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Impact of climate diplomacy on international relations: Modern trends

Abstract. The relevance of studying the impact of climate diplomacy on international relations is due to the intensification of the global climate crisis and geopolitical tensions, which create unprecedented challenges for the world community. The purpose of the article was to identify and analyse the modern trends of the impact of climate diplomacy on international relations in the context of geopolitical confrontation. The methodological basis of the study was the historical method, comparative analysis, and tabular modelling, which allowed for tracing the evolution of the international legal regime of climate diplomacy, studying the impact of conflicts on the implementation of climate initiatives, and comparing the features of climate policy of key geopolitical players. The main results of the study indicate the growing role of climate diplomacy as an integral component of modern international relations, which, however, faces serious challenges caused by geopolitical rivalry and the conflict of interests between states. It has been found that the contradictions between the USA, China, and Russia significantly complicate the achievement of the ambitious goals of the Paris Agreement, while trade wars, sanctions, and military conflicts divert attention and resources from pressing climate problems. The analysis showed that these geopolitical factors lead to the fragmentation of global efforts to combat climate change, undermine trust between key actors, and create obstacles to mobilising the necessary financial and technological resources. Particularly destructive to international climate policy is Russia's war against Ukraine, which has not only caused a large-scale energy crisis but also called into question the effectiveness of existing global governance mechanisms. At the same time, the research showed that the unprecedented nature of the climate crisis can become a catalyst for transforming traditional models of interstate competition towards multilateral cooperation in the face of common threats. In particular, there is a growing potential for climate diplomacy as a tool for mitigating geopolitical tensions, finding common ground between competing states, and forming new coalitions focused on achieving sustainable development and climate neutrality goals. The practical significance of the study lies in its establishment of a conceptual basis for developing scientifically grounded recommendations for building effective climate diplomacy as a critically important tool of global governance and adapting the international system to the imperative of mitigating climate change

Keywords: geopolitical confrontation; economic sanctions; military conflicts; renewable energy sources; decarbonisation; global warming

Introduction

In the context of global climate change and escalating geopolitical tensions, the issue of climate diplomacy is becoming increasingly important. The large-scale consequences of climate change, such as natural disasters, sea-level rise, ecosystem degradation, and food security problems, create new challenges for international relations. At the same time, the confrontation between leading geopolitical players, particularly Russia, China, and Western countries, is leaving its mark on the global climate agenda. Despite the general recognition of the need for joint efforts to

address the climate crisis, real progress is often hindered by conflicts of interest and distrust between states. This makes the study of the impact of climate diplomacy on international relations extremely relevant and timely. Understanding modern trends in this area will enable the development of more effective approaches to global climate policy and strengthening international cooperation.

The impact of climate diplomacy on international relations is a multifaceted topic that attracts the attention of researchers from various fields. The role of the

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European Union in promoting environmental diplomacy is thoroughly analysed by O. Lazard & R. Youngs (2021). The authors argue for the necessity of transitioning to a more holistic approach that considers the interconnection between climate, security, and sustainable development, offering specific steps to achieve this goal.

The internal factors shaping Russia's position in international climate diplomacy are studied by A. Korp-poo (2020). The researcher demonstrates the influence of economic interests related to fossil fuel exports and geopolitical considerations on the Russian approach. At the same time, the article leaves room for further exploration of Russia's role in global climate policy and its interactions with other key players.

The impact of greenhouse gases on climate change is analysed by A. Zhumadilova *et al.* (2023). The scientists emphasise the need for international cooperation to reduce emissions and adapt to the consequences of global warming. However, the authors do not pay sufficient attention to the role of climate diplomacy in these processes, leaving room for further research in this direction.

The international experience of using alternative energy sources, as exemplified by the European Union countries, is examined by Y. Zhuravel *et al.* (2023). The researchers emphasise the importance of transitioning to clean energy to achieve sustainable development goals and combat climate change. However, the geopolitical aspects of this process remain unaddressed by the authors, which opens up prospects for further research.

The consequences of climate change on foreign policy and national security are thoroughly analysed by K.M. Campbell *et al.* (2022). The authors warn that the climate crisis could become a catalyst for international conflicts and humanitarian crises. However, the research does not offer detailed mechanisms for preventing such consequences, leaving this question open for further study.

The possibility of effectively reforming climate policy in conditions of geopolitical tension is questioned by J. Cole & K. Dodds (2021). The researchers rightly point out that competition between states may hinder the resolution of global climate issues. However, the article does not fully consider the potential of climate diplomacy as a tool for cooperation and finding common interests.

The impact of climate change and geopolitics on the sustainable development of global supply chains is explored by M. Qin *et al.* (2023). The researchers emphasise the need to consider these factors to ensure the resilience and adaptability of economic systems. However, the role of international institutions in these processes remains insufficiently highlighted, leaving room for further research. M. Bazilian *et al.* (2020) analyse four scenarios of the energy transition and their implications for geopolitics. The researchers demonstrate that the transformation of the energy sector will have a significant impact on international relations and the balance of power in the world. However, the authors do not propose specific mechanisms for adapting to these changes, leaving this question open for further study.

The interplay between climate change, geopolitics, and human settlement, using the example of the Hexi region in China, is examined by L. Yang *et al.* (2020). The researchers demonstrate how natural and political factors have

influenced migration patterns and settlement development over the past 5000 years. However, the study does not consider the contemporary challenges of climate diplomacy, leaving room for further exploration in this direction.

The literature review demonstrates that despite significant scholarly study, several aspects of the impact of climate diplomacy on international relations require more detailed exploration. Specifically, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis on the use of climate issues as a tool for geopolitical competition and cooperation. The adaptation of international institutions to new challenges related to climate change also remains insufficiently researched.

The aim of this study was to analyse modern trends in the impact of climate diplomacy on international relations within the context of geopolitical confrontation. To achieve this goal, the following tasks were identified: to study the theoretical foundations of climate diplomacy and its role in international relations; to analyse the impact of conflicts and geopolitical competition in recent years on the implementation of climate initiatives; to identify the characteristics of climate policies among key geopolitical players such as Russia, China, and Western countries.

