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Gulnaz Kanafina*

PhD in Political Sciences

Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University

050000, 28 Kazibek Bi Str., Almaty, Kazakhstan

Institutionalisation of climate diplomacy in the global governance system

Abstract. The research relevance is determined by the transformation of climate diplomacy into one of the key components of global governance in response to the worsening climate crisis. The study aimed to analyse the process of institutionalisation of climate diplomacy in the context of the transformation of the modern system of international relations. The methodology was based on an interdisciplinary approach that combined comparative, typological, interpretive, structural and functional methods, as well as the method of value analysis and political deconstruction. The study found that climate diplomacy has evolved from classical intergovernmental negotiations to a polycentric model of global governance with the active participation of non-state actors. The study identified the key stages of institutionalisation from the first environmental forums of the 1970s to the formation of a complex architecture of agreements and mechanisms such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. The study analysed the structural and functional features of modern diplomacy, which includes negotiation, scientific and coordination subsystems operating both within and outside the United Nations. The study established that the regulatory framework of climate diplomacy is formed on the principles of global justice, inclusiveness and transparency, but its implementation is limited by political fragmentation, lack of funding and conflicting interests of actors. The study determined that institutional diffusion, regulatory hybridity and the use of digital technologies are becoming key trends in the development of this area. The theoretical analysis demonstrated that none of the existing paradigms, including institutionalism, constructivism or the concept of global governance, provides an exhaustive explanation of the phenomenon, but their combination creates a holistic picture. The study determined that climate diplomacy is a dynamic, multi-level process that both reflects and shapes the new logic of global cooperation. Its further institutionalisation depends on the ability to unite state and non-state actors around a common vision of climate justice. The practical significance of the study is determined by the formation of a conceptual framework for improving climate policy at the global and national levels

Keywords: climate regulation; institutional diffusion; normative hybridity; constructivism in international relations; concept of global governance

Introduction

In the 21st century, climate diplomacy has become one of the key components of the global governance system, which determines the parameters of interaction between states, international organisations, the private sector and civil society in addressing environmental issues on a global scale. The aggravation of the climate crisis, which is becoming systemic, has highlighted the need for new mechanisms of multilevel coordination based not only on political decisions of states but also on the involvement of a wide range of non-state actors. In the context of the evolution of international relations, the blurring of classical models of sovereignty, and the increasing role of transnational initiatives, climate diplomacy has acquired the features of polycentric governance with signs of institutional

diffusion, normative hybridity, and technological innovation. Its institutionalisation has proved to be heterogeneous, dynamic and often contradictory, which requires theoretical substantiation and empirical analysis through the prism of modern global governance paradigms (Kern *et al.*, 2024). The EU's current policy covers economic, social, environmental and security spheres, with an emphasis on maintaining social standards, environmental protection, the formation of a common digital policy, and ensuring security and external cooperation. Its focus on stability, development and peace at the global level is determined by its ability to adapt to new challenges, expand spheres of influence and ensure policy coordination in the context of EU enlargement (Krasivskyy, 2024). In 2020-2025,

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*Corresponding author



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academic research increasingly focused on climate diplomacy, which reflects the growing interest of the academic community in the interaction between politics, ecology, international law, and global governance. In particular, the transformation of the negotiation process under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has been actively studied. In this context, the work of N. Chan (2020) revealed that traditional criteria for assessing the negotiating capacity of countries, such as the number of delegates or the formal status of representation, no longer reflect the real dynamics of the multilateral process. At the same time, research at the intersection of climate science and international politics was developing. For example, G.A. Meehl (2023), presenting the results of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), showed that intergovernmental scientific structures are not only passive knowledge providers but also active moderators of the global political agenda. These institutions stimulate transnational funding for observations and coordinate large-scale climate modelling projects, such as the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project (World Climate Research Programme, n.d.).

At the same time, the role of international institutions and new diplomatic formats has been redefined. M. Feist (2023) emphasised that in the context of the overall slowdown in the multilateral process after the Paris Agreement, plurilateral initiatives are becoming increasingly relevant. Alliances between smaller groups of countries willing to implement ambitious measures have become not only practical but also a source of normative pressure on other states. However, these formats do not eliminate deep structural problems such as asymmetries of responsibility, conflicts of interest and inequality of access to resources. The historical and legal evolution of the environmental dimension of climate diplomacy was analysed by S. Atapattu (2022), tracing the development of international environmental law from the 1972 Stockholm Conference to the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals, emphasises that although the international legal framework has undergone a significant transformation, it still reflects the limitations of the modernist paradigm of economic growth, which contradicts the objectives of environmental sustainability. A separate group of studies focused on regional actors and their contribution to climate diplomacy. A. B rigin (2023) showed that the European Commission, combining the roles of political entrepreneur, coordinator and supervisor, has become a key agent in promoting the EU's ambitious climate policy. At the same time, it is actively involved in global climate governance through partnerships and the promotion of regulatory standards outside the Union. A. Thomas (2021) addressed social justice, demonstrating that trade union climate policies have become an arena of struggle between internal employee interests, external political allies, and pressure from UNFCCC institutions. In this context, the concept of a "just transition" takes on contradictory features, making it difficult to form a coherent position. The complexity and multilevel nature of climate diplomacy are also reflected in the network analysis of Z.W. Almquist *et al.* (2025), demonstrating that informal diplomatic alliances within the climate negotiations are gradually disintegrating. The European Union remained almost the only

