11th IDF, it was the NAO and the RAO who were the ones that were signing common agreements, which we were calling financing agreements in order for the money to be implemented in either direct or indirect management of the Africans. This is not the case anymore. There is a strong line to take to avoid indirect management...

Interviewer

How is indirect management avoided?

Interviewee 2

RAO & NAO are the stakeholders, this is practically the president of the Regional Economic Community. So Von der Leyen from its REC, so there is one REC for its region. So the president of the REC is the RAO and the NAO is each minister. They got eliminated from the procedure.

Interviewer

Why is that done? What is the reason behind it?

Interviewee 2

First we will speak about why it is done. And then we will speak about the repercussions of such decision, which are already felt deeply in our European skin. Ofcourse, the capacity and efficiency in time of the RECs is not always optimal. So we said, now we want the private sector in, and now we want more rapid implementation etcetera, in addition we had a very bad experience eregarding eligible causes and mismanaged of funds when they wer indirectly managend by NAOs and RAOs to take the wheel in our hands.

Interviewer

In European hands I should say then?

Correct. In my personal opinion this was a very bad decision, also contrary to are change of name, from DEVCO to INTPA. Cause it is as if you were my child and I say until you are 18 you cannot manage your funds, but as soon as you are 18 you can manage it yourself or part of it. But then I see that you failed to manage it well, but then instead of teaching you how to manage it, I wil say “n no no, let me handle it, I will do it again”. So let’s say that this decision to my eyes and to my feeling, was contradicting to ownership and participatory decision making procedure. So what did they do, the Africans, they simply blocked money that would go to Africa. So for example, the last very clear example, is 750 million transport decision, which the AU denied to sign, because they would manage no funds. In the end they signed it, but let’s say that, imagine that the a date of this decision is 31 December 2022, if this would not have been signed that they, we would have lost 750 million, we should go back to zero in order to be allocated in the African continent in the transport sector. So it would be a double job for us.

Interviewer

As a clarification of the last story, the 750 millon was alomost rejected because of the lack of ownership of continental authorities.

Interviewee 2

I am also doing regional policies, whatever framework you want to promote, you depend 99.9% on the REC. Let's say you want to pass from a trade agreement to the liberalization of the energy sector. So the unbundling of the three levels of a utility, generation, distribution, transmission. What do you do in Holland or Greece, you bring it to the parliament, and then it is approved, I prepare and draft a text and bring it to the minister. Who can then say okay. Or ECOWAS, so the REC for West Africa, what they have to do, they take the text, they review it on ministerial technical level, then they take it to ministerial level, from ministerial level they take it to council of ministers and finally the heads of state approve. This is their protocol, this is their procedure.

Interviewer

It has four layers basically?

Interviewee 2

Yes. Who will call the validation workshops, who will call the countries. You have no... ECOWAS is not involved or prepared the West-African Energy policy. Who will do the job?

Interviewer

So it is not clear how the competences are divided?

Interviewee 2

Why do you say that? If the Africans don't do it, then we have to do it, and we cannot do it. Because even if I go or you go to each country and say "I need a validation workshop" they will ask you "who are you". They need their ministers, their parliament, their authorities to have their approval procedure. You cannot replace their authorities.

Interviewer

Yes, so therefore, I did not completely understand what you meant with “ECOWAS has nothing to say” matter, do you mean it is all nationally arranged.

Interviewee 2

No to the contrary, we are 99.9% dependent on ECOWAS to call countries, each country. So I will give a European example okay. Let’s say the Africans pay technical assistance for the EU about taxation of African products to be imported in the EU. The text is ready, in order to be applied in the European Union. It has to be adopted by the Commission, who is the execution organisation, it has to be reviewed in parallel with comment by the ministers of the EU 28 Member States, correct? As the council and it has to be approved on EU level. So if the EU is not involved in preparing this text, in signing an agreement with Africans, okay, we will hear what you have to propose about the taxation of your project in our continent, in our European Union. How will the African Union call the European Council, will they take the phone? We depend on them for anything we want to pass in Africa.

Interviewer

So does that not happen enough, is there not enough involvement in the process?

Interviewee 2

Now there is no financing agreements between EU and RECs.

Interviewer

Sorry what RECs are?

Interviewee 2

Regional Economic Communities.

Interviewer

SO there is no cooperation with RECs, so basically the EU imposes how they would like to help.

Interviewee 2

They cannot impose it, and the reason is, you cannot impose anything anywhere on anybody. But it is not facilitated.

Interviewer

And is that mostly a procedural mistake?

Interviewee 2

According to our director general this is fine, according to me it is a mistake. So now what they say, look, the fact that we do not sign with you, does not mean we do not build with you. But his argument is very weak, I mean, if you build together, why don't you sign? To tell you the whole truth, our cooperation today for this interview, they will be fine, but for example if you need a reference. Then in addition, I have spoken with this person, someone will ask you, do you have a proof. There is no formality with the EU partnership with Africa right now, without a signature, with a line to take of not signing financing agreements with them.

Interviewer

So there is no formal cooperation without financing? Can you clarify the last part?

Interviewee 2

What was the text that made official the cooperation, the financing agreement, what is not recommended not to have. So this thing that was nothing content wise, but was a formality, really depicted the launch of a cooperation. And this stopped. However, in the last summit they had, there were lines that the continents wanted to go together, and on equal footing and it is always the same rhetorical use. What value does this have? Why do these people keep repeating these lines? We had some Africa-EU summit that were very big failures, with announcement that were construed like, we

do not need you in Africa, from the Africans. This will never be announced, but Africans are very reluctant about last Africa-EU summits. So they are rightly reluctant, but not for the good reasons unfortunately?

Interviewer

What are those would you say?

Interviewee 2

It is a different culture. So they might even prefer more intransparent kind of cooperation with Chinese for example than the strict Europeans.

Interviewer

Would you say in the context of climate, there is a lot of conditionality in trade agreements or support. Would you say this is a problem for the effectiveness of EU-Africa cooperation, that they rather just spend the money that they receive?

Interviewee 2

Do you mean, how fair are the European standards for a poorer continent?

Interviewer

Yes, but also, can it be detrimental for its effect for its usefulness that the EU is using such high conditionality.

Interviewee 2

On the contrary, in my opinion. It is very good for the Africans, and it is very bad for the EU. We are not famous anymore in providing funds. Looks the EU in general, at least in writing, in practice it is a decadent, it has been years that is hasn't gone very well. But he principles, the standards, the transparency, the equal treatment, all these conditions under which funds are given, even if it is not to

help African, but it is mostly to help Europeans, which is fair enough in an international partnership, equal partnership era and framework. Nobody else has this. Not the Americans, not the UN, not China or the Japanese, nobody. The framework in which procurement for example needs to be done, is very strict under European rules. And this is good in my opinion, it is bad for the European Union, but is very good for everybody. If everybody would follow the same rules, corruption would be less, then development would be accelerated.

