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**VACCINE DIPLOMACY, VACCINE
NATIONALISM OR VACCINE EQUITY?**
EU's discourse on COVID-19 vaccination distribution
and cultures of international anarchy

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ABSTRACT

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The COVID-19 pandemic is an extensive world political challenge, a global “wicked problem” with potential societal changes. From the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, global power relations and diplomatic controversies have been embedded in the response. COVID-19 vaccines and their global distribution became a matter of high interest in world politics. The vaccines were regarded as the way out of the pandemic and even a question of life and death. In 2021, a huge “vaccination gap” emerged. This refers to the differences in vaccination rates between Global North and the Global South. Vaccination inequality became evident. This was primarily due to the practices of the industrialized countries securing the vaccine doses for themselves. The European Union (EU) was in the middle of the global COVID-19 vaccination distribution turbulence as it had made a joint purchase of several types of vaccines, securing the vaccinations for its member states. It was also involved with donations to third countries and global solidarity efforts through the COVAX facility. The COVID-19 vaccinations and their distribution were given several meanings, such as solidary, geopolitical, diplomatic, and nationalistic.

This thesis studies the EU's discourse on COVID-19 vaccination distribution. Following the constructivist paradigm of international relations, it is presumed that realities are shaped by social interaction. This thesis studies how the EU institutions construct world politics and the EU itself while addressing the global distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations and what the emerging discourses disclose about the EU's position in world politics. The research questions are approached through Alexander Wendt's three cultures of international anarchy: Hobbesian enmity, Lockean rivalry and Kantian friendship.

A discourse analysis of 163 pieces of EU speeches, debates, statements, and communications on the COVID-19 vaccination distribution enabled finding of five meaningful discourses. These discourses are the discourse of responsibility and solidarity, the discourse of vaccination diplomacy, the discourse of geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines, the discourse of self-interest and vaccination nationalism and lastly, the discourse of systematic struggle and urgency of further integration of EU integration. These discourses intertwine, support, and contradict each other, interestingly providing a picture of the EU's challenging world political context.

This study provides a nuanced overview of the EU's discourse during a historical crisis that put the EU's self-image and value-based external action under scrutiny. The EU's construction of the world political situation included the EU's pressure to respond to the rising power politics that also materialized in vaccination distribution policies. This study finds that the EU's Other-pictures are seemingly threatening during the time of interest, from December 2020 to February 2022. The EU's discourses give the vaccine distribution a geopolitical meaning. They also contribute to the institutions of vaccine nationalism and self-help and reproduce the systemic struggle. However, the EU's discourses also entail its responsibility for regions outside the Union as well as an emphasis on vaccination equity through COVAX. The discourses intertwine in highly interesting ways, contributing to an understanding that the EU's solidarity efforts in vaccine distribution are linked to its geopolitical interests. This can be seen at least partly contradicting the EU's self-portrayal as a “force for good”.

Keywords: The EU external relations, world politics, vaccination diplomacy, geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines, vaccination nationalism, vaccination equity, cultures of international anarchy

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN - the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

ACT-A - the Access to COVID-19 tools Accelerator partnership

APAs - Advanced Purchase Agreements

COVAX - COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access

COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease 2019: SARS-CoV-2, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus

ECOSOC – United Nations Economic and Social Council

EEA – European Economic Area

EEAS – The Diplomatic Service of the European Union

EMA – European Medicines Agency

EPP – European People’s Party

The EU – European Union

G7 – Group of Seven

G20 – Group of 20

HERA - the European Health Emergency preparedness and Response Authority

HR/VP - High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission

IPR – Intellectual Property Rights

IR – International Relations

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

S&D - The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats

TRIPS - Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights

The UN – The United Nations

WHO – World Health Organization

WTO – World Trade Organization

FOREWORD

I started the writing process of this thesis in the spring of 2021, approximately a year after the COVID-19 virus had spread globally and the lockdowns had started in different parts of the globe. This time, several COVID-19 vaccinations had been approved by health officials, and the distribution of the vaccinations had begun. The EU was fighting over the vaccinations they had ordered and not received. For instance, European Commission blocked the shipments of vaccinations from the EU and had a dispute with the UK on vaccinations.

In May 2021, I was fortunate to be employed in the Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN in New York. Arriving in New York, I walked to the nearest walk-in vaccination centre, and I got vaccinated immediately, while in Finland, it would not have been my turn yet to receive the jab. After that, I discovered that there were many benefits, for instance, tickets to baseball matches and free subway rides offered to the people who agreed to vaccinate. At the same time, the low-income and middle-income countries had barely received their first doses. I spent the summer listening to the agony they brought to every forum within the UN.

In September 2021, I started another traineeship, this time in the European parliament. Every citizen of the EU had already had access to the vaccination for months, and the Global South was still left behind. The whole African continent had vaccinated three per cent of their citizens and low-income countries, and the low-income countries were only at 0,5 per cent. The Western countries were already planning on the next doses for their citizens.

I was writing my thesis at an extraordinary time. After following the discussions first in the UN and then in the EU, it was evident that the pandemic could shape world politics, and the COVID-19 vaccination had become a question of high politics. I wanted to grasp this change process and capture the competing discourses of the EU on paper.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research question and study aim

When COVID-19 started to spread across the globe in the Spring of 2020, it could be easily seen that the world was unprepared for what would follow. The pandemic came with various features: humanitarian, economic, and in many different ways, highly political ones. A lot of hope was put into the COVID-19 vaccines enabling to control the virus. They were seen as “the lasting way out of the pandemic”, as, for instance, Commission President von der Leyen (2020) tweeted in late 2020. Vaccination against the virus was developed historically fast due to unforeseen financing and international coordination (Le et al., 2020). However, the global race to get the vaccination doses for one’s own citizens and start the recovery as fast as possible followed. COVID-19 vaccinations became a matter of high politics, and vaccination distribution was at the top of the global agenda. The EU entered the vaccination market as a united front. The European Commission led the joint procurement of vaccines for the EU member states, making the EU a significant player in the global race to vaccinate nations. This thesis analyses the EU’s discourse on the global COVID-19 vaccination distribution. It is presumed that the studied EU statements construct the EU itself and its role in world politics in the context of what in International Relations (IR) is referred to as international anarchy.

What made me pick a topic that touches upon the COVID-19 pandemic in a situation that felt like endless lockdowns, frustration, and global misery? To me, examining current events closely as analysing small bits of the events contributes to a greater understanding of world politics and the different ways that it is changing, for example, through discursive practices. As the phenomenon is vast and difficult to grasp in its totality, it is crucial to understand its essential fragments. COVID-19 vaccinations and their global distribution are textbook example of such a phenomenon. Even when the situation was still ongoing, I decided I was up for the challenge of capturing it on paper as it was too meaningful to miss, especially when writing my most important academic work thus far. In this work, I chose to concentrate on the EU as it is an ongoing intriguing phase of the

evolution of its global position. Europe is looking for its place in the world, and while doing so, it also contributes to constructing world politics and itself.

This thesis will answer the following research questions:

1. How do the EU institutions construct world politics and the EU itself while addressing the global distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations?
2. What do the emerging discourses disclose about the position of the EU in world politics?

This study follows the constructivist paradigm of IR and aims to contribute to it, adding a unique case to its entirety. The study design was inspired by Alexander Wendt's ideas of different cultures of international anarchy. Already before starting the systematic analysis of the topic, the empirics of the global distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations seemed to follow his different cultures of anarchy. Thus, I decided to approach the primary research questions with a secondary research question:

3. How are Alexander Wendt's different cultures of international anarchy present in the EU's discourse on COVID-19 vaccination distribution?

Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to understanding the construction of international anarchy and the EU's position in world politics. I apply Wendt's ideas on international anarchy to an ongoing change process to gain a preliminary understanding of the direction that world politics is shifting and where the EU might stay in it. The COVID-19 vaccination was chosen as the topic as it was, at least at the time of interest, a commodity that was aspired to globally. COVID-19 vaccinations were a question of high politics, especially in 2021.

In the empirical part of the research, I have examined 163 pieces of EU documentation on global vaccination distribution. I employ discourse analysis to identify competing discourses and shared ideas. Studying vast data on the EU's external relations enables a better understanding of the context in which the EU operates in world politics. Choosing a case in the middle of an immense change process helps to understand better how the

EU behaves in crisis circumstances and how strongly it promotes its out-written values and views in such a context. A limitation of this thesis is that it concentrates solely on the EU's discourse, only helping to understand the EU's contribution to the state of world politics and leaving out the other actors' views and statements on the EU, which a full-fledged constructivist research would also consider.

In this introductory chapter, I will summarise the EU's context in world politics during the timeline in question, December 2020 to February 2022. This chapter is not, by any means, meant to be an exhaustive overview, but the general understanding of the state of world politics is essential when I move to the analysis part, as the social meanings cannot be stripped from the context. After the overview, I introduce the timeline sketch of the main political questions and empirics of the global vaccination distribution. That is done to structure the events and to provide a further understanding of the concepts regularly used during the pandemic, vaccination nationalism, vaccine solidarity, and vaccination diplomacy.

1.2. Timeline from the first EMA-approved COVID-19 vaccinations to the Omicron variant

This study's focus is not on the actors' exact reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic and the race to COVID-19 vaccinations. However, it is vital to comprehend the outline of the event concerning vaccination policies. This helps to understand the topics of discussion in the study materials. The timeline of events I provide here is written mainly from the viewpoint of the EU and its member states.

In the spring of 2020, when COVID-19 spread outside of China, notably first in Italy and Spain and then all over Europe, Moscow, Beijing, and even post-Brexit London were somewhat happy to see the EU struggle in the new demanding situation (van Middelaar, 2021, 47). When on 11 March 2020, WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a worldwide pandemic, the European continent was identified as its epicentre (WHO, 2022). Without addressing the humanitarian suffering or the economic losses that the pandemic brought, it can be understood that the EU also suffered from image losses at the beginning of the pandemic. That was due to the status of being the world's epicentre,

being the region that did not respond to the health threat with necessary measures, leading to the pandemic spreading even further.

Quickly, it became evident that vaccinations were seen as the key to ending the pandemic, and the race to first develop and then acquire them began. This phase of the vaccination distribution has even been labelled as “the vaccination Cold War” (Moreno et al., 2021). The EU approached vaccination procurement through a common EU approach aimed at securing supplies for the EU member states and facilitating their distribution. The European Joint Procurement Agreement (JPA) was signed in 2014 to organise the procurement of vaccines during pandemics. It was taken to use, making the European Commission responsible for the purchases and due to that, the Commission became a highly relevant actor regarding vaccinations. As discussed later, an interesting feature of these joint purchases is the meaning of the unity of the EU that is given to them by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. She reasoned the EU joint purchases saying that without that measure, the bigger EU member states would have rushed to the vaccines at the expense of the smaller member states. She saw that this would ultimately have broken up the European community as the member states with minor purchasing power would have been left without the vaccines. (European Parliament, 2021a.)

Entering the market as a coherent front was beneficial, especially to smaller member states. For instance, in the case of Finland, it has been evaluated to have been the most likely beneficial strategy, and the extensive vaccination coverage, on the other hand, has been the key to opening society again after the social distancing measures (Tiirinki et al., 2022, 1). did not stop the criticism of the European Commission’s actions when at the beginning of 2021, the vaccine roll-out to the EU needed to be faster-moving and marred by supply disruptions. For instance, Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán sought to downplay the EU’s joint efforts to access and purchase vaccinations from alternative sources. Concerning the Hungarian raising nationalistic sentiments in reaction to European integration and the EU’s criticism of its rule of law, this can be interpreted to have political motivations. (Moreno et al., 2021, 12.)

Another actor to challenge the EU’s vaccination actions can be found in its immediate neighbourhood, the UK. An interesting feature at the beginning of 2021 was the post-

Brexit UK and the ideological meanings that the vaccination race sparked. As Giuditta Caliendo (2022, 2–4) demonstrates, Britain’s success in acquiring the COVID-19 vaccines was used to advocate the Brexit process and deflect criticism against it. The rapid vaccination campaign allowed a new argument in favour of Brexit; it did not need to be slowed down by the EU’s careful review of vaccinations. In her study, she argues that the EU officials aimed to destabilise the public confidence in the “British vaccine”, AstraZeneca, that the EU did not receive as ordered. Besides that, the EU sought to lay the blame on the slow shipments to the UK. The EU compared its vaccination policy with the UK’s to legitimise the rationale of the EU’s vaccination distribution policy. It used argumentation that included a moral evaluation of the UK’s actions. In the EU’s discursive representations, the arguments were based on the EU’s traditional values, such as cooperation, fairness, and reciprocity. Caliendo also argues that the EU used implicit claims and presupposition triggers to trade off credibility for scapegoating purposes. (Caliendo, 2022 2–4.) In the EU-UK AstraZeneca case, it became evident that vaccination distribution has several different meanings and can be used for various purposes. As I find in this study, the EU statements from different institutions’ other’ the UK on several occasions while addressing the COVID-19 vaccinations. This aligns with Caliendo’s (2022) idea of “scapegoating purposes”.

Especially the beginning of the vaccine roll-out process in early 2021 was marked by the so-called vaccine nationalism because of the competitive procurement of vaccines. Vaccine nationalism can be understood as a practice in which the high-resource countries understand that each country is solely responsible for its population and practices policies that align with that. Vaccine nationalism has long roots in the history of wealthier countries acquiring vaccines at the expense of countries that cannot afford them. Global health scholars say it is a short-sighted, ineffective, and deadly system. If not even considering the moral claims, the uncoordinated patchwork of immunity is likely to lead to escape variants that alter the vaccine’s effectiveness and, thus, are in every way in wealthier nations’ self-interest. (Katz et al., 2021, 1281.) As discussed later in this study, the EU has been aware of the health threat caused by vaccination nationalism. I later argue that the EU statements addressed the danger of new variants of COVID-19 emerging, but the EU can still be interpreted to have constructed vaccine nationalism as a norm, especially in early 2021 when the EU was not receiving the vaccinations as scheduled.

The difference between the Global South and Global North in vaccine roll-out was glaring. For instance, according to WHO, in June 2021, low-income countries received only 0.4 per cent of the COVID-19 vaccinations (Fink, 2021). As stated by Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General already in January 2021: “The world is on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure – and the price of this failure will be paid with lives and livelihoods in the world’s poorest countries.” (WHO, 2021). In response to the uneven vaccination distribution, the G7 nations, including the EU, committed to supporting global vaccine procurement through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) program, which intends to supply the vaccines to low- and middle-income countries.

COVAX is the vaccine pillar of The Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A), intending to accelerate the development and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines and ensure fair and equitable access to everyone. Ann Danaiya Usher (2021) reports in June 2021, the COVAX was meant to be an ambitious procurement mechanism to supply vaccines for all but failed due to the rich countries’ unwillingness to share their doses. The idea behind COVAX was to combine funding streams of self-finance and aid-financed that would enable to invest in the research and development of several promising vaccine candidates, creating a portfolio of vaccines. Furthermore, the pooled procurement mechanism would allow COVAX, as a buyer, to drive down the prices for all the participants. (Usher, 2021, 2322.) COVAX became the preferred form for the EU to promote global vaccination solidarity. It also states that it is committed to vaccination solidarity through it (European Council, 2021b). It was a means to construct the EU’s role as a beneficiary, as demonstrated later. Another proposal to tackle the disparity of vaccines progressed through the World Trade Organization (WTO). In October 2020, India and South Africa proposed a Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver for COVID-19 vaccines. TRIPS-waiver would temporarily waive pharmaceutical patent protection, globally reducing the cost of manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines globally and thus, make them available for more countries with less purchasing power. (Katz et al., 2021, 1282.) The EU opposed the proposal (Furlong et al., 2022) and concentrated on promoting the COVAX program, for which it became a significant donor.

The global vaccination distribution is a fascinating phenomenon from the viewpoint of global politics. It can be taken that there was an understanding that the common good

would have been the pandemic ending, and this would be achieved by reaching global herd immunity. Global herd immunity would then prevent the virus from mutating, protecting one's citizens from the threat. Regardless, the international actors were still unable to cooperate adequately. In this sense, global vaccination distribution speaks for the fundamental issues of international anarchy, which is a term that IR scholars use to characterise the absence of a central authority in international relations. (Schmidt, 2016, 1).

