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# **HOW DOES MULTILATERALISM OCCUR IN GLOBAL CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS?**

The common principles and values behind the COP26  
negotiations

# ABSTRACT

Venla Toivanen: How does multilateralism occur in global climate negotiations? The common principles and values behind the COP26 negotiations.

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The global climate governance architecture consists of both public and private actors addressing the issue of climate change, aiming to decrease pollution's causes and impacts. This architecture has been inadequate in reaching this goal and also fragmented, largely due to multiple actors in it. One of the most central institutions in the global climate governance architecture is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The ultimate goal of the UNFCCC is to prevent the severe human intervention with the climate system. Then again, the Conference of the Parties (COP) is the Convention's primary decision-making body and the focus of this study.

The aim of the research is to contribute to the discussion of multilateralism as well as to the global climate negotiations and to analyse the relation between them. The research question is the following: "How are the values and principles of multilateralism reflected in the COP26 speeches?". The idea to look at the principles and values of multilateralism draws inspiration from Julieta Zelicovich's research. The COP26 was the annual Conference held in 2021 in Glasgow. The COPs in general have also been important in communicating and raising awareness about the urgency of the climate change. Multilateralism is a specific type of international cooperation referring to coordination of national policies in groups of states. This happens without giving attention to the state parties' specific interests or the strategic difficulties possibly occurring. Multilateral cooperation is an ambitious one to achieve but its "rigidness" can also make multilateral negotiations' results more durable. It is said that global cooperation is necessary to answer our global issues and climate change is at the moment one of the most severe and urgent one. The topic of this research was motivated by that. Multilateral cooperation was chosen because it is often referred to in the political speeches but at the same time it still remains somewhat ambiguous.

The method of the research is content analysis, more specifically conceptual analysis with the help of coding. As data, I use speeches of states and the EU representatives held at the COP26 (89 in total). In practice, the analysis for this research was done by first identifying a set of chosen concepts (23 in total) from the theory of multilateralism, representing in particular principles and values. Secondly, the speeches were read and the concepts were identified in the speeches. The analysis was done based on this.

On the basis of the concept analysis, successful multilateralism seems possible, but it is not without challenges. Although cooperation is seen necessary, the states are still reluctant to share their national sovereignty. Climate change all in all is seen as a security threat which we need to tackle together with solidarity and equity. The level of ambition varies between states. In the end, resilient and reciprocal arrangements for the issue of climate change are needed with multilateral cooperation part of this solution.

Keywords: Climate change, COP26, UNFCCC, Multilateralism, Cooperation, Principle, Value

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

As suggested in the podcast “Rauhaa vai Utopiaa – Monenkeskisen yhteistyön loppu?”<sup>1</sup> multilateral cooperation is one of the most central principle of international relations. Although it has been stated in many studies that global cooperation would be needed for an effective response to climate change<sup>2</sup>, many actors have done the opposite by their unilateral acts. For instance, the USA leaving the Paris agreement under Trump’s administration and the fact that there are many countries that have not ratified common agreements such as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). The point of departure of this research is that it is beneficial to analyse the relation between multilateralism and global climate negotiations, in this case in the context of the COP26-negotiations. COP, also referred as the Conference of the Parties, is the annual United Nations climate conference, and COP26 was held in Glasgow in 2016. This research draws inspiration from studies that suggest that the elusive concept of multilateralism can be operationalized through an analysis of values and attitudes<sup>3</sup>. The COP26 negotiations are here analysed in order to see whether there are any common principles and values related to multilateralism and after that what this means to the general state of multilateralism in the COP26 negotiations is evaluated.

The aim of this research is to contribute to the discussion of multilateralism as well as to the global climate negotiations and to analyse the relation between them. This is expected not only to increase understanding of the topic but also to possibly give some suggestions concerning the negotiations. As mentioned by John Ruggie<sup>4</sup> there has only been little detailed analytical attention towards multilateralism and thus it should be studied more. Although Ruggie’s claim is from decades ago, the concept still remains quite elusive<sup>5</sup> in relation to the frequency it is referred to in the discourse of international relations and cooperation more in general. The goal of this thesis is to contribute to the discussions about multilateralism, which, as said, is an important part of the international relations and discussions about the rules-based global cooperation.

The research was done by firstly getting familiar with the theory of multilateralism and then defining concepts that are frequently occurring in and central to the theory. Secondly, I conducted a content analysis searching for those concepts in a set of COP26 speeches. Thirdly, I evaluated numerally and

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<sup>1</sup> CMI X The Ulkopolitist 2023

<sup>2</sup> Keohane & Victor 2016

<sup>3</sup> Zelicovich 2022, Belyi 2014, 326–327

<sup>4</sup> Ruggie 1992, 565

<sup>5</sup> Has many definitions of which some are very wide and abstract containing various values and goals. More in the following chapters.

in terms of content how these concepts and, thus, multilateralism appears in the speeches. The research question in this research is the following: “How are the values and principles of multilateralism reflected in the COP26 speeches?”. On this basis, I also analysed what these findings mean for multilateralism and how they represent the pros and cons of multilateral cooperation. All of the concepts representing the principles and values of multilateralism were found in the speeches either implicitly or explicitly except for the concept of national sovereignty. The speeches highlighted the need for international cooperation and it was often connected to equity, solidarity and efficiency. On the basis of the analysis, multilateral cooperation seems possible but certain, and the known, challenges remain.

The structure of the thesis is the following: Next, I will introduce the global climate governance as a wider framework of this research as well as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and COP thus contextualizing the case analysed. After that the theory of the thesis, multilateralism, is introduced. After a chapter on the ethics of this research, the research data and methodology are described. This will introduce the concepts used in the analysis, describe how the analysis is done and also give an idea of the challenges of this research. Then I will move on to the analysis and results of the research by answering to the research question and giving numerical and verbal analysis on the concepts chosen. Finally, I will conclude by explaining the further implications of this research and give suggestions for further research topics.

## **1.1. Global climate governance**

Climate change refers to ““a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.”<sup>6</sup>” It has been increasingly recognized as a problem since the 1980s when climate change was accepted as a political issue in climate governance. In 1990s climate change was institutionalized first through the adoption of the UNFCCC in 1992 and after it the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. In 2000s the protocol was ratified, and its implementation process developed further.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> IPCC 2018: Annex 1: Glossary

<sup>7</sup> Biermann et al. 2010, 2

The global governance architecture has no universally agreed definition. That said, Biermann et al.<sup>8</sup> define it as

The overarching system of public and private institutions – that is, organizations, regimes and other forms of principles, norms, regulations and decision-making procedures – that are valid or active in a given issue area of world politics. Architecture can thus be described as the meta-level of governance.

As there is no single agreement on the definition of the global governance there is no single theory explaining it either. In Harris' book<sup>9</sup> multiple theories are said to describe it such as political science, sociology, economics and law. International relations is however one of the most central ones. Aykut et al.<sup>10</sup> cite Hale's argument that global climate governance consists of four pillars: mitigation, adaptation, climate finance and non-state initiatives such as the Non-state Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA) portal. The goal of effective, stable and long-term climate change governance is said to be creating a path for new ways of consumption and production that would lead to less carbon emissions or to lead adaption to a substantially warmer world.<sup>11</sup>

The climate governance architecture is described as fragmented, complex, inadequate and overlapping. Firstly, Biermann et al. claim that all global governance architectures are somewhat fragmented.<sup>12</sup> In the case of climate governance architecture, the fragmentation derives from multiple factors. Biermann et al. claim that a particular type of actors and institutions have increased their role in global climate governance which are non-state actors and more widely the governance beyond the state. In addition, these new actors include "public actors beyond central governments", for instance provinces, cities or intergovernmental bureaucracies. Concretely this means a long list of purely private actors including environmentalist groups, scientific networks and business associations. These actors have a growing significance in rule-setting institutions regulating certain sectors or in market-based mechanisms, for instance emissions trading. In other words, climate governance is no longer the domain of states and intergovernmental cooperation alone.<sup>13</sup> Instead, the current climate governance architecture is increasingly affected by the public-private partnerships, meaning networks of different societal actors and civil society organizations.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Biermann et al. 2010, 16

<sup>9</sup> Harris 2021, 11

<sup>10</sup> Aykut et al. 2021, 523

<sup>11</sup> Biermann et al. 2010, 1

<sup>12</sup> Biermann et al. 2010, 17

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 312

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 313

Zelli<sup>15</sup> argues that while there are many new actors in climate regime the UNFCCC still stays at the centre of it. However, the “UN climate regimes’ compliance system” does not include or has not sufficiently specified all the policies and tools connected to climate actions or emission reduction, for instance in trade related issues the World Trade Organization (WTO). This explains the existence and role of other, sometimes overlapping, institutions in the climate governance architecture.<sup>16</sup> As said the climate policy is a “cross-cutting policy domain” having connections to for instance energy policy, development and agriculture in addition to trade. Since this is the case, governance also varies: each governance system draws on different mechanisms and tools to have an impact on relevant actors and functions. It can mean voluntary, soft-law practices, or more traditional and enforced hard-law regulations.<sup>17</sup>

Aykut et al. argues global climate policy has undergone a change that has led to “an incantatory system of governance”. This means that the governance has

--Ritualised and repetitive dimensions of global climate governance, with its annual meetings and recurring calls to urgency and action (Little 1995), as well as to the theatrical dramaturgy of climate summits and their filiation to the ‘society of spectacle’<sup>18</sup>

In addition, the global climate policy nowadays is said to reach for a flexible system that combines voluntary pledges by public and private actors – the pledge and review system – and binding transparency and reporting rules for states. Before the policy was more about producing and enforcing binding reduction targets.<sup>19</sup> Aykut et al. emphasizes the importance of COPs too, which is the topic of this research:

UN summits, which attract new actors and issues into the climate arena, play an important role in this progressive extension of the thematic scope and symbolic reach of climate governance<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Zelli 2017, 677

<sup>16</sup> Biermann et al. 2010, 81–84

<sup>17</sup> Aykut et al. 2021, 533

<sup>18</sup> Aykut et al. 2021, 520

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Aykut et al. 2021, 528

COPs or Climate Action Summits are essentially about communicating on the urgency of the climate crisis, highlighting the economic and social benefits of climate action and showcasing existing efforts—especially corporate climate action—to address the crisis<sup>21</sup>.