Interviewer

I see your point. I agree with that. But there is so much competitiveness on gaining influence on the African continent, to what extent do these standards are negative for the EU to obtaining these objectives?

Interviewee 2

A few weeks ago a bridge went to the Chines instead of the Germans. Namely, the EU could never go to a government and say “I will give you money for the project, but I will also build three villas here and there, and I will invite you ten times in Europe next here to have a reunion and celebrate new year’s eve”.

Interviewer

So they have to play by different rules. That makes sense.

Interviewee 2

For example. What I am saying that this matters are illegal for European Union standards. Europe could never propose this. Even if all we do to bring money back to European banks and to European trade products, and to bring products back to the EU, at least we do it in a transparent way. And it is not appreciated. And we shouldn’t change it. And here comes, in my opinion, this is were really, the moment comes to like what you said, the African are underdeveloped, they should not be paying for the CO2 emissions. And I here this, where do this people that say this come from? It is a loco

argument. You are me we go in the sea. You and me need to escape and we take a floating boat to escape where we are. I am in with high heels and you go in bare footed. All goes fine, but when we are on the middle of the sea and the weather is not very promising, we find out that my heels have made a hole in our floating boat. So to say that the poor did not pollute, why should they pay for the pollution? Is as if you say to me, your heels has made a hole in the boat, now you take the water out of the floating boat so that we can cross the sea. But if you are as stupid as that, we will both die in the sea. This is not the way you treat global challenges, sorry to say.

Interviewer

I can imagine it. The argument against it is of course that there is such a small contribution still that it will not matter that much for ...

Interviewee 2

I am coming there, it is not the contribution that caused the problem. Either we die, or we save our asses. So everybody take a little bit of water out of the boat as soon as possible to do our best. The second thing is that, okay forget about China, China is the hell demographically speaking and pollution speaking. But, let's take the US or Europe, in comparison to Africa. The EU pollutes most, because Africa is underdeveloped. But Europe's trade in pollution is pretty stabilized, Europe will not have a demographic boom, compared to post-WWII anymore. You see what I mean. The ones who are under demographic hysteria are the Africans. So if you take the rate of development and the rate of development of Africa, if ever our efforts are global efforts, that the Africa development predictions come true, they will suddenly be found polluting 100 times more than Europeans. And the example is the hell, that is China. As long as China was underdeveloped, but as soon as China developed and became the global emperor, they pollute as we all together pollute in the rest of the planet. Do we want Africa to become the new China in polluting.

Interviewer

Okay, I agree with that. The Argument that is being made, is that the transition should be made on someone's own pace. For CBAM people argue for exclusion until they can comply, you respect the ownership and say: "Make sure you do it, and we will wait". But that might be the problem there.

Interviewee 2

Before that, I will add a third point is, there engagement. We pay them to go to the COPs, and at the COPs they engage vis-à-vis paris agreement. You better know what you sign before you put it. I did not take the hand of the Africans, so they should take the responsibility of engaging. This is equal partnership right? We cannot be equal wherever we want, and then be unequal wherever we want. Now, to come back to the transitional period. So if you search inside the Green Deal and also inside the Fit for 55, you will for the first time see a "just" green energy transition. Which started in the European Union, which then ofcourse extended beyond the borders of the European Union. So when we are talking about a just transition, it doesn't mean that only the rich pay. This is not just. This is pity of the ones who not have the... So no, we are equal partners right? So "just" has to do with transitional periods and with other measures. For example, in the same way in Europe, you say that, whole industries are closing and you need to find what will happen to the cities around the industry, what happens to people working around the coal industry, what happens to their families? So you should be putting even more emphasis to social impact assessment than to environmental impact assesments. The EIA is evidently super high, but then you may leave unemployed yada yada yada. All this have to do with justice, it doesn't mean we don't do it, it measn we do it on a different pace under different rules, with different flexibility with differen ceilings etc. etc. You also see this in CBAM, as you may have seen from October 2023 to 31 December to 2025 there is transitional period. So it is exactly the same with the Africans.

Interviewer

So would you say that the CBAM, with its transitional period, conflicts with equal partnership in that sense? Or would you say, I don't see where it correlates, it has nothing to do with each other.

Say that all that is to be imported in this six sectors, either it comes CO2 free, within the acceptable ranges of CO2 emissions or it is outside this range, then they have to buy a permit. So the Africans say, this is a barrier to our products. I do not see any unfairness. I see more unfairness when it is not. But I am a strict person.

Interviewer

By exporting the ETS, you exporting it to others, while you have actually said, you have ownership over your own transition. Is there a conflict between ownership and exporting the ETS to the African continent, or would you say this is part of the global effort and equal partnership means something else.

Interviewee 2

Me, I think this is equal, I think it is well done.

Interviewer

In what sense? What do you consider the most equal in the international partnerships with the Africans?

Interviewee 2

For me, equality is access to information. So transparency. So I am not saying that I am doing something with the intention of doing something else. I am very very clear. Let's take an industry, let's take oil. Nigerians export crude oil unprocessed, cheap, and they import high processed, so ready project, to be used. This is to my interest right, I buy cheap, and I sell high. Europe is happy. Is this fair? Absolutely. Because Nigerians have every power and freedom for deciding to invest in processing the product. So as long as I am clear with myself, in my opinion, all equality is found in the conversion of the grants era to the equal contribution era, even under concessional terms.

Interviewer

Makes sense.

Interviewee 2

You know the policy fo DG REGIO for the EU right? So DG region is not giving to each member state for development the same money. Portugal or Greece are not developing on the same rhytm as Holland does. So, this I find equal. On the other hand, if you pamper a continent for long, this is not equal at all, this does not promote ownership or anything at all.

Interviewer

How important is equal partnership in the daily routines? Why is it used and why is it so important?

Interviewee 2

The reason wy it is sold, is the fact is that it is catchy. We are equal, so you have been promoted to equal now. So the reasons why this is promoted as a term, might be different that what it daily serves. I am not imposing anything, I am playing with open cards, if you prefer to continue with corrupted players, that's fine.

Interviewer

And how important is it?

Interviewee 2

It is respect to your partners to treat them in an equal way. I would not say that I appreciate, I can't pay it because I am poor. If I give you. So I am not accepted that the fake argument, that they go for cheaper loans, because they are not cheaper, they in debt the whole population and they eliminate countries like Zambia. And this is their own decision, it is fine, my consciousness is calm and fine, I do my job clean.

Interviewer

Thank you very much for your time and your interesting insights.