In a recent study, Antoine de Bengy Puyvallée and Katerini Tagmatarchi Storeng (2022) discuss the politics of global vaccine inequity. They estimate that approximately 60 % of the COVAX vaccine supply consisted of donated doses. The significant matter is that these donations could not compensate for COVAX's issues with its independent procurement of vaccines. These difficulties can be understood to relate to the rich countries' bilateral agreements with the vaccine producers (Usher, 2021, 2322). De Bengy Puyvallée and Storeng (2021, 1) argue that the donations benefited COVAX, as it could claim its victories when more doses were donated. At the same time, the donating countries could be beneficiaries instead of "vaccine hoarders", and lastly, the pharmaceutical industry could hold on to intellectual property rights (IPRs). The dose sharing that the EU practised and pushed extensively, especially in late 2021, can also be seen as harmful to the global vaccination supply. The vaccination sharing helped COVAX to deliver. However, at the same time, its impact was undermined by the donors' preoccupation with their national security and diplomatic interests and the pharmaceutical industry's sheltered commercial interests. (De Bengy Puyvallée & Storeng, 2022, 1.) The EU based its global response to COVID-19 on the COVAX facility that it was organising from the start, which can fundamentally have been harmful to the global vaccination supply even when Europe and its member states together, labelled as the Team Europe, both donated and pushed for the more significant impact of the COVAX.

A term often attached to these measures is vaccination solidarity or vaccination equity. These terms are quite self-explanatory; they can be understood as allowing everyone access to vaccination without excessive effort. In global discussion, this thinking connects to the idea of making the vaccine a global public good, notably being present in the WHO and the UN, making COVID-19 vaccination a non-rival and non-excludable. (Peacock, 2022, 2.) Non-rival means that individuals can consume the product without affecting its

availability to others. Non-excludable means that once the product is provided, it is impossible to prohibit people who do not pay for it from consuming it. Global public good does not recognise the borders of countries but is available to the global population. (Morrissey et al., 2002, as cited in Peacock, 2022, 2.) The European Commission has used the language of “global public good” in the agreement of negotiating Advanced Purchase Agreements (APAs) dated 16 June 2020. The Commission promises to promote COVID-19 vaccinations as a global public good. However, this does not seem to fit the EU’s actions on vaccination distribution. (T’Hoen & Boulet, 2021.)

Besides vaccine nationalism, vaccine diplomacy also appeared swiftly during the health crisis. This is not a new phenomenon; quite the contrary, as Whittaker et al. (2018, 173) remark, health and politics are inexorably linked. In the case of COVID-19, scholars and popular media call the act of China, India, and Russia distributing significant amounts of the vaccines to the Global South and some high-income countries vaccination diplomacy (Su et al., 2021, 20). Examining Chinese, Indian, and Russian strategies in COVID-19 distribution, Suzuki and Yang (2022) argue that these countries’ actions align with the geopolitical interest and their relative advantages in vaccine research and development, manufacturing, and shipment. Especially China’s actions have not been unnoticed in the West. (Suzuki & Yang, 2022.) The EU has found itself operating in a complicated triangle with the US and China, in which each competes for more significant influence globally. The world politics of the COVID-19 vaccine has created opportunities as much as challenges for the actors, forcing them to consider the pandemic from a global perspective.

The following table gathers the most important events for the EU in the vaccination distribution from the time of interest. It seeks to clarify the timeline of Brussel’s actions and the change of the situation in the vaccination distribution to alleviate following the analysis of this study. As constructivist scholars suggest, knowing the historical context is crucial to understanding the discourse (Galbin, 2014, 82).

21 December 2020	The European Commission authorises the first COVID-19 vaccination, developed by BioNTech and Pfizer.
22 December 2020	The European Commission recommends a coordinated response to limit travel and transport from the United Kingdom due to the rising COVID-19 cases caused by the new Delta-variant
6 January 2021	The European Commission authorises the second COVID-19 vaccination in the EU, developed by Moderna.
29 January 2021	The European Commission authorises the third COVID-19 vaccination in the EU, developed by AstraZeneca.
29 January 2021	The European Commission puts in place a transparency and authorisation mechanism for exports of COVID-19 vaccines.
17 February 2021	The European Commission launches a "HERA incubator" that works with researchers, biotech companies, manufacturers, and public authorities to globally detect new variants and ensure rapid vaccination approval among adapting vaccinations.
19 February 2021	The EU doubles its contribution to COVAX to 1 billion euros.
End of February - beginning of March 2021	Several EU member states acquire the COVID-19 vaccinations outside the EU joint purchase. For instance, Austria and Denmark cooperate with Israel, and Slovakia purchases Sputnik vaccination from Russia and Hungary China's Sinopharm.
8 March 2021	President of the European Commission von der Leyen addresses the press on the vaccine roll-out to the EU that has been slower than expected by saying: "We are tired of being the scapegoat".
11 March 2021	The European Commission extends transparency and authorisation mechanism for exports of COVID-19 vaccinations due to continuing delays in vaccine deliveries to the EU.
11 March 2021	The European Commission authorises the fourth COVID-19 vaccination in the EU, developed by Janssen Pharmaceutica NV.
24 March 2021	The European Commission introduces the principles of reciprocity and proportionality of COVID-19 vaccinations due to the lack of vaccinations in the EU.

14 April 2021	The European Commission agrees with BioNTech-Pfizer on measures to accelerate the delivery of COVID-19 vaccinations.
21 May 2021	G20 Global Health Summit, the European Commission announces the Team Europe initiative of 1 billion euros to access vaccines, medicines, and health technologies, new agenda to overcome the pandemic adopted
10 July 2021	The EU has vaccination deliveries to 70% of its adult population
22 September 2021	An EU-US Agenda for vaccinating the world is announced. The goal is to reach 70% of the global vaccination rate by the UN General Assembly in September 2022.
18 October 2021	The EU announces that it has exported over 1 billion vaccines to more than 150 countries world. More than 75% of the EU adults have been fully vaccinated.
26 November 2021	The EU replaces the COVID-19 vaccine export authorisation mechanism with a new measure. At the beginning of January 2022, vaccine producers are not obliged to request authorisation for vaccination deliveries outside the EU.
1 December 2021	The European Commission rehashes to accelerate vaccination and swift deployment of boosters in response to the novel Omicron variant.

Table 1: The EU timeline from the first EMA-approved COVID-19 vaccinations to the Omicron variant

1.3. The situation of the COVID-19 vaccination supply in Autumn 2022

In Autumn 2022, when finalising this thesis, global vaccination distribution is no longer at the top of the global agenda as the Russian invasion of Ukraine has shifted the focus away from the COVID-19 crisis. According to the Our World in Data, at the end of September 2022, the global vaccination rate was 68 % for the people who had received at least one COVID-19 vaccination. In low-income countries, only 22.6 % have received at least one dose. (Mathieu et al., 2022.) In contrast, in the EU and EEA countries, over 75 % have received the first dose, close to 73 % the second one and the third one, so-called “first booster shots”, has been administered to almost 54 % of the citizens.

(European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 2022.) By June 2022, the European Commission calculates that the EU member states have donated 477 million doses worldwide, from which 407 million doses were shared via COVAX. The EU's pledge is to share 700 million doses by 2022 as Team Europe. Regarding exports, the Commission announced that almost 2.5 billion doses had been exported from the EU since December 2020. (European Commission, 2022.)

In July 2022, at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference, WTO Members adopted the Ministerial Decision on the TRIPS Agreement on the much-debated IP rights of COVID-19 vaccinations. As the EU mission to the WTO in Geneva stated at the General Council in July 2022, the reached agreement backs and clarifies the flexibilities that already existed in the TRIPS agreement but remained the protection of intellectual property. For the EU, intellectual property is “a key element for developing countries not only to benefit from the innovation that the system sustains but also to have the environment that incentivises the needed investments in the pharmaceutical sector.” (EEAS, 2022.) The EU held on to the IP rights of the COVID-19 vaccinations while the Commission has claimed the COVAX as a solution to vaccination equity. The EU partnered with the US to donate large quantities of the vaccines to the developing world through COVAX, but the TRIPS IP rights were not opened.

The EU's discourse on global solidarity and the self-image of a virtuous actor can be taken to have fallen short, especially in the eyes of the Global South (Balfour et al., 2022). The EU offered the COVAX initiative, through which it did make significant contributions, as the key to vaccination equality. However, in some discussions, this was a bid against the TRIPS waiver and opening the IP rights in the global forums that the EU was reluctant to do. I would suggest that this was the main reason that the EU's efforts for vaccination equality did not lead to the EU gain status of a virtuous actor in COVID-19 vaccination efforts despite its efforts to “vaccinate the world”.

1.4. The EU's context in world politics in the era of the pandemic

My research seeks to understand better the EU's position in world politics and how it has been constructed during the COVID-19 pandemic while debating the global vaccination distribution. This section aims to provide an understanding of some of the relevant change

processes that affect the EU's world political context. While doing that, I highlight why studying the EU's position in world politics is so alluring.

Change is a constant feature of world politics. As Haukkala (2020, 5) puts it, there is nothing new in the revolution of world politics, but what is new is the magnitude and speed in which the change is happening. In times of constant crises, a growing number of unstructured problems, so-called wicked problems, emerges. The origins and consequences are exceedingly difficult to identify and model, leading to difficulties finding a common understanding of the problem or the solution. Wicked problems have "interconnected subsets of problems" that touch upon many policy domains; thus, there are multiple stakeholders. No simple ways exist to solve these problems, but they are relentless. (Weber & Khademian, 2008, 336.) The COVID-19 crisis is, undeniably, a wicked problem.

Similarly, it is impossible to grasp the pandemic with any standardised analytical techniques, and the possible solutions lead to outcomes with unpredictable negative consequences. Schiefloe (2021, 8) concludes that the most recent pandemic not only qualifies as a wicked problem but also as a 'super wicked' one. As Luuk van Middelaar argues (2021), pandemics have characteristics to initiate significant societal changes. In this specific case of COVID-19, the world is even more highly intertwined, which gives the potential for even more significant changes. This makes studying the pandemic from the point of view of world politics especially vital.

From the beginning of the pandemic, power politics have been present in the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic globally. Donald Trump's administration was very vocal about the original source of the pandemic. For instance, President Trump often referred to COVID as the "Wuhan virus" and the "China virus" and accused WHO of blocking the investigations of the truth about the virus outbreak, leading him to terminate the US membership in WHO. On the other hand, President Xi Jinping was asking for more gratitude for face masks that China offered to other countries, aiming to hinder the speech on how the virus could have been stopped earlier. Europe was squeezed between the US and China, leaving only one possible solution. It had to have its own medical and pharmaceutical supplies in order. As van Middelaar puts it: "without strategic autonomy, no narrative sovereignty" (van Middelaar, 2021, 153–155.)

As Bart M. J. Szewczyk (2021, 80–81) describe, the EU has strong liberal foundations. In the 1990s, there was hope for global convergence of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and a market economy. This can be understood as the liberal consensus that became challenged soon after its establishment, and the struggle has been ongoing ever since. The main push-back came from two main directions, Russia and China. As Szewczyk argues, the pragmatic feature of today's disorder is increased greater power competition. The autocracy and democracy rivalry has emerged again, and Russia and China are challenging the liberal order. Whereas Russia's scope of the challenge is mainly regional and based on military and hybrid threats to the EU, China presents a more considerable transformative challenge to the liberal order, and it can even be argued to have the potential to establish a new global order. (Szewczyk, 2021, 80–81.) China's growing influence in world politics has been well-marked in the literature. It has even been suggested that bipolarity would return to world politics (Tunsjø, 2018). As noted above, the power struggle has been reflected in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations, and China's health diplomacy and Health Silk Road have been assumed as a use of power (Zoubir & Tran, 2022, 348).

The COVID-19 pandemic was a wake-up call to the world of China's geopolitical power and assertiveness, and the EU finds itself having to consider China and its growing importance and power strategically (Szewczyk, 2021, 7). A year before the pandemic, in 2019, the EU published a strategic document on China. The EU formulates three different roles that China plays for the EU. First, China is a partner in fulfilling global goals such as climate change, nuclear non-proliferation, and tackling pandemics. Second, China is a competitor in the economic and technological areas. Third, and possibly most importantly, China and the EU are "systemic rivals". They promote alternative political models, and the EU gives more significant value to individual rights and democratic institutions. (European Commission, 2019.) The systemic rivalry is a source of tension in EU and China relations and is an integral part of the EU's self-image and position between the great powers (van Middelaar, 2021, 164). China and its rising power and alternative norm systems may currently be the most pressing challenge to the EU. In my analysis, the systemic struggle is part of the EU's discourses on COVID-19 vaccinations.

It seems clear that the US is no longer the absolute superpower, but it is increasingly challenged. What is very notable for the Europeans is that the US no longer sees liberal Western cooperation as attractive as before. (Kimmage, 2020). The change in the US role in the world reflects Europe and the EU as, since the Second World War, Europe's liberal foundations have been established with the assistance of the US and the international institutions it has extensively led. This refers not only to NATO but also to GATT/WTO, OECD, OSCE, and numerous joint missions and operations. As widely understood, Trump's administration was the lowest point of transatlantic relations, but the change in Biden's administration has not radically changed the relationship for the better. (Szewczyk, 2021, 82.) As will be discussed later, the US and the EU did not create close cooperation in their vaccination distribution policies; on the contrary, at the beginning of 2021, they could be seen as somewhat competitors. The EU also compares itself to the US while portraying the EU's actions as morally more acceptable than theirs. This is especially evident when the EU institutions address the "export bans". However, once both had had access to the vaccination themselves and Joe Biden was in office, the two united in the global stance and made a joint initiative in the UN General Assembly 2021 to "vaccinate the world".

Biscop's (2020) analysis of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on world politics concludes that the pandemic was one more dimension where the power rivalry came to be. My analysis of world politics and the COVID-19 pandemic takes a different approach by studying the discourse on the distribution of vaccinations. However, I find that the great power competition, or the discourses on power competition, is noticeably present in the EU's discourses. This appears mainly in the discourses of geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines and vaccination diplomacy, as well as in the discourse of vaccination nationalism.

Studying world politics and its discourses during a major crisis is especially alluring, as the actors must react to events in a fast phase, and many processes are intensified. New opportunities to gain influence in the political arena present themselves. As van Middelaar (2021, 114) points out, the outcome of the pandemic is not just the sum of objective forces but also "a matter of humor and sentiment, gratitude and rancour, memory and expectation, words and stories". A pandemic offers an excellent opportunity to present other players in a bad light and weaken or manipulate them. (idem, 149.)

In conclusion, the EU's position in world politics is changing rapidly. The matter of interest in this study is how the EU, through its vaccine-related actions, constructs and reconstructs itself and its position in world politics as well as world politics at large. The research questions How do the EU institutions construct world politics and the EU itself while addressing the global distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations? and what do the emerging discourses disclose about the position of the EU in world politics? are addressed through the constructivist theoretical framework introduced thoroughly in the next chapter.

1.5. Structure of the study

By introducing the empirics of this topic, I wish to have highlighted that this research topic is highly relevant. The COVID-19 pandemic and the struggle with vaccination distribution coincide with times in which world politics is going through turmoil, and the EU must find its place. Theoretically, this situation is approached through a version of thin social constructivism. A matter of interest is how the EU constructs world politics and itself through its vaccine-related actions.

Next, I will move on to the theoretical framework of this study, social constructivism, and more specifically, Alexander Wendt's thin constructivism. In this chapter, I introduce Wendt's classical ideas of the culture's international anarchy, Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian, which help me structure the different discourses and relate them to world politics. The methodological chapter will follow the theoretical one. I use discourse analysis in this study to find meanings, representations, and norms in the EU's discourses. To ensure the discourse analysis's coherence, rigour, and transparency, I employ a structured model labelled 'thematic analysis' as the first step of the analysis. In the same chapter, the data utilised, EU statements, discussions, and communications in the global arena are addressed in more detail.

In the analysis part of this thesis, I provide a precise, structured discourse analysis of the EU's discourses concerning the global COVID-19 vaccination distribution and its implications for the EU's self-image as well as world politics. I find namely, "the discourse of responsibility and solidarity", "the discourse of vaccination diplomacy" "the

discourse of geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines”, “the discourse of self-interest and vaccination nationalism”, and “the discourse of the systemic struggle and the urgency of further integration of the EU”. These are discussed in detail, and an understanding of what these discourses disclose of the state of world politics.

2. ALEXANDER WENDT'S CONSTRUCTIVISM AND CONSTRUCTIVIST CONSIDERATIONS OF THE EU

The approaches that fall under the label of constructionism share the idea of criticality towards the knowledge and understanding that are taken for granted. Constructivism challenges positivism and empiricism and invites us to critically examine how the world appears. The concepts and categories vary depending on the context as they are historically and culturally specific, meaning that understandings are relative. It suggests that social interaction of all kinds constructs the world. Language is, by nature, in an essential role in constructing social realities. Social constructivism calls for deconstructing the discourses. (Burr, 2015, 1–5; 20.) Constructivism takes that there are no universal truths; in this sense, the individual mind does not represent the mirror of reality (Galbin, 2014, 82).