stable coalition, while the great powers showed a decrease in the intensity of cooperation. This indicates a change in the structure of diplomatic interactions and an increase in the role of historical ties and network inertia. Particularly noteworthy is the study by X. Ruiz-Campillo & M.d.P. Bueno Rubial (2025), which demonstrated that the countries of the Global South, in particular the G77 + China, were able to strategically push climate change adaptation to the centre of climate governance using the tools of moral pressure, public criticism and scientific legitimisation. This has challenged the traditional North-centric narratives that dominated climate diplomacy, while also revealing new mechanisms for weaker actors to influence the global process. Despite the diversity of approaches, most studies addressed specific aspects of climate diplomacy, such as negotiation formats, legal regimes, behaviour of individual actors, or technical aspects of commitment. Often, the analysis was limited to a descriptive description of institutions or practices, without covering the holistic process of shaping the institutional architecture of climate diplomacy. Thus, the topic of institutionalisation, i.e. the formation of normative, procedural, organisational and communication structures that ensure the stability, legitimacy and effectiveness of climate governance, remained insufficiently explored. The lack of systematic knowledge about the mechanisms of institutional integration, the interaction between formal and informal elements, the transformation of actors' roles and the changing principles of coordination makes it difficult to determine how climate diplomacy functions as a structural component of the global governance system. The study aimed to examine the process of institutionalisation of climate diplomacy in the global governance system by analysing its evolutionary stages, structural components and key challenges. In this context, the main hypothesis of the study was that climate diplomacy is evolving from a form of interstate cooperation to a full-fledged element of global governance with an institutional structure. Such a transformation implies not only the expansion of the functional powers of the relevant actors, but also the complexity of decision-making mechanisms, and increased requirements for legitimacy, efficiency and fairness in the global response to climate challenges.

Materials and Methods

The methodological basis of this study was based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines the methods of political science, international relations, legal analytics and institutional theory. For a systematic study of the process of institutionalisation of climate diplomacy, a set of methods was chosen to investigate the normative design, functional mechanisms and structural manifestations of this phenomenon within the modern architecture of global governance. Given the complexity and multilevel nature of the object under study, the methodology was based on a combination of comparative, typological, normative, interpretive and structural-functional methods, each was substantial in identifying key patterns. The comparative method was used to compare the three main theoretical frameworks for analysing institutionalism, constructivism and the concept of global governance. This approach identified differences in the interpretation of the role of formal

structures, norms, identities and horizontal coordination mechanisms in the process of institutionalisation. The basis for the comparative analysis was the conceptual provisions stipulated by J.A. Scholte (2021), F.B. Çelik (2022) and G. Visconti *et al.* (2024), which provide different approaches to research of the institutional nature of climate diplomacy in the context of globalisation. The study by S. Bremer *et al.* (2021), which considers climate diplomacy as part of broader processes of political adaptation to climate risks, was also considered separately. In addition, the study analysed official international documents, in particular the Kyoto Protocol (UNFCCC, 1998) and the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, n.d.b), which laid the regulatory framework for the evolution of climate agreements at the global level. The typological method made it possible to classify the main features, mechanisms and manifestations of institutionalisation, which was used to create a generalised scheme of the functioning of climate diplomacy in the structure of global governance.

The interpretative method was used to study the content of regulations, international agreements and declarations. In particular, the documents analysed were the United Nations (n.d.a; n.d.b), The European Green Deal (European Commission, n.d.), which defines the current climate policy framework at the global level. The study also considered the Talanoa Dialogue (UNFCCC, 2017), Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (UNFCCC, n.d.c), and The end of coal is in sight (PPCA, n.d.) as examples of institutional initiatives that demonstrate the development of climate diplomacy towards inclusiveness and a just transition. Additionally, the IPCC (n.d.) was analysed, which reflects current changes in climate governance. It was used to highlight the symbolic and value aspects of climate diplomacy, such as global justice, responsibility and inclusiveness. This identified political mechanisms for enshrining the relevant categories in the content of global agreements, including the principles of “common but differentiated responsibilities” (CBDR), “net-zero targets”, financial support mechanisms, and transparency institutions. The structural-functional method was used to reconstruct the organisational hierarchy of climate diplomacy. The analysis was based on the scientific approaches outlined in T. Hickmann *et al.* (2019) and M. Flessa (2023). The research by S. Mor & M. Ghimire (2022) was also of analytical value, as it was used to specify the relationships between actors at different levels. In addition to academic sources, data on official institutional structures were used, including Climate Action Network (n.d.) and Greenpeace International (n.d.). Examples of city and multi-level alliances, such as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI, n.d.), the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP, n.d.) and the Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA, n.d.) were also considered. Additionally, the activities of the High Ambition Coalition (n.d.) were analysed as an example of coalition diplomacy in the climate sphere. This

method explored the functional links between the negotiation, scientific and coordination subsystems operating within the UN system and determined how scientific data are integrated into policy processes. This reconstruction helped to identify the vertical and horizontal contours of diplomatic interaction that mediate global decision-making. The method of value analysis addressed the normative content of climate diplomacy as a space for the formation of political and ethical norms and symbolic capital of states. The application of the political deconstruction method was used to analyse the criticism of institutional mechanisms by the countries of the Global South, in particular in the context of accusations of “environmental neocolonialism”, and to study the phenomenon of political polycentrism as a consequence of the fragmentation of legal and regulatory mechanisms in the field of climate governance.