Materials and Methods

During the study, the historical method was actively employed, which allowed for tracing the genesis and evolution of the international legal principles of global climate policy. Particular attention was paid to analysing the process of formation and development of the regime of the United Nations Framework Convention (1992), including the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the Paris Agreement (2015). The application of this method made it possible not only to identify the continuity and innovation of these documents in regulating international cooperation to combat climate change but also to assess their impact on the transformation of the global climate governance architecture. Furthermore, the historical method allowed for tracing the evolution of approaches of key states and integration associations to climate issues, identifying the factors that conditioned changes in their positions and strategies at different stages of international climate negotiations. The examples of the US-China rivalry and Russia's war against Ukraine were extensively analysed for their destructive impact on global climate policy. A comparative method played an important role in the research and was applied to compare the features of the climate policies of the EU, China, and Russia. This allowed for identifying significant differences in their approaches, levels of ambition and motivation, and also assessing the contribution of these actors to global efforts to combat climate change. In particular, the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) of these countries, their long-term strategies for low-carbon development, and specific policies in the energy, industry, and transport sectors were analysed. To visually represent the obtained results, a tabular method was used, which allowed for systematising and comparing the key aspects of the climate policy of the studied states.

The research was based on international legal documents in the field of climate policy, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992), the Kyoto Protocol (1997), and the Paris Agreement (2015).

These documents laid the foundational principles of the global regime to combat climate change and defined the key mechanisms for international cooperation in this area. A detailed analysis of these agreements allowed for tracing the evolution of international legal regulation of climate issues, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to organising global climate actions.

Leading scholars' research on various aspects of climate diplomacy's impact on international relations was also analysed. These studies cover a wide range of issues, from the theoretical foundations of climate diplomacy to the practical aspects of its implementation in conditions of geopolitical tension. A critical analysis of them allowed for the formation of the theoretical and methodological basis of the study, identifying key trends in the development of climate diplomacy in conditions of geopolitical turbulence, and outlining promising directions for further research in this field.

A separate group of sources consisted of statistical data and analytical materials, which allowed for reinforcing theoretical conclusions with empirical evidence. In particular, data on the dynamics of greenhouse gas emissions (Total CO₂ emissions..., 2021) were used, which demonstrate global decarbonisation trends and the effectiveness of international efforts to combat climate change. This data covers the period from 1990 to 2020 and reflects changes in the structure of emissions by economic sectors and world regions. Statistical reports on the development of renewable energy sources (RES) (Lagana, 2024) also played an important role, documenting the rapid increase in the share of "green" generation in the global energy balance. These reports contain detailed information on installed capacities of solar, wind, hydro, and bioenergy, as well as forecasts of their development until 2030.

Results

The theoretical foundations of climate diplomacy and its role in international relations. Climate diplomacy, as a relatively new field in international relations, has gained significant relevance in recent decades of the 21st century. Its emergence and rapid development are directly linked to the global community's recognition of the scale and severity of the threat that climate change poses to humanity and the planet as a whole. The goal of climate diplomacy is to find common solutions and coordinate efforts at the international level to effectively combat climate change and adapt to its inevitable consequences.

The essence of climate diplomacy lies in the strategic use of the full spectrum of diplomatic tools and mechanisms to advance an ambitious climate agenda and achieve consensus among states on joint actions in this critically important area. This involves active negotiations, the conclusion of multilateral and bilateral international agreements, the purposeful formation of coalitions and alliances, as well as the involvement of a wide range of non-state actors, such as business structures, civil society organisations, and the scientific community (Cole & Dodds, 2021).

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of climate diplomacy in the context of the global challenges facing humanity in the 21st century. Climate change poses an existential threat not only to the environment but also to economic and social stability, food security, public

health, and international peace and security. Therefore, effective climate diplomacy is not just desirable but absolutely necessary for ensuring the sustainable development and well-being of humanity in the long term.

Climate diplomacy plays a crucial, indeed defining role in shaping and implementing the global agenda on combating climate change. It is precisely thanks to persistent and coordinated diplomatic efforts at various levels, from bilateral negotiations to multilateral forums, that a number of international legal documents have been developed and concluded, laying a strong foundation for joint actions by the global community in this area. Of particular importance among them are the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992), the Kyoto Protocol (1997), and the Paris Agreement (2015).

The adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) marked a real breakthrough in the international legal regulation of climate issues. This convention not only recognised climate change as a "common concern of humankind" (Art. 1) but also established the basic goals and principles of global climate policy, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities of states (Art. 3). The Kyoto Protocol (1997) went even further, establishing legally binding quantitative targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions for developed countries, as well as introducing innovative market mechanisms such as emissions trading (Art. 17). Finally, the Paris Agreement (2015) marked a new stage in the development of climate diplomacy, setting ambitious goals to limit global average temperature rise to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C (Art. 2).

These documents are the result of extremely complex and protracted diplomatic negotiations, during which participating states sought to reconcile their often divergent national interests and find an acceptable balance between the goals of economic development and the urgent need to protect the environment. However, it would be a mistake to believe that climate diplomacy is limited to only official negotiations and agreements. Informal initiatives and partnerships, aimed at exchanging best practices, transferring clean technologies, mobilising financial and other resources to support climate action, and raising awareness and engagement of the broader public in these processes, play an equally important role (Cole & Dodds, 2021). In this context, the role of non-state actors such as international organisations within the UN system, influential business associations and think tanks, reputable scientific institutions, and networks of environmental non-governmental organisations cannot be overstated.

Climate diplomacy does not exist in a vacuum but is an integral and organic part of the overall system of international relations at the beginning of the 21st century. Moreover, it is precisely the interconnection and interdependence between climate diplomacy and other key areas of global politics, such as security, trade, energy, and sustainable development, that largely determine its agenda, dynamics, and effectiveness.

In the modern context, climate change is increasingly viewed not simply as an "environmental" problem, but as a powerful multiplier of threats in the realm of international security (Campbell *et al.*, 2022). Climate change can

exacerbate existing conflicts, provoke mass migration flows, and destabilise vulnerable states and regions, creating a conducive environment for the spread of violent extremism and terrorism. Accordingly, taking into account the climate factor is becoming a critically important element of strategic planning and decision-making in the security sphere, and climate diplomacy is becoming an integral part of preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution.