In this chapter, I first briefly discuss the constructivist approaches to the EU. The literature on the topic is vast, and this is not a comprehensive summary but some important notions and approaches that support my study ambition. After this part, I introduce Alexander Wendt's constructivism more in-depth, as it is the version I utilise in this study. Wendt's categorisations of the cultures of international anarchy will serve as a backbone in the discussion part of this study when I introduce what the EU's different discourses disclose about world politics.

2.1. Constructivist approaches to the EU

In the EU foreign policy field, constructivist approaches have relatively long roots. For instance, Ginsberg (1999) suggests that already in the 1990s, scholars had been able to move forward from examining the existence of the EU and its international presence to developing more sophisticated concepts that would not be bound to the realist and liberal approaches enabling a more comprehensive understanding. He argues that the multidimensional nature of the EU's foreign policy may never be fitted into a general theory. However, he suggests that selective and redefined concepts combined offer explanations of the EU's foreign policy decision-making processes. (Ginsberg, 1999.)

This suggests that constructivist approaches have enriched the discussion, enabling a more rounded picture of its actions that cannot ultimately be strictly understood in materialistic terms.

As Bahar Rumelili understands, the constructivist theory has been exported to the EU's external action study from the study of IR. Broadly, the aim has often been to understand how identities and interests are constructed in social interaction processes. In the case of the EU, constructivists point out that the process of collective identity formation among member states is a central factor that drives the EU's external action. Collective identity also depends on third parties, and the EU's discourse of difference is assumed to influence its external action. The constructivist theory emphasises that the EU's external action is shaped by identity conceptions of the EU and the member states, the ongoing social interaction and ideas, norms, and values of theirs and the global society. Likewise, the EU's external action shapes the identities of the EU and member states. (Rumelili, 2021, 197.)

Constructivism comes in many shades, also in the study of the EU. Critical constructivism approaches emphasise how the European identity is constructed in relation to the 'other' (Campbell, 1992). Differing from this view, liberal constructivists suggest that the European identity that the EU promotes is post-national, liberal, and inclusive, and it is not based on the 'othering' of the outsiders (Schimmelfenning, 2001). As Rumelili (2021, 199) explains, the common ground for constructivists is that identity matters. She argues that the EU's 'othering' takes different forms and influences the EU's external actions depending on whether the EU's discourses of differences are recognised or rejected by the target state at the time. (Rumelili, 2021, 200–202.) The importance of this recognition for this study is that in the EU's politics of global COVID-19 distribution, 'othering' is present, primarily when the EU statements address vaccine-producing countries, namely the US and the UK.

Besides the study of the EU's external actions, constructivist approaches also spread in the study of European integration, focusing on how ideational factors influenced political actions. This alone does not mean there would be a coherent conceptual framework for constructivists in EU studies, as Saurugger (2013) points out. Saurugger's argument about the importance of causal logic and the constitutive, cognitive, and materialistic factors

aligns with my study orientation. Examining the literature on EU studies with a constructivist approach, Saurugger (2013) finds four different public policy perspectives with common ground and differences. These are “sociological institutionalism,” “discursive institutionalism,” “approaches based on socialisation and learning,” and “actor-centred constructivism”. All these, but actor-centred constructivism, explicitly or implicitly demand clear differentiation between rationalist and constructivist thinking, rejecting the assumption of material factors as the primary independent variable. Actor-centred constructivism assumes that worldviews both set up a cognitive background in which actors develop and are utilised by the actors to accomplish their goals. It allows both constitutive logic, as the ideas and norms constitute the environment, and causal logic, considering that the ideas and norms are used by the actors strategically. Saurugger argues that cognitive and materialistic factors must be considered to understand the EU public policy. (Saurugger, 2013, 887–890.) This approach to constructivism is also present in this study. The theoretical framework of this study allows causal logic and the usage of norms strategically and takes materialistic factors into account: It is important to what kind of meaning actors give to the materialistic factors.

2.2. EU’s global reach

The EU’s nature and role in international politics have been widely discussed. For a good reason, the member states of the EU have designated more power to the Union than any country to any other organisation. It is a unique structure, and arguable, it can be seen to possess autonomous power. Smith (2003) has argued that even the intergovernmental policymaking structures are so institutionalised that the EU is no longer only a mechanism that the member states can instrumentalise. Similarly, Keukelaire and Delreux (2014, 3) have argued that the EU is not only a result of foreign policy, but it already has its foreign policy.

By the assumptions of constructivism, the EU shapes its own foreign policy identity through the processes of interaction and using language. For instance, the European Union Global Strategy has become a matter of interest. As Maria Mälksoo (2016) argues, the EU can be seen even be “obsessed” with its global outreach, security identity, and international credibility. She sees that the EU’s Global Strategy from 2016 and the European Security Strategy from 2003 function as “autobiographic narrations” and

“rhetorical anchors” in insisting on the EU’s status as a global actor among its associates in the international society. (Mälksoo, 2016, 375; 384.)

Filip Tereszkievicz (2019) poses an essential question on the changes in the EU identity and the role that the EU puts in words in its Global Strategy. The language of the EU as an unfinished project gives the impression of the EU as a “normal” international actor commonly fulfilled by states. The uniqueness of the EU system has been an essential factor when constructing its distinction from others as well as its unique identity. The EU becoming a ‘normal’ international actor would mean losing its current identity. Leaning toward Wendt (1999), Tereszkievicz assumes that the language used in a strategic document can modify the EU’s identity and thus lead to the change of its role later.

Pishchikova and Piras (2017) compare the EU Global Strategy from 2003 to the version of 2016 and find that the emerging EU identity seems to have been weakened by the centrifugal processes of internal contestation and a diminishing claim for external power projection. This is understandable, taking into consideration the changing environment of the EU already at the time, the pressure created by the Brexit process, and growing Euroscepticism. Their analysis is that the EU’s ‘other’ is no longer an entity to its external borders but exists in the alternative narratives inside the EU itself. They anticipate that the EU’s new self-understanding would lead to more inward-looking and modest relations with other international actors, become more pragmatic and deal with one issue at a time. In the same way as Tereszkievicz (2019), they find that the EU is facing an identity crisis. (Pishchikova & Piras, 2017, 116–117.)

The identity crisis of the EU would be no wonder, as the initial expectations for its external relations have been colossal. In 2002, Manners titled the EU’s international influence as a normative power, meaning that the EU operates in the international order by changing the normal of international politics and promoting its values. For instance, Diez (2005) and Pace (2007) have argued that the normative power of Europe is, or was, a discursive construction and thus, it is prone to changes. At the time, the EU’s self-portrayal was a “force for good”. At least when it comes to self-portrayal, it is evident that the EU’s confidence as the normative power has disintegrated. Besides the before discussed ‘othering’, the self-representation of the EU becomes a matter of interest in this

study. There are competing discourses on this matter, but, for instance, the EU represents itself as a ‘force for good’ and economic power.

It is not only a question of whether the EU holds itself as a relevant player in world politics, but it is also fundamental whether others perceive the EU as a global actor. There are mismatches between what the EU claims to be a diplomatic actor and what it is in reality (Orenstein & Klemen, 2017). For instance, Gehring et al. (2013) examine why the EU is recognised as a relevant actor in some international institutions but only in some. They conclude that the EU is recognised as a relevant actor according to its action capability rather than its formal membership. This leads to the conclusion that the EU needs to hold relevant governance resources. This leads to the EU’s limited recognition, for instance, in the World Health Organization, irrespective of its formal membership status. Despite their findings, I understand that the EU’s joint vaccine procurement and significant commitment and promotion of the COVAX facility make the EU a relevant actor in the field of global health in the era of the pandemic and, thus, a relevant study subject in this study case.

2.3. Constructivism in international relations

Social constructivism has been applied to the study of IR in various ways. In 1989, Nicolas Onuf was one of the first ones to introduce constructivism to IR. He presented the idea of constructivism in such a manner that international politics is a “world of our making”, not an objective reality (Onuf, 1989). However, Alexander Wendt’s (1992) article “Anarchy is What States Make of it” is often characterised as the outset of constructivism in IR. In 1998, Checkel argued that constructivism broadened the theoretical profile of IR. Even if the approach was inadequate in some ways, in his opinion exploring issues of identity and interest of the constructivists led to meaningful interpretations of international politics. (Checkel, 1998, 325.) In short, constructivism first emerged as a critique of the traditional theories, namely realism and liberalism. Still, it can be seen to have mainstreamed and, naturally, developed and gained new approaches. (Fierke, 2007, 189.)

Constructivism leaves room for an agency by emphasising the importance of interaction processes while recognising that the actors cannot deliberately choose their context and

means (Fierke, 2007, 189). Accordingly, my research highlights the importance of interaction without denying that the actors do not choose the conditions. However, my research also presumes that the actors of world politics – such as the EU – construct international anarchy through social interaction. The culture of world politics may change in the interaction of the actors. (Wendt, 1992.)

My thesis contributes to the constructivist study of world politics. More specifically, I follow Wendt's ideas of it. As mentioned, the discussion about constructivism in IR has enriched over the years several new types of constructivism have emerged. Peltonen (2016) shows that there was never only one specific type of constructivism in IR, but already from the beginning, several different constructivisms. The basic assumption of constructivism is that ideas matter, but differences concern, for instance, how to study them and the type of knowledge one might gain from them. Compared to some more radical constructivists, Wendt's constructivism includes the idea that constructivism is compatible with positivist epistemology and that causal explanation is still possible. (Peltonen, 2016, 4–6.) Milja Kurki (2006, 199) notes that although constructivists have not rejected the notion of cause similarly to critical and poststructuralist theorists, they do not seem to agree on the terms of causal and constitutive. However, Alexander Wendt has taken steps towards an understanding of causation (Kurki, 2006, 200). As Kurki suggests, Wendt has made important contributions to rethinking causation by emphasising the 'causal mechanisms' (idem, 203) and successfully opened the possibility of broadening the notion of cause for IR theorising (idem 205).

Based on Wendt's arguments, Copeland (2006, 3) lists three elements that separate constructivism from prior IR theorising. First, it is understood that global politics is driven by intersubjectively shared ideas, norms, and values of the actors. The intersubjective dimension of knowledge is a matter of interest. It is understood as an "ideational structure constraining and shaping behaviour". Second, the ideational structure is not only regulative but also has a constitutive effect on actors, meaning that due to it, the actors may redefine their interests and identities by interacting. This process is better known as becoming socialised. Third, ideational structures and actors constitute and determine each other. As brought up, the ideational structures constitute actors and their interests and identities, but in addition, the actors also produce, reproduce, and alter it through their discursive practices. The current state is not given, but social willpower may change the

structures of the interaction processes. It is important to note that actors' reality is bound to the historical context and constructed within it.

Guzzini and Leander (2006) address Wendt's version of constructivism and suggest that it is often understood as one of the most abstracts of the different constructivisms in the field of IR. It is not usually too concerned about the actual empirics. For this reason, choosing Wendt's theory may seem a rather odd theoretical point of departure for my thesis, as the idea has evolved strongly from empirical concerns. However, Wendt's version of constructivism asks from the very beginning about the possibility of change in world politics (Guzzini & Leander, 2006), which suits my research ambitions very well. In addition, the discourse on COVID-19 vaccinations seemed to follow Wendt's different types of culture surprisingly accurately.

2.4. Wendt's take on the international anarchy

As this research aims to study the EU's position in world politics by following Wendt's constructivist assumptions, it is vital to understand the concept of international anarchy. This will be further discussed in this section. International anarchy is vaguely understood as the state in world politics in which state and non-state actors interact in the absence of a central authority. Most scholars of IR agree that international anarchy shapes international relations fundamentally. (Schmidt, 2016, 1.) There is some controversy on who first introduced the concept of politics without a central authority. Schmidt suggests that it can be seen as initially written by G. Lowes Dickinson (*idem*. 161). However, to understand how fundamental the concept of international anarchy is for IR, it should be noted that the category of anarchy has also been connected to the emergence of an autonomous discipline of IR. (*idem* 16.)

The discussion of anarchy in the field of IR has been rich. Donnelly (2015) finds that after the publication of Waltz's "Theory of International Politics", a discursive transformation took place. He argues that in "pre-Waltzian IR", anarchy was not an analytically central concept. Undeniably, Waltz's (1979) theory of structural realism, later also known as neo-realism, has, since its publication, attracted assessments (Lechner, 2017, 345). Further, Alexander Wendt's constructivist IR theory was created as a critique of Waltz's ideas and to better understand the theory, and it needs to be seen in the background of neorealism.

At the heart of Waltz's theory (1979) is that the anarchic structure creates self-help. In this self-help system, the states must find the means and ways to protect and sustain themselves. Conflict is to be expected in this system. Wendt (1992) rejects this idea and argues that self-help and power politics are institutions and not causally derived from the structure but created by a process. At the heart of this idea is that anarchy is what states make of it, emphasising that the state may change from the current one. (Wendt, 1992, 391–395.) Wendt's ideas consider identity and interests, which are an integral part of the theory. Wendt builds an idea of the different logics of anarchies and argues that the anarchies only may have characteristics that lead to power politics. The current logic of anarchy only exists if it is sustained. (Wendt, 1992, 247–249.)

A key idea in my thesis is that the state of world politics may change, but it is not deterministic because of its unchangeable structure. However, it is crucial to take into consideration the context and materialistic means when capturing the change process. As Wendt argues, neorealist self-help is not given by an anarchic structure (Wendt, 1992, 394). Self-help is an institution within the international anarchy, and the current state of the structure can alter; it is not given, as neorealists assume. The self-help culture is due to the process rather than structure. (Wendt, 1999, 247–249.)

The debate between neoliberals and neorealists on international anarchy shared the idea of rationalism, entailing similar assumptions of agents. The two theories take a stand that the central agents are states that define security in “self-interested” terms. Wendt (1992) argues that taking a self-interested state as the starting point for a theory is inadequate. (Wendt, 1992, 392.) This notion is also present in the exact positioning of my research question as I study the EU, not its member states. From the realist point of view, the EU is, by nature, somewhat challenging to address as the member states have given parts of their decision-making power to the Union level. The departure point for their ideas is a self-interested nation-state.

The possibility of the changing logic or culture of international anarchy is the departure point for my theoretical orientation. Wendt builds his theory on three different cultures of anarchy. I utilise these to interpret my data to gain insight into the EU's global role and to find the relevant discourses on this chosen case. Next, I introduce Wendt's initial ideas

on the three different types of anarchy, on which I later build on my identification of the discourses present in my research.

2.5. Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian cultures of anarchy

Wendt (1999) argues that there are three different logics of international anarchy. These structures are named after Martin Wight and the English School, the Hobbesian enmity, Lockean rivalry, and Kantian friendship, but they are merely metaphors. I apply these cultures of anarchy to this unique case that may be the most significant upheaval in world politics since the end of the Cold War. My research focuses on the process rather than the outcome itself. Taking these different cultures of anarchy, I wish to understand how the EU's position in world politics is shifting and how the EU is, on its behalf, constructing world politics. Wendt argues that the structures could be, in principle, constituted by private ideas but ineffective. They are more likely to be constituted by shared ideas only. (Wendt, 1999, 248–249.) For this reason, in my study, I also focus on public speeches and shared ideas instead of individuals, even if the individual-level ideas would be interesting as well.

These cultures are self-fulfilling prophecies, and they tend to reproduce themselves. By defining the structures, we understand that the logic might change. The possibilities for changes have a lot to do with the degree of the states' internalisation of the shared culture. (Wendt, 1999, 309–310.) The different structures entail specific orientations toward the Self and the Other. In Hobbesian culture, this would mean seeing the other actors as enemies, and this means that there are no limits to their use of violence towards each other. In contrast, the rivals can use violence to their advantage but avoid killing each other. Lastly, Kantian friends mean allies that do not use violence and allow teamwork against security threats. (Wendt, 1999, 258.)

First, the perhaps most well-known culture of anarchy is Hobbesian enmity. Wendt argues that this is the only one of the structures that is truly a self-help system, a state wherein Hobbes' words, "war of all against all", dominate the system. The system is based on deep distrust between the actors. They cannot trust each other for help or basic self-restraint. Security is seen as a zero-sum affair, and security dilemmas are present. The states keep on representing each other in Hobbesian terms, and as long as this continues,

war is likely. (Wendt, 1999, 260–264.) Wendt understands *realpolitik* as a self-fulfilling prophecy, sustaining the logic of Hobbesian anarchy. The logic of enmity is based on representations, where the Self mirrors the Other and the other way around. They become convinced of others' hostile intentions and respond accordingly, confirming the others' suspicions. (idem, 263.) The deep structure of the Hobbesian world for Wendt is that structure and shared ideas of Hobbesian anarchy become parts of actors' identities and interests, and because of this, they are difficult to change. (idem, 278.)