Results

Theoretical and conceptual foundations of the institutionalisation of climate diplomacy. Climate diplomacy is a dynamic phenomenon in the system of modern international relations. Its emergence and active institutionalisation are driven not only by the growing climate challenges but also by the qualitative transformation of the principles of global governance. In contrast to classical diplomacy, which has traditionally been based on the protection of national interests within a clearly defined system of state sovereignty, climate diplomacy operates in a field of complex multilevel interaction between governmental, supranational, non-governmental and even private actors. In this context, it is used as a coordinator of global efforts to mitigate climate change, adapt to it and ensure environmental security. The term “climate diplomacy” is generally defined by scholars as a set of institutional mechanisms, negotiation processes, and political instruments used by states and international organisations to reach consensus on global climate policy (Idibekzoda, 2024). It includes both formal diplomatic channels, such as multilateral negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and informal coalitions, transnational networks, “climate public diplomacy” and actions by non-state actors. In the structure of global governance, climate diplomacy is a means of institutionalising the global climate regime that regulates the behaviour of states and non-state actors in response to climate change. Climate diplomacy is also a space of struggle for norms, resources and interpretations of global challenges. Therefore, its institutionalisation should be defined in the context of contemporary theories of international relations. These theories are not mutually exclusive, but each addresses certain aspects of the institutionalisation of climate diplomacy, from the role of formal institutions to the social construction of norms and the role of non-linear global processes. A comparative analysis of these theoretical frameworks is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative characteristics of theoretical approaches to the institutionalisation of climate diplomacy

Criteria	Institutionalism	Constructivism	The concept of global governance
Main focus	Formal structures, rules, and agreements	Norms, ideas, identities	Multi-level coordination between actors

Table 1. Continued

Criteria	Institutionalism	Constructivism	The concept of global governance
Key subjects	States, intergovernmental organisations	Knowledge elites, activists, regulators	Governments, NGOs, businesses, transnational networks
Mechanisms of institutionalisation	International agreements, decision-making procedures	Social recognition of norms, discursive legitimisation	Inclusive platforms, partnerships, and hybrid institutions
Application examples	Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement	Formation of the concepts of “environmental justice” and “common but differentiated responsibility”	NDCs mechanisms, platforms such as C40, GEF, GCF
Advantages	Clarity of structures, legal force	Explains changing norms and political narratives	Covers the complexity and fragmentation of the current system
Limitations	Insufficient attention to social and discursive factors	Lack of instrumental clarity, difficulties in verification	Risk of inefficiency due to lack of formal commitments
Contribution to climate diplomacy	Defines the legal framework and procedures for cooperation	Demonstrates the role of discourse and legitimisation of climate action	Covers the multi-subject nature and elements of the new governance architecture

Note: NGOs – non-governmental organisations; NDCs – Nationally Determined Contributions; C40 – C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group; GEF – Global Environment Facility; GCF – Green Climate Fund

Source: compiled by the author based on UNFCCC (1998; n.d.b), J.A. Scholte (2021), G. Visconti *et al.* (2024)

A comparative description of institutionalism, constructivism and the concept of global governance further addressed the mechanisms of institutionalisation of climate diplomacy. According to institutionalism, the formal structures, rules and international agreements that define a stable framework for cooperation between states are prioritised. Constructivism, on the other hand, emphasises the role of norms, ideas and identities that shape common approaches to global issues through discursive practices, social acceptance and legitimisation. The concept of global governance emphasises multi-level coordination between different actors, including governments, NGOs, businesses and transnational networks, creating conditions for inclusive partnerships and innovative platforms such as the C40, GEF or GCF. Examples of these approaches demonstrate the specifics of institutionalisation. In the case of institutionalism, it is primarily the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, which established a legally binding or politically significant framework for international climate policy. The constructivist approach is manifested in the concepts of “environmental justice” or the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities”, which was crucial in the negotiations between the global North and South. Instead, global governance is represented by the mechanisms of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), as well as the activities of transnational platforms and climate funds, which ensure dynamic multi-stakeholder interaction. In this context, each approach has advantages and limitations. Institutionalism provides clear structures and legal force, but it insufficiently addresses social and discursive factors. Constructivism helps explain changing norms and political narratives but lacks instrumental clarity and verifiability. The concept of global governance can address the complexity and fragmentation of the modern climate system, although it risks becoming ineffective due to the lack of formal commitments. The first manifestations of climate diplomacy date back to the

1970s, when the international community began to realise the negative effects of anthropogenic impact on the environment. The UN Environment Conference in Stockholm, although it did not have a clear climate agenda, laid the normative groundwork for further multilateral environmental negotiations (United Nations, n.d.b). However, the transition to systemic climate governance began only in 1988, when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was established to provide a scientific basis for policy decisions (Rashidi & Lyons, 2022). Its reports became a source of legitimisation for future climate agreements. The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992) was marked by the conclusion of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which laid the legal groundwork for the further institutionalisation of climate diplomacy. The Convention enshrined the principles of “common but differentiated responsibilities” and the priority of sustainable development. Since its adoption, climate diplomacy has acquired the status of a stable negotiation process with annual conferences of parties (COPs) functioning as a mechanism for updating and clarifying climate policy. A further development was the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol, which for the first time introduced legally binding commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for developed countries. The Kyoto Protocol laid down mechanisms for implementing the goals, including an emissions trading system, joint implementation projects, and a clean development mechanism (UNFCCC, 1998). Within the framework of Kyoto, the institutionalisation of climate diplomacy exceeded the scope of declarative decisions and became a legally binding international architecture. At the same time, the limited participation of developing countries and the US withdrawal from the protocol in 2001 showed the fragility of this system (King & van den Bergh, 2021). The culmination of the institutional maturity of climate diplomacy was the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015 at COP21. This document marked the transition from a binding to a

flexible governance mechanism based on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which each state forms independently, but within the overall framework of the commitment to keep global temperature rise to no more than 2°C, to limit it to 1.5°C (UNFCCC, n.d.b). The Paris Agreement marked a new paradigm of climate diplomacy: from vertical regulation to horizontal coordination, which requires constant dialogue, transparency and accountability. Its adoption was made possible by expanding the circle of actors and changing the logic of negotiations from block confrontation to flexible coalitions.