Transcript Interviewee 3 - Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki

Conducted on 29/05/2023

Function

- Special Envoy of the African Union on Food Systems
- Former Prime Minister of Niger (1997-2000)
- Former CEO of AUDA-NEPAD

Interview

Interviewer

Thank you very much for your time today. Shall we just jump into it then with the questions? Maybe as a first, first of all, big thank you for making this time in your busy schedule. And I'll try to be as concise as possible in my questioning so that we actually use our time well. Well, first of all, I of course, received your email with some information on there. And you already expressed your opinion about equal partnerships, that is articulated in the joint African in EU strategy, that words might have changed, but policies are yet to come. Could you elaborate a bit on that and what your understanding of equal partnership is?

Interviewee 3

It is changing significantly today. Why? Because there is an effort which is being made in order to evaluate the implementation of commitments made by the EU and the African Union. And I advise you to really look at the work which is being undertaken by the Africa Europe foundation, it's an equidistant Foundation, which is working a lot on a tracking tool, but would allow us to see what is the level of implementation of commitments. In that sense, out of this evaluation process, a certain number of conclusions will be made. And an analysis will be made on what is called equal partnership. If we define it today, it will be very theoretical, even if we know by definition, but there is an asymmetry in terms of negotiating power, in terms of donor recipient relationship, etc. We don't want to avert it has been documented. But philosophically, aiming at an equal partnership is evidently

sound. But my main point here is: once we have the data, and we analytical work on the levels of implementation from both sides, we could better define what an equal partnership would be.

Interviewer

Okay. And because it's there, but there is something that it's measured now, right? What are those factors?

Interviewee 3

A lot of factors, you know, a lot of domains were looked at, during the EU AU summit. Domains related to health, domains related to agriculture, domains related to infrastructure, etc. Domains related to climate adaptation, to financing climate adaptation, and other critical activities with funding, which were targeted. So my question is, what has happened since when? How well has it been implemented? And what are the numbers what each side is showing?,

Interviewer

And what is the eventual dream goal? What is the ultimate aim of equal partnership in that sense?

Interviewee 3

According to my view, but it is my view, not the view of the African Union in particular, or the euro. It is my view. But I do not see the cost because for me an equal partnership is a construction process is not a state of being of, you know, more things being a construction process. It needs a long term vision. And I'm not sure that today, Europe and Africa have a long term vision of what they want to be for many reasons, you see. First of all, politically, you have seen during the vote at the United Nations, regarding Ukraine, many African countries didn't align to either side. They maintained a a non-alignment position, which was very much criticized by European partners, because they wondered why. So, politically, this will open a lot of discussions. Secondly, the Latin American countries have you know, produced a concept which is called active non alignment, ANA. So, what you have studied what an active non alignment, we don't know yet what it means, but it is a

philosophical posture which will have consequences. Thirdly, the main discussion, when you talk with negotiators in the EU, and I was at I'm part of a board of the Royal Institute Elcano in Spain, and Spain is going to chair the EU now, in July from the EU side. I mean, the essential issue, which is being looked at in the discussions with with the Africans is the issue of migration. And many countries, which were considered as progressive looking, even management of migration have shifted their views like Denmark, for example, and the Danish model is being looked at by many other European countries in order to draw a legislation on what to do. What we have to understand is that most of our migration is intra African migration. But it should be replaced in a in global debate on development, which is not fully accepted by the European side. So, you see all these bits and pieces of topics, in my view, if African Union and European Union seek to discuss bits and pieces of, of issues, in my view, it will not help in providing solutions. Europe and Africa should think in the long term, so, what do we want to construct together? On the one hand, we have a very young continent with a median age of 19 and we have an aging continent. We should look at how the combination of the comparative advantages of both regions can really help solve problems in Europe and problems in Africa. So, if you we have this long term vision, because in a new case, we have African Europe neighbours, so they will have to find solutions to common problems, but will not go by. So if they insert their analysis in the long term vision, it tends first of all, to construct short term solutions in the long term perspective. And secondly, it will enormously help the national public opinions. Because the national public convenience, or the distorted image of what Africa is, and the role of leadership of European Union is to say, "look, we are discussing where we have returns on the long term perspective". And in that long term, it's not only about problems, it's about solutions to problems. And it helps to educate the public opinions. You see. So this is my view, and it is not only my view, I also derive value from some thinkers who are thinking alike.

Interviewer

I think that makes sense as well, that there is common root causes to the problem that should be addressed in the long term instead of only looking at a certain silo. From the European side, there's always a lot of talk from some sort of security narrative that there is, that there is a security issue. And

I think the agenda is getting more broad, especially with climate change. Would you say that equal partnership plays a bigger role in this new domain of climate change as well because of the interdependence?

Interviewee 3

Yes, I think so too, because if you look at the carbon border adjustment mechanism, what many Africans are saying is “look, commitments were made under the climate agenda to support Africa, which is a zero net emitters to support Africa in adaptation policies. So by applying a carbon border adjustment mechanism, it will reduce Africa's GDP. But at the same time, you don't have any support?” What about support for implementations of commitments which were made in terms of climate finance. So this is a kind of unequal partnership.

Interviewer

Yeah. Because you say just to clarify, your argument, is that CBM imposes some sort of system? Am I understanding it right, while there is also another agenda that already covers this goal? Am I saying it correctly now?

Interviewee 3

Yep, moving is very is an ecosystem, or a just implementation of a carbon border adjustment mechanism. And that ecosystem includes evidently, climate finance, income, close technology transfer? Because African countries have a lot to learn from renewable experiences in Europe. So So what's the way when they see it?

Interviewer

And if, for instance, because this is something that I think the European Parliament is already, at the moment quite pushing for it is, for instance, saying that the reflow of revenues from the border adjustment mechanism, going back to invest in necessary infrastructure to actually comply to the rules

in developing the states. Would you say, would you say if such a thing is implemented, that it then fulfills equal partnership commitments again, or is there still a problem there?

Interviewee 3

No, I think it could. It could be in the it is totally logical. It makes sense. It makes sense. I was at the European Parliament last week. And discussions were about the Great Green war. You know, it's, it's, it's an example. I fully agree. It's really common sensical sometimes. And a key point is African policymakers and public administrations should be supported in accessing climate finance. But what's the critical issue now with China which is accessing climate finance mostly.

Interviewer

How is this procedure of externalising internal climate policies happening internally? Is that detrimental to equal partnerships? So I saw in your email that you talk about the role of consultation, how important is that consultation to respect equal partners?

Interviewee 3

I think, yeah, you this point is an important point, because respect that through consultation, respect is not an imposition of a solution, which has been thought bureaucratically. So here's, here's why I say, if you let bureaucrats and experts reflect on solutions, and you don't have a long term political vision, then it's really difficult to establish an equal partnership. Consultation should take place and could take place quite, quite efficiently. I mean, the mechanisms do exist!

Interviewer

And in what form in the process should this consultation happen? And how intensive should it be? Because it can also there might be conflicting ambitions and and still that one party might choose to go for its own agenda.