As comes up later in the analysis, the discourse of self-help has been present in the vaccination distribution, especially when there was a supply shortage. The institution of self-help is primarily part of the discourse that I call “the discourse of self-interest and vaccination nationalism”. While the European Commission intended to secure their doses according to the agreements with the pharmaceutical companies as a by-product, it also contributed to the social understanding of the world as a zero-sum game.

For Wendt, the empirical records show that in the past few centuries, the Hobbesian logic has been replaced by the Lockean anarchical society that can be titled ‘live and let live’ - logic. The structure is based on rivalry, but there is a recognised right to sovereignty. In the same way, as in enmity, the rivals are constituted by representations about Self and Others, but these representations are less threatening. State sovereignty is territorial, including the right to some property, but this property may occasionally be disputed. Sovereignty can be seen as an institution shared by many states. This means there is a shared idea of respecting this sovereignty and no to threatening other life and liberty. In Westphalian systems, this is formalised by international law. Lockean anarchy also includes the state's tendency to balance power. Wendt sees this balancing as the consequence of the mutual recognition of sovereignty. (Wendt, 1999, 279–281;184.) In this study, elements of Lockean international anarchy are the EU promoting a rule-based international system and the EU's vaccination diplomacy in its self-interested terms.

Lastly, the Kantian culture of international anarchy is a possible scenario for international anarchy that is based on friendship. In this friendship role structure, the states assume that the dispute will be handled without war or threat of war, and if there is a threat, they would fight together to conquer the outside threat. This can be seen as an ‘all for one, one for all’ kind of relationship. The friendship is also temporally open-ended, distinguishing

it from being allies in a different type of relationship, temporally cooperating within anarchy of rivalry or enmity. Security communities, where war is no longer a legitimate way of settling disputes, emerge, and negotiations and courts handle conflicts. (Wendt, 1999, 299–300.)

In my research, I identify that the Lockean discourse is the most evident in the discussion of vaccination diplomacy. The actors recognise each other's sovereignty, but the main objective and interest are to gain their influence. In the EU's discourse, promoting a rule-based international system is essential, which entails the assumptions of needed rules to restrain chaos in the international system. The focus of this thesis is on the EU's external relations. However, the EU's efforts to coordinate the distribution of vaccines within the member states and to prioritise the groups that are vulnerable to the virus within the Union can be interpreted to be part of the Lockean and partly Kantian culture as the goal was to cooperate and to adhere to rules and norms to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. This kind of solidarity within the Union was not coherent, but still present. In my analysis, Kantian culture is mainly about global solidarity and vaccination equity. The discussion about opening the patents of the COVID-19 vaccinations by the TRIPS waiver is identified as a subtle move towards Kantian culture as it includes the idea of giving up or at least loosening intellectual property rights in the name of global solidarity. In Lockean culture, states' property rights are essential.

Understanding how Self and Other are represented will give much insight into the social system. In Hobbesian logic, the Other is constituted by representation where the Other does not recognise the Self's existence and autonomy, and the Other does not voluntarily limit the violence toward the Self. This is the main difference between rivalry and enmity, as in rivalry, the Other recognises the Self's right to exist, and the violence is self-limiting. (Wendt, 1999, 261.) In this thesis, representation is essential as it tells considerably of the actors' social reality and perceptions. As evident, this study does not touch upon violence or war. However, especially the identified "discourse of self-interest and vaccine nationalism" has an emphasis on national interest and geopolitics. It can be understood to reflect on Hobbesian culture. Violence and war are the extreme manifestations of that kind of culture.

The change process is complex and occurs on a slow base. As Wendt suggests, throughout much of international history, states have lived in the Hobbesian culture. In the seventeenth century, a Lockean culture began to emerge. He argues that European states founded a Lockean culture based on the shared understanding of sovereignty that limited the conflicts. This culture became global despite the process of colonialism. At the time, Wendt believed that in the late twentieth century, the states were in the change process towards the Kantian culture of collective security. Although it was limited to the West and still unsettled there as well, he argued that states were making something new of the international anarchy at the time. Wendt also adds that historically, the states have always had a greater capacity for collective action despite the continuing anarchic structure. (Wendt, 1999, 314.) However, the world appears rather different today than just before the end of the millennium. At the time, it would be challenging to argue plausibly that the world is collectively moving towards a Kantian culture of international anarchy. However, as I later discuss, the EU's discourse entails elements of shared humanity and trust in the international system. Nevertheless, this kind of discourse intertwines with discourses that construct contradicting international anarchy that hint that even Hobbesian type of culture is emerging again in the 21st century.

The idea of the change process is at the very centre of my work. I analyse a small bit of world politics' change process and concentrate on a current global issue. Wendt's fundamental idea that guided my research design is,

Looking at process is important because it is only through the interaction of state agents that the structure of the international system is produced, reproduced, and sometimes transformed. The logic of that interaction at a given moment will reflect the characteristics of state agents and the systemic structures in which they are embedded, but the process of interacting adds an irreducible and potentially transformative element which must be studied on its own terms. (idem. 366.)

In conclusion, the theoretical framework for this study consists of Wendt's theory of constructivism in IR and constructivist approaches to the EU. The focus is to understand better how the EU constructs world politics and capture the EU's position in it. Following Wendt, the main points of materialism and causal explanation are allowed

while giving great importance to discursive practices. Interests, identity, norms, and representations of the Self and the Other, become matters of interest. In terms of methodology, the study subject is approached utilising discourse analysis. This will be further explored in the next chapter.

3. UTILISING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS TO UNDERSTAND THE EU'S POSITION IN WORLD POLITICS

3.1. Discourse analysis and social constructivism go hand in hand

Constructivism is the guiding metatheoretical assumption of my thesis. Already in the designing phase of this thesis, I found myself drawn to how the EU's current position in world politics is constructed and how it may change in the social interaction processes. It was interesting how competing discourses seemed very present concerning COVID-19 vaccinations. Based on my preliminary ideas and the above-referred Wendt's theory, it made sense to commit ontologically and epistemologically to the constructivist paradigm while studying the EU's discourse on the COVID-19 vaccine's global distribution and what it unveils about the state of world politics.

Straightforwardly, discourse analysis is a "close study of language and language as evidence of aspects of society and social life" (Taylor, 2013, 4). The fundamental assumption of discourse analysis is that the social world performs in discourse. Without understanding discourse, it is impossible to understand reality, experiences, or ourselves. Discourse analysis involves an assumption of the constructive impacts of discourse. It does not merely try to understand the meaningfulness of social life but seeks to explore how socially produced ideas were first initiated and how they are maintained. It is about how discourse constructs phenomena and implies that the world cannot be understood separately from discourse. (Hardy & Philips, 2002, 5.) In the context of this study, this means that the EU's position in world politics, world politics, and the EU itself are socially constructed. This understanding opens a possibility to study these social constructions by closely examining the discourse and the representations, presumptions and meanings present in it and, this way, better understand the EU's position in world politics.

At the base of discourse analysis, there is a solid social constructivist epistemology. For instance, that was introduced to social sciences by Berger and Luckmann (1967) in their ground-breaking book *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of*

Knowledge. Their theory on the sociology of knowledge takes that human reality is socially constructed. Berger and Luckmann's ideas of the nature of knowledge also constitute a basic premise for Alexander Wendt's work (see, e.g. Wendt, 1999, 140; 249). As Dreher (2016, 54) explains Berger and Luckmann's work, they argue that the task is to conduct an analysis of the social construction of the world within the dialectical relationship of objective and subjective reality, in other words, to study the social construction of reality. Discourse analysis is a convenient method for this task. It can also be taken that discourse analysis is not only an analytic tool but can also be seen as an academic project that emphasises reflexivity and reminds the academic community of them being part and parcel of the constructive effects of discourse (Hardy & Philips, 2002, 2).

Constructivist epistemology is transactional and subjectivist. This means that the researcher and the study subject are linked, and the researcher understands that their persona also shapes the interpretation. As Galbin (2014, 82) puts it: "Each of us creates our own worlds from our perceptions of the actual world". I cannot assume that my perspectives and empirical experiences would not affect the research at all. As discourse analysis understands, the discourse construction of social realities is interpretative by nature (Hardy, 2001). My study considers this; for instance, the first step is clearly stating this issue. I also offer evidence on how I find the main discourses from my research materials. I wish to highlight that I aim to identify shared meanings, norms and structures, so-called "institutional facts". Institutional facts are facts that require human institutions to exist. They are typically objective facts, meaning that are facts only by human agreement or approval. Speech acts create all these institutional facts. (Searle, 2010, 10–11.) This study focuses on the shared meanings, not at any moment on my personal ones.

John Searle (1995, 62) insists that for some facts to be institutional, as explained above, there must be other facts, such as physical and biological, that are brute. My theoretical framework is compatible with Searle's ideas on the existence of brute facts. In this study, it is not debated whether the material, such as the virus or the vaccinations, are brute facts, but it is taken for granted. They are brute facts. However, I want to highlight that these have different social meanings in different contexts. In Searle's thinking, mental facts can be recognised by individuals or several individuals. If many recognise them, they become social facts that are generally agreed upon. (Searle, 1995, 7–8.) For instance, in the

context of the COVID-19 vaccine distribution, it became a social fact that herd immunity that could be achieved with a higher vaccination rate was desirable for nations as it would help to restrain or even end the pandemic. Later in the process, it became a social fact in the EU that a higher vaccination rate should be achieved globally to hinder the virus from mutating and possibly causing new variants that are more severe.

The constructivism utilised in this study is the so-called Wendtian “thin” constructivism, which recognises the central attributes of materialism and individualism among scientific methods of social inquiry (Mengshu, 2020, 1). This is an important notion as it takes into consideration that discourse cannot be entirely stripped from the broader context. Thus, it is distinguished from the strong social constructivist view, as the analysis has a different emphasis on the combination of text and context (Hardy & Philips, 2002, 5). On the other hand, strong social constructivism would assume that all facts are institutional and that there are no so-called brute facts. The constructivism utilised here is relatively weak than strong, meaning that the understanding is that there are brute facts even if the reality is socially constructed. For instance, the virus and the vaccines are brute facts. An example of a social fact could be that the COVID-19 vaccines should be distributed globally and that the global community has a responsibility to accelerate the process. However, not every individual or community agrees, leading to the conclusion that social facts can be challenged and changed.

Greckhamer and Cilesiz (2014, 425) address the key challenges researchers that utilise discourse analysis face. They call for systematic and transparent analysis, and to their mind, the researcher should warrant appropriate evidence of the study’s rigorous analysis process and knowledge claims. I aimed to tackle the challenge of transparency by documenting the whole process, from my motivation to study the subject and what led to the final research design to the final analysis. To be systematic, I chose to utilise a clearly structured model specially designed to make qualitative analysis more systematic. This model is introduced later in this chapter. I also focus on documenting the analysis procedures closely, leading to a greater understanding of my interpretation of the data.

3.2. Discourse analysis in IR

IR scholars using discourse analysis are interested in the influence of identity, meaning, and discourse on world politics. Discourse analysis, similar to the constructivist theory, has become mainstream in IR. (Aydin-Duzgit & Rumelili, 2019, 290.) There is no shared understanding of discourse analysis in IR; on the contrary, different perspectives from the very beginning (Carta, 2019, 82). As Audrey Alejandro explains, discourse analysis “encompasses different methods that address different disciplinary and theoretical needs”. It represents methodologies compatible with various reflexive and theoretical objectives (Alejandro, 2021, 158).

Discourse analysis entered the stage of IR in the times of the so-called Third Debate. The Third Debate refers to the rationalism versus reflectivism dichotomy (Lapid, 1989) that led to several scholars being inspired by poststructuralist approaches and challenging positivist assumptions. Discourse analysis was used for critical approaches, delegitimising the absolute claims about truth. From the 1990s onwards, discourse analysis became ever more common while constructivist scholars took an interest in it, focusing instead more on the ontological challenges of the discipline. (Aydin-Duzgit & Rumelili, 2019, 287–288.) Discourse is important for social constructivists as it reveals norms and identities that shape, for example, foreign policy by the logic of appropriateness or by shaping interests that, in sequence, shape foreign policy (Diez, 2014, 322). As Aydin-Duzgit and Rumelili (2019, 289) understand, at a general level and with some exceptions, it can be understood that constructivist scholars employ discourse analysis in an interpretative manner rather than critically. Constructivists’ study interest is more to identify structures of shared meanings, whereas critical approaches to discourse analysis take an interest in revealing the dominance and historicity of the discourse. (Aydin-Duzgit & Rumelili, 2019, 289.)

As explained, discourse analysis can be understood as an umbrella term and should not be taken as a coherent approach. On the contrary, As Carta (2019, 100) demonstrates, in the field of IR, there are different perspectives on discourse analysis: it is used in poststructuralist, critical realist, and constructivist approaches. These share some essential premises, such as the commitment to analyse the semantic relations that intertwine material and immaterial social facts. However, approaches have differing understandings

of the relations between material and immaterial, leading to plurality in ontological, epistemological, and methodological takes on discourse analysis. My approach is closest to the constructivist perspective, following Carta's (2019, 87) classification. The ontology, epistemology and methodology follow the paradigm. From the ontological side, the understanding derives from Berger and Luckmann's thinking. They suggest that social reality is taken to refrain from asserting the ontological status of the phenomena analysed (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, 78). From the epistemological side, it is assumed that "observer reality implies ontological subjectivity, but ontological subjectivity does not preclude epistemic objectivity" (Searle, 2006, 55). The methodology allows for combining qualitative methods (Pouliot, 2007). I also combined thematic analysis and discourse analysis as I used the thematic analysis as the first phase when moving on to the actual discourse analysis.

As discussed before, in this study, it is presumed that the actors of world politics construct international anarchy through social interaction. (Wendt, 1992, 424) By taking Wendt's ideas as my support, I share the understanding that discourse can have constitutive and causal effects (Wendt, 1999, 25). Thus, studying discourse is fundamental to understanding the state of world politics and how it may be changing. Wendt (1999, 2) himself refers to this constructivism as "thin constructivism", as the scholars accept causal and constitutive explanations. Employing Wendtian constructivism and discourse analysis allows me to contribute to understanding the EU's discourse implications for world politics. The EU is taken as an actor in world politics that, on its behalf, constructs world politics as well as itself when socially interacting. Employing discourse analysis in the research materials, I aim to provide a macro-level picture of the construction of the EU's position in world politics as well as international anarchy.

3.3. The EU's statements and debates as primary data

As Aydin-Duzgit and Rumelili (2019, 300) point out, any texts selected to be analysed need to be justified to match the research goals. As they explain, typically, IR scholars pick "official speeches, declarations, parliamentary debates, diplomatic documents, interviews, newspapers, and editorials as primary documents". My data consists of very similar types of texts in the EU. To narrow down the data, I chose to concentrate on the EU's outputs and did not include views or perceptions of outside parties, even when I

recognise that the EU's discourse alone does not matter. For instance, Rumelili (2021, 197) argues that the EU's identity also depends on third parties. In this study, the study focus is more on the EU's ways of constructing itself and world politics.

As Larsen (2004, 62) accounts, discourse analysis functions well as a method for studying EU foreign policy, and it has become increasingly popular in that field. COVID-19 vaccinations' global distribution can be considered part of the EU's external action. External action can be understood as a broader concept that also includes the EU foreign policy (Gstöhl & Schunz, 2021, 2). Among other concerns, scholars studying EU external action by discourse analytical approaches highlight how the EU constructs its identity by distinguishing itself from other actors (Carta, 2021, 215). Other forms that discourse analysis has been fruitful for EU external action studies are sustaining inquiry into the constitutive link between identity and foreign policy and the EU's dynamic relationship with the broader context. (idem, 224).

In this study, the EU representation is understood narrowly, including only the EU institutions and bodies. Choosing what to include as "the EU" is somewhat tricky, as member states have independent legal competencies, and the EU's external actions are never solely conducted by the EU's institutions and bodies. (Gstöhl & Schunz, 2021, 2). The data is limited solely to the EU institutions as gathering data on all 27 member states would not have been meaningful to the research task. In this case, the EU institutions' statements are more substantial. From the EU institutions, particular focus is given to the Commission and the European Council as they most often act as the voice of the EU globally. In the European Parliament, most of the data included are from the plenary sessions and resolutions with external dimensions. From the parliament plenary sessions, the focus is on the debates' first statements, which a relevant member of the Commission and the presidents of the biggest political groups of the parliament often hold. These statements can be understood to be directed to a broader audience than the parliament alone. All the institutions have been active on the issue of COVID-19 vaccinations, which also highlights how it has been a matter of high politics.