In the process of institutionalising climate diplomacy, the actors involved in its formation have evolved. While at the initial stage, the states representing their delegations at international negotiations were central, over time, the architecture of climate diplomacy has become increasingly multi-actor. Alongside states, intergovernmental organisations (UN, EU, World Bank Group) became substantial not only in coordinating efforts but also in providing financial, analytical and organisational support. The European Union, its member states and the European Investment Bank (EIB) are the largest providers of public climate finance to developing countries (European Union, n.d.). In 2021, their combined contribution amounted to 23.04 billion EUR. In 2022, the European Commission provided 4.03 billion EUR, more than half of which was allocated to climate change adaptation measures, while the EIB provided 2.52 billion EUR in climate finance (European Commission, n.d.). In fiscal year 2022, the World Bank Group invested 31.7 billion USD in climate projects (representing 36% of its portfolio), a substantial contribution to developing countries. At COP29, multilateral development banks (MDBs) announced a target to mobilise 120 billion USD annually by 2030 for middle- and low-income countries (including 42 billion USD for adaptation) and to attract 65 billion USD from the private sector (World Bank Group, 2022). Non-governmental organisations are substantial in monitoring, exerting public pressure, providing analytical support and mobilising public opinion. For instance, the Climate Action Network (n.d.) and Greenpeace International (n.d.) actively participate in COP meetings, shaping alternative agendas and influencing the content of decisions. Transnational networks such as ICLEI (n.d.) or the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP, n.d.) represent a new wave of climate diplomacy that is horizontal, non-linear and based on practical coordination of efforts between cities, regions and the private sector. All these actors operate within a flexible global system in which influence is determined not only by political weight, but also by expertise, legitimacy and capacity to act. Climate diplomacy differs radically from classical diplomacy in both its institutional

structure and its logic of operation. While traditional diplomacy is focused on protecting national interests, preserving sovereignty and achieving strategic advantages through bilateral or multilateral agreements, climate diplomacy operates in terms of collective responsibility, global welfare and long-term stability. Its goal is not only to resolve conflicts or reconcile positions, but to form a common framework for joint action within the ecological limits of the planet. In contrast to traditional diplomacy, climate diplomacy is not limited to foreign ministries and permanent representations to international organisations. It involves a wide range of actors: ministries of environment, energy, and economy; regional and municipal authorities; companies that shape corporate climate responsibility; and research institutes that generate data for decision-making. Such multi-level interaction provides broader coverage, but also creates additional challenges related to coordination, distribution of powers and accountability mechanisms. Climate institutionalisation is the process of formalising stable structures, procedures, norms and mechanisms that govern the behaviour of states, international organisations and other actors in the global response to climate change. It is not limited to legal obligations or the creation of formal institutions, but encompasses a broader range of social, political and symbolic practices that anchor the climate agenda in the system of global governance. In this sense, institutionalisation is not only a tool for coordinating efforts but also a way of shaping the normative space in which international policy actors operate. In a multipolar world where there is no single decision-making centre, the institutionalisation of climate processes is manifested through several features, including repeatability of procedures, formalisation of goals, stabilisation of decision-making mechanisms, the existence of sanctions or incentives for compliance, and social legitimisation of climate norms (Bremer *et al.*, 2021). These features are combined with mechanisms that include both legal agreements, such as the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, n.d.b), and monitoring institutions, coalitions, such as the Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA, n.d.), financial instruments (OCCRP, n.d.), as well as indicative methods of influence such as ratings, indices, and reports. The manifestations of this process are both the creation of new organisations and the re-profiling of existing ones to meet new challenges, the development of cross-border partnerships, policy coordination and environmental convergence between states. Below is a comparative table that systematises the key features, mechanisms and manifestations of the institutionalisation of climate diplomacy within the modern system of global governance.

Table 2. Institutionalisation of climate diplomacy: Signs, mechanisms, manifestations

Category	Content	Examples
Signs of institutionalisation	Systematic procedures, regularity of summits, legal formalisation, sustainability of norms, and accountability mechanisms	Annual COPs, UNFCCC as a conventional framework, and the transparency mechanism of the Paris Agreement
	Multistakeholder participation, the growing role of non-state actors, and the recognition of climate change as a global challenge	Involvement of cities (C40), business (Science Based Targets), NGOs (Greenpeace International, CAN), and civil movements

Table 2. Continued

Category	Content	Examples
Mechanisms of institutionalisation	International agreements and treaties, enforcement mechanisms, climate finance, technical support, and reporting	The Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement, the Green Climate Fund, and the “loss and damage” mechanism
	Voluntary initiatives, cross-sectoral coalitions, national policies and strategies	NDCs, EU Green Deal, Powering Past Coal Alliance
Manifestations of institutionalisation	Formation of separate climate policy institutions and inclusion of climate issues in other areas of global governance	IPCC, UNEP, integration of climate risks into security, trade and development policies
	Symbolic legitimization, the formation of climate standards, and cultural entrenchment of the value of sustainable development	SDGs (Goal 13), ESG approaches to investing, and climate education programmes

Note: UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme; SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals; ESG – Environmental, Social, and Governance

Source: compiled by the author based on UNFCCC (1998; n.d.a; n.d.b), J.A. Scholte (2021), F.B. Çelik (2022), Climate Action Network (n.d.), Greenpeace International (n.d.), ICLEI (n.d.), European Commission (n.d.), PPCA (n.d.), IPCC (n.d.)