Biermann et al.<sup>22</sup> argue that the level of fragmentation is connected to the perceived scale of the problem. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that climate governance is strongly fragmented and may become even more so.

Many new initiatives include the United States, which has rejected the Kyoto Protocol; most are not or only loosely linked to the UN climate regime; and the compatibility of some norms and principles with those of the core institution is often ambiguous at best<sup>23</sup>.

Climate governance is said to have three types of fragmentation: synergistic, cooperative and conflictive fragmentation, from which the cooperative fragmentation fits the climate governance architecture best. The institutional core of the climate governance architecture has similarities to synergistic fragmentation. The climate convention at the architecture's core is ratified by almost all states and appoints many fundamental principles. The convention also provides international assistance with data collection, administrative support and policy development.<sup>24</sup> Conflictive fragmentation can be seen in the new initiatives –for instance by the USA- are only loosely, if at all, linked to the UN climate regime and its norms and principles. As said the cooperative fragmentation seems to describe the climate governance best. This means that an increasing amount of organizations, arenas and regimes address the issue of climate change and even if the relation of these institutions remains somewhat ambiguous it is largely cooperative.<sup>25</sup> The fragmentation that characterises the climate governance can also be discussed in other terms. For instance, Zelli et al.<sup>26</sup> also address the question of institutional complexity as in diversity of institutions and the role of private actors there as a “hybrid multilateralism”.

However, fragmentation has both negative and also positive traits. It may create more opportunities for non-state, sub-state and “laggard” actors – that for instance have not ratified the Kyoto protocol

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 531

<sup>22</sup> Biermann et al. 2010, 17

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 22

<sup>24</sup> Biermann et al. 2010, 20

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 22

<sup>26</sup> Zelli et al. 2017, 669–670



yet – to participate, and fasten the process by circumventing the possible deadlocks of bigger forums. Still fragmentation may function so that it benefits only particular interests or add the risk of forum shopping.<sup>27</sup>

Harris argues that despite its international and multiple efforts, the current global climate governance has been inadequate in answering to the serious problem of climate change. If the goal has been to reduce the causes and impacts of pollution, Harris states, then the climate governance has been a failure.<sup>28</sup> Thus, it is necessary to look at the reasons, or pathologies, explaining climate change. As a first group of pathologies, it is said that the sovereign nation-states that are too centred on “protecting and promoting” their national interests. Second problem can be found in states’ national politics. Third pathology is the human nature that is for instance linked to consumerism.<sup>29</sup> On top of the complexities found in the climate governance architecture, the aim of addressing the issue of climate change is a big challenge in itself.

The literature also gives some suggestions and future-scenarios for the climate governance architecture. Biermann et al.<sup>30</sup> suggest that the most effective option would be a strongly integrated architecture. This, however, is not the most realistic one, perhaps. Thus the second best option would be “a well-coordinated web of institutions” that would include a better functioning division of labour for both the climate-related institutions and also for institutions in different issue areas.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Biermann et al. lists options where in the international institutional environment this governance could go into. The governance would be under the UN climate regime, in cross-institutional collaboration or in other international organizations. Most suggestions are said to be linked to the UN umbrella. This goes well with the general claim of the study that despite some of the positive impacts of the institutional fragmentation, it is of utmost importance to strengthen the UN regime as the primary institution in addressing the issue of climate change<sup>32</sup>.

Other suggestions regarding the climate governance architecture are that the governance should be effective, efficient and equitable.<sup>33</sup> In addition, it is argued that the climate governance should better include other important topics that have not traditionally been connected to climate change.<sup>34</sup> Harris

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<sup>27</sup> Biermann et al. 2010, 309

<sup>28</sup> Harris 2021, 3

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 4–8

<sup>30</sup> 2010, 309

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 319

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 321

<sup>34</sup> Aykut et al. 2021, 535

gives a more overarching suggestion that the climate governance has to lead for structural changes, end the status quo and include mitigation, adaptation or a combination of these two.<sup>35</sup>

On top of this, Harris argues that most policies regarding climate change should be seen holistically and as intertwined components for the wider effort to make climate governance more efficient.<sup>36</sup> Harris has 20 policy recommendations. Among these are international agreements on for instance decarbonisation, energy subsidies, electrification, climate security and human rights; regulations on transportation and housing policies; as well as other policies and subsidies promoting wellbeing of and ecological way of life for both individuals and for the society.<sup>37</sup>

What comes to the future of climate governance, Harris paints a picture of multiple options. One end of this spectrum is said to have climate governance that will only go backwards and a return to “business as usual”. The other end of this spectrum would be the opposite in which the pathologies and other causes of the climate crisis are taken seriously into account and it would have efficient implementing tools and policies as solution for these challenges.<sup>38</sup> Harris’ guess is that climate governance is probably not able to solve the crisis in the near future but it could prevent things from getting worse.<sup>39</sup>

## 1.2. Background: What is COP?

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is

a framework for international cooperation to combat climate change by limiting average global temperature increases and the resulting climate change, and coping with the impacts that were, by then, inevitable.

On top of that, it is a central part of the global climate governance architecture as explained in the previous sub-chapter. In 1992 countries joined the UNFCCC treaty and by 1995 the negotiations were launched to accelerate the global response to climate change. The Kyoto protocol that legally binds developed country Parties to emission reduction targets was adopted in 1997. The Convention has nowadays 197 Parties and the Kyoto Protocol has 192 parties to it.<sup>40</sup> The ultimate goal of the UNFCCC is to prevent “the ‘dangerous’ human interference with the climate system”.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Harris 2021, 4

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 219

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.219–227

<sup>38</sup> Harris 2021, 228–229

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 232

<sup>40</sup> UNFCCCa

<sup>41</sup> UNFCCCb

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is

The supreme decision-making body of the Convention. All States that are Parties to the Convention are represented at the COP, at which they review the implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts and take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the Convention--.<sup>42</sup>

The first COP was held in 1995 in Berlin<sup>43</sup> during which annual meetings were decided. After the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, the COP in 2007 held in Bali gave a timetable for negotiations to reach a new international agreement replacing the Kyoto that would include all countries. In 2009 the COP in Copenhagen validated the 2-celsius objective. After that, COP16 held in Cancun created the Green Climate Fund, in COP17 in Duncan all countries agreed to begin to cut emissions and in COP18 the extension of Kyoto Protocol was discussed, however, this was not agreed by all.<sup>44</sup> In Lima in 2014 all of the countries agreed to “develop and share their commitment to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases” for the first time. The 21st COP in Paris is famous for adopting the Paris Agreement that would “keep the global warming below 2-degrees above pre-industrial and continue the efforts to limit it to 1.5 degrees”. COP22 strengthened previous decisions and the first CMA<sup>45</sup>meeting was held. The COP23 was held in 2017 in Bonn with following topics: the Paris Rulebook and Talanoa Dialogue, which for instance highlighted the role of indigenous people and women. The COP24 in Katowice left the Article 6 unresolved despite the fact that it was one of the most important articles of that meeting.<sup>46</sup> The COP25 conference had trouble with most of its “major negotiation issues”. However, it succeeded in the implementation of a global Gender Action Plan.<sup>47</sup>

The COP26 (UN’s Climate Change Conference in 2021 in Glasgow) was held to bring different parties together to “accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The goals of the meeting were to “secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1,5 degrees within reach”, “adapt to protect communities and natural habitats”, “mobilise finance” and “work together to deliver” which also relates to multilateral thinking<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> UNFCCCc

<sup>43</sup> UNFCCCa

<sup>44</sup> For instance the USA, China, Russia and Canada

<sup>45</sup> The decision-making body for the Paris Agreement

<sup>46</sup> Acciona

<sup>47</sup> De Rafael 2019

<sup>48</sup> UKCOP26

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its annual Conference of the Parties (COP) have been the central multilateral actors in the topic of climate change and environment.<sup>49</sup> However, as also seen above, their track record has not been that successful. Legally binding treaties and significant concrete impacts are still missing<sup>50</sup>. Still UN and its organs are said to be the decision making place since it is “the only legitimate multilateral forum for concluding a global deal”.<sup>51</sup>

The UN (and the whole multilateral climate policy) has its challenges that have been partially addressed with multilateral climate negotiations. One of the arguments is that the COPs are too big of negotiation platforms: because there are hundreds of states involved the interests are varied and the decision making ineffective.<sup>52</sup> Thus it has been suggested that climate negotiations should move to smaller groups. The question remains how to select the representatives, since for example the role of smaller and most vulnerable states is also very central. They may often be more ambitious than the average, not to forget non-state actors as well.<sup>53</sup> However, within smaller groups the decision making could be quicker. In addition, the smaller groups would only be an addition to the UN’s negotiation since, as stated, it is the only platform with legitimacy needed.<sup>54</sup>

Other suggestion for more effective climate multilateralism is to study and address the national preferences and traits better since they impact on how the negotiations will proceed.<sup>55</sup> In other words, to know whether the countries participating to the negotiations are capable and motivated enough to agree on further agreements. Keohane and Viktor have also ideas about the proceeding of the negotiations:

The coordination–cooperation distinction also suggests how progress could be made on climate change. If the toughest problems are tackled first, deadlock is likely to result. It is crucial to move from shallow coordination towards deeper cooperation, while at the same time creating the conditions for favourable political coalitions within countries.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Keohane & Viktor 2016, 570

<sup>50</sup> Eckersley 2012, 24

<sup>51</sup> Winkler & Beaumont 2010, 650

<sup>52</sup> Keohane & Viktor 2016, 570

<sup>53</sup> Eckersley 2012, 33

<sup>54</sup> Winkler & Beaumont 2010, 651

<sup>55</sup> Keohane & Viktor 2016, 570–572

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 572

The task is not easy: the climate negotiations should bring out politically feasible but scientifically ambitious goals that are legally binding.<sup>57</sup> Keohane and Viktor argue that since no single negotiation strategy will be effective enough, multiple actions “regime complex” should be enforced. This could include for instance “universal agreements with legally binding targets and timetables”, climate clubs and pledge and review process.<sup>58</sup>

There are also some ethical problems with UN’s climate negotiation processes. They often come down to two issues: the relation between developing and developed states with climate actions and whether and how the actions are actually taken. Even though the UNFCCC follows affirmative multilateralism, in which the asymmetries of states are balanced via differentiated responsibilities, the developing states still have an unequal position in the negotiations.<sup>59</sup> The negotiation processes should be equal and transparent. However, the level of ambition still remains low because of many reasons such as that the climate actions are not seen politically beneficial or other states are not expected to follow the lead.<sup>60</sup> Although, as the time goes, these actions become more urgent and even politically and business-wise desirable.

In this research, I chose to focus on the global climate negotiations because we urgently need common rules and procedures through which to limit our emissions and tackle the issue of climate change. The COP26 is especially interesting since its global scope and timeliness. As a UN negotiation it at least represents inclusiveness, non-discrimination and collaboration<sup>61</sup> thus relating well to the idea of multilateralism as well. When compared to the EU’s external climate projects for instance, it is more of a project where all actors – states mostly – contribute and not a top-down process in which one actor tells the others what to do. At least on some level the COP26 can be seen as a succeeded global climate negotiation and thus it would be interesting to research multilateralism in that kind of a context.

The United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Glasgow from 31 October to 13 November 2021 (COP26) was many things: a global media event, a leaders’ summit, a negotiation marathon. While governments expressed disappointment that the Glasgow Climate Pact did not meet all of their objectives, and others, especially in civil society, decried the conference as a failure because it did not provide the definitive solution to the

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<sup>57</sup> Keohane & Viktor 2016, 573; Winkler & Beaumont 2010, 640–641

<sup>58</sup> Keohane & Viktor 2016, 573–574

<sup>59</sup> Eckersley 2012; 31, 34–35

<sup>60</sup> Keohane & Viktor 2016, 571–573

<sup>61</sup> UKCOP26

climate crisis, in reality COP26 was one of history's more productive COPs. It delivered outcomes that advanced the intergovernmental climate agenda and showed that multilateralism can succeed when there is sufficient political will.<sup>62</sup>

COPs have in the past decade become 'global moments' distinct from their origin as traditional negotiation meetings. The huge array of activities held in parallel to the formal meetings showcase climate action, raise awareness and feature the launch of concrete initiatives to reduce emissions and adapt.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Kinley 2022

<sup>63</sup> Kinley 2022

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: WHAT IS MULTILATERALISM?

From reading different studies it becomes quite clear that, first of all, global cooperation is needed to tackle a variety of issues and, secondly, there are multiple ways of organizing this cooperation. For instance, Robert Keohane and David Victor claim that it is unlikely that one type of action will be globally sufficient and thus a variety of actions should be taken to reach efficient global cooperation. Keohane and Victor's article "Cooperation and discord in global climate policy" provides several suggestions: climate clubs, technological solutions, and creating economic benefits or public goods that would address the public good of climate change.<sup>64</sup> Keohane and Victor's other text also provides suggestions that a climate change regime complex would be a better solution than any politically possible comprehensive regime.<sup>65</sup>

Global world can be governed in various ways, including via multilateral cooperation. Knud Jorgensen and Katie Laatikainen<sup>66</sup> suggest the following:

1. Unilateral state action within territor bound to reduce vulnerability or adopt external standards to enhance competitiveness
2. Unilateral action by powerful states and blocs to affect the actors of states, firms and NGOs outside their territories
3. Regional cooperation to increase policy effectiveness
4. Multilateral cooperation on a global level, forming international regimes to govern globalization
5. Transnational and transgovernmental cooperation to govern globalization in ways not involving coherent state action. Sum of these is likely to be "fragmented and messy as the global governance now."<sup>67</sup>

They also list few functions that are usually included in well working global regimes: the regimes are created out of necessity, at the right time and on common interests and they are directed to future not the past. In addition, they inform different actors and coordinate the diverse interests.<sup>68</sup>

Multilateralism is a specific type of international cooperation and it has many definitions. Given this, it is important to give a broad overview of the concept of multilateralism so that it can be evaluated and analysed. Multilateralism can be understood both as a means and as an end.<sup>69</sup> Ruggie's definition of multilateralism is widely used. He defines multilateralism as coordination of national policies in

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<sup>64</sup> Keohane & Victor 2016, 573–574

<sup>65</sup> Keohane & Victor 2011, 7

<sup>66</sup> Jorgensen & Laatikainen 2013

<sup>67</sup> Jorgensen & Laatikainen 2013, 259

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 291-296

<sup>69</sup> Ruggie 1992, 413

groups of three or more states on the basis of certain principles of ordering relations among those states. This happens “without regard to the particular interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence.”<sup>70</sup> Zartman and Touval also use the definition by Lisa Martin, who observes “that avoidance of large transaction costs in bargaining is an important explanation of why multilateralism is employed even by large states.”<sup>71</sup> For small states, they argue, multilateralism can be seen as a way to increase their global role.<sup>72</sup> In addition to that, Zartman and Touval<sup>73</sup> remind that no state strategy is pure and thus multilateral acts often have some unilateralist or isolationist traits as well. “But multilateralism reveals why cooperation and competition cannot be so separated. Cooperation can be used and often is used to compete”.<sup>74</sup> Cox argues that multilateralism can be examined from two standpoints: “as institutionalization and regulation of established order or as the locus of interactions for the transformation of existing order while in practice it is both.”<sup>75</sup>

In practice multilateralism can, but does not necessarily, take its form in international orders, regimes or institutions.<sup>76</sup> Thus the organizational options for multilateral cooperation are quite varied like in international cooperation in general. Multilateral organization is institutional behaviour, that is defined by decision making rules such as voting or consensus procedures.<sup>77</sup> Thus, both formal organizations like the European Union (EU) and on the other hand more ad hoc based negotiations like the Conference of the Parties (COP), which is the focus of this research, can be seen as representing multilateral forms of cooperation as long as they follow certain core principles.

There has been multilateralism most in cases described as coordination problems in which the actors in international relations seem to be quite indifferent about the outcome as long as it is similar to all of the parties involved.<sup>78</sup> Zartman and Touval<sup>79</sup> identify three topic areas in which multilateralism is often turned to. They are property rights, coordination problems where states do not care about the outcome significantly and thirdly collaboration problems with conflicts of interest. With property right multilateralism seems desirable because often it is wanted that the principles of ownership

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<sup>70</sup> Ruggie 1992, 567

<sup>71</sup> Martin 1999, 40

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 40

<sup>73</sup> Zartman & Touval 2010, 41

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ruggie 1992, 163

<sup>76</sup> Ruggie 1992, 572

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 574

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 578

<sup>79</sup> Zartman & Touval 2010, 62



reflect reciprocity. Coordination problems in which multilateralism are turned to are in other words easy issues because the states accept the same outcome and are not that interested in it in general. As an example, the book gives telecommunication regimes. Collaboration problems are more difficult because with them states have strong and conflicting interests and thus multilateral arrangements are more challenging.<sup>80</sup>

Historical developments have also impacted multilateralism and thus it can be expected that it continues to change in the future with its context. After the so called move to institutions, principal-agent relations<sup>81</sup> have become more complicated. Multilateral forums have a bigger say in the agenda-setting and convening power of states and multilateral diplomacy now has “a procedural norm in its own right”.<sup>82</sup> The variety of multilateral arrangements across different issue areas increased considerably after 1945.<sup>83</sup> Telo’s<sup>84</sup> book “Globalisation, multilateralism, Europe : towards a better global governance?” then again divides multilateralism into three eras. First is the 19th century conferences and arrangements, second era is the limitedly institutionalized multilateral system after the Second World War and during the United States’ hegemony and third is the diverse and uncertain era of cooperative actions after the end of Cold War within the multipolar context.<sup>85</sup> Browne<sup>86</sup> dates the roots of multilateralism to the 17th century and discussions of the Peace of Westphalia. They argue that the aim of multilateralism back then was to subsume stronger power(s) in a cooperative relationship, giving other actors a voting capacity and a voice as well.<sup>87</sup>

There are also some ideas about how multilateralism should develop. Kwakwa argues in an article “The Future of Multilateralism” that it does not reflect timely conditions if we see multilateralism as a coordination only between states. This is because multilateralism also includes non-state actors coordinating their relations as seen in international cooperation recently, especially in global topics such as climate change and public health in which “the active participation of private sector entities” has increased.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 62

<sup>81</sup> In principal-agent relations “any form of organizational mediation” could now impact the outcome

<sup>82</sup> Ruggie 1992, 584

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Telo 2014

<sup>85</sup> Telo 2014, 35

<sup>86</sup> 2017, 36

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Kwakwa 2018, 341

In addition, it has been argued that for an effective cooperation one needs a proper strategy and to understand the true preferences and suitable incentives of all the actors.<sup>89</sup> On top of that, when thinking about global efforts, the different capabilities, priorities and historical responsibilities between developed and developing states need to be taken into account.<sup>90</sup> The context in which we live in needs to be taken into account, as previously mentioned. Jacobs for instance lists some fundamental changes in today's society: international system is more inclusive than before, the source of war is not power anymore rather weakness, there is mobility in society in many aspects and lastly there is increasing complexity and interdependence between all the dimensions of multilateral relations.<sup>91</sup> Often these changes create more challenges to international institutions.<sup>92</sup> In addition, public trust and confidence in the multilateral system are needed for the multilateral cooperation to be effective.<sup>93</sup>

Moreover, Cox<sup>94</sup> has suggested that the implications of multilateralism extend beyond humanity. Since multilateralism needs to take into account different actors and contexts, be effective and follow certain rules at the same time, one could say that it is a highly ambitious way of organizing relations. The balance should be found somewhere between the old and new definition of multilateralism in order to organize cooperation that is ambitious enough but also possible to achieve.<sup>95</sup> This is also one of the points of departure of this research: certain core principles are needed. However, if we connect multilateralism with all the possible virtues that can be attached to it, it becomes both very hard to accomplish but also quite vague as a theory.