Interviewee 3

My sense is, well, you know, the architecture of the European Union rollover Commission, the role of a parliament, which is not the collectible, because they tend to seek to have more power of control of a commission. Adversary same time. I think European Union is also needs to deal with its opening to East European members. So they have their own internal consultation processes. But consultation processes from one region to another, from the EU with Latin America, EU with Asia and the AU. Africa has not been fully resolved yet, when in the case of Africa, we have this summit. We have commission to commission meetings. So we also should see that progress has been made compared to 20 years ago. So we just need to strengthen these processes of consultations with more regularity and less time in between.

Interviewer

Yeah. Okay. I have another I've some issues that came up in other interviews as well. Namely, that the AU and the EU are quite different animals at the moment. How do you think the equal partnership shapes this as counterparts with each other? Are they counterparts with each other? What are the challenges in this regard of the EU and EU institutional setup?

Interviewee 3

No, Wouter, it is clear. It is global. It's clear, it's global. But it's, it's clear. Well. In the current context, we have a high level of uncertainty geopolitically. Because Europe has to deal at the same time with the US and China in terms of positioning itself, geopolitical, but Europe cannot neglect quote, unquote, its partnership for Africa for the obvious reasons that I mentioned. African reach in 2052 the point of 6 billion people, and Africa is not India, which is far away. It's just the neighbour. That's one point. But the second point is that many changes accelerated today. So given this acceleration of changes, social changes, economic changes, combined with uncertainty on, you know, the near future, it obliges to have a constant interaction between the leadership's of both regions. I think this it is really critical. And I see good signs, so I was in Spain one month ago, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain gathered a certain number of Africans who are not current policymakers but quite independent like I am. And to tell them, Look, we are going to chair the EU we want an independent thinking from

yourself, your six or seven, so that we could shake a little bit the way the EU is functioning in this relationship with Africa. So but priorities are not only fixed by us, but priorities are negotiated. But basic consultation, you see it's a good thing in a in a in the context where you wake up every morning and videos, what you hear is about the Ukraine wars, and you know, Ukraine war and the uncertain geopolitical context, which is around that. I think we should rebalance towards more realism, optimism and construction of peace solutions, you see. So the shedding of the of the, of the, the fact that the country like Spain cheering the EU as for advice, which will not have been possible 10 years ago.

You see, you take Giorgia Meloni, one of their first trip was to go to Addis Ababa, meet the government discuss with the African Union. Look at listen to how we were looking at migration. So even with someone who can be considered politically as extreme right, you have that reaction to engage in a type of dialogue, which normally should not, could not have been engaged 10/15 years ago. Yeah. So that's the positive signs I see.

Interviewer

About this. And I think continuing on this, there is a clear emphasis on a regional approach. And I have seen in earlier interviews as well, that you've been, like, very positive, very positive over regional cooperation instead of multilateralism, or bilateralism, in the sense that there is a necessity to cooperate regionally. Why is this so important in EU-AU cooperation?

Interviewee 3

You know, what, multilateralism has been weakened. It has been weakened in terms of decision power. And it has been weakened in terms of capacity and resources. And one big issue of a multilateral system, and the UN is the the non-operationality of the UN Security Council today. So you have all these agencies, evidently, the FAO, or the UNDP, and so on, but they are also affected by this global context. So I think a new multilateralism, will emerge, but it's an opinion. It shouldn't be more studied. But my intuition is worthy to emerge from more regional dialogues.

Interviewer

Okay that is clear.

Interviewee 3

Sorry, I need to go.,

Interviewer

Yes, okay. No, okay. That's, that's fine. I've got to maybe ask one very small question, just as a, as you talked about, that the CBAM would have detrimental effects on the African continental free trade area. Can you just tell me the line of reasoning in that because that's the very much interests mean in this case?

Interviewee 3

Well, the line is reasoning is that as we implement the continental free trade area, we try to fight against tariff barriers and non-tariff barriers. So whilst we are cdeonstructing, you know, what's the Border Force increasing Africa trade, asking countries to erase non-tariff barriers? We think we remember carbon border adjustment is a kind of tariff barrier, although it doesn't say so in its name, isn't it? It could give ideas to some African countries. We have a consensus in the CFTA to implement. But you know, we love the CFTA. We have a lot of resistances. So it could give ideas to some countries within the agreement, who have adopted the treaty, which are the ultimate treaty, to start thinking about mechanisms like this one, but that would be really at big costs, correct?

Interviewer

I can, I can imagine. Okay. Well, thank you very much. Thank you for that last question.

Interviewee 3

Thank you, and we'll continue with email.

Transcript Interviewees 4 & 5

Conducted on 03/03/2023

Functions Interviewee 4

- Head economic, digital, environmental and digital issues at the EEAS
- Former Advisor on Climate Change for the EEAS
- Former Director of regional Cooperation in South America for French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Functions Interviewee 5

- Principal administrator for Managing Directorate for the Global Agenda of the EEAS
- Former legal adviser & policy officer in EU delegation to the UN in Geneva

Interviewer:

What is your understanding of equal partnership in EU and AU relations?

Interviewee 4

Well, I mean, I will not pretend I'm giving you the EU take on it. Because I'm not such a specialist on AU. Maybe the first thing I can tell you from the experience in Geneva, is that the AU is a very different animal from the EU. Because it's tempting to make a parallel between the two. And indeed, we've got EU-AU summits, we've got EU-AU partnerships. But the level of integration and unity in the EU is totally incomparable with the level of unity and integration in the AU. I wouldn't say that in the AU, there are many regional policies, the markets are not very open to one another. I don't see as many regulations there in environment trade or whatever, as at our AU level. There are a lot of subgroups and conflicts between countries and different visions. So the EU is a very, totally different animal. And if I give you my experience in Geneva, we have developed in different areas, dialogues with African colleagues. Every time it's very complicated to know if we have to go through African regions, or through African Union's because the African Union has an ambassador. But the African

Union always says we cannot do anything, we have to ask the current chair of the African group. And the African group also has coordinators that sometimes change every six months on different topics. And sometimes it's not clear who's going to be the next coordinator on this topic, that topic. And so it is very difficult. It is a famous Kissinger question, who do I call when I call Europe? Now for Europe? It's more or less an answer for African groups, slash the AU, it is very difficult. I mean, you've got in appearance, commissioners, like we got commissioners and everything. So at first sight it looks like each other, but very, very different. So can be equal partners in a philosophical sense, in the sense of respecting countries of, you know, the another continent with a different level of development, much beyond the colonial and postcolonial narrative assembly. I think there is absolutely no doubt that we think of ourselves as equal partners, not dependent, no dependency, no imposition of norms. And so that's why we've got these summits, we define ourselves together, what are the areas of cooperation? But it's not a partnership of equal in the sense... because they're not the same animals. So it's an equal partnership in the political sense, but it's clearly not a partnership of equals.