Climate change mitigation measures, such as the active transition to renewable energy sources or the introduction of a carbon tax, have extremely significant and far-reaching economic and trade consequences (Qin *et al.*, 2023). On the one hand, they can seriously affect the international competitiveness of entire industries and individual countries, creating additional barriers and distortions in world trade. On the other hand, the consistent implementation of a “green” agenda can stimulate the development of new promising markets for environmentally friendly goods and services, as well as contribute to the transfer of innovative low-carbon technologies. Therefore, ensuring the coherence and synergy between the goals of

climate diplomacy and the principles of the global trading system is one of the most complex and pressing challenges of current trends.

It is impossible to overlook the defining role that climate diplomacy plays in advancing the concept of sustainable development and overcoming the problem of energy poverty on a global scale. The climate-diplomatic track of international cooperation is aimed, on the one hand, at providing comprehensive support to developing countries in adapting to the inevitable consequences of climate change, and on the other hand, at promoting their transition to cleaner and more efficient energy sources (Table 1). Key elements of this support include providing targeted financial and technical assistance, creating platforms for exchanging knowledge and best practices, and mobilising private sector resources for the implementation of climate projects in Global South countries. It is in this context that climate diplomacy acts as an effective tool for ensuring inclusive low-carbon development and achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (Resolution of the General Assembly of the UN No. 70/1..., 2015).

Table 1. Comparison of key mechanisms of climate diplomacy

Mechanism	Main features	Pros	Cons	Examples
Multilateral climate agreements	- legally binding nature; - establishment of common goals and principles; - provision of implementation and reporting mechanisms	- high legitimacy at the international level; - establishment of unified “rules of the game” for all parties; - the possibility of applying monitoring and sanction mechanisms	- complexity and duration of the negotiation process; - need to achieve consensus among parties with different interests; - risk of non-compliance by individual parties	- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (1992); - Kyoto Protocol (1997); - Paris Agreement (2015)
Climate partnerships and coalitions	- voluntary participation; - flexibility and adaptability to specific needs and conditions; - involvement of non-state actors (businesses, NGOs, scientific communities, etc.)	- potential for uniting efforts of countries with shared interests and goals; - improved coordination and synergy among participants; - potential for innovation and exchange of best practices	- lack of legally binding force; - the risk of fragmentation and duplication of efforts; - potential instability due to changes in the political priorities of participants	- Lima-Paris Action Agenda (LPAA); - Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS); - High Ambition Coalition (HAC)
Climate finance	- mobilisation of financial resources to support climate actions; - combination of contributions from developed countries and the private sector; - priority support for the most vulnerable countries	- Ensuring predictable and stable financing; - catalysing additional investments in low-carbon development; - promoting the transition to a climate-resilient economy.	- Insufficiency of current funding levels to achieve climate goals; - difficulty in attracting private capital under conditions of high risks; - issues of transparency in the distribution and use of funds	- Green Climate Fund (GCF); - Global Environment Facility (GEF); - Adaptation Fund

Sources: compiled by the author based on D. Bodansky (2016), R. Falkner (2016), UNFCCC (2019)

In conclusion, it is worth noting that contemporary climate diplomacy is characterised by a diversity of mechanisms and instruments, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. From legally binding multilateral agreements to voluntary partnerships and coalitions, from traditional intergovernmental negotiations to innovative forms of engagement with non-state actors – this diversity reflects the complexity of the challenges associated with climate change. At the same time, it indicates the growing attention of the international community to this problem and the willingness to seek effective ways to address it at various levels and in various formats. The

success of climate diplomacy in the next decade will largely depend on the ability to combine these diverse approaches into a coherent and consistent strategy for global climate action.

The impact of conflicts and geopolitical competition on the implementation of climate initiatives. Despite the growing recognition of the need for urgent and coordinated action to combat climate change, geopolitical tensions and competition between states often hinder the effective implementation of climate initiatives. Conflicting interests and a lack of trust among key geopolitical players, such as the USA, China, and Russia,

significantly complicate reaching consensus and fully fulfilling obligations under international climate agreements (Cole & Dodds, 2021).

One of the most resonant examples of geopolitical confrontation in the climate sphere was the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement (2015) in November 2020 under President Donald Trump's administration. This unprecedented decision not only dealt a significant blow to global efforts to combat climate change but also vividly demonstrated the priority of narrow national interests over international commitments, even in such a critically important area as climate policy (Campbell *et al.*, 2022). Although newly elected President Joe Biden signed an executive order to rejoin the Paris Agreement (2015) on his first day in office, January 20, 2021, trust in Washington as a reliable and consistent partner in climate diplomacy was significantly undermined.

Another serious challenge to the formation of effective and inclusive global climate policy is the growing strategic competition and geopolitical rivalry between the two largest greenhouse gas emitters in the world – the USA and China. On the one hand, in recent years, both countries have declared increasingly ambitious goals for achieving carbon neutrality in their economies (by 2060 for China and by 2050 for the US) and are actively investing in the development of clean/green technologies. On the other hand, their geopolitical rivalry in other sensitive areas of bilateral relations, such as trade, technology, or security, has negative repercussions and leaves its mark on the global climate agenda, diverting resources and political attention and complicating the much-needed cooperation in addressing climate change (Qin *et al.*, 2023).

An example of such geopolitically motivated actions by China was the temporary suspension of bilateral climate dialogue with the USA in August 2022 in response to the visit of Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, to Taiwan. Beijing viewed this visit as a direct violation of its sovereignty and a challenge to its "One China" policy, leading to the suspension of cooperation with the USA on a range of issues, including climate change. However, a few months later, in November 2022, during the 27th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP-27) in Egypt, China announced the resumption of bilateral climate dialogue (China and US renew..., 2022), the very fact that the climate track is being used as a tool of political pressure indicates how vulnerable climate diplomacy is to geopolitical upheavals.