## **2.1. The necessity and different sides of multilateralism**

As Jacobs claims, almost all of the issues we face nowadays are global in origin and magnitude. Thus they can not be effectively solved by individual states acting independently. Global cooperation is needed. Solutions are said to “require profound changes in the relations between nation states and in the structure and functioning of multilateral institutions.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Keohane & Victor 2016, 572; van Schaick & Schunz 2012, 183–184

<sup>90</sup> Sippel & Neuhoff 2009, 490

<sup>91</sup> Jacobs et al. 2020, 9

<sup>92</sup> Jorgensen & Laatikainen 2013

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 11

<sup>94</sup> Ruggie 1992, 166

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 166

<sup>96</sup> Jacobs et al. 2020, 6

However, there are multiple reasons why multilateralism is and would be difficult. It is thus important to take a look at them in order to understand how and why multilateralism can or can not work in different contexts. For instance, it is said that governments usually try to hide their true preferences, there are interests to free-ride even though all actors would be needed, multilateralism as a mood of cooperation is difficult to organize<sup>97</sup> and might all in all seem too demanding and constraining for great powers.<sup>98</sup> In addition, the distribution of interests and attempt to manage uncertainty make the multilateral cooperation under only one regime less probable.<sup>99</sup> As said “there has been lots of climate talk and little action thus far.”<sup>100</sup> Eckersley<sup>101</sup> points out the threat that even if ideal, the multilateral negotiations may be too slow “in the narrow window of time left to prevent dangerous climate change”.

When thinking about the cons of multilateralism there is also a concept of contested multilateralism that explains part of it. Contested multilateralism refers to a situation where dissatisfied states, non-state actors or multilateral organizations use multilateral institutions internally to challenge the rules, missions or practices of multilateral institutions. This usually happens via competitive regime creation or regime shifting.<sup>102</sup> Different – political – discussions about the true meaning and goal of multilateralism may also lead to this kind of behaviour.<sup>103</sup> The problem in multilateralism is seen in the weakness of institutions regulating the behaviour of different actors -when it comes to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)- instead of in the weakness of global organizations themselves.<sup>104</sup> In addition, the year 2016 has been seen as a partial loss for multilateralism. That year many countries, especially Western ones, showed signs of nationalism instead of joint solutions for example by the triumph of far right/nationalist parties and Brexit.<sup>105</sup> In the book they also list measures for supporting global political system: offensive tactic in defending it, looking for partners in the Global South and transparency of institutions.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Keohane & Victor 2016, 570–572

<sup>98</sup> Eckersley 2012, 12

<sup>99</sup> Keohane & Victor 2011, 8

<sup>100</sup> Keohane & Victor 2016, 570

<sup>101</sup> Eckersley 2012, 34

<sup>102</sup> Morse & Keohane 2014, 385

<sup>103</sup> Zartman & Touval 2010, 60–61

<sup>104</sup> Meyer et al 2021, 35

<sup>105</sup> Meyer, Marques, Telol 2021, 119

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 130

Jorgensen and Laatikainen then, again, argue that the rigidity of multilateral negotiations can be seen both as an enabling and constraining factor.<sup>107</sup> Ruggie's<sup>108</sup> argument is similar. He states that the "very features that make it difficult to establish multilateral arrangements in the first place may enhance the durability and ability of these arrangements once they take place." Sippel and Neuhoff's article<sup>109</sup> has a similar point of view: multilateral regimes have the possibility of decreasing the complex and detrimental ways of cooperation, limit the capability of individual countries to free-ride by abusing the mechanisms in the sake of geostrategic interests and create stronger reactions in the case of non-compliance. Brechet et al.<sup>110</sup> suggests that the costs of unilateral action and free riding in the context of globally and severely damaging, soon facing climate change should be highlighted and make seen.

In the end, as Jacobs states, the achievements of multilateralism are enormous despite its shortfalls and the need for a multilateral regime is needed more than ever before.<sup>111</sup> In addition, Ruggie<sup>112</sup> argues that it seems that multilateral norms and institutions have significant impact in managing vast array of regional and global changes happening today.

Pouliot's argument is that multilateralism is beneficial regardless of its direct results. It is seen as a global governance practice happening through inclusive, principled and institutionalized dialogue thus creating benefits such as "mutually recognizable patterns of action, typically moderate solutions and legitimate policies whose large ownership eases their effective implementation". All in all, this leads to stronger political impetus of the global cooperation.<sup>113</sup> If multilateralism is understood from Pouliot's point of view, we should try to cooperate in that way despite the possible shortfalls and challenges but in an effective enough way so that Eckersley's prediction<sup>114</sup> does not become true. In addition, Kinley<sup>115</sup> has similar argument: multilateral negotiations in climate action have achieved a lot<sup>116</sup> but the implementation is crucially needed.

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<sup>107</sup> Jorgensen & Laatikainen 2013, 5

<sup>108</sup> 1992, 594

<sup>109</sup> Sippel & Neuhoff 2009, 491

<sup>110</sup> Brechet et al. 2010

<sup>111</sup> Jacobs et al. 2020, 7

<sup>112</sup> Ruggie 1992, 561

<sup>113</sup> Pouliot 2011, 18

<sup>114</sup> Eckersley (2012, 34) points out the threat that even if ideal the multilateral negotiations may be too slow "in the narrow window of time left to prevent dangerous climate change".

<sup>115</sup> Kinley 2022

<sup>116</sup> Multilateral climate negotiations, and wider climate diplomacy, have, over the past 30 years, delivered three landmark treaties – an extensive rulebook, a rigorous reporting and transparency system and mechanisms for financial support to developing countries – along with numerous other initiatives.

Newman, Thakur and Tirman<sup>117</sup> claim that “It has often been argued that multilateralism is the instrument of choice in the international resource and environmental arena, since multilateralism allows for a political and legal framework for cooperation between states. The success of multilateral cooperation is demonstrated by the veritable proliferation of multilateral instruments in resource and environmental regimes.”<sup>118</sup> However, there are challenges in this field such as free-riding, (un)legitimacy of national authorities and lack in implementing the agreed policies.<sup>119</sup> These are all resolvable in the end, since multilateralism decreases the possibility of free-riding. On top of that, other actors in addition to states – such as businesses – are also keen to address the environmental issues.<sup>120</sup>

## **2.2. Multilateralism: principles and values**

Julieta Zelicovich<sup>121</sup> argues that multilateralism is often connected even as a precondition, to certain values and principles. Zelicovich cites for example Osler Hampson who says that the concept of multilateralism is inspired by concepts such as empowerment, fair representation, equity and even democracy.<sup>122</sup> The aim of this study is to look at those principles and values discussed in previous literature and compare them to the narratives used by states in the COP26 climate negotiations (as above) context. The goal in Zelicovich’s research is to identify whether the states in the reform debates of WTO still have shared core values and principles. With the help of them, Zelicovich argues, trade multilateralism could be sustained and WTO upgraded from “its current paralysis”. The main finding is that even though the states are willing to support multilateralism, they diverge in the principles and values.<sup>123</sup> The values and principles of multilateralism are connected to multilateralism since for instance Ruggie sees the principles as a distinctive trait of multilateralism. Values are seen similar and are thus connected to these principles.<sup>124</sup>

In order to operationalize the values and principles idea in my research, I started to pay attention to values or themes via which multilateralism is addressed in previous literature and research. As values

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<sup>117</sup> Newman et al. 2006

<sup>118</sup> Newman et al. 2006, 289

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 290–295

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 300–301

<sup>121</sup> Zelicovich 2022, 334

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Zelicovich 2022, 332

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 334

and principles Zelicovich<sup>125</sup> lists development, transparency, rules-based system, openness, predictability, non-discrimination, inclusiveness, equity, consensus and flexibility. Among some of others are, for example, effectiveness and resilience, willingness and power of states, legitimacy, globalism and values such as human rights, rule of law, peace and security. The values and principles that I identified when reading the literature are detailed in the table below. One has to keep in mind that multilateralism is also somewhat tied to cultural understandings: the way it is seen in Western states differs significantly from the one in for example China<sup>126</sup>. In addition, as Keohane and Victor<sup>127</sup> argue, interests are distributed. Besides the different understandings of the “traditional” multilateralism there are also additional definitions like new multilateralism, multilateralism 2.0<sup>128</sup>, relational<sup>129</sup> and institutional multilateralism<sup>130</sup> and so on. Fundamentally they are quite similar, but they do have some different traits.