In this context, climate diplomacy also acts as an instrument of “soft power” in the foreign policy of states. In contrast to traditional hard power, which involves economic or military coercion, “soft power” is based on the attractiveness of ideas, values, norms and models of behaviour. By using climate diplomacy, states can strengthen their international authority, demonstrate leadership in addressing global challenges, build a positive image and strengthen strategic alliances without direct pressure. Countries that demonstrate consistent and ambitious climate policies, such as Germany, France, Sweden, and Canada, gain symbolic capital in the field of environmental governance (Evans & Thomas, 2023). This capital can be used to initiate regulatory changes, shape the agenda in climate negotiations, and engage partners in new initiatives. For instance, through the International Climate Initiative mechanism, Germany finances projects in developing countries, combining foreign policy interests with environmental support (Onabowale, 2025). Similarly, China is actively promoting the concept of “ecological civilisation” as part of its “Green Belt and Road” policy, shaping its new global narrative (Geng & Lo, 2023). Within the framework of climate diplomacy, “soft power” is exercised through participation in global coalitions, support for innovative solutions, demonstration of climate technologies, organisation of international events, and environmental cultural expansion. This approach enhances not only the external attractiveness of states but also the internal legitimacy of ruling regimes through an image of responsibility, modernisation, and global solidarity. An integral part of the institutional design of climate diplomacy is its normative and value dimension, which encompasses key concepts: global justice, responsibility and inclusiveness. These categories are not purely moral; they acquire political significance and directly influence the architecture of negotiations, the content of agreements and implementation mechanisms. Global climate justice requires recognition of the asymmetry between those who caused climate change and those who suffer most from its consequences. Conventionally, countries of the Global North have greater historical responsibility for

greenhouse gas emissions, while countries of the Global South are more vulnerable to climate risks. Therefore, principles such as CBDR are the foundation of the global climate regime (Alliou, 2025). Their implementation is reflected in mechanisms for financial support, technology transfer and simplified access to resources for developing countries. The category of responsibility covers not only historical guilt but also future obligations. Countries are increasingly setting net-zero targets, and corporate actors are implementing emissions accountability. Accountability is institutionalised through public reporting, climate ratings, transparent monitoring methodologies and policy impact assessments. Inclusivity as a value means opening decision-making processes to a wide range of actors, from local communities to representatives of indigenous peoples, youth, women, scientists and business. The Paris Agreement encourages inclusivity as an element of effectiveness. Inclusive platforms such as the Talanoa Dialogue (UNFCCC, 2017) or the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (UNFCCC, n.d.c) demonstrate how local knowledge and priorities can be integrated into global processes. In summary, it is possible to argue that contemporary climate diplomacy is not only an arena for political agreements, but also a space for the formation of new norms, practices and structures that transform the very essence of global governance. Its institutionalisation, based on soft power and value consensus, highlights the formation of a new type of political interaction, based not on confrontation but on interdependence, not on domination but on solidarity.

Mechanisms and institutions of climate diplomacy in the global governance system. In the field of global governance, climate diplomacy is emerging as a key mechanism for coordinating the efforts of states, transnational institutions and non-state actors to combat climate change. The organisational structure of international climate diplomacy was formed in response to the growing global environmental challenges and the need for a collective response based on scientific data, political agreements and legal obligations. The central institutional platform in this context is the United Nations system, which has

formed several units to implement climate policy at the global level. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, established in 1992 as a basic agreement to regulate international climate policy, is central in the process. The UNFCCC not only forms the institutional environment for negotiations between member states but also ensures the creation of mechanisms to monitor compliance with climate commitments, collect climate data, develop financial instruments, and facilitate technology transfer (Hickmann *et al.*, 2019). The UNFCCC has become a platform for the conclusion of key international treaties, such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, which have become milestones in the institutionalisation of the global climate order (UNFCCC, 1998; n.d.b). Another key element is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which has been operating since 1988 and serves as the main source of science-based information on climate change. It was created jointly by the World Meteorological Organisation (n.d.) and the United Nations Environment Programme (United Nations, n.d.a). The IPCC does not conduct primary research, but instead summarises and systematises existing scientific data, basing the political institutions' decision-making on the most up-to-date knowledge. IPCC's analytical reports have a strategic impact on global climate policy-making, including the revision of national climate strategies and contributions. The United Nations Environment Programme coordinates environmental activities within the UN system and supports the development of environmental policies at the regional and national levels. UNEP mediates between science, policy and practice, creating a platform for dialogue between governments, the private sector and civil society. Its functions include analysis, educational initiatives, support for the implementation of environmental standards, and management of sustainable development projects. Through UNEP, environmental issues were institutionalised as one of the central items on the UN political agenda (United Nations, n.d.a). At the heart of the institutional structure of climate diplomacy are the annual Conferences of the Parties (COP), which are the governing body of the UNFCCC (Flessa, 2023). The COP summits have become the main platform for intergovernmental negotiations on climate policy, financing, adaptation and monitoring

mechanisms. Historically, COPs were substantial in the evolution of the legal framework of international climate diplomacy: it was at COP3 in Kyoto that the Kyoto Protocol was adopted, and at COP21 in Paris that the Paris Climate Agreement was adopted. From an institutionalisation perspective, COPs form horizontal and vertical links between actors in climate diplomacy: governments, regional associations, business representatives, the scientific community, international organisations and civil society. This structure not only coordinates countries, but also adapts policies to a rapidly changing scientific and economic context. With each passing year, COP increasingly resembles a global forum for sustainable development, where not only the commitments of states are discussed, but also the architecture of the future green transition.