I collected the primary data from the EU's public speeches, debates, and declarations in the public arena. The focus is on global forums such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN General Assembly (UNGA), and G7. I concentrate on the EU's

statements and communications to answer the research questions and, ultimately, provide an understanding of the EU's construction of international anarchy in the case of COVID-19 vaccinations. I gathered the data by systematically going through the official publications of the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament, the European Council, and the European External Action Service (EEAS), which is the EU's diplomatic service, established in 2011. To ensure neutrality, I included everything that touched upon the COVID-19 vaccinations in the EU's external policies in the first phase. In total, I analysed 163 pieces of EU documentation on global vaccination distribution.

I delimited the data gathering according to the empirics of the evolving situation. The data gathering starts from the successfully developed COVID-19 vaccination approved in the first EU countries in December 2020. The data is restrained to the spread of the COVID-19 variant, known as Omicron, that WHO reported from South Africa in late November 2021 and transmitted quicker to individuals vaccinated against the virus (WHO, 2021). The data gathering concluded in February 2022. As well known, the pandemic did not end by then, even if the Omicron variant was found less deadly. The global focus shifted when Russia started a war against Ukraine on 24 February, which brought profound and diverse consequences such as security, energy, and food crises. Thus, February 2022 is a natural endpoint for the data, as 24 February 2022 marks a start of a new period of crisis with new characteristics.

In this chapter, I first introduced the theoretical considerations of the thin constructivism and discourse analysis they match with. I continued by justifying the data and explaining its limitations and the decisions I made to restrain it. In the next chapter, I explain, more in-depth, how I analysed the 163 pieces of material and found meaningful discourses.

4. ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I first introduce how I conducted the analysis by coding the data and finding themes. Based on the themes found, I discovered five dominating discourses from the research materials. These are the discourse of responsibility and solidarity, the discourse of vaccination diplomacy, the discourse of geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines, the discourse of self-interest and vaccination nationalism, and lastly, the discourse of systemic struggle and the urgency of further integration of the EU. Once I have explained how I identified these discourses, I introduce and discuss them in detail one after another in this chapter.

4.1. Data analysis process

As Michael Briguglio (2019, 63) emphasizes, theoretical and methodological strategies cannot be as complex as the environment they are examining, and this challenge is best tackled with a clear plan for data gathering and analysis. Following his recommendation, I chose to utilise Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases in what they refer to as "thematic analysis" to structure and work systematically. Following a transparent, structured scientific model ensures that I conducted the data analysis systematically, and this, on its behalf, increases the rigour and transparency of my study, which are characteristics that are considered underlying issues of discourse analysis. (Greckhamer & Cilesiz, 2014, 425). I use this thematic analysis model as an initial phase to generate the data. As Juhila (2022) accounts, thematic analysis, similar to coding, can be utilised before moving to discourse analysis. In this process, central characteristics and entities essential to the research aim and representative features of the data are distinguished from the data. In other words, my primary method is discourse analysis, as it best fits my study ambition. Themes are best understood as elements of the discourses. They are a tool to find meaningful discourses from vast material. The thematic analysis model improves my analysis's quality by making it more systematic.

The first phase is to familiarise oneself with the data, transcribe it if needed and reread the data with some preliminary notes on ideas. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 87). As my data

set also includes some videos, I transferred the videos into a verbal form with the help of the official transcript. I chose not to include any other elements from the videos, even if the discourse analysis would have allowed that. The videos are pre-recorded statements of high EU representatives sent on different occasions when the high EU representatives have not been present, as well as some debates from the European parliament due to the pandemic and social distancing. These video statements only include a few elements besides speech acts. The European Parliament debates are translated in real-time; thus, the translations are not always in line with the speaker's tone of voice and expression. For these reasons, I found it most helpful to focus on the words and language in my study.

The second phase is to generate initial codes. I created initial codes for the data. I found the interesting features of the data, and I coded them systematically in the data set. The coded data differed somewhat from the themes or units of analysis that are broader. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 88.) I chose to work manually, as it is the most natural way for me to work on large amounts of information. I went through the data systematically with the chosen research task in mind; how does the EU construct world politics and itself while addressing the global COVID-19 vaccine distribution? In the first reading, I found 91 codes that worked as a starting point for my work to find meaningful discourses.

In the third phase, I sorted the different codes into potential themes. Once I had done that, I moved on to the fourth phase, which was the refinement of the themes that I had found before. This part was done on two different levels. On the first level, I reviewed if the themes chosen would work with the coded extracts, and on the second level, if the themes worked with the entire data set. Based on this work, I defined and further refined the themes I introduce in my analysis in the fifth phase. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 89–93.) In total, I concluded the process with 25 themes that helped me to find the meaningful discourse from the research materials.

As my data set is extensive, utilising the model of Braun and Clarke (2006) helped me to find meaningful parts of it and stay systematic throughout the process. Rereading the data set, coding the text, and finding themes were time-consuming, but they helped me to structure my analysis phase and raise the integrity of the results. Thematic analysis was a step towards discourse analysis to find meaningful entities and characteristics (Juhila, 2022) and conduct the analysis coherently. The themes acted as a tool to identify the

meaningful discourses, as themes are narrower than discourses. Discourse is a significantly broader concept. As Teun A. van Dijk (1997, 1) argues, squeezing discourse into one definition is complicated, as in many cases of complex phenomena. He characterizes discourse as evolving from three main dimensions, language use, cognition, and interaction in their sociocultural context. He also argues how fundamental the context is in the study of discourse (e.g., van Dijk, 2008). Limiting the analysis to merely the themes would have left important notions out of this study and, for instance, not adequately noted the Self-Other images, norms, and world political context.

The table below presents how I identified the found themes in relation to the discourses present in the research materials. The themes are elements of the discourses that I introduce in this chapter.

Themes	Discourses
Common unity of purpose, intergenerational justice, geographical reach, multilateralism, COVAX, vaccine as a global public good, rule-based international order, responsibility	1. The discourse of responsibility and solidarity
Comparisons to other actors, diplomatic gains and losses, significant others, numbers of donations	2. The discourse of vaccination diplomacy
Neighbourhood priority, bilateral partners, articulating the geopolitics of the vaccine distributions	3. The discourse of geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines
Vaccine nationalism, fragmented global vaccine system, prohibition of exportation, the economic power of the EU	4. The discourse of self-interest and vaccination nationalism
Democracies that deliver, systemic tension, showcasing how democracies deliver, HERA, lessons learned, strategic autonomy	5. The discourse of systemic struggle and urgency of further EU integration

Table 2: The themes in relation to the meaningful discourses of the EU

Next, I introduce all the identified discourses in detail, each in one subchapter. In the discussion chapter, I will further develop the idea of Wendt's different cultures of anarchy and the EU's contribution to the state of international anarchy in the COVID-19 vaccination case.

4.2. The discourse of solidarity and responsibility

4.2.1. Establishing a common unity of purpose

When addressing the external audience on COVID-19 vaccinations, especially from the Commission's side, the EU's most repeated discourse concerns the importance of global solidarity to combat the virus together and to ensure globally equitable access to COVID-19 vaccination. Part of this discourse is to construct a common journey to end the pandemic becomes an important part of this discourse. For instance, rhetoric such as “the virus knows no borders” and “the common enemy is the virus” was being used by President von der Leyen and members of the parliament in the plenary sessions while debating the vaccine distribution (European Parliament, 2020b, European Parliament 2021a). The message is clear; there is no other way to end the pandemic than working together and being better prepared the next time. This type of EU discourse aims to unite the world and create a sense of shared destiny. This discourse suggests that a collective response is a way to end the crisis since the world is highly interconnected.

The discourse of solidarity and responsibility emphasises the sense of common humanity during the pandemic. For instance, on the first anniversary of The Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A), Commission President von der Leyen related the EU's actions to the idea of “team human”:

We all mobilised – the World Health Organisation and national governments, UN agencies and philanthropists, NGOs and the pharma industry. Joining forces as a team. As team human. This is the spirit of ACT-Accelerator, and Europe is playing for the team. (European Commission, 2021m.)

The EU officials construct a role of the EU as a leading actor for the common humanity, a moral actor that acts benevolently. As European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides stated in late 2021: “It has never been about Europe first. It has always been Europe for the world.” (European Parliament, 2021f.)

Many EU statements related to the COVID-19 vaccine distribution promote global, multilateral solutions and rule-based order. This discourse also entails that other global challenges, such as climate change and economic development, are equated to the fight against the current and possible future pandemics. The President of the European Council, Charles Michel, even asks for the spirit of the end of the Second World, saying: “Just like after the atrocities of World War 2, visionary leaders came together to build a multilateral model and to strengthen international cooperation.” (European Council, 2021b.) The EU, especially from the European Council’s side, asks for increased accountability and trust in the international system as it is argued to be the only way to recover from the pandemic anywhere. As repeated, “we are in this together” (e.g. European Commission, 2020b, EEAS, 2021h).

In the global forums, the EU statements frame the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to promote multilateralism and global partnerships. For instance, in the EU statement in the second committee of the UN, the EU Ambassador said:

This global shock has tested multilateralism and global partnerships. Yet, it has also offered the opportunity to come together to work towards a more sustainable, inclusive, just, equal, and resilient world. We believe that a global vaccination campaign is a first step in this regard. (EEAS, 2021i.)

Different EU institutions take pride in establishing these partnerships and addresses, especially the ACT-A and COVAX, the vaccine pillar of ACT-A. The European Commission and the European Parliament name stepping up the vaccination distribution through COVAX their priority (e.g. the European Parliament, 2021e, European Commission, 2021u). Although the TRIPS waiver and the IP rights are minorly presented, most EU statements promote COVAX as a tool for global solidarity. It is also a way for the EU to build its self-image as a virtuous actor in world politics.

4.2.2. The EU's responsibility to engage globally

A strong articulation of responsibility forms a part of the solidarity discourse and takes different forms. This leads to an understanding that different actors within the EU see it as their responsibility for other parts of the world, in addition to the European continent. Already in June 2020, half a year before successful vaccines were approved, the European Commission's communication of the EU strategy for COVID-19 vaccines emphasised that

– high-income countries have a responsibility to accelerate the development and production of a safe and effective vaccine and make it accessible for all the regions of the world (European Commission, 2020a).

In December 2020, when it seemed like the EU would have a strong position in the global vaccination market, it had united its power with the member states, and the Commission negotiated agreements. It seemed clear that it would be one of the leading market powers with smooth and rapid access to vaccines. The discourse of responsibility was strong; it included the premise that the EU should help making COVID-19 vaccinations a global public good and ensure their equal distribution. However, when the European Commission bumped into difficulties in distribution, the statements about the EU's responsibility to vaccinate the world toned down. They appeared again stronger when the EU had better access to COVID-19 vaccinations itself.

In February 2021, while the EU was still going through a rough patch on their own COVID-19 vaccination deliveries, the Commission president Ursula von der Leyen stated: "Our responsibility extends far beyond Europe's borders" while addressing the vaccination distribution at the European Parliament (European Parliament, 2021a). Similar outputs have come from all the other institutions as well. For instance, the European Parliament's resolution "recognizes the particular responsibility of the EU in ensuring equitable and universal access to COVID-19 vaccines" (European Parliament, 2021e). The EU's responsibility for the global distribution of vaccines can be interpreted to stem from the position of capacity and wealth as well as the history of the European countries, namely colonialism. Also, the EU's outspoken values, especially human dignity, that it has committed to promoting in its external relations are likely to be part of

the EU's self-image that manifests as a responsibility to be an actor that intends to vaccinate the world.

The discourse on responsibility can be interpreted as an intended norm-building that many EU institutions practised. The EU's solidarity efforts were hoped to spread to other parts of the world. An illustrative example of this is President Michel's wording at the G20 Global Health Summit:

I also support the message put forward by many others is that we need to work hand in hand to ensure equitable and global access to vaccines. This is our shared responsibility. We must be committed to this battle. (European Council, 2021c.)

The EU leaders' aspiration for more responsibility in the international system becomes evident in the case in question. Responsibility would also possibly lead to increased trust in the international system.

Another form in which responsibility is present in the EU's discourse is inter-generational justice. Responsibility for future generations is an important theme. In his speech at the World Health Summit in October 2021, President Michel urged world leaders to "keep in mind the future of our children in the spirit of our predecessors, who signed the UN charter over 75 years ago" (European Council, 2021e) and later that "Our solidarity is ensuring that the world is better prepared will be our legacy that protects our children and grandchildren—" in a joint statement. (EEAS, 2021d). I understand that the intergenerational responsibility derives from the sustainable development requirements to which the EU is formally and very visibly committed. The EU's statements on vaccination distribution include considerations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the statement Towards a new EU Global Health Strategy, the Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides and Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen stated the following:

The lessons must be learnt and we must put the Sustainable Development Goals back on track. Health is the foundation for resilient, equal and just

societies, but viruses know no borders. To secure the health all our citizens deserve, we must tackle health globally, and we must do this together. (European Commission, 2022d.)

This discourse found in the research materials includes construction in which the EU is responsible for promoting sustainable development globally. However, different EU representatives' discourses include that the EU's ultimate responsibility is to its citizens. The understanding is that global engagement is its responsibility and an obligatory measure to protect EU citizens in the COVID-19 pandemic. This widely accepted idea of achieving global herd immunity that would hinder the new variants from emerging and spreading.

The question of the EU's responsibility could be further explored in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, but this cannot be done in the scope of this thesis. However, here, it is important to note that the EU's self-image includes the responsibility of distributing vaccinations globally, and there is a humanitarian imperative. The EU promotes the Kantian type of international anarchy and articulates its responsibility to act for the good of humankind. However, this is limited as the study materials include competing discourses with more characteristics of Lockean and Hobbesian cultures of international anarchy.

4.3. The discourse of vaccination diplomacy

In the different discourses of the EU, it becomes clear that the EU representatives were highly aware of the vaccine diplomacy and the other actors using the COVID-19 vaccinations to gain diplomatic influence. I also identified the EU's discourse of vaccination diplomacy that intertwines especially with the discourse of geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines. The discourses entail similar concerns of the EU losing diplomatic leverage and being viewed less positively by others. However, especially the discourse of vaccination diplomacy entails challenges for the EU's identity as well. As explained, the EU statements in the international forums mostly promote donating to COVAX and vaccination equity. This lives up to the EU's value-based foreign policy. Considering Mälksoo's (2016) notions of the EU being even "obsessed" with its global outreach,

security identity, and international credibility, the vaccination distribution and especially bilateral donations can be seen to be challenging for the EU's identity.

The discourse of vaccine diplomacy is more subtle than the promotion of vaccine solidarity. The pressure of using health diplomatically can be found in the EU statements. For instance, President von der Leyen declared the EU's aim to shape its own health diplomacy in March 2021:

Health diplomacy is now central to a modern European foreign policy. Since the early months of the pandemic, we have worked to shape a European approach to health diplomacy. (European Commission, 2021j.)

Using health diplomatically seems to be reactive to other states' ways of doing that. As President von der Leyen's statement reveals, it is "now central", meaning it was not so much before. The EU has had to respond to the world political situation. The EU's discourse of vaccination diplomacy concentrates on its significant others, constructing the social reality in which what the others gain, the EU loses.

4.3.1. Significant others to the EU: China, Russia, the US, and the UK

As mentioned above, in the data, all the EU institutions compare the EU to the other actors, at least in some of their statements. This discourse's most prominent significant others are China, Russia, the US, and the UK. The EU's own actions are mirrored to them, and the EU representatives construct the EU's self-identity in relation to them. As one may anticipate, the views on China and Russia are less positive in this discourse. The EU's virtue is seen against China's and Russia's poor actions concerning COVID-19 vaccine distribution. A more interesting feature is how the EU is forming its relation to its former member state UK as well as the US. The US, a former absolute superpower, has historically, in many ways, supported establishing the liberal world order after the World Wars (Szewczyk, 2021, 82).

At the very heart of the global vaccination distribution issues, from the EU's viewpoint, is how it did not become recognised for its efforts to vaccinate the world. The frustration is especially evident in President Michel's following statement:

We should not let ourselves be misled by China and Russia, both regimes with less desirable values than ours, as they organize highly limited but widely publicized operations to supply vaccines to others. According to available figures, these countries have administered half as many doses per 100 inhabitants as the European Union. And Europe will not use vaccines for propaganda purposes. We promote our values. (EEAS, 2021c.)