Another stark example of the subordination of climate issues to geopolitical interests was the situation surrounding the implementation of the US-China Joint Glasgow Declaration on Enhancing Climate Action in the 2020s, which was adopted in November 2021 on the side-lines of the 26th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP-26) in Glasgow. Despite lofty statements by both sides about their shared commitment to ambitious climate goals and deepening bilateral climate cooperation, real progress in implementing the provisions of the declaration has been extremely limited. The reasons for this include the persistence of deep contradictions between the USA and China in the trade and security spheres, as well as domestic political struggles within the USA itself, where the Republican victory in the midterm

congressional elections in November 2022 significantly narrowed the Biden administration's ability to advance its climate agenda (Goldberg, 2023).

Starting from 2014, Russia's ongoing military aggression against Ukraine, which escalated into a full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, has caused tectonic shifts not only in the architecture of European and global security but has also had far-reaching consequences for international climate policy and climate diplomacy. Its destructive impact has manifested itself in several key dimensions. The large-scale war unleashed by Russia on Ukrainian territory has led to the destruction and degradation of critical civilian and industrial infrastructure, significant losses in the agricultural and forestry sectors, and environmental pollution due to the damage to environmentally hazardous facilities and the use of various types of weapons. All this is inevitably accompanied by additional greenhouse gas emissions and a general weakening of the resilience of the Ukrainian state and society in the face of climate challenges (Cole & Dodds, 2021). Although it is too early to make any precise estimates, it is quite obvious that the reconstruction and environmental rehabilitation of the affected territories will require colossal efforts and resources, diverting them from equally urgent climate and environmental protection projects.

In response to Russian aggression, Western countries and institutions have imposed unprecedented economic sanctions against Russia, including a gradual abandonment of purchases of Russian energy carriers (oil, gas, coal). This tendency towards reducing energy dependence on Russia has forced many European countries to fundamentally review their energy strategies and policies. On the one hand, the urgent need to replace Russian hydrocarbons with alternative sources is driving the accelerated deployment of renewable/low-carbon generation capacity and infrastructure (Eyl-Mazzega & Mathieu, 2022). On the other hand, this process is not without certain risks and challenges – both in terms of energy security and climate prospects. In particular, many European countries are forced to temporarily increase the use of coal and extend the operation of existing nuclear power plants, which objectively slows down the pace of decarbonisation of their economies.

Russia's gross violation of fundamental norms of international law, the UN Charter, and the principles of the Helsinki Final Act (1975) has not only destroyed trust in Moscow as a responsible participant in international relations but has also seriously undermined the prospects for engaging Russia in constructive dialogue and cooperation within the framework of global climate initiatives and forums. Even though Russia formally remains a party to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) and the Paris Agreement (2015) and even sets seemingly ambitious goals to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060, the real direction of its actions raises great doubts. As A. Koppoo (2020) notes, the roots of Moscow's climate nihilism and obstructionism lie in the dominance of narrow domestic economic interests, linked to the preservation of an export-oriented development model based on the extraction and export of fossil fuels.

Moreover, there are serious concerns that in the future, the Kremlin may resort to the deliberate escalation

of conflicts and destabilisation of the situation in certain regions of the world as a tool to undermine global efforts to reduce dependence on Russian energy carriers and weaken the corresponding sanctions (Goldberg, 2023). Such a hypothetical strategy of “energy blackmail” and provoking economic chaos poses risks to global climate policy, capable of neutralising even the most determined efforts of other responsible actors.

Despite the seriousness of the challenges posed by geopolitical confrontation in the era of climate change, it would be unjustified to underestimate the potential of climate diplomacy as a tool for mitigating conflicts and deepening international cooperation in response to common threats to humanity. As O. Lazard & R. Youngs (2021) emphasize, consistent and coordinated efforts to combat climate change at the global, regional, and national levels can serve as an important unifying platform for dialogue and interaction even between countries that have serious contradictions and tense relations in other areas. One of the most promising examples of such an approach could be the Green Silk Road Initiative proposed by China as part of the broader Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As M. Qin *et al.* (2023) note, this initiative envisages large-scale investments by China and partner countries in the development of renewable energy, green infrastructure, low-carbon industrial clusters, and innovative eco-technologies in countries along the land and sea routes of the BRI. Despite all the reservations about the ambiguity of the geopolitical motives behind this initiative, its practical implementation is capable of significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing energy efficiency, and promoting more sustainable and inclusive development in Eurasia and adjacent regions. In addition to direct climate and environmental benefits, the Green Silk Road also has significant potential to strengthen political,

economic, and cultural-humanitarian ties between participating countries. Another important factor that can mitigate the negative manifestations of interstate rivalry in the climate sphere is the consistent activity of the European Union (EU) in integrating ambitious climate goals into all aspects of its foreign policy, from trade and investment to neighbourhood policy and development cooperation (Dupont, 2020). Today, the EU is undoubtedly a global leader in promoting the concept of “climate diplomacy” as an integral part of modern diplomatic practice. Brussels insists on the need to take climate factors into account when developing and implementing foreign policy decisions at all levels. One of the key mechanisms for implementing this approach is providing financial and technical assistance to EU partner countries in developing and implementing ambitious low-carbon development and climate change adaptation strategies. Such targeted support not only accelerates the transition to a climate-neutral economy globally but also contributes to the affirmation of the EU’s soft power and normative leadership in international relations (Lazard & Youngs, 2021).

It is important to note the growing role of various subnational and non-state actors – from municipalities and regions to private corporations and civil society movements – in shaping the agenda and implementing climate policy. In an environment of geopolitical tension and conflicting national interests, it is precisely these actors that often serve as the driving force of climate progress, demonstrating innovative approaches and ambitious voluntary commitments (Hsu *et al.*, 2021). A comparative analysis of the impact of individual geopolitical factors on global climate policy, presented in Table 2, allows for a better understanding of the complex dynamics of these processes and outlines possible mechanisms to counteract negative trends.