Interviewee 5

And also that's why the DG used to be called Development Corporation, which mainly deals with African countries and these commitments changed to international partnerships. Yeah, so DG DEVCO became INTPA. So partnerships is the new thing now to talk about, and we're partners in this, we're together. But if you cannot treat the AU on equal footing, because the competences, the powers they have are very, very different.

Interviewer

Equal partnership also consists of the idea of ownership of the countries, when there are resources distributed, that the countries actually have ownership over them, and also on agenda setting power. So basically saying that if we're meeting or we're going to discuss some things that there is an equal voice on both sides. Would you say that has changed over time? Or is that already the case? Or do you think that because of its market power, the European Union is dominant?

Interviewee 4

I don't know. It probably depends on the topics but I was speaking not so long ago with an African researcher in Geneva, who was more from the old post colonial narrative. And I don't remember which kind of dialogue there was between EU and AU. And there was an asymmetry first because the actions were mostly funded by the EU. So probably economic asymmetry, but so we provide more, but we can be criticised for providing more and not being on an equal footing. You see, sometimes it's kind of ambiguous. People can be also... I'm not so happy by the fact that we are contributing more. We're contributing more from good faith goodwill, and not with a view of political asymmetry. It's a problem, because a big part of the agenda was set up by the EU. So I asked him how comes by because the Africans could not agree among themselves to propose something. So the penholder for that specific dialogue, I don't remember what it was, de facto had been valuable because we are more unified, said we've got a level of competence, that makes it much easier for us to come up with a proposal than the Africans. For them to agree on something, is so so difficult, that at the end of the day, indeed, they may have to discuss on a proposal that we've made, which is unfortunate, and may give the impression of neocolonialism, I think is clearly not because you want that, but sometimes, because the African partners have difficulty to provide a united front.

Interviewer

And for more bilateral negotiation. So if there's just one state that represents itself, is there a difference there? Is our dynamics different than when negotiating or talking with AU, or African regional organisations?

Interviewee 5

I mean, in the political dialogues between the EU and these different countries, usually the agenda has the lead on each agenda item, and even the proposal and the negotiation of the agenda of these political dialogues. It's usually equal in the sense that, you know, they will say, okay, these are our priorities. And we will set an agenda where you know, on one item, it's you leading the conversation

on another item and it is them. So there is this attempt to make it equal, of course, because that's just the nature of these political dialogues, you know, you want to give this.

Interviewee 4

We define together, what we call the very general action plan in the annual action plan that the EU is implementing in countries or delegations, in dialogue with the country to set up what the priorities are: education, justice reform, environment, all of that is not used. We will do education in your country. We're not...it's a dialogue, they say, what it is you are interested in, and we develop a programme of action and funding behind to support their priorities. So with one country, it's much easier to have kind of an equal thing, because one country can easily define its policies. For the AU as a whole, it's much more difficult to have a unified approach. And it's always easier for us to have one voice.

Interviewer

How important is it in these negotiations that there is equal footing? How important is this? And is this actually happening?

Interviewee 5

It depends on the competence area to you know, because the Development Corporation is shared competence, which means that when the EU has a Development Cooperation Dialogue with a specific African country, and in parallel, there's also France or whoever else other member states having the same dialogue and coming up with their priorities. The purse from which these projects will be materialising are different. And it's a parallel competence which actually means that really, it's data we cannot tell France how to do, and France will not tell the EU how to do it, it's different pots of money. But at the same time, we talked about joint programming and a team Europe approach which means that in development cooperation, for example now with Global Gateway, which is supposed to be now the branding of most of our funding.

Interviewee 4

Yeah, it really very much depends on the area of competence. It is development, cooperation and It's a parallel competence where our own member states, we that's why we do it in a so called Team Europe approach to EU plus the member states. So we coordinate more and more so that we don't overlap our areas of cooperation. Because if you're dealing with that part, I don't know, adaptation. You don't want France and Germany to do the same projects with the EU. So there is complex coordination. So that's what it's called Kimura approach, kind of there is coordination mechanisms, so that our different actions that are parallel are complementary and replicating. You can imagine there's a big risk of duplication in many of these.

Interviewer

Yeah. And then I want to switch a little bit to the introduction of CBAM. And what kind of replaying or effect it had. There was some critique on it being green protectionist, which is, of course, always a risk when unilaterally deciding things. Did you notice any difference with your African partners, can be bilaterally or interregional, when this thing was introduced?

Interviewee 4

Personally, I haven't had much experience interacting with African partners on that. We know that in some CTE committees on the trading environment at the WTO. Sometimes criticism emerges from African and other countries. But CBAM really will have to do with the few most industrialised countries of Africa. So I think it will not be really an African question. Probably it will be an emerging country in general concern. And personally, I'm not really involved in these. So it's hard for me to know, because I have no experience with this.

Interviewee 5

There's so many facets on how you engage us around the world that we know a few. But that is beyond our domain of work. Yeah, I can imagine it might be useful, actually, because we don't have direct knowledge of this. But generally, all of these initiatives, Green Deal or otherwise, go through an

impact assessment. And I'm sure it's online somewhere, there's usually a very detailed impact assessment, including spillover effects of the CBAM, you know. So I'm sure if you look up CBAM Impact Assessment Report, because it's public, you'll be able to find it, probably you'll find even more than what you hoped for.

Interviewee 4

That's a very good idea, because you will probably find also input from member states of African Union, maybe from the African Union itself, contributing because that's the role of this also could be computational in the political situation phase, where we have our own impact assessment, their own impact from the Commission at the stage of a commission proposal. And then as part of the machinery before it gets adopted the communication or a legislative proposal, there is a public consultation,

Interviewer

And also in other continents?

Interviewee 4

to everyone, everybody, trade unions, business associations, third countries, and they don't hesitate to do this, depending on the topics. When you were GDPR, you could see, you know, there were very strong and critical contributions from... you can imagine... and so it's probably a good way to find the views of those countries and maybe from the Secretariat, one of the commissioners of the EU.

Interviewee 5

Okay, so there, you could look at it. Have you it's called have your say, have your say is the portal where we have all these public consultations on any new commission proposal.

Interviewer

Okay. And that's open for everyone?

Interviewee 5

Yes. It's actually pursued to involve developing countries.

Interviewer

But for instance, because I can imagine that if you're a policymaker in an African state, that you're not reacting to such a thing by them, is there actively pursuing African interests there? Or is it open for everyone? And then it's their own choice to actually...

Interviewee 4

All the African nations in Brussels follow the developments, and they follow the cooperation between AU and EU. So their role is really to inform their capitals how the EU is developing. This is important. Let's look at this. So if they do their job, they're really in Brussels to follow EU developments to influence it.