Similar frustration is present in the EEAS' Malaysian delegation publication from July 2021, written as a response to the public debate in Malaysia on global vaccine distribution: "Fact: about half of the EU's total production is being exported" and " – Fact: there is no hoarding or stockpiling of vaccines in the EU." (EEAS, 2021h.) Carnegie Europe's and Open Society European Policy Institute's recent study finds the EU's response to COVID-19 was inadequate in the eyes of the Global South. The EU's strategies were seen as parochial, from stocking the COVID-19 vaccines and opposing the vaccine waivers. This happened among the geopolitical games in which the EU did not manage to "deweaponize" access to healthcare through COVAX. (Balfour et al., 2022.) This discourse also responds the critics on the EU's actions in vaccination distribution. While doing that, it also aims to protect the EU's identity as a virtuous actor.

The quality of the vaccines became a matter of interest and took the form of 'othering' in an interesting way. In 2020, the European Parliament's (2020a) Report on the foreign policy consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak took a rather bold stance on the Russian vaccination, Sputnik V, and raised concerns about its efficacy and the implications of exporting such vaccination:

[The European Parliament] is concerned about the effectiveness and safety of the new Russian vaccine now in use; recalls that the quality of medical products delivered by Russia in some cases was very low and hence ineffective.

Furthermore, it scolds Russia for its vaccination diplomacy and its assertive geopolitical agenda. (European Parliament, 2020a.) In vaccine diplomacy, the EU statements do not take Russia as a major player, but the statements concerning Russia in 2021 and early

2022 concern, first and foremost, the tightening situation in Ukraine and its borders. Health and vaccine diplomacy became important during the pandemic, but the concern of the war in Europe is still at the top of the agenda.

Some countries, such as the UK, the US, Russia, Israel, and China, authorised their vaccines in 2020 earlier than the EU that went through the European Medical Agency's (EMA) approval process. In December 2020, a little before the approval of the first vaccines in the European Parliament's debate on the preparations for the EU Strategy on COVID-19, the Commission ensured that the EMA process is the one to trust. Vice-president and Commissioner for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis Schinas, said: "Europe will only authorise vaccines for our citizens under the sole condition that they are safe." In the same debate, it was highlighted that the EMA is free from any political pressure. (European Parliament, 2020b.) One can interpret that while appraising the quality of the European way of handling vaccination authorisation, the EU's takes the countries that have dealt with the process quicker than the EU as its Others and criticizes their process and the quality of their vaccinations.

As mentioned, the EU adopted a new strategy for its relations with China in 2019. This approach was recalled by Charles Michel while giving his remarks ahead of the G7 summit in June 2021: "The EU's approach is clear: China is a partner, a competitor and potential systematic rival" (European Council, 2021d.) The Commission and the European Council can be interpreted to stay cautious in statements on China regarding the vaccination distribution or the original source of the pandemic. The European Parliament, as usual, is less reserved and, for instance, raises a concern in its report stating the following:

[The European Parliament] condemns the attempts by China to use this 'virus diplomacy' against the EU with the ambition of shaping its global image as a benevolent power. (European Parliament, 2020a).

The EU institutions seem to consider China's health diplomacy a coercive measure. In the vaccine distribution, the EU does not seek China as its partner, but it is given more meaning than a competitor.

The UK was quicker to authorise COVID-19 vaccination than the EU. The pictures of 91-years old Margaret Keenan, the first person to receive a COVID-19 vaccine jab, spread across the social media platforms in Europe in early December 2020, and the vaccine campaign started in the UK, demonstrating how the EU was, indeed, late in comparison. While responding to the criticism and reasoning for the joint purchase of the vaccines, the EU began to define itself compared to the UK. As mentioned before, the EU actors rushed to ensure the excellency of the EMA authorisation process. In February 2021, President von der Leyen addressed the European Parliament about the EU's COVID-19 vaccination strategy, saying that "We, Europeans, have collectively ordered the vaccine in solidarity" (European Parliament, 2021a) which excludes the UK from "Europe". In the same debate, especially the EPP's president Weber criticizes the UK's actions saying that the British gave up on liability principles for the companies while the EU held on to it. The internal question of the European parliament also becomes about the export bans and questioning why the EU should allow exportations to the UK when they do not allow exportations to the EU. (European Parliament, 2021a.) The EU also assures the importance of a healthy neighbourhood in containing the pandemic, implicating that the UK would not be better off before the rest of Europe is vaccinated as well.

The EU and the UK had a dispute over vaccination exports. For instance, the European Parliament named and shamed the UK and the US over their so-labelled export bans and lack of solidarity with the Global South on many occasions. For instance, the European Parliament's resolution from June 2021 includes the following:

[The European Parliament] underlines the need to prioritise supplying COVAX; regrets moves by the UK and the US in developing a secondary re-sale market to sell surplus vaccines to other industrialised countries as well as "– calls on the US and the UK to immediately abolish their export ban on vaccines and raw materials that are required for vaccine production. (European Parliament, 2021c.)

The other institutions focus more on explaining the EU's right way of handling COVID-19 vaccinations, and the comparison to the UK and the US is more subtle but present. The relationship between the EU and the UK is still forming, and the lack of vaccination cooperation highlighted the separation of the two actors. Both can be seen as re-

establishing their identities in the international without one another as a part of it. The US plays an interesting role for the EU in this period of interest. As has been claimed, transatlantic relations have lost their old glory, and this manifested especially during Trump's administration (Szewczyk, 2021, 82).

At the beginning of the vaccine distribution processes, the EU's discourse on the US actions had a disappointed tone. The EU's statements about the US and UK EU-labelled "exportation bans" were used to differentiate their transportation and transparency mechanism from these measures. The transparency and authorisation mechanism for exports of COVID-19 vaccines that was put in place in early 2021 by the EU required explanation for the EU's partners. Comparing the EU's actions to other Western vaccine-producing countries, especially the US and the UK, also hints that it was also about the EU's identity building; it is a virtuous actor in a different way than the US and the UK.

Once President Joe Biden took office, the US became active in global vaccination efforts. In March 2021, President von der Leyen said:

–and we are glad that the US has now joined us, too. COVAX is for all humankind. Everyone can donate, and everyone can benefit from it. (European Commission, 2021j.)

This reflects how the EU, especially the European Commission, aimed to portray COVAX as their initiative. The US joined their efforts and finally took responsibility for what they should have done from the beginning. Also, President Michel addressed the changing administration on a positive note in March 2021:

Along with the US, we will undoubtedly be the largest producer of vaccines for the world. That is why our strategic partnership with the US, which we are currently relaunching with their new administration, is also crucial in the fight against the pandemic. We need them as much as they need us. (EEAS, 2021c.)

However, in May 2021, the EU's discourse on the US actions in WTO was hesitant. In the European Parliament's debate, the US took the form of othering. For instance, the two

biggest groups of the European Parliament, EPP and S&D, took pride in the EU still being more active in exporting and donating the COVID-19 vaccine to other parts of the world than the US, which did not show adequate solidarity. (European Parliament, 2021b).

In September 2021, during the High-Level Meetings of the 76th Session of the General Assembly of the UN in New York, the EU and the US launched a common agenda for beating the global pandemic with several pledges, declaring that the common agenda: “– will showcase the force of a Transatlantic partnership in facilitating global vaccination while enabling more progress by multilateral and regional initiatives.” The two invite the nations that can vaccinate their populations to double their dose-sharing. (European Commission, 2021t.) Since the launch of this agenda, the discourse on the US changed. It became about the US being the main partner for the EU in its global vaccination efforts. The tone became about the EU and the US together for a healthy world, which showcased how the “liberal democracies that deliver”, in President Michel’s words (European Council, 2021b). The EU’s positioning regarding the US in its discourse changed from scolding them to being the primary partner and joint leader of the world in solidarity efforts.

4.4. The discourse of geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines

As already noted, the identified discourses of the geopolitics of vaccines and vaccination diplomacy are interestingly intertwined. I understand this is mainly because power politics has returned to world politics (see, e.g. Haukkala, 2020). Diplomacy is more often conducted in a challenging, even hostile environment where geopolitics, in Wendtian terms, Hobbesian culture, is more present. Thus, they entail similar elements, such as concerns about their global influence and image. I take these are discourses that are reactive to the world powers’ actions. If the EU is to keep up with the tensioning world politics, it is likely to adopt this sort of geopolitical discourse in the long term as well. This would mean that geopolitical discourse becomes closer to the EU’s diplomatic discourses. As I found in my analysis, they have already come closer to each other. In comparison, the discourse of vaccine solidarity is more about the EU being proactive and aiming to promote its values in world politics.

From the EU's statements, it becomes evident that at least the high officials buy into the understanding of the geopolitisation of the COVID-19 vaccines. Already in January 2021, Commissioner Kyriakides stated that "Vaccine donations will be the central geopolitical issue of 2021. Europe will not shy away from its moral and political responsibilities." In the same statement, she adds that the EU's vaccination campaign speaks "—about how a united Europe can play a strong geopolitical role with its belief in humanism, solidarity and multilateralism." (European Commission, 2021d.) Aaltola et al. (2021, 6) see that the EU's call for vaccination solidarity works at least partly "in tandem" with its geopolitical interest. This can at least partly explain the interesting entanglement of the discourses of vaccine solidarity and geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines, as noticeable in the statement above.

The EU representatives from all the institutions regularly articulate ideas related to the geopolitics of vaccines, especially in the first half of 2021. Still, in the latter half of 2021, in the annual speech of the State of the Union, President Von der Leyen highlights the vaccine inequality and raises solving it as the priority for the EU:

Our first and most urgent priority is to speed up global vaccination. With less than 1% of global doses administered in low-income countries, the scale of injustice and the level of urgency is obvious. This is one of the great geopolitical issues in our time. (European Parliament, 2021d.)

The discourses of vaccination equity and geopolitics intertwine in a highly interesting way. If the humanitarian imperative of vaccination equity, in Wendt's terms Kantian project, is not met, there will be geopolitical consequences that leads to a more Hobbesian kind of culture in international relations.

The EU high officials also articulate the concern that a huge disparity in vaccination distribution will affect the international order. For instance, in his opinion article, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP) Josep Borrell is concerned about the global implications of vaccine inequality leading to a more volatile state of the world:

If the vaccination gap persists, it risks reversing the trend in recent decades of declining poverty and global inequalities. Such a negative dynamic would hold back economic activity and increase geopolitical tensions. (EEAS, 2021g.)

This statement implies that failing to create a more just system will lead to geopolitical consequences. It constructs the general understanding that promoting Kantian-type international anarchy is needed so the world would not slide back to the Hobbesian world.

Vaccination distribution is given a geopolitical meaning in this discourse. It concerns the EU's position in world politics, the general state of the world, and the growing geopolitical tension. In the COVID-19 vaccinations case, it can be seen that not receiving the vaccination when most needed leads to economic losses. This was because vaccines were often the key to opening societies after social distancing that included significant disruptions for businesses' normal functions. Thus, vaccination was also regarded as economically important. Increasing poverty and inequality can lead to negative dynamics in the world. Poverty and inequality destabilize societies. For instance, Johan Galtung (1994) argue that poor societies are caught in cycles of poverty, ill health and violence. Besides the humanitarian suffering, the negative dynamics caused by the vaccination gap would also lead to unstable regions and possible conflicts. On the other hand, this leads to more threatening Other -images, creating a negative circle when the Other also increases caution towards the Self.

In its statements, the European Commission is aware of the number of doses it delivers outside its borders and compares these numbers to those of other states. In April 2021, while President von der Leyen was visiting the Pfizer manufacturing plant in Belgium, she noted that the EU is in the top three of delivering vaccines, after the US and China. (European Commission, 2021n). When addressing or communicating the EU's global solidarity in vaccine exportations, the EU uses data on its exportations and donations. In September 2021, Manfred Weber, President of the European People's Party (EPP), stated: "Today, neither the Chinese nor the Americans are ahead with the COVID vaccines, but we are. So let us use our know-how right now." (European Parliament, 2021d.) The EU representatives can be seen to wish to be regarded as the leader of the solidarity efforts in vaccination distribution, a geopolitical winner, perhaps?

4.4.1. The geographical emphasis in Western Balkans and Africa

The discourse of geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines includes an element of geographical distribution. Although the EU discourse gives great importance to COVAX, as for them, it ensured equal distribution of the vaccine, it also held on to the possibility of donating some of its vaccines bilaterally. Some EU countries, including Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Latvia, clearly preferred bilateral donations over COVAX (de Bengy Puyvallée & Storeng, 2022, 4). The bilateral sharing was mainly for Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries. A similar notion has been made by Aaltola et al. (2021, 5). They find that although the EU declared its readiness for global vaccine solidarity, the EU's geopolitical interest and global solidarity are aimed at its neighbouring countries.

The European Commission statements often mention the EU's neighbourhood without defining it. However, at least in the case of the COVID-19 vaccine, it has most often referred to the actions in Western Balkans and secondarily to the Eastern Partnership. The geographical focus of the bilateral donations has been in the Western Balkans, and the vaccinations delivered there have given a political meaning of the region being important to the EU. In the EU's discourse of vaccination diplomacy, also other regions that rely on vaccine deliveries have been recognised. Africa is given the second priority after the EU's neighbourhood, and Latin America has been noted as a region in which the EU has not been able to be as active as it should have been. There is a minor tone of the EU hoping to be more present in the Indo-Pacific. The EU's discourse on vaccination diplomacy hints at the EU seeing the world in blocks.

Especially Western Balkans was given importance in the EU's discourse, highlighting how the EU had previously helped the region with medical equipment. Ana E. Juncos' (2021) article on Carnegie Europe argues that the COVID-19 pandemic added to the EU's enlargement policy problems in the Western Balkans, where China and Russia have used vaccine diplomacy to strengthen their geopolitical roles. She argues that despite the EU's ability to deliver to the Western Balkans after its difficulties in the first quarter of 2021, harm was already done to the EU's reputation in the region. She anticipates that this will lead to further problems in the EU's democracy promotion efforts and the EU's credibility and give authoritarian powers the possibility to strengthen their influence in the region.

The EU's discourse on the Western Balkans can be taken to be reactive to this challenging context in the region.

When Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi, gave remarks in April 2021, when the first deliveries of EU-funded vaccines arrived in the Western Balkans, he repeatedly mentioned that the EU is giving the vaccinations because the EU cares about them: "I think this is a very important contribution from the European Union and this must be taken as an extremely important sign that the European Union and its Member States do care about this region." (European Commission, 2021l.) Soon after, he travelled to Tirana, Albania, with the same message:

I am travelling to the Western Balkans to pass a clear message: We care! We care about our partners, and we care about their healthcare workers and the most vulnerable. The delivery of the vaccines confirms our continuous commitment to provide support, as we have been doing since the outbreak of the pandemic. Stronger together! (EEAS, 2021f.)

Similarly, President von der Leyen ensures that "The European Union stands by our partners in the region, who have been looking to us for support." (European Commission, 2021k), recognising that the EU has been the direction the Western Balkans have turned to in handling the pandemic.

In the case of the Western Balkans, also the discourse on the EU enlargement appears when Commissar Várhelyi stated: "We care about the Western Balkans whose future is in the European Union." while stressing the importance of this gesture saying, "–Despite the current global shortage, the EU will deliver life-saving vaccines for the Western Balkans." (European Commission, 2021k). My interpretation is that the EU has the strongest geopolitical discourse on Western Balkans, while in other cases, it prefers to point out other actors' behaviour in vaccination diplomacy. Suppose the EU wishes to keep up with the development of tensioning world politics. In that case, as mentioned, it is most likely to adopt this kind of geopolitical discourse that emerged in the research materials in the future. While doing that, it also contributes to the type of international anarchy where the power rivalry is an institution which, on the other hand, might make

practising its value-based external actions more difficult. This would most likely have implications for the EU's identity as well.

The EU's discourse of vaccine diplomacy occasionally touches upon the difficult situation of vaccines in Africa. The dominating discourse on Africa is about the structural problem. Africa imports 99% of its vaccines. The EU's discourse on the partnership seems to respect the EU's goal of a balanced partnership. For instance, in the EU-Africa Global Gateway Investment package, the basic premise that the EU states is: "The European Union supports the African Union's goal for 2040 to manufacture locally 60% of the vaccines used on the continent." Similarly, Commissioner Urpilainen stated: "We have heard our African partners: the challenge now is to accelerate the roll-out and uptake of vaccines on the ground and to respond to other needs of the COVID-19 response." (European Commission, 2022c.) EU institutions adopt a discourse on the African continent in which the EU has a supporting role. However, Africa also becomes a matter of geopolitical interest.