Table 2. Comparative analysis of the impact of certain geopolitical factors on global climate policy

Factor	Main manifestations	Positive impact	Negative impact	Countermeasures
American-Chinese rivalry	- trade war and destabilisation of global supply chains; - competition in the field of innovation and green technologies; - Taiwan issue	- stimulating investments in RES and other low-carbon technologies as factors of energy independence and competitiveness; - exploring new formats of climate cooperation (e.g., within the framework of the G20)	- risks of fragmentation of the global climate regime into American- and Chinese-centric blocs; - destabilisation of multilateral institutions (UN, COPs, etc.); “climate wars” in third countries	- activation of EU and other responsible actors’ climate diplomacy as mediators between the USA and China; - new coalitions and partnerships involving non-state actors; - investments in the resilience of global supply chains critical to green transition
Russian aggression against Ukraine	- destruction of civilian and industrial infrastructure; - impact on food and energy security of the region; - global economic instability	- accelerated reduction of EU dependence on Russian fossil energy carriers; - increased investments in RE and energy efficiency in response to the energy crisis	- forced increase in coal use by European countries in the short term; - diversion of attention and resources of the global community from climate to security issues; - Russia’s destructive stance in negotiations on the implementation of the Paris Agreement (2015)	- urgent investments in the restoration and green transformation of Ukraine supported by international partners; - isolation of Russia in multilateral climate processes; - global campaign exposing Russia’s environmental crimes

Table 2. Continued

Factor	Main manifestations	Positive impact	Negative impact	Countermeasures
Near East conflicts	◆instability in energy resource supply from the region; ◆humanitarian crises and climate-induced migration; ◆risks of escalation due to freshwater scarcity	◆increasing interest of Arabian Gulf monarchies in investments in RES as part of economic diversification strategies; ◆efforts by the UN and regional organisations to mediate using a climate lens (e.g., Israeli-Jordanian cooperation)	◆slowing down green transformation due to instability in fossil fuel prices; ◆lack of investment in climate adaptation and resilience in conflict-affected countries; ◆potential use of control over water resources as a pressure tool	◆targeted climate aid to vulnerable countries and communities in the region; ◆targeted climate aid to vulnerable countries and communities in the region; ◆regional initiatives on managing transboundary water resources based on international law

Notes: COPs – Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; G20 – Group of Twenty (a group of 19 countries with the world's largest economies and the EU)

Sources: compiled by the author based on C. Dupont (2020), A. Hsu *et al.* (2021), M.A. Eyl-Mazzega & C. Mathieu (2022), M. Goldberg (2023)

Geopolitical tensions and conflicts of interest among the world's leading states remain a serious challenge to global climate policy and climate diplomacy at the present stage (2014-2024). From trade wars and sanctions between the USA and China to Russia's outright military aggression against Ukraine – all these destructive phenomena of international life have a negative impact on the implementation of the Paris Agreement and other ambitious climate initiatives. At the same time, the recognition of the seriousness and inevitability of the climate crisis can serve as a powerful unifying factor for the international community, prompting the search for common ground and the development of joint approaches even amidst geopolitical tensions. The ability of global and regional actors to think strategically and long-term, subordinating narrow interests to the fundamental needs of survival and human development, critically determines the prospects for climate progress over the next decade.

Peculiarities of climate policy of leading geopolitical players. The European Union (EU) is rightfully considered one of the undisputed leaders in global climate policy and the most consistent supporter of active climate diplomacy. Over the past decade (2013-2024), the EU has consistently demonstrated its commitment to ambitious goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to a climate-neutral economy. In particular, in December 2019, the European Commission presented the European Green Deal – a comprehensive strategy for achieving climate neutrality in the EU by 2050, which envisages a fundamental transformation of all sectors of the economy and society (Fetting, 2020).

The central element of the European Green Deal became the European Climate Law (2021). This legislative act enshrined at the level of the *acquis communautaire* the legally binding goal of achieving climate neutrality in the EU by 2050, as well as the interim goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels – Article 2 European Climate Law (2021). To ensure the implementation of these ambitious goals, the European Commission has developed a comprehensive package of legislative proposals "Fit for 55", which envisages a review and strengthening of all key instruments of EU climate policy – from the Emissions Trading System (ETS) and CO₂ emission standards for cars to directives on

energy efficiency and renewable energy sources (Bocquillon & Maltby, 2021).

On the international stage, the EU actively uses a wide range of climate diplomacy tools to promote its climate agenda and encourage other countries to take more decisive climate action. In particular, Brussels is working hard to include ambitious provisions on sustainable development, environmental protection, and climate change mitigation in all its trade agreements and investment deals with third countries. Such provisions often include commitments by parties to effectively implement the Paris Agreement, review and strengthen their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), introduce carbon pricing, phase out fossil fuel subsidies, and develop trade in clean goods and services.

Another important priority of the EU's climate diplomacy is providing financial and technical assistance to developing countries to support their efforts to adapt to the impacts of climate change and transition to sustainable low-carbon development. The EU and its member states are the largest donors of international climate finance, providing about half of the total mobilised resources. In particular, during the period 2014-2020, the EU allocated over 20 billion euros to support climate action in partner countries through geographical and thematic cooperation instruments (Lazard & Youngs, 2021).

Despite its undeniable global climate leadership, the EU faces a number of serious challenges on the path to achieving its ambitious goals. Within the Union, there are significant differences among member states regarding the pace, mechanisms, and distribution of the costs of decarbonising the economy, especially in the context of post-pandemic recovery. The goals of the European Green Deal and the "Fit for 55" package have raised concerns in a number of Central and Eastern European countries (particularly Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary), which fear negative economic and social consequences of an accelerated "green" transition and demand greater financial solidarity from wealthier member states.

Even more serious challenges for EU climate policy exist at the international level. Despite Brussels' active climate diplomacy and strong support for international cooperation in combating climate change, geopolitical realities require the EU to constantly balance and seek

compromises. As rightly noted by J. Cole & K. Dodds (2021), promoting the climate agenda cannot be separated from the broader strategic priorities and long-term interests of the EU in relations with key partners such as the USA, China, and India, which have their own geopolitical and economic considerations. Therefore, Brussels must constantly seek a balance between climate ambitions and pragmatic cooperation with these states to ensure global security, economic stability, and the EU's influence in the world.

In the context of global efforts to combat climate change, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is, without exaggeration, a central player whose position and actions are critical to the prospects of achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. This is due to the colossal scale of greenhouse gas emissions generated by the Chinese economy, as well as its growing economic and geopolitical influence in the world. According to data from the Statistical Review of World Energy, China's share of global CO₂ emissions related to energy was approximately 31% (Total CO₂ emissions..., 2021). This is more than the combined share of the USA (13%), the EU (9%), and Japan (3%), which together accounted for about 25% of global CO₂ emissions in 2022 (Raimi *et al.*, 2024).