Interviewee 5

Yes. And there's a quite developed long standing dialogue, which you can also find the proceedings online. Is the joint EU ACP parliamentary meetings, joint EU AU partnership? Yeah, this is specific. Oh, yeah. Yes. So this is mainly in the context of post cotonou.

Interviewer

Okay, so that's already in the policymaking process. African stakeholders consulted. But you might, of course, take it even broader, like are developing states taken into consideration when making these quite impactful unilateral decisions.

Interviewee 4

And you could look at the EU, AU, the last summits and different levels there have summits of heads of state and government, but they're also all the layers and senior official meetings and so on to more

ministerial level or expert level. So all those topics on the table must be the object of discussion. So you can probably find the proceedings conclusions of these EU AU discussions.

Interviewer

So how could you... This is, I think, my last question. How could you explain the quite critical response from a lot of African states when the CBAM was officially introduced? Is that pure politics? How can we understand that?

Interviewee 4

I think because there is just so many stakeholders, and when you've got politics, for sure, it's always good to activate the Old North South narrative. It's also always a good way that I'm becoming cynical. And again, I'm not speaking on the behalf of the EU. It is also always a good way to push back responsibility for everything that goes bad in your country to others. Unfortunately, you see that a lot. It's easier to say that something is the fault of the EU than saying maybe we could do more in terms of regional integration. For instance, the other day we had Jose Antonio Ocampo, a minister of economics of Colombia, he's been an Assistant Secretary, or deputy for the deployment of economies of Social Affairs. And so he comes with a fairly traditional structural East- West dependency kind of theory approach. But he was also in the q&a, he was very clear say, yes, in many cases, instead of criticising, let's look at what the EU has done. And let's integrate among ourselves, we've been failing terribly to integrate among ourselves. And the consequences are there. And let's not always put the blame on others. Let's put the blame also on ourselves. So it's always in progress. I mean in Africa, you've got different regional things. I think there's progress in some of those. But yeah, if you look at cross border, trade, investment, infrastructure, I'm sure you've had a lot of weaknesses, that prevents Africa from developing as they could, and a lot of the responsibilities are easy to overcome, but it's not the other's fault. No, no.

Interviewer

Is there a possibility following CBAM, that you actually push the states that are not capable yet of producing in a way that is sustainable out. Isn't there a risk that they just move to other superpowers like China in the US for exporting their products? And that would also limit the effectiveness of this event?

Interviewee 4

Of course, how do we tune in to CBAM, there is a cooperation dimension also to help countries move away from the GHG emission heavy industry. For instance, the case of South Africa, which is the biggest kind of industrial power in Africa. What we mentioned on the just economic transition programme, that is the other side of CBAM. If you want, you could see that the other side is really to help South Africa, develop a low carbon economy and help them export to us low carbon products. So it's not only about the stick, but also about cooperation to help countries adapt to this new state of competition. So the EU is helping others to compete with us.

Interviewer

Thank you both very much.

Transcript Interviewee 6

Conducted on 07/06/2023

Function

- Policy Officer at DG INTPA on Southern Africa and Indian Ocean
- EU Party Delegate at COP 27 in Sharm el Sheikh

Interview

Interviewer

Thank you very much, shall we just go straight into it to make sure? efficiently? I'm writing my thesis about equal partnerships and how it relates to unilateral climate policies that are made at the moment, which would be the famous example of sea lamb, of course. But first, I wanted to start with the basics and ask you how you interpret equal partnership. What does it mean, in practice?

Interviewee 6

Yep. So I think to kind of anchor it into very much the EU priorities, especially now, did you input priorities so our Commissioner you to rely on and one of the great things that she really did and really good went for is the Global Gateway. And I think that equal partnership really resonates with that idea as well, of this gateway, because her entire deal with Gateway, is that like a gateway, it goes both ways, in that it's not just about benefiting us or our interests. And it's not just also about the other country's interests. But it's really about seeing not only where there are compromises to made, what can we do for you so that you can do something for us, but also what are actually the common interests that we have. And this idea of common interest is really there, and about kind of building back together in a way that is better and benefit mutually beneficial. And I think that's something that we're really trying to turn on with this kind of Global Gateway strategy. And I think that resonates with equal partnerships that way.

Interviewer

And how does that the reciprocity in this sense, I would say, are the the it goes both directions? How does it translate? So what is what are the the active efforts made to achieve this?

Interviewee 6

Yes, so the way that DG INTPA works ... We also work obviously, with the External Action Service the EEAS, but the way that we kind of like is very much kind of more of a project management kind of basis. We're not necessarily much as the policy DGs, although we have that as well. But the way that we kind of interpret into reality, equal partnerships with Global Gateway, and everything, are mainly through kind of a funding. Firstly, but also different projects. Now, with the fund, there are different ways already. A funding can just give a loan or a grant. But you can also do blended financing. I'm sure you know, all of this, especially as it is your domain, but I'm just going to kind of reiterate the different tools that we have at our disposal. Then what we're also doing hugely, especially with the Global Gateway is de-risking. So a lot of what we do is within our kind of team Europe initiative. So this is one of the ways is kind of, I'd say, Global Gateway is more of a strategy. It's not really a fund per se, the NDICI is what we have as a fund. But then what we have within the team Europe initiative, is that we actually collaborate not only with member states, but it's also with different financial institutions. And here... What is really important, is that what we actually don't just have a fund at your disposal, and we go to country and we say to the country, you do X Y, Z, and you're going to get some money for it. No, no, what we actually now rethinking entirely, is rather we are invited by a country to go to country, and we talk, we have a talk, we first really discuss what is actually needed, what and how can we assist you? Where is there room for our common interest? Where's the scope to develop? Where are the interests? And then what we do is either we have a kind of funding in place or de-risking in place, or all these different kinds of mechanisms in place. And we actually just have an implemented dialogue with the country. That's how I would say it's more in reality, rather than a very much of a top down, one-way stream. It's very much a discussion both ways. This would be important. This is what's important for us, how can we implement it? What are the specialties of each country? And that's how we go about it.

Interviewer

Okay, so is there more agency, in this case, from African partners to decide how it attributes funds?

Interviewee 6

Yes, exactly. Absolutely. Not only attributes. So we do have within certain funds, but it's about the funds going to the right place and where they're needed. So very much both ways. So we do have for each country, a certain kind of envelope, we call money, basically, envelope, and then it's very much a dialogue of where is it most relevant. Where's it going to have the most impact?

Interviewer

Why do you think all cooperation strategies express such a prominent line to take in communication?

Why would you and how would you explain that equal partnership is so important in this context?