The EU's programs aim to enhance local manufacturing in Africa and create partnerships. Supporting local manufacturing is given much importance and is connected to the EU's discourse on inhibiting future pandemics and similar vaccination disparities. In May 2021, announcing 31.€1 billion Team Europe initiative on manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines, and health technologies in Africa, Commissioner Urpilainen comments on the initiative "Born from a key lesson learnt from this pandemic, this initiative incarnates the spirit of solidarity and mutually beneficial partnerships that the EU promotes" (European Commission, 2021o). As President Michel and President von der Leyen comment in their joint statement: "Beyond 2022, it is not just about sharing vaccines, but it will be also about developing manufacturing capacity in Africa." (European Commission, 2021r.)

The EU's discourse also highlights the wish to present, in supporting role in Africa beyond the acute phase of COVID-19 as a strategic partner. On the other hand, supporting African manufacturing is the EU's way of constructing its self-image. In the UN General Assembly, in the High-Level Debate on Galvanising Momentum for Universal Vaccination in early 2022, President von der Leyen stated in her intervention:

Already this year, we will build two factories in Rwanda and Senegal, to manufacture mRNA vaccines. Beginning in 2023, the vaccines will be sold at not-for-profit prices, exclusively to African countries. They will be made in Africa, for Africa, with world-class technology. (EEAS, 2022a.)

This “world-class technology” assumably comes from the EU, demonstrating that the EU is not entirely free from the post-colonial discourse.

In the research materials, the geopolitical focus is first on the EU’s neighbourhood, especially the Western Balkans and the African continent. Other regions appeared in the minority of the discourse. For instance, Latin America and the vaccine diplomacy practices of other regional actors are a matter of concern to the EU. In the European Parliament’s 2021 annual report on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy adopted text, the wording is as follows:

[The European Parliament] urges the EU to recover its position as the preferred partner of Latin American countries in view of other geopolitical actors occupying increasing space in the region, especially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine diplomacy. (European Parliament, 2022.)

The EU also assures that it is ready to work with its regional partners (EEAS, 2022a). However, Latin America plays a minor role in the EU’s discourse, reflecting the acknowledgement of the EU’s limitations that it finds in its ability to influence the world.

It is notable how little the EU institutions address the Asian vaccination situation. The region is mainly covered while addressing the COVAX initiative and the EU’s contributions to it. However, the EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have established a vaccine dialogue. Concerning it, the EU states about the cooperation:

We stand for vaccine cooperation instead of vaccine nationalism. We stand for vaccine multilateralism and resolutely oppose the waving of vaccine promises in return for political favours. (EEAS, 2021a.)

This statement is dated to the beginning of 2021, when the global shortage of vaccines was the highest. By stating that the EU does not take political favours for vaccines, it becomes to point out that there are actors who do that in the region.

In November 2021, President von der Leyen participated the Global Town Hall at the invitation of the Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia. In her speech, she highlights that the EU has been an essential part of Asian vaccine supplies, although it is a far-away continent. She also presents that the EU “Europe wants to be your partner in ending the pandemic and strengthening the world’s health infrastructure for the future.” as well as “Europe wants to be more present and more active in your part of the world.” (European Commission, 2021x.) The EU seems to realise that this is not possible at this time, which leads it to further contribute to the construction of world politics, in which the world is divided into blocks.

4.5. The discourse of self-interest and vaccination nationalism

4.5.1. Discourse on vaccination nationalism

The EU’s vaccination campaign had a rocky start in early 2021, causing criticism of the EU’s slow action compared to, for instance, the UK and the US. As previously explained, the EU did not receive the vaccine from AstraZeneca as ordered, and there were issues with the process of the new vaccines and the new technologies. I understand that during this supply shortage, the EU’s discourse on vaccination distribution had characteristics of vaccination nationalism. However, it should be noted that the discourse of global solidarity and the importance of COVAX never disappeared, but it did tone down.

In early January 2021, President von der Leyen ensured that “We’ll have more than enough safe and effective vaccines for protecting all Europeans.” (European Commission, 2021a), and the Commission press release stated that “Should all vaccines candidates turn out to be safe and effective, the Member States have the possibility to donate part of their doses to lower- and middle-income countries.” (European Commission, 2021b.) These statements disclose that the European Commission was, on its behalf, reconstructing the norm of vaccination nationalism; the vaccines were for their citizens. Others would come once the European citizens were vaccinated.

On the 29th of January 2021, the European Commission announced its transparency and authorisation mechanism for exports of COVID-19 vaccines. Executive Vice President of the European Commission for An Economy that Works for People Valdis Dombrovskis stated, “The protection and safety of our citizens is our priority. And the challenges we now face have left us with no other choice but to act.” and “We need to be efficient and ensure vaccines reach people across the EU.” The statement did, however, include that the EU also honours its humanitarian commitments. (European Commission, 2021g.) President von der Leyen addresses the measure articulating that: “Protecting the health of our citizens remains our utmost priority, and we must put in place the necessary measures to ensure we achieve this.” (European Commission, 2021g.) Before releasing the Commission measures, Commissioner Kyriakides stated, “The European Union will take any action required to protect its citizens and rights.” (European Commission, 2021f). I take this as some form of “Europeans first” -discourse that also reflects on vaccine nationalism and awakens the EU’s discourse of power and even interpreted coercive economic measures.

The statements disclose the idea that once the EU is vaccinated, it commits to global solidarity. For instance, in January, the Commission set out key actions for a united front to beat COVID-19. President von der Leyen stated:

We have already secured enough vaccines for the entire population of the European Union. Now we need to accelerate the delivery and speed up vaccination. (European Commission, 2021c).

This was the discourse at the end of November 2021, when the shortage of supply in Europe was long gone. The basic premises of vaccination nationalism construction build up in this manner. The priority is that Europeans get vaccinations first, but the European Commission is willing to contribute to the rest of the world just when its citizens are vaccinated first. I interpret this as an element of constructing self-interest and vaccine nationalism.

The utmost motivation is self-interest, which can be taken as an institution in international relations. For instance, when constantly giving reasons to fight the pandemic and ensuring

equitable vaccination distribution globally, the EU used its self-interest as an argument on multiple occasions. The EU's mantra "no one is safe until everyone is safe" also reflects that the main reason for speeding up the global vaccination roll-out is a question of self-interest. It is about hindering the new variants from emerging, which would also protect the EU citizens. This self-interest in controlling the virus is also articulated in regularly by all the different EU institutions. (e.g. European Commission, 2021e & x, European Parliament, 2021g.) This discourse reconstructs the institution of self-interest.

As explained, the European Commission entered the vaccine market as a common front. The EU's joint contracts on vaccines, APAs, were the means to bind the member states together in the challenging situation where there was a severe supply shortage and the market was challenging. An interesting nuance is how President von der Leyen rationalises the joint purchase. While addressing the European Parliament in February 2021, she argued that without the joint acquisition of the vaccines, the bigger member states would have rushed to the vaccines, ultimately breaking up the community (European Parliament, 2021a). This hints that the fundamental zero-sum idea of world politics also concerns the Member States themselves. However, the Commission also gives the joint purchase an economic meaning from the very beginning of forming the joint purchase:

It creates solidarity between all Member States, irrespective of the size of their population and their purchasing power. A pan-EU approach will increase the EU's leverage when negotiating with industry. (European Commission, 2020a.)

This leads to the next question of interest, how the EU framed and constructed its economic means in this case of the COVID-19 vaccine.

4.5.2. Discourse of the economic power of the EU

The economic power of the EU became apparent in its discourse in variable ways. First, when the EU did not receive the doses that the European Commission had ordered, the discourse became about how the EU had pre-financed the vaccine development and its production and expected to see the return. The message was clear from all the institutions;

they wanted to see contracts fulfilled. (European Commission, 2021f, European Council, 2021a, European Parliament, 2021a.) The frustration with the companies and lack of respecting the APAs led to the Commission establishing a COVID-19 vaccine export authorisation mechanism. This authorisation system requires the companies to notify the member state authorities about the intention to export vaccines produced in the EU. Shortly after, the EU further explain the mechanism for its partners. For instance, the EU repeats that the measure is not an exportation ban (EEAS, 2021b & c, European Commission, 2021h) and states that the UK and the US, on the other hand, had established export bans while the EU kept the exportation flowing (EEAS, 2021c).

As explained, the EU's discourses of solidarity and vaccination equity aim to gain recognition for the EU's proactive role in combatting the pandemic. A repeating theme is how it founded the ACT-A in cooperation with the WHO. Almost without exception, the EU's statements and communications include the number of EU vaccination donations, and the notion of the EU being the largest distributor of COVID-19 vaccinations in the world once reached the position. This how the EU's discourses intertwine; the EU is a benefactor but also searching for recognition for this self-image. However, the EU's discourse also recognizes that only funding COVAX is not enough but enhancing the global vaccination distribution requires solving obstacles and bottlenecks (European Council, 2021e).

The EU is committed to vaccination solidarity through COVAX (European Council, 2021b). As previously explained, another global initiative to increase vaccination equity proceeded in WTO in the form of the TRIPS waiver, which the EU did not support first-hand but preferred the COVAX facility. The EU mentioned its efforts to COVAX whenever it discussed the global vaccine solidarity or the TRIPS agreement and IPR in general, leading these two to appear as competing roads to vaccine equity. The European Council repeatedly stated that they did not believe that intellectual property would be "a silver bullet" (European Council, 2021b & c).

The European Parliament, especially the groups from the left, had a more positive attitude toward the TRIPS proposal. Also, Vice-President Schinas stated that the Commission ensured in late 2020 that "intellectual property rights are not an obstacle to universal access to vaccines" (European Parliament, 2020b.) This discourse repeats. To the EU, the

IPR should not be an obstacle but, on the contrary, enable innovation in the future as well. The European Commission's communication on urgent trade policy response on TRIPS from June 2021 stated:

The rapid development of several safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines has shown the value of intellectual property, in terms of the necessary incentives and rewards to research and innovation.

and ensure that “–the role of intellectual property will continue to be essential.” (The European Commission, 2021q.)

In the scope of this thesis, the importance of the TRIPS discussion is that the EU has reconstructed its position as an economic power. The views and narratives on European integration and its first steps vary, but historically the EU is an economic actor. The Union has strong roots in economic cooperation and mutual benefits, creating prosperity and peace. The European Parliament resolution in June 2021 emphasises “that the protection of property rights, including intellectual property rights, is a constitutional obligation of the European Union and its Member States”. (European Parliament, 2021c.) This self-portray the economic power of the Union and implies contributing to the institution of power politics, or perhaps more accurately, geo-economics.

4.6. The discourse of the systemic struggle and the urgency of further integration of the EU

The idea of a systemic struggle was part of the EU's discourse on many occasions. The European Parliament report on the foreign policy consequences emphasises that the pandemic is “triggering systemic tensions of global governance with far-reaching and long-term consequences for international relations” (European Parliament, 2020a). HR/VP Borrell's analysis of the European foreign policy in the times of COVID-19 highlights the EU's increasingly difficult positioning in world politics between the US and China:

The third block is about the global battle between the US and China, which will have consequences for Europe because this power struggle is being

waged through battles over trade, technology, and standards. It raises questions about our positioning and the meaning of strategic autonomy. In fact, this global battle is being used to define where and how Europe can position itself in this new polarity. (EEAS, 2021e.)

In the case of vaccine distribution, this systemic struggle becomes evident in the EU's discourse, especially when EU institutions promote their preferred global governance.

In the European Council Statement on the 10th of June 2021, ahead of the G7 Summit, President Michel said, "First, to support and promote a rules-based international order, and to demonstrate that liberal democratic societies are the best equipped to address the challenges" (European Council, 2021d). President von der Leyen also strongly defends the liberal democracies' ability to handle the pandemic and gives the successful vaccination campaigns a meaning of demonstrating the superiority of the democratic systems. She starts her State of the World -address by inculcating this:

There is a question lingering out there since the start of the pandemic: Are our democracies strong and fast enough to face the incredible challenge of COVID-19? Can democracies deliver? I have no doubt. The pandemic has not only demonstrated our democracies' ability to act, but it has also shown that democracies are the more powerful, the more resilient and the more sustainable form of government. (European Commission, 2022b.)

Once the vaccination supply of the EU is on track, this type of rhetoric repeats. The success of vaccination campaigns is given the meaning of being a great example of well-functioning democratic societies. For instance, the idea of a successful vaccination campaign acting as an example of a democracies ability to deliver is evident in President Von der Leyen's statement: "From our united response in the face of external threats to our European vaccination campaign, we demonstrate every day that our Union and democracies deliver." (European Commission, 2021ä).

The EU reconstructs the relationship with the US as its main ally for the liberal democracies and 'the free world' once the two take on vaccination distribution and donation cooperation. In President Michel's words:

By joining forces, we will demonstrate that liberal democracies, supported by science, collective intelligence and value-based international cooperation, are most effective in overcoming a huge crisis such as the current pandemic. (EEAS, 2021c.)

However, the EU's discourse also distinguishes its actions from the US. For instance, President von der Leyen's State of the Union -speech highlights how the EU has gone through its path in its vaccine strategy:

We followed the science. We delivered to Europe. We delivered to the world. We did it the right way because we did it the European way. And it worked! (European Parliament, 2021d.)

The theme of the systemic struggle hints that the EU constructs itself as having diminishing leeway in the international system. It focuses on defending the position of liberal democracies by taking the successful and morally well-handled vaccination campaigns as its showcase. Another discourse related to the systemic tension is the EU's urgency to further the integration to respond to the threats and challenges the Union faces. This is analysed next.

4.6.1. Urgency of the EU's further integration

The discourse on further integration plays a noticeable part in the EU's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This aligns with the old idea of Jean Monnet, a "founding father of the EU", that articulated that: "Europe will be forged in crisis and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises". As a side note, the European Union Recovery Instrument, Next Generation EU, a more than 800 billion euros temporary recovery instrument that includes the first-ever EU's joint loan, speaks for the deepening integration in response to the crisis. Concerning health and vaccinations, the main areas where integration would be needed in the discourse are preparedness, strategic autonomy, and the European Health Union, all bringing the EU tighter together to enable a better response to the threats. As stated by Vice-President Schinas: "This crisis can be a catalyst

for furthering European integration in the areas where it is most needed” (European Commission, 2021s).

The European Commission launched The Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) Incubator to prepare for the emergence of variants. The objective is to

- detect new variants, provide incentives to develop new and adapted vaccines, speed up the approval process for these vaccines, and ensure scaling up of manufacturing capacities. (European Commission, 2021i.)

While launching this initiative, Commissioner for the Internal Market Thierry Breton commented: “This is not only about short-term fixes: it will contribute to a higher level of autonomy in the area of health in the near future for our Continent” (European Commission, 2021i). HERA was given credit once the Omicron variant started to spread in late 2021, ensuring the EU citizens that this time the Union is better prepared (European Commission, 2021z).

The European Health Union is another topic the EU raises in its discourse on the integration urgency as a crisis response. For instance, when the Omicron variant starts to spread and alarms the EU, the Commission prompts, “The European Parliament and the Council should adopt the full European Health Union package and the Council the HERA crisis regulation as a matter of urgency” (European Commission, 2021y). Similar discourse on the importance of the European Health Union as a response appeared already before (European Commission, 2021s). Even though the Health Union has not yet been in place, Commissioner Kyriakides brings up the topic at World Health Summit: “We are building a strong European Health Union, in which all EU countries prepare and respond together to health crises.” (European Commission, 2021w.) This can be interpreted as an intention to lead by example or to portray the EU as a united and strong actor. At the same World Health Summit, President von der Leyen also announces that the HERA’s horizon will be greater than the EU, and the goal is to have international counterparts (European Commission, 2021v). The EU’s discourse reflects its wishes to export its models to spread to other parts of the world. The self-portrait could be labelled as “leading with example” or “spreading best practices”. “Leading with example” can also be seen in its discourse on global vaccine distribution, exporting every other vaccine outside its borders.

An additional relevant feature in the COVID-19 vaccine distribution is the emergence of the Team Europe -approach. HR/VP Borrell addressed the origin of Team Europe, stating that combining the resources from the EU, the member states, and financial institutions such as European Investment Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development was necessary to “support partner countries in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences” (EEAS, 2021e). Team Europe refers to the EU together with its member states. At the beginning of 2022, President von der Leyen stated, “As Team Europe, we have exceeded our vaccine-sharing target in 2021. Because we will only control this global pandemic if we fight it in every corner of the world.” (European Commission, 2022a). Stating that the EU’s and its member states’ work needs to be more visible indicates how the EU has yet to get its message through, but it must be further brought up. This connects to the idea that the EU lacks recognition for its solidarity efforts.