Starting from the 2010s, the leadership of the PRC has increasingly demonstrated an understanding of the seriousness of the climate crisis and a willingness to take responsibility for addressing it at both the national and international levels. In September 2020, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that China would reach peak CO₂ emissions by 2030 and strive to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. These goals were officially enshrined in China's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in accordance with the requirements of the Paris Agreement (Cheung & Hong, 2021).

To achieve these ambitious goals, China is taking vigorous measures to accelerate the development of renewable energy sources, improve the energy efficiency of the economy, and electrify transport. According to China's latest five-year development plan for 2021-2025, the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption is expected to increase to 20% by 2025, and the installed capacity of wind and solar generation is expected to exceed 1200 GW (Zhang *et al.*, 2022). China is already the world leader in investments in renewable energy, installed capacity of RES, and the production of equipment for "green" generation (Cheung & Hong, 2021; Lagana, 2024).

Another important component of China's climate policy has been the introduction of a nationwide emissions trading system (ETS), which officially began operating in July 2021. Today, China's ETS is the largest in the world in terms of the volume of regulated emissions, covering more than 2,000 companies in the power generation and heat sector (Qin *et al.*, 2023). Although in its initial stages, the Chinese national ETS suffers from a number of "teething problems", particularly regarding the allocation of quotas and emissions verification, in the long term this system is expected to play a key role in ensuring economic efficiency and environmental integrity of the decarbonisation of the Chinese economy.

Despite undeniable progress in building a national climate policy, China's international position and actions to combat climate change often elicit mixed reviews. On the

one hand, over the past decade (2014-2024), Beijing has significantly increased its diplomatic activity and public rhetoric regarding the importance of multilateral cooperation in combating climate change. Within the framework of multilateral climate summits and negotiations, Chinese leaders have consistently called on other countries to "build a community of a shared future for mankind", adhere to the principles of the Paris Agreement (2015), and provide greater support to developing countries. In September 2021, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that China would stop building new coal-fired power plants abroad and increase support for the green low-carbon development of other countries (Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Undoubtedly, such declarations play an important role in shaping global public opinion and strengthening Chinese soft power.

On the other hand, many experts point to significant discrepancies between Beijing's public statements and its actual actions both domestically and in the international arena. Despite the active development of RES and other low-carbon technologies, China continues to rely on coal as its primary energy source, providing about 50-60% of the country's electricity generation (Cole & Dodds, 2021). Despite the announced refusal to build new coal-fired power plants abroad, Chinese companies and banks remain the world's largest source of financing for new carbon-intensive projects in developing countries, ranging from Southeast Asia to Africa and Latin America (Ball *et al.*, 2021).

Even more problematic is the fact that China continues to use the climate track as a tool of pressure and promotion of its geopolitical and geoeconomic interests, especially in relations with the USA. Climate cooperation has become one of the "battlegrounds" within the broader US-China strategic rivalry. Despite signing a joint statement by the two countries on strengthening climate action in the 2020s on the sidelines of COP26 in Glasgow, real progress in its implementation has been extremely limited (Goldberg, 2023). In particular, Beijing has repeatedly suspended bilateral climate dialogue with the United States in response to Washington's actions on such sensitive issues as Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Xinjiang.

Such an instrumentalist approach to climate diplomacy calls into question the sincerity of China's climate commitments and ambitions and also creates additional barriers to global efforts to combat climate change. As M. Qin *et al.* (2023) note, in order to become a truly responsible leader of global climate policy, China must make greater efforts to align its national economic policy, international investment activities, and diplomatic position with the goals of the Paris Agreement (2015) and the best scientific recommendations. This will require, among other things, accelerating the phase-out of fossil fuels domestically, stopping the financing of coal projects abroad, more ambitious emissions reduction targets in key sectors, and a constructive approach to multilateral negotiations.

As one of the world's largest producers and exporters of fossil fuels (oil, gas, coal), and having an energy- and carbon-intensive economy, the Russian Federation has traditionally played an ambiguous, if not destructive, role in global climate policy. Russian elites have long been quite sceptical about the problem of climate change, viewing international efforts to address it through the

prism of geopolitical competition and a threat to national economic interests.

This position began to gradually change only at the end of the 2010s under the influence of new scientific data, growing international pressure, and extreme weather events within the country – from catastrophic forest fires to the melting of permafrost (Korppoo, 2020). In September 2019, the Russian government officially ratified the Paris Agreement (2015), committing to keep greenhouse gas emissions in 2030 at 70% of the 1990 level, taking into account the absorption capacity of forests. In November 2020, speaking at the G20 summit, President V. Putin announced Russia's intention to achieve carbon neutrality no later than 2060. These declarations were intended to demonstrate Moscow's responsible approach to global climate challenges.

However, as A. Korppoo (2021) notes, the real actions of the Russian leadership at the national and international levels do not confirm the sincerity and seriousness of these intentions. In particular, the emission reduction targets presented by Russia as part of its NDC were criticised by experts as extremely unambitious and *de facto* allowing it to even increase emissions compared to the current level. Moreover, at UN climate negotiations, the Russian delegation has consistently opposed strengthening global climate goals and rules, blocking the adoption of more ambitious decisions along with other major emitting countries.

At the domestic level, Russia's climate policy remains fragmented and contradictory. On the one hand, the country is implementing individual initiatives to improve energy efficiency, develop RES (primarily large hydropower plants), and afforestation. In particular, in 2021, the State Duma of the Russian Federation adopted a law "On Limiting Greenhouse Gas Emissions", which created a legal framework for introducing a national system for monitoring, reporting, and verification of emissions, voluntary climate projects, and a prospective carbon market (Makarov, 2022). On the other hand, the government's long-term low-emission development strategy for Russia until 2050, approved in October 2021, provides for the preservation of the dominant role of fossil fuels in the national energy balance and is focused primarily on CCS technologies, rather than on RES or energy efficiency.