Interviewee 6

I think it just reflects a huge shift that has happened in the commission. I think since the last commissioner, and now our current Commissioner, there's already... Think each commissioner has their own agenda and are trying to demarcate themselves, which makes sense. But I think it goes beyond that. It's also, I think, very much ingrained, and how we went from DEVCO to INTPA. I think equal partnership resonates with that kind of change and dynamic. You can say it's happening for a lot of reasons, I can leave that up to interpretation for you. But I would in a very kind of rational way, it's also about the EU, we do have a certain budget, where is it going to go? But also, where does it make sense to go the most, and is it to countries who want us there? And to countries who would appreciate the guidance, or technical systems or everything that we can offer the different tools? But I think that the idea of equal partnership is just a different kind of landscape of development cooperation that we're currently under. And I think that it's very much more a mutual, beneficial idea. I think, for example, if I can just take a little example, where we are now looking at energy or critical raw materials, it's no longer just about the EU helping other countries very much, there's a huge shift in that where we're also looking for help. And we really want a mutually beneficial relationship with a

lot of countries. And I do think that that's something that's very much ingrained into how the EU is with its own member states, but also now how it's on the outside as well.

Interviewer

Okay, so does it also mark a shift towards more business cooperation?,

Interviewee 6

Yes, I think it is. I think the way that ingrained, again, into the kind of commission priorities, you have this entire idea that all our policies are linked with growth. So I think, again, as you can see, that's very kind of more business mentality there. But again, it's all about the way that we also find policy or different tools there. Again, I think kind of de-risking investments or this kind of idea, is about shifting. It's kind of not about shifting entirely, just going from political to business. It is also seeing how business relates back to the political in the same way, the entire history of the EU, originally very economic and everything, but then the fact that we have economic ties has meant so much more. And that's very much reflected in how we want to do business with others. And it's not just about that business, but the repercussions that it does have on our relationships. So yeah, I'd go with what you said.

Interviewer

Perfect. Thank you. Thanks for that. That's already very insightful. Then we enter to the next phase of what my research is about. What's the interplay with CBAM, which is my case study? But how would you say, how would you say it relates with each other?

Interviewee 6

So I think, again, very easy perspective, it relates very well. I think that there are different ways that you can see it. But the way that you very much see it firstly, that we are treating everybody equally. If you go back to the WTO rules, you kind of wonder like, oh, is CBAM even complying with WTO rules? Well, yes, very much so, because not only within the WTO, do you also have this idea of

protecting the environment and the climate. But we actually we've imposed these rules on EU member states. So we have the ETS, and we have a carbon tax that we already have. Now, we're just making sure that it's everywhere else as well, kind of everywhere that's interacting with the EU. And I think that's very much more egalitarian. And in that sense, that at least we're treating everybody equally. And I think something that's very crucial in the way that the entire CBAM was configured is that it's not, it's not at all directed at countries, it's not directed at the LDCs. It's not directed at any country. It's directed at a product. So the aim is not to impose a tax or a burden on any particular country, but rather to disincentivize carbon emissions in certain sectors. So I think that, once you look at it like that, rather than, all but certain countries are being disadvantaged or whatever, you already see a shift in that paradigm. But then on top of that, we're not disadvantaging any countries, that's really not the aim there. It's just really to make sure, we have an ETS, we have certain obligations under the Paris agreement, we do want to fight climate change. But if we do it, and then all businesses just go elsewhere, and then emit elsewhere, then we're not actually doing it. It's just a way of a coping mechanism of our own policies, to make sure that they're actually working and doing what we want them to do. And then on top of it, when it comes to equal partnerships, and a lot of countries, I mean, I especially focus on Southern Africa, but if we look at a lot of countries, we are now actually in spring 2023. So I think we're spring 2023, even summer now. We've now launched a whole Information Program, Technical Assistance Program, to a lot of countries to actually help them with CBAM to make sure that CBAM isn't disruptive and isn't a huge burden. We're also going to provide financial assistance. We're doing a lot to make sure that that this is not destroying the equal part of the relationship.

Interviewer

Do you understand in the case that Some LDCs in developing countries, especially also in southern Africa, were are hit much harder than other countries because of their vulnerability and exposure to the mechanism? Of course. In a sense there is an ownership aspect in it, an ownership and an agenda setting aspects that are very essential. So you equally decide what is on the agenda. And you're equal, and then as soon as that is decided, then somebody has ownership over what that person wants, or that

state wants to do with it. How would you say that this relates to CBAM because it does export that European ETS to those states, while not giving them a chance of choosing their own pathway for transition.

Interviewee 6

So I think that is a lot of scope, we are very open to every other country having not only their own ETS, but any other type of carbon tax. if any other country does, and it comes close to kind of what we are. And we absolutely take that into account. So even within the very mechanism of CBAM, we are taking into account that other people are also trying to reduce their emissions. Then I think that's also kind of... what you're saying was kind of a bit of an agenda setting, exporting our own ideals, then, under the Paris agreement under which nearly hopefully, all countries are, they also subscribed to the fact that we said that we would reduce our emissions that there is a certain level of ambition of 1.5 degrees. So I'm sorry, so it is not really us exporting. It's something that we've all kind of agreed upon, that is really important, especially for LDCs, who will be hit very hard. So I think that from that point of view, it's just, it's one of the mechanisms that we have to make sure that we don't have carbon leakage, that emissions aren't going elsewhere. And we are taking into account that different countries and LDCs may have different systems in place. And also something that is very important, is that we truly hope that at some point, we don't need CBAM anymore. And we hope that every other country has reduced the emission so much, that it's no longer necessary. So it's not, it's not in our interest to have to disrupt other countries or have disadvantages for them. And I do also think it's important to say that LDCs, their exports that are carbon heavy, are truly, truly minimal. So whilst it could, in theory affect them, it's not one of the areas that will be as disruptive for their businesses or incur huge costs, because it is really, really slim, in comparison to other countries and other sectors. So that's also within proportion a concern. And that's something that we have been very much wanting to take into account, also with that information campaign about the financial assistance we give, etc. But it shouldn't be in any case, a huge thing that disrupts any LDC.

Interviewer

Okay. I think that's very clear. Other take to take it, and it's because there's, there's a certain benefit. And this actually leads us as well to the third part of, of how you can approach or how I can approach the thesis or is the broader implications of it. When there is unilateral policies made, how far and in what extent are these states consulted about their interest? Is there a high level of consultation? How does it work?

Interviewee 6

Yes, we do have huge consultations right now, we work very closely, especially digital, with all our locations in the different countries. So what we're now doing, which has just been launched, and we're having a huge campaign. So in all of these members in order, not member states, and all of these states and countries, to discuss with them exactly the central situation. So not only do we provide them with information, but they also can explain what their perspective is on the matter what they're different kinds of issues that they may face or encounter, where they might require technical assistance. So all of that, as you said, partnership element is very much still there. It's not just us kind of arriving be like "so this is the thing, deal with it." No, not at all. Like, that's not the point. That would be really, really bad for our relationships anyway, regardless of how great CBAM is or not. But that's not what's happening at all. So we've had and we've launched a huge campaign that's going to run I think, until October 2023, where we're really, really doing a lot of that work on the ground with the different governments explaining to them the situation, getting their input, etc. So that is definitely going to happen. I do think that when it comes to CBAM, as a climate policy, you can't just see it on its own. I do think that one of the things that is quite crucial to see, and also helps in understanding how to kind of mitigate its impact on other countries, is that the EU remains also the biggest climate finance provider. And we continue to do so. And I think that's also one of the ways that we're trying to kind of not just compensate but also make sure that countries that we respect CBDR, and that principle and make sure that we are helping different countries with different burdens and responsibilities to not entirely be impacted by potentially disruptive mitigation policies.