The contributions to COVAX and the investments are stated to be from Team Europe efforts (e.g., European Commission, 2021a & 2022c.) The portrayal is that Team Europe has been essential in solving the pandemic from the very beginning of the global response. Team Europe is also affirmed to be a lasting institution: “You can continue to count on Team Europe’s commitment. We are here for the long haul. We are here until we end the pandemic everywhere”, as President von der Leyen states at the Gavi COVAX Advance Market Commitment Summit (European Commission, 2021p). Team Europe was born to help the EU coordinate its global COVID-19 response. At least to some extent, it can also be seen as a step forward in integration in the EU’s foreign and development policy field. The following is stated on the EEAS webpage:

In a changing geopolitical context, Team Europe is about establishing a leading role on the global stage, protecting our interests and promoting our values. Team Europe is also about branding EU interventions and creating more visibility. (EEAS, 2022b.)

The emergence of Team Europe is part of the EU’s reaction to the growing tension in world politics. This could be taken as the EU’s way to keep up with the tensioning situation and to recreate its image.

In the next chapter, I discuss the different discourses of the EU in more detail, considering them in relation to Wendt's cultures of international anarchy and its implications for the construction of world politics.

5. DISCUSSION – HOBBSIAN, LOCKEAN AND KANTIAN WORLD POLITICS OF COVID-19 VACCINES

At the beginning of this process, I set two main research questions for this study: “How do the EU institutions construct world politics and the EU itself while addressing the global distribution of the COVID-19 vaccinations? and “what do the emerging discourses disclose about the position of the EU in world politics?” My third, analytical, research question: “How are Alexander Wendt’s different cultures of international anarchy present in the EU’s discourse on COVID-19 vaccinations distribution?” is best understood to complement and help structure the analysis to respond to the two first ones and to relate the discourse analysis to international relations and world politics’ debates. In this discussion chapter, I convey my answers to these research questions.

The analysis details how the EU is trying to find its voice in the tightening situation in world politics. The expectations for the EU’s actions are controversial and perceptible in its different discourses. The struggle evident in the EU’s discourses is how the EU could push for global solidarity and vaccine equity while protecting its economic interests and keeping the EU citizens as a priority in the vaccination order. In a way, the EU policies that actualised global vaccination distribution responded to this dilemma. The promotion of COVAX and representing it as a tool for global solidarity did not change the dynamics of the pharma industry and let the EU citizens be first in line to get the vaccine shots before the countries that could not acquire the vaccines as quickly. However, COVAX allowed the EU to promote global solidarity regardless. This actualised outcome feels rather natural when examining the competing discourses and the expectations that the EU’s discourses recognise.

The story of COVID-19 vaccination distribution is highly different if one observes it from within the EU or from the EU’s external relations perspective. From the diplomatic and external relations -perspective, it seems clear that the vaccinations should have been distributed equally at a global scale as fast as possible. It would have been positive for the EU’s representation and helped reverse the geopolitical tension that the vaccination gap possibly causes. All of the above would perhaps have enabled the EU to function in

world politics more effortlessly, making especially the Global South less keen on buying into the negative narrations of the Union. At the same time, looking at the vaccination distribution from inside the Union, it becomes clear that there was pressure to deliver for the EU citizens at a fast pace. Delivering vaccines to Europeans was, after all, a question of unity, as president von der Leyen herself stated (European Parliament, 2021a). It was keeping the Union together and sending a clear message to the citizens of the Commission, delivering contradicted with the actions that the global vaccination equity would have required to be successful and timely. The two discourses clashed, ultimately causing an outcome that contributed to the institution of vaccination diplomacy and self-help but also promoted global solidarity through COVAX. Aaltola et al. (2021, 6) have made a similar observation in a Finnish Institute of International Affairs briefing paper, noting that the EU may have to compromise unity as the EU's vaccine restrictions have raised a question of where the member states' solidarity lie; in the global world or within the EU? This is also an identity question in many senses.

In the chart below, I present the discourses found and to which type of culture of world politics they mainly contribute to in Wendt's terms. However, social realities cannot be treated with such straightforward methods. The chart should not be taken as a strict categorisation but as a way to open views to different dimensions of social realities. As noted, in my study, the discourses are intertwined and bring each other forward in complex ways. For this reason, this is not a categorisation as it would not be feasible nor appropriate to place them under one sole type of anarchy. I wish to emphasise that the state of world politics is most likely a mix of various kinds of cultures. I chose to utilise Wendt's different cultures as a backbone as it helps to find meaningful patterns and help analyse the social realities, but it only works as a tool in my work. For these reasons, the chart should be understood as a tool to structure the discussion, not a strict categorisation.

Discourse	Culture of anarchy
The discourse of responsibility and solidarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kantian common humanity and humanitarian imperative • Kantian increased trust in international system • Kantian intergenerational justice • Kantian geographical reach • Lockean rule-based international system
The discourse of vaccination diplomacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lockean vaccination diplomacy • Lockean/ Hobbesian comparison to other actors • Lockean /Hobbesian significant others
The discourse of geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hobbesian geopolitics of the vaccines • Lockean/Hobbesian means of responding to geopolitics
The discourse of self-interest and vaccination nationalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hobbesian/Lockean economic power • Hobbesian vaccination nationalism • Hobbesian institution of self-help
The discourse of the systemic struggle and the urgency of further integration of the EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reaction to the institution of power politics strengthening

Table 3: The discourses found in the research materials in relation to Wendt's cultures of anarchy

The discourse of responsibility and solidarity included the EU's self-portrayal as a force for good, an actor that has the responsibility to contribute to other regions' vaccination supplies as well. The EU's intention that becomes evident in this discourse is increasing trust and responsibility in the international system. In a way, this discourse could be understood to contribute to the Kantian type of international anarchy, where the friendship between the states is open-ended; it is about trust and cooperation (Wendt, 1999, 299). This is limited, as, for instance, vaccination equity was often treated in self-interested

terms, especially when the promotion of it was reasoned by hindering the new variants from emerging. This idea included the fundamental idea of the EU's security. Another reason for the imperative to share the vaccinations globally was the geopolitical competition the EU recognised and had to respond to.

The discourse of solidarity and vaccination equity also appears in the protection of the EU's self-image, much related to the Union's outspoken value-based external policy. Who would the European Union be if it only ensured its citizens' vaccinations? As noted, in a crisis of the time, the EU still has discourse that promotes global solidarity and sees that it has a responsibility to act outside its borders. On a more negative note, the actualisation of its actions cannot be seen to have succeeded very well. For instance, according to a recent study, the EU did not appear to be a credible partner to others. The study finds that this was in many ways due to the intentions of trying to balance contradictory aims to value-based external policy. In the Global South, the EU's strategies were seen as parochial, from stocking the COVID-19 vaccines and opposing the vaccine waivers. (Balfour et al., 2022.)

Whereas the discourse of responsibility and solidarity may lose credibility due to the contradictions to other competing discourses, such as vaccination nationalism and the discourse of geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines, this discourse has the most potential when the EU promotes and indulges partnerships and rule-based international order. The EU has a long history of promoting both, and it can be seen as part of the EU's identity that is not actively questioned. Part of Wendt's (2003) thinking is that the world government is inevitable. As explained, the discourse of responsibility and solidarity emphasises the common humanity and the common destiny of humankind. This discourse contributes constructs on its behalf to the world government or, at least, the strengthening of world governance. Also, intergenerational justice and sustainability perspectives could be linked to this strain of thoughts. The discourse entails that these measures are needed in order to humankind to collectively survive global disasters, such as the pandemic in this case.

Partnerships and the promotion of rule-based international order contribute to a more stable international system where the EU's fundamental values are respected. The partnerships also have a geopolitical meaning in the EU's discourse, and for this reason,

they include an assumption of Lockean rivalry, where there is no deep trust between the partners. As explained, in 2021, when the global vaccination distribution was a question of high politics, the EU's discourse of geopolitics and, interestingly, vaccination diplomacy as well, entailed that the EU was aware of the importance of showing solidarity to its partners in its neighbourhood in geopolitical terms. This is, first and foremost, a question of rivalry in the international system that also the EU constructs, even if it is not in line with its interest. In this process, the EU mirrored its actions in COVID-19 vaccination sharing against a backdrop of vaccination-producing states that are not its member states. This othering can be interpreted to be part of the EU's identity-building process. It is used to ensure the EU itself and others that it is a virtuous actor.

The discourse of geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines entails a perception of the consequences of failing to act in solidarity in vaccine distribution. The discourse hints that failing to provide a Kantian system of solidarity will lead to geopolitical tension characterised by Hobbesian culture in which the Other takes the form of an enemy, and the Self is insecure (Wendt, 1999, 263). As Sami Moisio (2008, 80) notes, geopolitical approaches are often linked to identity politics that are dominated by approaches that are dominated by Hobbesian culture. As the EU's solidarity efforts are also linked to the threat of rising geopolitics and vaccination diplomacy also includes elements of power competition, it can be interpreted that the underlying culture is, in fact, closer to the Hobbesian characteristics than one might think at first.

The discourse of vaccination nationalism and self-interest was especially evident in the first half of 2021 when the EU established the transportation authorisation mechanism. The most evident discourse of the time contributed to the self-help institution in world politics. Especially the Commission statements included the "Europeans first" -premise, where the vaccination deliveries to other parts of the world would occur once the EU was vaccinated. This contributes to the institution of self-help. It also shifts the EU identity away from the basic premise of it being a force for good. An interesting question is, would the EU have been able to hold on to this type of identity in the first place regardless of the pandemic?

The discourse of systemic struggle and urgency of further integration of the EU tell a story of the tensioning situation in world politics that deepening integration would be a

response to. The birth of “Team Europe” can be taken as a response to this hardship situation in which the EU operates worldwide. The creation of “Team Europe” can be understood as a sign of the EU’s craving for more recognition of the EU’s actions during the COVID-19 pandemic that it takes that it has not received. This leads to a perception that the EU’s general understanding is that its partners perceive it less positively. The EU seems to sense its perceived shortcomings in the COVID-19 vaccination distribution. As mentioned, the EU did not manage to “deweaponize” access to healthcare through COVAX (Balfour et al., 2022). Taking the responsibility to “vaccinate the world” also exposed the EU to large-scale criticism when the expectations could not be met.

Whether the EU promotes the Kantian type of international anarchy in any other context but within the Union is questionable. This is due to the EU’s promoting vaccine equity in self-interested terms and using the vaccine distribution to respond to the geopolitics of the vaccine distributions. However, the Kantian type of international anarchy is noticeable, for instance, when the discourses entail the ideas of intergenerational justice and common unity. The EU also reproduces the norm of vaccine nationalism, at least to a certain extent, contributing to the understanding of the COVID-19 vaccine market as a battlefield in which the institution of self-help is evident.

All the above can be understood as the EU’s identity crisis caused by the pressure of its outspoken value-based external action that makes it even more challenging to behave accordingly in the current context. Paradoxically, adopting the discourse of geopolitics seems necessary in order to promote the EU values, but this, on the other hand, shifts the EU’s perceived identity away from being a benefactor and promoter of global solidarity. At the time, world politics is continually becoming more volatile. Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine has further accelerated the situation. In the context where the EU has diminishing leeway, it is most likely to be able to protect its interest and values if they are not too extensive and if they are not contradictory to one another. I anticipate the EU institutions will adopt more discourses that contribute to the Hobbesian kind of international anarchy, self-interest, and caution towards the Other. The Kantian type of international anarchy will most likely be reserved for participants of European integration.

In this chapter, I have discussed my findings from the analysis in more detail and with Wendt's cultures of international anarchy. In Wendt's terms, I understand that the discourses entail elements from all three cultures of anarchy. This speaks to the limitations of analysing through Wendt's categories. The different cultures are ideal types; thus, the actual discourses are more complicated. However, they are convenient instruments for identifying the Self-Other -representations and the implications that these have for world politics. Although it cannot be unambiguously stated in which kind of culture we are living now and in which direction we are definitely going, it helps to make notions of the world political situation. This kind of analysis most likely bears policy relevance as it enables to structure and analyse the complex social processes and nuances of world politics. This can be assumed to help contemplate beneficial future policies and better understand the different dimensions of the EU's external activities. This study can also bring insights for future research investigating the EU in a crisis environment.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE AVENUES OF RESEARCH

In this last chapter, I will briefly conclude my study by presenting the central findings. I also convey my ideas for future avenues of research. In this thesis, I have presented a discourse analysis of the EU's global COVID-19 vaccination distribution. Studying this historical process through the EU's discourses offers insight into the EU's self-construction as well as the construction of world politics.

The COVID-19 pandemic offers multiple study topics for future studies on the EU. In this study, my objective was to create a view of the EU's construction of world politics and itself in the case of COVID-19 vaccination distribution. While conducting the analysis, I noted that this topic could be dismantled into smaller fragments to focus on constructing certain issues. To my mind, especially vital topics would be what implications the "Team Europe" -image entails and what implications did the EU not favouring the TRIPS waiver on COVID-19 vaccinations include. It would be essential to gather more information on how others have constructed the EU during the pandemic, as the data for this study was solely the EU's statements and views.

In this study, I found five main discourses of the EU in this matter of interest. These are:

1. The discourse of responsibility and solidarity
2. The discourse of vaccination diplomacy
3. The discourse of geopolitics of COVID-19 vaccines
4. The discourse of self-interest and vaccination nationalism and
5. The discourse of the systemic struggle and the urgency of further integration of the EU.

These unfold different sides of the EU's self-construction and construction of world politics. They are partly competing and, in many senses, highly intertwined.

I understand that my study provides a picture of the EU's challenging situation where it feels pressured to respond to the rising power politics and struggles to hold on to its identity as a force for good. Power politics can be understood to have been reproduced in the EU's discourse on vaccination policies. The underlying cautious Other-images allude to the Hobbesian type of international anarchy. In addition to promoting vaccination

equity through COVAX, the EU's discourses also entail the primacy of the EU citizens' vaccinations, which made practising its value-based external actions challenging. This complexity led to the EU not being perceived as a reliable partner, leading to more difficulties in practising its external relations, responding to power politics, and promoting the EU's values that are actively challenged, namely by Russia and China. I suggest that this process also leads the EU to question its identity. In the study materials, it seems like the EU still wishes to hold onto the self-construction of a virtuous actor that has responsibility outside its borders but senses the pressure to respond to geopolitical tension. The EU's discourses also include the concern about the vaccination gap leading to further geopolitical tension. The idea behind this is that failing to promote peaceful and just policies externally will further exhilarate power politics. However, the EU seeks to find ways to cooperate and create mechanisms that increase trust in the international system. The EU's discourse on multilateralism and the rule-based international system, as well as the arguments to further European integration, seem a response to the tightening state of international politics in which the institution of power politics is evermore present.

Lastly, an interesting question is, is the COVID-19 pandemic a turning point in world politics or merely a continuation of what was already happening? At least from a European perspective, the COVID-19 pandemic and the vaccination distribution are, in the end, less of a turning point than Russia starting a war in Europe. This makes it even more challenging to estimate which part of world political changes are due to the war and its consequences and which parts are due to the pandemic. As Daniel W. Drezner (2020, 19) notes, the COVID-19 pandemic to be an inflexion point, fundamental components such as the distribution of power, calculation of interest, and social constitution should be transformed. Kathleen McNamara and Abraham Newman (2020, 60) argue that the pandemic exacerbates the underlying trends. The COVID-19 pandemic is not the main source of the tension in areas such as climate change and inequality. However, the pandemic exacerbated the trade-offs and made the challenges governing a tightly connected world salient. I understand that the pandemic is possibly an accelerator but not necessarily a dramatic turning point. I would suggest that the pandemic has the potential for more significant world political changes, or at least changes in the EU's position if enough attention is not paid to the Global South and Global North -gap during and after the pandemic. If the EU is continuedly perceived as unreliable or unjust in the eyes of its

partner, the EU will have increasing difficulties in its external relations. I understand that this would also most likely lead to an identity crisis within the EU as other actors mirror the EU less positively.

For the EU, the pandemic emphasised the need to practice coherent and realistic external relations. It must aim for fewer contracting discourses in the global forums. The EU could strive to emerge as a pragmatic and reliable alternative for other world powers. However, despite the EU's significant number of external activities and some independent competencies, it is still a compromise of 27 independent nation-states with some unique characteristics and interests in their foreign policy. For this reason, as this study also shows, one should not have too many hopes and expectations of the EU being the balancing factor in world politics.

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