The table was constructed so that it divides the quotes from literature about multilateralism into principles and values of multilateralism. The divisions are partly artificial as values and principles are often intertwined. However, I have decided to place them separately to show what kind of things guide the operation of multilateralism (principles) and what type of interests and worldviews are behind that or aimed to (values). The table’s purpose is to provide a comprehensive overview to the different definitions of the principles and values of multilateralism and be a theoretical evaluation tool in the analysis part of this thesis. To the footnotes, I will write what principle or value I identified from that specific quote. After the table I will give my own point of view to the concept of multilateralism and describe how the theory will be used in this thesis.

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<sup>125</sup> Zelicovich 2022, 342

<sup>126</sup> F.e. Zartman & Touval 2010, 73; Courmont 2012, 186

<sup>127</sup> Keohane & Victor 2011, 8

<sup>128</sup> Basically the new multilateralism and multilateralism 2.0 are meant to take new context into consideration, such as non-state actors and is also connected to certain values for instance democracy and security (Wolfe). More on this on the table (Winkler and Beaumont 2010).

<sup>129</sup> Instead of formal institutions, relational multilateralism highlights the relations and atmosphere in which relations are managed, harmonized and trust is present (Meyer, Marques and Telo 2021, 235)

<sup>130</sup> Highlights legal and formal institutions instead of the role of f.e. human emotions in governance and coordination

Source	Principles	Values
Newman et al. 2006, 74		“The criteria for the input legitimacy of multilateral institutions include inclusiveness, decisiveness, and epistemic reliability.” <sup>131</sup>
Telo 2012, 38		“--for example, in case of transition countries, where democracy and rule of law are still fragile or marginal, multilateral cooperation strengthens the role of the branch of civil society, networks and of civil servants respecting international standards, multilateral rules and procedures on an equal basis--”.
Garry et al. 2020, 5	“Multilateral institutions must devise new and more effective ways to bridge the vast distance and surmount the innumerable barriers that separate “we the people” from decision-making in international affairs.” <sup>132</sup>	
Telo 2014, 34	“Multipolarism and multilateralism are two distinct concepts, --they both, firstly, oppose unipolarism/unilateralism and, secondly, put the realist construction of an eternally fragmented and anarchical international system into question.” <sup>133</sup>	
Zartman & Touval 2010, 61		“In recent years, however, the idea that reciprocity among states is the bedrock of multilateralism has come under challenge from left-of-center critics and--. Concepts of equity, empowerment, fair representation, and even democracy now infuse the concept of multilateralism.” <sup>134</sup>
Zartman & Touval 2010, 62	“Brian Job (1997) argues that multilateralism is a form of state practice that accords with certain principles and that involves the development of shared norms, collective identities, and institutions, which can be formal or informal.” <sup>135</sup>	
Zartman and Touval 2010, 40	Multilateralism is described as a strategy in which decision making is	

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<sup>131</sup> Non-discrimination, efficiency

<sup>132</sup> Democracy

<sup>133</sup> Unilateralism

<sup>134</sup> Equity, democracy

<sup>135</sup> (Common) principles, norms

shared and thus the outcomes are often compromises.

Ruggie 1992, 567 Ruggie defines multilateralism as coordination of national policies in groups of three or more states on the basis of certain principles of ordering relations among those states. This happens “without regard to the particular interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence.”<sup>136</sup>

Zartman and Touval 2010, 40 Zartman and Touval also use definition given by John Ruggie: “According to John Ruggie, multilateralism consists of (i) the principle of collective security that an attack on one member of a coalition is an attack on all members (indivisibility); (ii) the principle that members are “equal before the law” and will be treated equally (nondiscrimination); and (iii) the principle that members take the long view rather than the short-term view, or that the average is more important than the marginal decision, or that they look at all the bargains on balance, not just separate bargains with each individual member (diffuse reciprocity)”<sup>137</sup>

Newman et al. 2006, 1; 57–59 Multilateralism is defined as “institutionalized collective action by an inclusively determined set of independent states. Truly multilateral organizations are open to all states meeting specified criteria. The rules of multilateral organizations are publicly known and persist over a substantial period of time.”<sup>138</sup>

Nazirny 2003, 8 Nazirny defines multilateral bodies as “policy prescriptions, including the strengthening of international law, the creation of regimes, and the use of multilateral diplomacy”.<sup>140</sup>

Their text also ponders about the legitimacy of multilateralism. It can mean that the entity follows set rules in its practices, brings positive outcomes or is otherwise accepted from outside as a legitimate authority<sup>139</sup>.

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<sup>136</sup> Principles, diffuse reciprocity

<sup>137</sup> Equity, non-discrimination, diffuse reciprocity

<sup>138</sup> Inclusivity, rules

<sup>139</sup> (Common) rules

<sup>140</sup> Diplomacy



Winkler &  
Beaumont  
2010, 643

New multilateralism is defined the following way. It would prioritize the provision of global public goods; recognize the complex interconnections among global challenges; deliver security, development and human rights to vulnerable people; broaden collective response through stakeholder coalitions and strengthen the global multilateral architecture. 141

Eckersley  
2012, 12–14;  
Jacobs et al.  
2020, 5

In addition, some of the researches have proposed a new definition for multilateralism that would take into account the new global environment we live in now and all the new actors in it.142

Meyer,  
Marques,  
Telol 2021,  
199; 213

Whereas Robert Keohane highlights institutions' ability to enhance cooperation in contrast to anarchy, Jeffrey Sng and Kishore Mahbubani see that informal relationships bring success to cooperation. To achieve the most efficient and resilient form of multilateralism the authors think traits from both should be taken into account.143

Winkler &  
Beaumont  
2010, 647

Winkler & Beaumont add to these lists of preconditions: multilateralism needs to be fair, inclusive, efficient, binding and adequate. A clear mandate, scope and date of a review need to be defined for the multilateral regime to be effective.144

Meyer,  
Marques and  
Telol 2021,  
32–33

Meyer, Marques and Telol describe the weaknesses of multilateralism in following way: "The ineffectiveness of multilateral environmental governance in the face of accelerated economic globalization is, according to some, not only a problem of international cooperation and institutions but also and more fundamentally a problem of global values, and more precisely the priority that has been given to economic growth and trade globalization over the

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<sup>141</sup> Security, human rights

<sup>142</sup> Flexibility

<sup>143</sup> Flexibility

<sup>144</sup> Inclusivity, efficiency, binding

- environment under the mantra of development in the current world order.”
- Jorgensen & Laatikainen 2013, 9 “For instance institutionalist scholars have focused on the ways in which multilateral international institutions can undermine anarchy and decrease the centrality of power in outcomes.”
- Zartman and Touval 2010, 55–57 In Zartman and Touval’s book (2010) NAFTA negotiations are given as an example of a successful multilateral negotiation. To summarize the features that made it so successful were that the negotiation partners were diverse but still had quite equal saying in matters, the ones that committed the biggest were also the ones receiving most benefits, the outcomes of the negotiations were practical benefits to most of the actors and lastly the negotiations were transparent, open and created interdependency.<sup>145</sup> It is argued that the success of multilateral governance is significantly connected to the acceptance of common norms and values.<sup>146</sup>
- Belyi 2014, 326–327
- Telo 2021, 8 Telo’s book also puts out some preconditions of a well-functioning multilateral arrangement: there should be ideas and common goals of states, cooperation should be based on middle-range or long-range promises, actors would need to be willing to limit or share national sovereignty and have some degree of reciprocal trust. The need for (output and input) legitimacy is also highlighted (ibid., 35–36, 38) and it is argued that multilateralism may even enhance democracy. <sup>147</sup>
- Telo 2012, 40–42 Some tips are given too for a better functioning/new multilateralism such as: efficiency, countering isolationist action, flexibility as in functioning in different topic areas, taking new developments and actors into account, coordination among multilateral entities, the availability of monitoring

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<sup>145</sup> Equity, inclusivity

<sup>146</sup> (Common) norms and values

<sup>147</sup> Diffuse reciprocity, limiting national sovereignty, democracy

systems, as well as legitimacy, accountability, diversity and adjustability of different multilateral entities.<sup>148</sup>

Pouliot 2011, 18 As said before Pouliot's argument is that multilateralism is beneficial regardless of its direct results. It is seen as a global governance practice happening through inclusive, principled and institutionalized dialogue thus creating benefits such as "mutually recognizable patterns of action, typically moderate solutions and legitimate policies whose large ownership eases their effective implementation".<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Efficiency, flexibility

<sup>149</sup> Inclusivity, (common) principles

In the subsequent analysis, I will speak about the core values and principles of multilateralism in order to highlight their primary importance. In other words, I consider these to be the traits that make cooperation multilateral in the first place. By the core values and principles, I mean definitions in the above table such as by John Ruggie given in the text of Zartman and Touval, Newman and also Nazirny. However, I will still use the new and more comprehensive definitions – such as the definitions by Winkler and Beaumont as well as Telo – of multilateralism to some extent because they too are connected to multilateral cooperation in some of the literature. Firstly, in the analysis I will pay attention to whether the data follows the more traditional and core definitions and after that to which extent they follow the expectations from new multilateralism. In addition, I will evaluate does the data follow more the successful multilateral negotiations like Nafta or represent more its failures like Meyer, Marques and Telo mentions.