One component of international climate diplomacy is a set of legal and political instruments that ensure the implementation of global climate agreements. The regulatory framework consists of international agreements that are binding documents that create legal obligations for countries. These agreements not only set quantitative targets, but also provide for mechanisms for financing, technical support and technology transfer. Alongside legally binding treaties, political declarations are substantial. Although they do not have the force of international law, they shape normative expectations and set the direction of political will. They may include COP outcomes, regional initiatives, partnerships and memoranda of understanding. Such documents are central for creating the atmosphere of consensus and trust necessary for the further implementation of specific decisions. A separate instrument is the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which were introduced under the Paris Agreement as indicators of national-level commitments to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change (Mor & Ghimire, 2022). NDCs are not the same for all countries; they are formed incorporating the level of development, historical responsibility for emissions and financial capabilities. NDCs can be used for the flexible combination of global goals with national priorities, while creating a tool for monitoring and evaluating the fulfilment of commitments within the global climate regime. The organisational structure of climate diplomacy is shown in Figure 1.

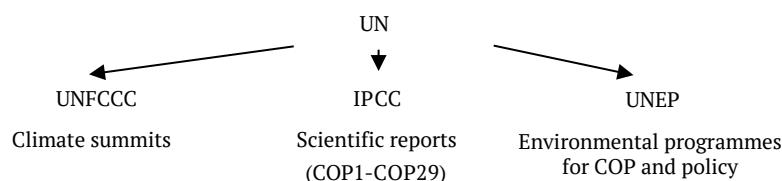


Figure 1. Organisational structure of climate diplomacy

Source: compiled by the author

The diagram shows the functional hierarchy of international climate diplomacy, which is based on the United Nations. It has three main subsystems: UNFCCC, IPCC and UNEP, which have different functions: negotiation, science and coordination, respectively. The UNFCCC is the central institution that organises the annual COP summits, a key political mechanism for agreeing international commitments. The summits are based on IPCC scientific

reports, which provide empirical justification for political decisions, and are supported by UNEP programme activities. This complementary mechanism results in the adoption of international agreements and national contributions that reflect the actual implementation of global agreements at the state level. UNEP estimates the financial needs for climate change adaptation, noting that annual adaptation costs in developing countries could range

from 160 to 340 billion USD by 2030. These estimates are used by countries to set funding priorities and help mobilise resources through international mechanisms (United Nations Environment..., n.d.). This scheme provides the vertical integration of knowledge, decisions and actions necessary for effective climate governance. In the current phase of globalisation, the issue of climate governance is becoming increasingly complex from an institutional perspective. Three interrelated dimensions are key in this context: institutional challenges, the transformation of the negotiation format, and the integration of climate aspects into broader global governance architectures. These factors do not function in isolation but form an interdependent system where changes in one dimension automatically trigger adaptation or destabilisation processes in others. The institutional challenges facing the global climate governance system are driven by both internal structural fragmentation and external pressure from economic and political priorities. Fragmentation manifests itself in a growing number of regulatory and procedural regimes that compete with or overlap each other, particularly in the context of regional initiatives, multilateral agreements and private standards. This creates a situation of legal and political polycentrism that undermines the capacity for coordinated action. Supranational control, implemented through institutions such as the UNFCCC, IPCC, or EU institutions, while strengthening regulatory power, is also facing growing resistance from national governments, especially in the Global South. They perceive such mechanisms as instruments of environmental neocolonialism that impose asymmetrical obligations. The issues of legitimacy and accountability are central in this context. The underrepresentation of marginalised states in the decision-making process leads to the delegitimisation of decisions in their political space. Similarly, the lack of institutional accountability on the part of transnational corporations, which are key emitters, creates a paradox of environmental responsibility without control. These challenges directly influence the change in the format of climate negotiations. The traditional consensus model that dominated the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement is increasingly giving way to coalitions of the willing (Huntjens & Kemp, 2022). Coalitions such as the High Ambition Coalition (n.d.) or the Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA, n.d.) operate outside the formal UN negotiation tracks, demonstrating greater efficiency but at the same time reducing the overall inclusiveness of the process. Countries in Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia are increasingly formulating common positions not only as objects of influence, but as subjects proposing alternative paradigms for a just transition. For instance, the African Climate Initiative emphasises the need for green financing that considers the historical responsibility of Northern countries and the structural constraints of the South (African Development Bank, n.d.). In this sense, the Global South acts not only as a “brake” on the negotiation process, as is often interpreted, but as a catalyst for its ethical reconfiguration.

At the same time, climate aspects are increasingly being integrated into broader global governance architectures, going beyond purely environmental policy. In the economic sphere, the concept of “green transformation” permeates the regulatory structures of the European