However, the most destructive and long-term negative impact on global climate policy is the military aggression of Russia against Ukraine, which began in 2014 and escalated into a full-scale war in 2022. In addition to direct destruction and greenhouse gas emissions from hostilities, this war has caused the largest energy crisis in Europe and the world since World War II, disrupting trade flows and causing a surge in prices for all types of fossil fuels (Eyl-Mazzega & Mathieu, 2022). This has forced many countries to temporarily postpone the closure of coal-fired power plants and other carbon-intensive industries, which objectively delays the achievement of global climate goals.

At the same time, in the medium and long term, Russia's aggression against Ukraine may become a catalyst for accelerated "green" transition and decarbonisation of the global economy. As M. Goldberg (2023) notes, the desire to reduce geopolitical and economic dependence on Russia as an unreliable supplier of energy resources is stimulating the EU, the USA, China, and other countries to invest

in the development of renewable energy sources and clean technologies on an unprecedented scale. In parallel, the imposition of tough economic and technological sanctions against Russia makes it impossible for it to fully participate in multilateral climate processes and projects. The war unleashed by Russia may not only not hinder, but also stimulate the global transition to a climate-neutral future, in which there will be no place for Russian fossil fuels and political influence.

The above-analysed examples of climate policies of the EU, China, and Russia demonstrate that in the current geopolitical realities (2013–2024), the fight against climate change has turned into an arena of fierce competition and rivalry between major powers for status, resources, and influence in a turbulent world. Despite the existence of an objective common interest in curbing global warming, each of these actors seeks to use the climate agenda to advance their own selfish goals and priorities, often to the detriment of others and the long-term prospects of humanity.

As mentioned above, climate diplomacy does not exist in a vacuum but is an integral part of the overall strategic landscape of international relations. Therefore, it is naive to expect that even in the face of existential threats posed by climate change, states will abandon their usual models of competition and hegemony. At the same time, the severity and unprecedented nature of these threats, and their fundamental impact on all aspects of human civilisation, can become a powerful stimulus for multilateral cooperation and innovation.

A key prerequisite for realising this potential is the presence of a critical mass of responsible actors who understand the primacy of human survival over narrow national interests and are ready to take on the role of leaders of the global "green" transition – both at the level of specific policies and technologies and in terms of creating new norms and institutions of cooperation. The European Union is increasingly taking on such a role within the framework of its climate diplomacy, trying to build an ambitious and inclusive coalition around the goals of the Paris Agreement (2015), involving not only states but also subnational and non-state actors – from cities and regions to business and civil society (Cole & Dodds, 2021).

Such climate diplomacy requires not only the soft power of persuasion and financial incentives but also a readiness to apply "climate conditionality" in all aspects of foreign policy – from trade and investment to security and development. That is, access to markets, resources, and the benefits of cooperation with the EU and other progressive actors should be directly linked to the readiness of partners to contribute to global climate action. This will create a powerful incentive for China, the US, and other major players to transform their declared climate ambitions into real actions and policies, as well as limit the scope for irresponsible and opportunistic behaviour.

Certainly, even such proactive climate diplomacy cannot completely eliminate conflicts of interest and contradictions between key actors, especially in the context of geopolitical confrontation and the restructuring of the world order. However, it is precisely in such a situation that it becomes even more important to keep channels of dialogue and cooperation open on climate issues, even if

relations in other areas remain tense or hostile. As the experience of US-Soviet negotiations in the 1960s and 1970s on arms control shows, the presence of a common existential threat can push even irreconcilable rivals to mutual compromises and the emergence of new formats of interaction. Climate change, with its unprecedented risks to all of humanity, is precisely such a threat that requires unprecedented approaches that go beyond traditional geopolitical frameworks.

The success of climate diplomacy and multilateral cooperation in the 21st century will hinge critically on the international community's ability to bridge the gap between the Global North and South, developed countries and developing nations. Without a sense of inclusivity, equality, and justice in the distribution of costs and benefits of the "green" transition, without adequate financial and technological support for the most vulnerable countries and communities, global climate actions are doomed to failure. In this context, the leadership and responsibility of leading geopolitical players lies in recognising their historical debt and the obligation to repay it through concrete assistance to poor countries in adaptation and low-carbon development.

Discussion

The results of the conducted research confirm the growing role and significance of climate diplomacy as an integral component of the modern system of international relations. These conclusions find confirmation and development in the research of other scientists who have studied various aspects of the interaction between climate policy and world politics.

In particular, the obtained results regarding the potential of science diplomacy in addressing the global problem of climate change correlate with the conclusions of E. Özkarağöz Doğan *et al.* (2021). The mentioned authors also note the importance of effective interaction between the scientific community and political circles at the international level as a necessary prerequisite for overcoming the climate crisis. At the same time, if the authors focus mainly on the institutional mechanisms of such interaction, this study offers a broader perspective, analysing the role of the expert environment within the framework of climate diplomacy as a whole.

Conclusions regarding the European Union's international climate leadership and its aspiration to formulate a comprehensive climate strategy are reflected in the study of S. Oberthür & C. Dupont (2021). These researchers also emphasise the EU's significant potential to become a global leader in the fight against climate change but point to the need to overcome a number of internal and external challenges along this path. This study deepens this analysis, providing more details on the specific mechanisms and tools for implementing the EU's climate ambitions in the international arena.

The obtained results regarding the unpreparedness of the current international order to adequately respond to the climate crisis and the need for new planetary politics are consistent with the theses of S.M. Patrick (2021). Both studies emphasise the mismatch of existing global institutions and norms with the unprecedented challenges posed by climate change, advocating for a fundamental

transformation of the international relations system in line with the imperative of human survival. Additionally, this study expands on this perspective, offering a more comprehensive and multidimensional view of the role of climate diplomacy within such transformation.

The research by C. Bianco (2022), focusing on the specifics of European climate diplomacy in the Persian Gulf region, is crucial for verifying the conclusions drawn. The author concludes that the EU has significant potential to influence the climate policies of the Gulf countries, but emphasises the need for more flexible and adaptive approaches, taking into account regional specifics. These results correlate with the conclusions of this study regarding the importance of the regional dimension of climate diplomacy and the need to differentiate its methods and tools according to the local context.