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA

The analysis is based on primary qualitative data. The state representatives' speeches from COP26 were chosen for research material because states represent the primary actors in global governance, such as in the fight against climate change. They are the key actors in conferences such as the COPs and make decisions and commitments there. I also evaluated the speeches given by the EU-representatives, since they also represent a group of states -the EU-member states- and since the EU plays an important role in the climate issues. In addition, compared to other documents, political speeches are more clear-cut and represent what the states and decision makers want to publicly communicate to other countries.

I did not consider making interviews since they should have been from people participating in the COP26 or from those who had otherwise been connected to it. That seemed too ambitious of a project considering the resources available for this thesis project. This may impact the results'. The data was also chosen secondly in relation to the theory, since the main issue I wanted to focus on is the multilateralism. I believe multilateralism is both necessary and understudied.

Since the data consists of only speeches, this might be considered as a limitation. Speeches are often political in nature, leave out many things, and the concrete actions/impacts of the COP26 can not be fully evaluated via them. In addition, only the speeches in English are used which results in lack of the viewpoint from the speeches that are not analysed. On top of that, the COP26 is not the most recent one, since the COP27 had already been held. However, the speeches were still publicly unavailable in the beginning of the analysis and thus not used. I decided to choose the speeches in COP26 since they are more understandable in the context of multilateralism than other documents available from negotiations. The speeches of states -and not the following organizations- were chosen, because states still represent the traditional actors in multilateralism and have the decision-making power in the issues connected to climate change.

In the process of the data analysis, I firstly read all the speeches in the COP26 of state representatives that were available and in English. During the reading, I wrote short descriptions with the help of which I will made the decision which speeches will be analysed more in depth in the thesis. In the end, I decided to use the 89 speeches<sup>150</sup> that were in English because the other ones did not have

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<sup>150</sup> Angola, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Bhutan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Dominica,

translations in languages I understand sufficiently (Finnish and English). The data was already collected and available on the website of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

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Estonia, Eswatini, Representatives of the European Council and the European Commission, Representatives on behalf of European Union Group, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Holy See, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, Niue, North-Macedonia, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Belarus to the United Kingdom Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Republic of Nauru Republic of Uganda, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Sids Marshall Island, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Vanuatu, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe

## 5. METHODOLOGY

### 5.1. Methodology

The analysis method in this thesis is content analysis, more specifically conceptual analysis via the use of coding. Qualitative content analysis is described to be “a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena.”<sup>151</sup> Using concept analysis, the data and the phenomenon is reduced to describable – explicit or implicit – concepts. That way one can analyse and quantify the presence, meanings and relations of the chosen concepts.<sup>152</sup> The intention is to identify the focus, goals or communication trends of the actor behind the data or in this case the speeches.<sup>153</sup> To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the results, one should report how they came to be.<sup>154</sup>

Peltonen mentions three main pros of conceptual analysis: it gives clarity over the concept and phenomenon that is discussed, to the discourse we have over it and via it we may gain a more general understanding of the constructed social world.<sup>155</sup> It is highlighted how concepts are connected to how they are used and to the particular time and context they are defined.<sup>156</sup> Thus conceptual analysis must include the analysis of “the wider historical context and the agency of a concept’s user within it” in addition to the calculation of the recurrence of the concept. In addition, the aim of conceptual analysis must be to understand the social world and the actors in it within a certain historical context instead of just focusing on the concept itself.<sup>157</sup>

Peltonen argues that the process of conceptual analysis should include for instance the following acts: avoiding and being aware of our preconceptions and assumptions; using other necessary concepts in the definition of the main one(s); use of formal and informal definitions; considering etymology, context, synonyms and use of the concept; identifying key elements and their counterparts, examining the distinguishing criteria from other concepts and also elimination tactic in which the aim is to figure out first what the concept is not rather than what it is.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Elo et al. 2014, 1

<sup>152</sup> Columbia Public Health

<sup>153</sup> Elo et al. 2014, 1; Columbia Public Health

<sup>154</sup> Elo et al. 2014, 1

<sup>155</sup> Peltonen 2020, 25

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 25–26

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 26

<sup>158</sup> Peltonen 2020, 28-34

Peltonen introduces different strategies and tactics for a conceptual analysis. The intention of my thesis will be closest to the strategy of “question an assumption”.<sup>159</sup> The strategy of question an assumption is not about seeing whether something exists but about assuming it does and then process to analyse “what its existence would entail”.<sup>160</sup> In this research this means that the goal is not to find out the presence of multilateralism in COP26 but rather to evaluate how and to what degree multilateralism appears and is understood by looking at the values and principles in the speeches. As Ruggie reminds, the domestic reaction to multilateralism has an impact to “the overall durability of multilateral arrangement”.<sup>161</sup>

The analysis proceeded in the following way: firstly, the research question was identified, secondly, the sample for analysis was chosen, thirdly, the text was coded into “manageable content categories and lastly the results were analysed. Coding was used as a tool in this research in order to put multilateralism theory into these researchable units, in other words as concepts of the analysis. In this case the research question is already identified to a following sentence: “How are the values and principles of multilateralism reflected in the COP26 speeches”. Decisions to be made with the coding is also necessary: the level of analysis such as in one word or theme, the number of concepts, whether to look for frequency or existence of the code, how the concepts will be distinguished, what way the coding is done and what to do with the “irrelevant” information.<sup>162</sup>

Coding simply means identifying segments of meaning in the data and then labelling those segments with a certain code. This can be done in many ways, for instance with the help of a software or then colour coding with a pen.<sup>163</sup> In this thesis, coding was done both manually by reading all of the speeches and then taking notes when the identified concepts come up -either explicitly or implicitly- and automatically by using the software called Atlas.ti with which one can search for specific concepts from the texts. With the help of Atlas.ti, I also calculated how many times each concept was mentioned explicitly in the speeches, read through the contexts so that the concepts meant the same thing as I did (for example not equally important but equal as in equity). Then I inserted those numbers to an Excel sheet that is seen in the results-chapter of this thesis. Both the results gotten from automatic and manual work are used in the analysis and results part. In qualitative analysis coding is especially efficient, since it helps to condense large amounts of empirical material and to focus only

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<sup>159</sup> Peltonen 2020, 26–27

<sup>160</sup> Peltonen 2020, 26–27

<sup>161</sup> Ruggie cit. Zelicovich 2022, 334

<sup>162</sup> Columbia Public Health

<sup>163</sup> Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard 2019, p.260



on the most relevant or chosen parts. Coding helps to make the data analysable by restructuring and already thematically or theoretically segmenting the data.<sup>164</sup> Criticism towards coding brings out how in coding one might focus too much on the codes and lose the sight of the bigger context with the phenomenon. In addition, it is criticised how coding bases too much into one person's subjective assessment and analysis.<sup>165</sup>

Coding is usually divided into inductive and deductive coding. In this thesis I have used the deductive coding, since in it the coding frame – in this case the theory of multilateralism – is created before coding the data and thus it helps to focus especially on that theory. However, what makes the process more flexible is that even in deductive coding “the coding frame can be adjusted if interesting differences emerge within a given code or if some new and interesting things come up that are not captured by the existing codes.”<sup>166</sup> In the analysis the codes were taken from the definitions of multilateralism that I identified in the previous literature on multilateralism and summarized in the table (in p.15–21).

Not all of the adjectives or concepts in the table are used. Instead I will use the ones that keep repeating or are connected more to multilateralism than just as suggestions (e.g. accountability that I am not using as a concept was mentioned but only as a suggestion) and the ones that are distinctive enough, in other words not just a synonym for another concept. The following concepts and criteria kept repeating in the literature and are thus used in the coding and analysis of this thesis:

Nationalism, unilateralism; democracy; (common)rules, principles, norms; equity, non-discrimination, inclusivity; diffuse reciprocity; security; human rights; cooperation, collaboration, multilateralism, efficient, binding, legal; diplomacy, negotiation; (willingness to limit) national sovereignty and flexibility.

Some of these concepts are more ambiguous or open to multiple understandings and thus will be shortly defined in the analysis part. The definitions will not go into detail about for example the different definitions of peace (negative, positive etc.) or to the history of the ideologies since in the analysis it is only necessary to understand the basic definition of these concepts.

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p.259–265

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 267

<sup>166</sup> Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard 2019, 264

## **5.2. Research and ethics**

As a researcher it is necessary to be aware of one's prejudices and take them into account during the research process. For me the topic is close and I am aware that I do have some attitudes towards both the climate and COP26 seeing global climate action both positive and necessary. The same goes with multilateralism. On top of that, when reading the speeches from the representatives of different states, I noticed that I have some prejudices towards some of the countries that are generally thought to be reluctant towards global cooperation, climate action or both. These attitudes should not affect the results and thus it was of utmost importance to keep the focus on what really was found from the speeches and read each of them through couple of times.

## 6. ANALYSIS

### 6.1. Cooperation, collaboration, multilateralism

The speeches explicitly mention cooperation 41 times, multilateralism 16 and collaboration 10 times. First of all, what almost all of the speeches mention in one way or another is that some sort of cooperation is needed in the fight against climate change. One of the ways of doing cooperation is multilateralism and it is said to be “the right prescription”<sup>167</sup> to global challenges. In the speeches cooperation often means global action. However, it can also mean regional efforts<sup>168</sup> or cooperation with the private sector<sup>169</sup> or stakeholders.<sup>170</sup>

Cooperation, collaboration and multilateralism in the speeches is associated with innovation<sup>171</sup> and solidarity.<sup>172</sup> In addition, there is some variety about what each of the speeches highlight: for instance, the representative of Bosnia-Herzegovina stresses how cooperation is important because it needs support -resources- to be able to act, the representative of Portugal talks about strong leadership, the representative of Papua New Guinea how all countries should be heard and the EU’s representative Timmermans speaks about rule-based multilateralism and human rights. The representative of Estonia asks for “common global commitment”. The level of ambition towards global action varies from hoping for responsible and ambitious action to realistic and achievable goals. There is both optimism towards common action as well as uncertainty. The overall attitude towards cooperation and multilateralism is positive and takes it as granted even.