Green Deal, as well as numerous World Bank and IMF (International Monetary Fund) initiatives on green financing (Arıcı, 2023). In the field of security, the discourse of “environmental security” is becoming increasingly relevant, according to which climate change is seen as a factor destabilising regional and global stability. This is particularly relevant in areas of climate conflict, such as the Sahel region or South Asia, where the depletion of water and land resources provokes internal migration, political fragmentation and the growth of radical movements (Naz & Saleem, 2024). In the field of human rights, “environmental rights” are being normalised as part of the third generation of rights, as confirmed in numerous decisions of regional courts, in particular the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *KlimaSeniorinnen v. Switzerland* (European Court of Human Rights, n.d.). Thus, climate issues are no longer an isolated policy sector but are becoming a transversal axis that is integrated into institutional, security, economic and human rights regimes. In the context of the development of global climate diplomacy, the influence of non-state actors, in particular the scientific community, business, civil society and youth movements, is becoming increasingly noticeable. Their role has grown significantly due to the limited effectiveness of traditional intergovernmental formats in addressing climate issues and the growing need for innovative, flexible approaches. The scientific community provides the basis for climate policy by providing empirically verified data, which justifies decisions of political elites in the areas of decarbonisation, adaptation to climate change and the transformation of energy systems (Meadowcroft & Rosenbloom, 2023). An example is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which, although it has intergovernmental status, is based on the work of thousands of scientists and functions as a channel between the academic community and the political process (IPCC, n.d.). The business sector, especially transnational corporations, is increasingly relevant not only as addressees of regulatory policy, but also as active participants in climate diplomacy. This is manifested through corporate initiatives such as the Science Based Targets Initiative (n.d.), global associations such as the We Mean Business Coalition (n.d.), or transnational investment alliances aimed to decarbonise supply chains. At the same time, civil society legitimises political decisions and puts pressure on governments by mobilising support for climate reforms. Campaigns such as Fridays for Future (n.d.), Extinction Rebellion (n.d.) or local community initiatives are central in shaping the normative climate and preventing political inertia. These processes are inextricably linked to the dynamics of regional initiatives that are shaping a new configuration of climate diplomacy. They act as an intermediate link between global frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and local policies. An example is the European Green Deal, which demonstrates a structural approach to environmental transformation by integrating environmental policy into the areas of industry, agriculture, finance and international trade (European Commission, n.d.). At the same time, networks such as ICLEI (n.d.), an alliance of megacities aimed to achieve climate neutrality, demonstrate that large cities can form autonomous diplomatic agents, developing domestic climate strategies and cooperating outside state channels.

At the global level, formats such as the G7 and G20 are increasingly including climate issues on their agendas, not only as part of environmental policy, but as a systemic challenge to financial stability, security and development. Participants in these platforms are initiating multi-level partnerships that integrate climate considerations into development, investment and technology transfer policies. Digitalisation has become a key factor in the transformation of climate diplomacy, as it not only optimises decision-making processes but also provides a new quality of evidence. The collection, processing and visualisation of climate data using satellite monitoring, artificial intelligence and big data can be used to create accurate climate change models and the justification of policies in real time. In particular, the European Copernicus programme (n.d.) provides open access to environmental information, ensuring transparency and accountability of state actions. Digital technologies also encourage citizens to participate in climate policy by stimulating the emergence of new digital communication formats, from interactive platforms to feedback monitoring systems. In the field of diplomacy, these technologies improve coordination between institutions, reduce the transaction costs of participating in multilateral forums, and activate the role of small states that previously had limited influence due to a lack of institutional resources. All the above confirms the research hypothesis and points to the need for further institutionalisation of climate diplomacy. The current system is highly fragmented, which complicates coordination and leads to duplication of efforts. A relevant area of research is the development of institutional mechanisms that ensure effective interaction between state and non-state actors in the field of climate policy. Similar platforms already exist in the form of coalitions, such as the High-Level Climate Champions within the COP process, which brings together representatives of governments, business, finance and the public (Aykut *et al.*, 2022). At the same time, it is necessary to create permanent supranational structures that will have a mandate to implement long-term climate policies, monitor the fulfilment of international commitments and arbitrate in contentious issues. This perspective is a logical continuation of current processes, where diplomacy is increasingly shifting from one-off conferences to continuous, institutionalised dialogue. The new structures are expected to be multi-sectoral in nature, based on network logic, and capable of synchronising efforts at the national, regional and global levels. Thus, the development of climate diplomacy is taking place in the interaction of several interrelated processes: the expansion of the participation of non-state actors, the rooting of regional initiatives, the digital transformation of management tools, and the formation of new institutional architectures. All these elements form a complex system in which diplomacy is no longer the exclusive prerogative of states, but becomes an open, multi-level platform for coordinating collective action in response to the global challenge of climate change.

Discussion

The results of this study have revealed the multidimensionality of the process of institutionalisation of climate diplomacy as one of the leading mechanisms of modern global governance, where formal structures, value principles,

non-state actors and new technological tools interact. A comparison with some contemporary studies has revealed both confirmation of the main conclusions and certain analytical differences that contribute to the political logic of climate diplomacy. B. Ogunbanjo (2024) addressed the foreign policy dimension of climate diplomacy, in particular, the interaction between national interests and global goals. The study analysed the structure of environmental diplomacy through the prism of leadership, language norms, and non-state actors, emphasising that the dominance of the negotiation model created barriers to achieving effective agreements. This was broadly consistent with the findings of this study on the fragmentation, normative vagueness and lack of sanctioning of existing mechanisms, but this study shifted the focus from institutional weaknesses to the benefits of multi-level coordination formats. In contrast to a study by B. Ogunbanjo, which noted a certain inefficiency of diplomacy as such, this study considered climate diplomacy as a process that is transforming from a hierarchical model to a polycentric one, with the potential for an increasing role of hybrid formats.

S. Beaudoin (2024) addressed the evolution of long-term climate goals (LTGGs), considered in the context of structural, normative and ideological influences. The study emphasised the importance of historical contextuality and multi-level interaction of actors in the formation and implementation of climate targets. These considerations conceptually echoed the findings of this study on the normative and value-based dimension of climate diplomacy, in particular in highlighting the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the need for an inclusive approach to policymaking. At the same time, this paper addressed the genealogy of climate goals as a result of a multi-year negotiation process, while the present study analysed the institutionalisation and mechanisms of policy implementation, which indicates the complementarity of the two analytical perspectives of goal setting and institutionalisation. L. Mai & J.P. Elsässer (2022) analysed the digital infrastructures of climate diplomacy, in particular the role of the Global Climate Action Portal in mobilising and monitoring the actions of non-state actors. The shift in the function of this tool from stimulating intergovernmental decisions to increasing transparency of the responsibility of participants after 2015 coincided with the findings of the study on the growing role of digital technologies in climate governance. At the same time, the study highlighted the limitations of these platforms in overcoming the underlying structural contradictions of global cooperation. This correlated with the findings of this study, which also noted fragmentation between initiatives, competition between actors, and a lack of agreed mechanisms for monitoring commitments. In this context, it was confirmed that digital tools alone are not a panacea but can be substantial in creating transparent and accountable mechanisms if integrated into a broader institutional framework. G. Dikaos (2024) proposed a systematic framework for analysing EU diplomatic activity in the context of the International Civil Aviation Organisation and the International Maritime Organisation, which expanded the field of study by analysing a specific regional strategy and its transnational impact. This was used to compare the concept of global governance proposed in