A thorough analysis of the impact of environmental diplomacy on CO₂ emissions dynamics, conducted by G. Li *et al.* (2020), is largely consistent with the results of this study. Both researches demonstrate that the effectiveness of environmental/climate diplomacy in reducing greenhouse gas emissions depends on the specific conditions and circumstances of its implementation and cannot be considered a universal panacea. The study by G. Li *et al.* (2020) emphasises the importance of considering economic, political, and social factors that influence the effectiveness of environmental diplomacy in different countries. The authors emphasise that the success of climate initiatives largely depends on the level of economic development, institutional capacity, and political will of participating states. However, G. Li *et al.* (2020) use a more formalised econometric tool (the panel data analysis method). This methodological difference allows for complementary results: the quantitative analysis of the authors provides statistically significant generalisations, while the qualitative approach of this study allows for a deeper understanding of the contextual nuances and mechanisms of influence of climate diplomacy on international relations.

The conceptual work of B. Buzan & A. Acharya (2021), which calls for a fundamental "rethinking" of the theory and practice of world politics in light of new global challenges, has significant heuristic potential for understanding the transformative impact of climate diplomacy on international relations. The authors argue for the need to move away from traditional, Western-centric approaches to international relations and propose a more inclusive, global perspective that would take into account the diversity of cultural and political traditions. In the context of climate diplomacy, this means the need to develop new conceptual frameworks that would adequately reflect the complex and transnational nature of environmental threats. Despite some differences in methodological approaches, both studies agree on the inevitability and desirability of such a rethinking given the unprecedented threats posed by climate change. This research develops these ideas, offering specific examples of how climate diplomacy is already transforming established practices of interstate interaction and contributing to the formation of new norms of global governance.

Similarly, the conclusions of this study regarding the need for a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach

to the analysis of climate diplomacy resonate with the methodological guidelines of G. Sørensen *et al.* (2022). These authors emphasise the importance of engaging a wide range of theoretical paradigms and conceptual “lenses” to understand the multidimensionality and dynamism of the contemporary international system, into which the phenomenon of climate diplomacy is organically woven.

Another important perspective is offered by the study of A.E. Abdenur (2021), which examines the role of the UN in shaping the climate and security agenda, particularly in the context of the interests and needs of “Global South” countries. The author’s conclusions regarding the importance, but also the limitations, of the UN’s influence in mobilising international attention to climate issues, as well as the need to reform this organisation, correlate with the results of this study regarding the institutional dimension of global climate governance.

The results of this study are significantly influenced by the studies of F. Genovese (2020), which focus on the roles and positions of weak states in global climate negotiations. Despite the difference in the focus of analysis, both researchers arrive at a similar conclusion about the potential ability of small and vulnerable countries to influence the formation of international climate policy, provided that their efforts are effectively coordinated and their specific interests are taken into account. These results emphasise the importance of inclusivity and sensitivity to the needs of all participants as key principles of climate diplomacy.

The conclusions of this study regarding the potential of trade agreements as a tool for achieving climate goals closely correlate with the results of C.M. Dent (2021). In both cases, the authors emphasise the possibility and desirability of integrating environmental and social standards into trade liberalisation processes in order to create additional incentives for the “green” transformation of the global economy. However, the scholar delves deeper into the analysis of specific mechanisms and legal nuances of such integration.

Summarising this comparative analysis, it can be stated that the results obtained in this study are within the conceptual “mainstream” of contemporary academic discourse on the growing role of climate diplomacy in international relations. They organically correlate and resonate with the conclusions of other researchers regarding various dimensions of this phenomenon – from theoretical and methodological foundations to practical case studies at the global and regional levels. Despite some differences in research focuses and methodologies, the results found are generally characterised by a high degree of compatibility and complementarity.

Conclusions

During the conducted research, modern trends in the influence of climate diplomacy on international relations were analysed within the context of geopolitical rivalry. The findings indicate a growing role of climate diplomacy as an integral component of global policy and a key instrument in responding to unprecedented challenges posed by climate change. Climate diplomacy is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses a wide

range of formal and informal interactions between states, international organisations, and non-state actors aimed at developing and implementing coordinated approaches to combating global warming. The effectiveness of climate diplomacy critically depends on its ability to mobilise political will, financial and technological resources, and ensure the inclusivity and fairness of global climate actions, taking into account the interests of all countries and communities.

Research into the impact of geopolitical rivalries and conflicts on the implementation of climate initiatives has shown that strategic competition between major powers, particularly the USA, China, and Russia, often hinders the achievement of the ambitious goals of the Paris Agreement (2015). From trade wars and sanctions to outright military aggression, these destructive manifestations of international relations divert the attention and resources of the global community from pressing climate challenges. At the same time, the unprecedented nature of the climate crisis can serve as a catalyst for transforming traditional models of competition and confrontation towards multilateral cooperation in the face of common threats to humanity.

A comparative analysis of the climate policies of the EU, China, and Russia has revealed significant differences in their approaches and levels of ambition. While the European Union consistently positions itself as a global leader in the “green” transition, promoting climate goals in all aspects of its domestic and foreign policy, China demonstrates a more instrumental understanding of climate diplomacy as a means of strengthening its geopolitical influence. In turn, Russia is essentially sabotaging international efforts to combat climate change, driven by narrow interests in preserving an export-oriented economic model based on fossil fuels.

Based on the conducted research, it can be concluded that in the context of the turbulence of the modern international system, climate diplomacy is becoming a critically important tool for global governance and transforming the world order in accordance with the imperative of human survival. Realising this potential requires fundamental changes in the architecture of international relations and the consciousness of political elites, which would prioritise fundamental needs to mitigate the climate crisis over narrow national interests and geopolitical calculations.

The limitations of the study lie in its focus on a limited number of states, insufficient attention to the role of non-state actors, and a superficial examination of methods for assessing the effectiveness of climate diplomacy. Promising areas for further research include expanding the geographic scope of the analysis, deepening the study of the role of non-governmental organisations and businesses in climate diplomacy, and developing comprehensive methodologies for evaluating the effectiveness of various climate policy tools.

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Conflict of interest

None.

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