It is with the hope, that this COP26 is a testament to the genuine partnerships and collective responsibilities of all parties, in raising their ambition and actions towards achieving the goals, of the Paris Agreement.<sup>173</sup>

In the theory of multilateral cooperation, it is defined as collective action, shared decision making and coordination of national policies in groups of states. COP26 in itself represents coordinative

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<sup>167</sup> China p.4

<sup>168</sup> Cyprus p.4

<sup>169</sup> Austria p.2

<sup>170</sup> Lao p.2

<sup>171</sup> Austria p.2

<sup>172</sup> Indonesia p.2

<sup>173</sup> Tonga p.4

decision making but it will depend on the participating states how much will they decide to coordinate their policies in the end.

## 6.2. Democracy

In the discussions of multilateralism as theory, democracy is one of the values often connected to it or something that multilateral cooperation could strengthen.<sup>174</sup> The speeches do not mention democracy explicitly. Still in many of the speeches, climate action is coordinated with the participation of citizens.<sup>175</sup>

In June of this year, I convened a National Climate Change and Environment Conference to mobilize my citizens and partners in working together to urgently address the critical issue of climate change and environment.<sup>176</sup>

In similar vein, it is mentioned<sup>177</sup> how the people – especially youth – are calling for action and how it is the leaders' obligation to their citizens to do something about the crisis.<sup>178</sup>

We have an obligation and noble task to deliver our citizens, the much needed and desired changes to preserve this planet and safeguard our environment for future generations.<sup>179</sup>

The speeches thus support some of the main traits of democracy, but do not distinctively support increasing of the participation of citizens in for example the decision-making process or the negotiations. However as stated before, democracy is not necessarily a precondition for multilateral cooperation but rather a possible positive result from it.

## 6.3. Diffuse reciprocity

Explicitly, diffuse reciprocity is not mentioned in the speeches. This may relate to the fact that the term might not be that popular and thus not used. In the multilateralism theory, diffuse reciprocity is one of the central principles meaning long-term thinking, preferring average to marginal decisions and looking at “the bargains on balance.”<sup>180</sup> Some of the speeches did refer to long-term thinking<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Garry et al. 2020, 5 & Telo 2012, 38

<sup>175</sup> By for instance North Macedonia p.2, Liberia p.3 and Kenya p.5

<sup>176</sup> Liberia p.3

<sup>177</sup> By for instance Slovakia p.2, Latvia p.2 and Saint Lucia p.2

<sup>178</sup> By for instance Mauritius p.5, Zambia p.4, Belize p.6

<sup>179</sup> Zambia p.4

<sup>180</sup> Zartman and Touval 2010, 40

<sup>181</sup> Indonesia, Tuvalu, Seychelles

and stressed the need for a “new mindset”<sup>182</sup> or “sacrifices”<sup>183</sup> which can be connected to looking at the bargains on balance type of thinking.

The world must build a vision for a climate resilient future that puts adaptation and loss and damage at the centre of decision-making, and take immediate action now to protect people, the economy, and the environment.<sup>184</sup>

Generally, the speeches however were more about the short-term future when it comes to the actions hoped for – even though the future of the people and globe was talked about – and actions that would not necessarily require “a new mindset”. For instance, sustainable development was still supported, although in climate talk it is often criticized by specialists.

#### **6.4. Diplomacy, negotiations**

In the analysed speeches, diplomacy is mentioned once explicitly whereas the term negotiation is mentioned 17 times. What is mostly talked about are the pace, participation, importance and content of the negotiations. To quicken the pace of the negotiations<sup>185</sup> and the participation<sup>186</sup> to them are encouraged. About the contents of the COP26, in addition to the previously mentioned themes, the Article 6<sup>187</sup> rouse up multiple times. Concrete<sup>188</sup> and durable solutions<sup>189</sup> from this COP are hoped for. “Finally, Eswatini commits to advance negotiations under the UNFCCC process to reach an ambitious, inclusive, balanced, rules-based and durable outcome at this COP.<sup>190</sup>” Both the representative of Belarus to the UK and Timmermans as the EU representative stressed the need for countries to “overcome differences” -as in political or economic- and continue the work together.

In the multilateralism theory, Nazirny (2003, 8) connects the use of multilateral diplomacy to the multilateral bodies. COP26 represents diplomacy in itself. However, in order COP26 to be efficient or well-working diplomatic negotiations, the above mentioned overcoming of differences and finding compromises needs to happen.

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<sup>182</sup> Latvia p.1

<sup>183</sup> Montenegro p.1

<sup>184</sup> Seychelles p.2

<sup>185</sup> For instance by Seychelles p.1–3

<sup>186</sup> For instance by Eswatini p.3

<sup>187</sup> For instance by Vanuatu p.4 and Kenya p.1–2

<sup>188</sup> For instance by Sids Marshall Island

<sup>189</sup> For instance by Eswatini p.4

<sup>190</sup> Eswatini, p.4

## 6.5. Efficient, binding, legal

Six analysed speeches mention efficiency, five use the term binding and seven mention legal explicitly. Efficiency is connected to the action as in efficient adaptation<sup>191</sup>, ecosystem<sup>192</sup> or negotiations.<sup>193</sup> In addition, hoped for are immediate action (urgency)<sup>194</sup>, more ambitious goals<sup>195</sup>, concrete action and implementation.<sup>196</sup> When it comes to the nature of the decisions, legally binding commitments<sup>197</sup> are hoped couple of times. “Do not be fooled by the spectacle of press releases for underfunded initiatives and non-binding pledges to reach net-zero in the distant future.”<sup>198</sup> In the discourse of new multilateralism theory, Winkler and Beaumont<sup>199</sup> list efficiency and binding nature as one of the preconditions. On the basis of the analysis, it can be said that the states agree on the efficiency of decision-making and negotiations but are not vocal on the binding nature of decisions.

## 6.6. Equity, non-discrimination, inclusivity

Numerally, the speeches mention equity 10 times and inclusivity<sup>200</sup> twice whereas non-discrimination<sup>201</sup> is not mentioned at all explicitly. In the speeches equity was seen both as an outcome of climate actions and the process<sup>202</sup> and more specifically it was mentioned related to gender, the relation between advanced and developing states as well as part of a social inequality discussion.<sup>203</sup>

Necessary changes may create social challenges. Certain individuals, groups and nations will in the short and medium term suffer losses. The concerns of those who mistrust and refuse to accept the climate agenda must be answered.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Tuvalu p.3

<sup>192</sup> UAE p.3

<sup>193</sup> Cyprus p.2

<sup>194</sup> For instance by Seychelles p.1–3 and Vietnam p.1

<sup>195</sup> For instance by Kenya p.1 and Samoa p.2

<sup>196</sup> For instance by the European Council p.2 and Commission p.1, Liechtenstein p.4 and Montenegro p.1–2

<sup>197</sup> For instance by Ireland p.2 and Netherlands p.1

<sup>198</sup> Nauru p.4

<sup>199</sup> Winkler & Beaumont 2010, 647

<sup>200</sup> The Cambridge Dictionary defines inclusivity as “the fact of including all types of people, things or ideas and treating them all fairly and equally”

<sup>201</sup> The Cambridge Dictionary defines non-discrimination as “the practice of treating people, companies, countries, etc. in the same way as others in order to be fair.” In multilateral theory, non-discrimination is defined by Ruggie as the equal treatment of the members of cooperation (Zartman and Touval 2010, 40).

<sup>202</sup> Kenya p.1;3, Cyprus p.2

<sup>203</sup> Seychelles p.2, Latvia p.2, Kenya p.3

<sup>204</sup> Latvia p.2

Inclusivity too was connected to the climate action: all states should be included, often with common but differentiated principle in mind. For instance, Taiwan’s participation was supported in some of the speeches. One could argue that this is more about politics than following the principles of multilateralism. Many of the speeches mentioned justice, either to the vulnerable groups or more restorative justice to countries that had historically polluted less but would now suffer the most.<sup>205</sup> The representative of Kyrgyzstan<sup>206</sup> also mentioned the “abusive economic activities” happening in their country.

John Ruggies definition<sup>207</sup> of multilateralism lists non-discrimination -meaning equal treating of the members- as one of the ingredients of multilateralism. It is also said that “truly multilateral organizations are open to all states meeting specified criteria”<sup>208</sup>, and should be inclusive.<sup>209</sup> In the speeches, equity, inclusivity and non-discrimination were hoped for in the process and thus supported.

## 6.7. Flexibility

Flexibility is not mentioned explicitly in the speeches. However, it is mentioned how climate actions should take into account states’ different capabilities and contexts.<sup>210</sup> On top of this, the representative of Bhutan “calls on all Parties to be flexible—”.

Flexibility is one value sometimes added to the desired traits of well-functioning multilateralism.<sup>211</sup> In such a context as COP26, including over a hundred of states, flexibility is both a key to getting results but also something that is very difficult to achieve. As said in some of the speeches, it is of utmost importance to take the participants’ different contexts into consideration while asking all of them to participate and follow the same rules. This should not however lead to avoiding responsibilities or decreasing the level of ambition.

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<sup>205</sup> Kyrgyzstan p.1

<sup>206</sup> Kyrgyzstan p.2

<sup>207</sup> Zartman and Touval 2010, 40

<sup>208</sup> Newman et al. 2006, 57–59

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 74

<sup>210</sup> For instance by Marshall Islands p.1, UAE p.2 and Niue p.3

<sup>211</sup> Telo 2012, 40–42

## 6.8. Human rights

Human rights is mentioned explicitly twice in the speeches. In both of these cases, human rights violations are connected to climate change.