this study with the European model of “normative power”, which has proven to be an effective tool for promoting climate norms in industries that have long avoided strict regulation. The study by G. Dikaos provided an example of structured, targeted diplomacy, whereas this analysis considers the broader architecture of climate diplomacy as a dynamic, multidimensional phenomenon where state and non-state actors interact in a changing regulatory environment. J.I. Allan *et al.* (2023) conducted a multifactorial analysis of the adoption of the Paris Agreement, focusing on institutional design, coalition politics, and the impact of civil society mobilisation. This echoed the findings of the present study, which also highlighted the importance of scientific knowledge, public pressure and constructive design of international agreements. J.I. Allan *et al.* demonstrated that even in periods of political inertia, success was possible through a combination of strategic institutional decisions and the mobilisation of responsible actors. In this study, similar conclusions were extended to the current trends of digitalisation, which served as a logical extension of this paradigm.

M. Saaïda (2023) addressed the global dimension of climate change and the importance of international cooperation to address the effects of warming. This approach was in line with the general focus of this study, which also emphasised the collective nature of climate action, but Saaïda paid more attention to the moral imperative of solidarity, while this study also considered the technical and institutional challenges associated with implementing an equitable approach, in particular through financial mechanisms and the CBDR principle. Thus, the study by M. Saaïda provided a normative foundation for the broader institutional analysis conducted in this paper. L. Zhang & E. Bai (2023) highlighted the institutional fragmentation of climate governance, where state-centred mechanisms were increasingly prioritising hybrid forms of cooperation. The relevance of internal motivations such as self-identification and the quest for legitimacy was highlighted, alongside external imperatives such as globalisation and the rise of citizen networks. This study confirmed the vision of a fragmented but interconnected system of climate diplomacy that operated through a constant balancing act between normative obligations and political interests. However, the comparison expanded the determination of this fragmentation as not only a challenge, but also a potential resource that improved inclusiveness and flexibility of international processes. The study by J. Earsom & T. Delreux (2023) analysed the EU’s strategies within the climate change regime, emphasising the Paris Agreement negotiation process. The authors identified four ways in which the EU could act, including creating political momentum and ensuring inter-institutional coordination. Compared to this approach, the results of this study confirmed the effectiveness of the EU’s multilateral diplomacy, but additionally highlighted the importance of informal channels, including civil society participation and digital technologies, in maintaining transparency and accountability. Thus, while J. Earsom & T. Delreux addressed the EU’s internal institutional effectiveness; this study reveals its role in the wider system of global governance. B.K. Weinger (2025) critically analysed the gap between scientifically based planetary limits and the

state-centred logic that underpinned the UNFCCC. The authors argue that current climate governance is limited by the entrenched asymmetry between the Global North and South, as well as the marginalisation of alternative approaches to climate justice. In this study, similar findings were confirmed through the analysis of the principles of global justice and differentiated responsibilities. However, in contrast to a critical analysis by B.K. Weinger, this study also outlined opportunities to overcome limitations through inclusive hybrid platforms, a combination of state and non-state mechanisms, and the development of supranational monitoring structures. Thus, the findings of this study were consistent with the main points of the reviewed works, but at the same time complemented them with a broader determination of climate diplomacy as a complex, multilevel and normative phenomenon that has evolved in the context of the environmental crisis, political fragmentation and the growing significance of non-state actors.

Conclusions

The study determined that climate diplomacy is a complex multi-level mechanism of global governance, shaped by the aggravation of environmental crises, the transformation of international relations and the growing role of non-state actors. The study analysed the evolution of the institutional framework of climate diplomacy from the first international environmental initiatives of the 1970s, through the creation of the IPCC and the adoption of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992, to the signing of the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, which shows a gradual transition from strict legal obligations to flexible mechanisms based on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The study compares theoretical approaches: institutionalism demonstrates the role of formal structures and international agreements, constructivism emphasises the influence of norms, ideas and discourses on climate policy, and the concept of global governance highlights the participation of non-state actors such as cities, corporations and civil networks in coordinating climate action. The study analysed the normative and value-based dimension of climate diplomacy, in particular the principles of global equity, common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) and inclusiveness, as well as financial mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund, technology transfer and adaptation support in developing countries. The study determined that these instruments contribute to the implementation of the principles, but their effectiveness is limited by insufficient funding, bureaucracy and political controversies. The study also determined that digital technologies, satellite monitoring and civic engagement platforms enhance transparency and accountability, but fragmentation of initiatives and competition between actors make it difficult to reach consensus. Based on the analysis, the study proposed that the future of climate diplomacy is linked to further institutionalisation through the creation of hybrid platforms that bring together state and non-state actors, as well as the development of supranational structures to monitor the implementation of commitments and integrate scientific data into decision-making. Prospects include further analysis of the role of digital technologies, local initiatives and

innovative financial mechanisms in strengthening climate diplomacy in a globalised world.

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Conflict of Interest

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