Interviewer

Why was there such commotion when CBAM was introduced? Was there consultation already in that phase? Or was it a surprise for these countries? How does it work?

Interviewee 6

I think...so I come very much from a more international climate background. And I would have to say that commotion is commotion. And it's normal,.. think it's up to an extent is very valid. But it's also a lot of countries taking a stance, that's what it's our job to do. And that's fair enough. A lot of things are, I would say, kept slightly more under, especially because we do have that internal dynamic with 27 Member States. Getting that through them is already a work and a half. But know that we are we do work very closely with our delegations, so we do work very closely with different countries. And this is not suddenly something very new that has happened. We work very closely with countries also under the UNFCCC. But we've had difficult dynamics, we have faced obstacles in our collaborative work together in the past, and this can all come up. And there are a lot of difficult dynamics, especially in international climate negotiations, especially in all kinds of international climate policies, because they do really affect the economy. But they are also very political in nature. They're no longer just technical and sciency. They talk about a lot of money. And that's normal. I think anything that kind of sounds like attacks, has a tendency of not being very popular or coming across the way that we intend to. But I think if you go back very much the core idea that we have a mitigation policy, we're trying to reduce emissions. And we're just trying to make sure that all the businesses that don't really want to reduce emissions, don't go elsewhere and pollute elsewhere. We don't want them to get into LDCs polluting there. That's not the point. I think you get that core idea.

Interviewer

Yeah, I get to the core idea now. Yeah, absolutely. I understand that. How would you say, because you can also argue that NDCs would already provide for preventing carbon leakage, when refering that you said they're committed already, if you actually trust the commitment to NDCs. They will probably come up with a system themselves because they actually signed a treaty.

Interviewee 6

So that's why kind of CBDR comes back in. And even with NDCs, there is a huge differentiation, I think businesses very legitimately could go to LDCs, who are developing and of which other CBDR should get to develop and that's 100%, we back that. But then that totally makes sense. They're going to invest in the country, they're going to help it develop, but they're also going to pollute there, NDCs don't prevent that in any way. And I think also a NDC's are fantastic, Paris was great move all the way, but there's also something to take into account with how the indices are made and how the improvements are very incremental. And how business shifts can be a much more short-term, medium-term thing. And NDCs and especially in developing countries, can be much more of a long term progression of how the industrialisation will look like, rather than a short change, which is already what we're really looking at. I mean, when you look at Fit for 55 package, or net zero, all of these aims that we do have, those are nets. 2055 is pretty short term. And already that if we're already in those couple of years, having businesses go elsewhere, which legitimately they could do. Wouldn't be great for the planet. So I think it is a NDCs are not a catch all prevention mechanism for that. And they shouldn't be because development we want that, we want that progress to happen there as well. But in a sustainable way.

Interviewer

In a post-colonial context there are still resonating asymmetries between the continents, I would say. Is equal partnership related to that, and how does it work in that sense?

Interviewee 6

So I think one of the things that the team Europe initiative does, is that it looks at that quite well. So within the team here, we have EU different institutions, and crucially, the member states. You could potentially imagine that ex colonies, the member states that are involved in certain projects, and certain areas that could potentially be certain countries interested because of their past in those countries in Africa. You wouldn't be wrong picking that up. That's true. I think there's also, I think it's also an element of more proximity, having knowledge of the area and more interest in that area. But

nevertheless, I think that the EU up to an extent, kind of counterbalances that. I think, obviously, there is a general kind of Europe-Africa dynamic. But already having the EU on board rather than just France, just Portugal does change this dynamic again, I think very crucially, when it does come to that kind of postcolonial dynamic. We've now really, really shifted in having a dialogue with the countries and really, it's not even just a dialogue in the way that we say stuff, they say stuff. It's really, they say what they need, where it is useful. Obviously, we also need to know what's happening to our money, making sure that it is going to the most effective places. So there are whole kinds of guarantees and regulatory mechanisms there to make sure. But in the end, it's very much about where the interest is for a country. A country does not have any interest in having you involvement in that kind of way, we're not going to force it upon it. I think that is also a dynamic that has changed. No, I think, especially if you kind of look at West Africa and France, the dynamic has shifted that you've seen how things work or do not work. So I do think that there has been a shift there that will also continue to happen, hopefully.

Interviewer

I hope so. How important do you think that shift is? Why is that shift so important?

Interviewee 6

I think that the shift has been quite substantial. So because how our relationship is with the delegations. I think it's no longer just a "Brussels says, what should happen in Zambia." It's not at all that. I think the delegation there on the ground, you know, people on the ground, who have relationship with the government, are really going to be able to also understand the situation a lot better. And they tell us a lot of stuff. So it's not, it's a very different dynamic and relationship there. And I think that the importance of delegations has really, so long a headquarters kind of vibe all the time. I think the shift has been really important, also to legitimize ourselves. But it's also been really important for our own interests, you can say. I think, if we treat people well, it's a lot easier to get what we want as well. And that makes sense. And if we want critical materials, but we keep not being very nice. So I think that it's also realizing that we're not on top of the world, especially when it comes

to climate change, especially when it comes to so many other problems. The pandemic really showed that when it comes to critical materials and so on. I think there's been a re-evaluation that has occurred, and a taking of responsibility as well. And wanting to foster those better relationships. I think there's also understanding that certain top down dynamics, they may give a sense of power, but they're not necessarily the best relationships.

Interviewer

Does this also has something to do with current geopolitical power struggles in Africa?

Interviewee 6

So I think we're very aware of Russia and China doing what they do. I don't think we're aware enough. But I do think that that is a dynamic that's there as well. But I think it's also... We're very aware that in comparison to those other countries, when we do get funding, when we do have that, we also do have a lot of measures in place to make sure that it's sustainable projects. That it's you know, including gender problems, which other countries don't. So we're also aware that we're not making it easy for ourselves because a lot of countries then find that frustrating that it comes with a lot of conditions on the side. But I do think that is an element. But if it were, if we were to be that aware, we would have maybe become a lot more lenient.

Interviewer

Okay. Let's leave it aside if that's a good or a bad thing.

Interviewee 6

I think that there are good ways to scramble for Africa and there are very bad ways.

Interviewer

That's it I think, thank you very much