This climate injustice, as viewed from Pakistan's lens, is the gravest human rights violation of history where the lives and livelihoods of billions of people are at risk – all due to the unbridled pollution and uncontrolled excesses of a few.

In addition, the topic of human rights rose up more indirectly via discourses about the most vulnerable groups<sup>212</sup>, human centrism<sup>213</sup> and international law protecting people.<sup>214</sup>

In the theory of multilateralism, it is suggested that multilateral bodies should strengthen the international law, of which human rights are part of.<sup>215</sup> In addition, human rights is something that the new multilateralism should enhance.<sup>216</sup> Human rights were not perhaps the most often risen topic, but definitely part of the climate change discourse.

## 6.9. Nationalism, unilateralism

As for instance Telo<sup>217</sup> says, unilateralism is opposite to multilateralism and would also contradict with the cooperative spirit of COP26. If the common, in this case climate, actions are seen harmful to the national interest and benefit it can create some tensions and unwillingness to participate actively to the common negotiations and decisions. The analysed speeches do not explicitly mention nationalism<sup>218</sup> or unilateralism.<sup>219</sup> However, most of the speeches were written from the viewpoint of the state in case, which is natural given that they were given by states representatives. The national actions were often described as proportionately more ambitious<sup>220</sup> than other states'. Although it might be true, this can also be seen as nation branding and it also hints that the other countries are doing less. Support – often financial – was asked from other, more developed states.<sup>221</sup> While this upholds some nationalism, it is also a question of solidarity. The representatives of some states, such

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<sup>212</sup> For instance by Mongolia p.2

<sup>213</sup> For instance by Liberia p.1;8, Tuvalu p.3, Finland p.2

<sup>214</sup> For instance by Marshall Islands p.2

<sup>215</sup> Nazirny 2003, 8

<sup>216</sup> Winkler & Beaumont 2010, 643

<sup>217</sup> Telo 2014, 34

<sup>218</sup> In this thesis, nationalism is given the simple meaning of putting the interests and needs of one's own state before others or the global ones.

<sup>219</sup> Cambridge dictionary defines unilateralism as “the process or fact of deciding a policy or action without involving another group or country”. It can also be seen as an opposite to multilateralism/multilateral actions.

<sup>220</sup> By for instance by Finland p.1, Indonesia p.3 and Romania p.1

<sup>221</sup> By for instance Indonesia p.2, Seychelles p.2 and Sri Lanka p.2.



as Kyrgyzstan<sup>222</sup> and Australia<sup>223</sup>, also saw the opportunity to bring knowledge and via that economic benefit to their national, often industrial, projects that others could use.

Driving the emergence of low-emissions technologies and fostering their widespread adoption is at the heart of all our plans to reach net zero.—And we're not starting from scratch – 90 per cent of commercial solar cells globally use Australian technology.

The above mentioned upholds national traits and may impact to the overall atmosphere of the COP26. However, what could harm the multilateral project is comparing climate actions to national interests and benefit.<sup>224</sup> Such an example can be found in a speech by the representative of Liberia arguing that the actions of “high level of forest conservation” might not be beneficial to the state after all.

### **6.9.1. National sovereignty**

The speeches do not mention limiting national sovereignty either directly or indirectly. Surely it is said that cooperation for instance is needed (and multilateral organizations like UN for that matter) and some changes are necessary (in mind-set and limiting the emissions for instance) in order to get the long term goals but there was no talk about the national sovereignty. Because almost all of the speeches were held by states representatives, it is not surprising in my opinion. States still have the final say in climate actions and want to keep it that way.

In the theory of multilateralism, Telo<sup>225</sup> argues that in order for multilateral coordination to work, the “actors need to be willing to limit or share national sovereignty and have some degree of reciprocal trust”. In this sense, the more the states trust each other and are willing to share their national sovereignty the more they can do in coordination and thus strengthen the multilateralism.

### **6.9.2. Rules, principles, norms**

The speeches mention the term rules 34 times, principles<sup>226</sup> 16 times and norms<sup>227</sup> twice. Rules, norms and principles were talked both in general and also in a more specific manner. Binding, global

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<sup>222</sup> Kyrgyzstan p.2

<sup>223</sup> Australia p.2

<sup>224</sup> Liberia p.4

<sup>225</sup> Telo 2021, 8

<sup>226</sup> In theory of multilateralism, the coordination of relations is done “on the basis of certain principles of ordering relations” (Ruggie 1992, 567). The Cambridge Dictionary defines principle as following: “a basic idea or rule that explains or controls how something happens or works.”

<sup>227</sup> The Cambridge Dictionary defines norm as: “an accepted standard or a way of behaving or doing things that most people agree with.”

commitments were hoped for, as well as the completion of rulebook for the full implementation of the Paris Agreement.<sup>228</sup> Concrete actions, timeframes and leadership of developed countries were also mentioned several times.<sup>229</sup> The ideal action was described as transparent<sup>230</sup>, collaborative<sup>231</sup>, efficient<sup>232</sup> and innovative<sup>233</sup> containing common global and just norms. The success of the COP26 and climate actions was at least partially connected to having clear rules for everyone. For instance, Tuvalu’s<sup>234</sup> representative stressed the need for developing global norms and practices. “We must lead the charge to develop global norms, practices, and meaningful changes to avoid the most devastating impacts of climate change and sea level rise.”

The representative of Montenegro, for example referred to clarity and strictness of rules and restrictions as a precondition for joint climate action:

This is yet another confirmation of the fact that, if we respect the rules and strict restrictions, if we are willing to sacrifice the comfort we are used to, and if we do it together with solidarity, we can achieve our goal.<sup>235</sup>

More specifically the Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which allows countries to voluntarily cooperate with each other to achieve emission reduction targets set out in their NDCs<sup>236</sup>, was mentioned several times.<sup>237</sup> The speeches mentioned different principles, including the second UN principle of leaving no one behind<sup>238</sup>, principle of common but differentiated responsibilities<sup>239</sup>, principle of environmental integrity<sup>240</sup>, principle of sustainability<sup>241</sup> as well as the principles of the Convention and Paris Agreement.<sup>242</sup> The countries also highlighted the 1.5 target<sup>243</sup>, loss and damage<sup>244</sup>, sustainable energy transfer<sup>245</sup>, circular economy<sup>246</sup> and different funds.<sup>247</sup> The representative of Armenia hoped for change in the whole way of thinking in order to tackle the issue

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<sup>228</sup> Palau p.2, Guatemala p.2, Seychelles p.2, Samoa p.3

<sup>229</sup> Zambia p.2–4, Netherlands p.1

<sup>230</sup> Georgia p.6

<sup>231</sup> Georgia p.5–6

<sup>232</sup> Papua New Guinea p.4

<sup>233</sup> Austria p.3

<sup>234</sup> Tuvalu p.1

<sup>235</sup> Montenegro, p.1

<sup>236</sup> The World Bank 2022

<sup>237</sup> European Union Group p.2

<sup>238</sup> Eswatini p.4

<sup>239</sup> Guatemala p.2

<sup>240</sup> CFRN Papua New Guinea p.1

<sup>241</sup> UAE p.2

<sup>242</sup> Bhutan p.4

<sup>243</sup> Samoa p.2

<sup>244</sup> Tuvalu p.4

<sup>245</sup> Trinidad p.2

<sup>246</sup> Netherlands p.1

<sup>247</sup> Kyrgyzstan p.3, Papua New Guinea p.2

of climate change, the representative of Liechtenstein the 2030 Agenda for Sustainability to guide all the actions and the representative of Latvia hoped for a more detailed plan on how the implementation of the decisions made work in practice.

This is a crossroad that we have to start thinking differently because the world that's ahead of us, is not the one that was there 10 or 20 years ago. If we change our mentality and form our ambition and strategy, then we can effectively use the finances and the wealth that the world created during this phenomenal development and use the technology to handle the problems that we are facing.<sup>248</sup>

One of the core aspects of multilateralism is that the cooperation is based on certain principles, rules or norms that “are publicly known and persist over a substantial period of time.”<sup>249</sup> From the perspective of multilateralism one could argue that the most specific rules, norms and principles included for instance the article 6, and the specific timeframes and emission reductions. The rules, principles and norms in the speeches reflected the nature of multilateralism by highlighting efficient cooperation and common rules. Because these are laid in the public speeches one could argue that they are also made reachable to everyone. The speeches themselves did not give such a clear picture of the rules and principles that countries are expected to obey – these might be found better in the documents and agreements made. There is also a chance that multilateral negotiation like COP26 rarely provide very specific rules, instead compromises and general guidelines.

### **6.9.3. Security, peace**

On security, the speeches have 23 explicit mentions and on peace three. Most of the security references were about climate change and how it poses a global security threat.<sup>250</sup> In addition, the impacts of climate change to food and energy security were mentioned numerously.<sup>251</sup> Indonesia connects climate change to conflicts and that way makes it a question of peace as well. The speeches express the urgency of the security threat clearly: “If we fail, the only thing to discuss at future COPs will be the irreversible devastation of our planet and its habitats.”<sup>252</sup> Some of them also put the blame on others, though it might have been deserved: “This is eerily reminiscent of today’s world, as the

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<sup>248</sup> Armenia p.3

<sup>249</sup> Zartman & Touval 2010, 62 & Ruggie 1992, 567 & Newman et al. 2006, 1; 57–59

<sup>250</sup> For instance North-Macedonia p.1 and Montenegro p.1

<sup>251</sup> For instance North-Macedonia p.1 and Nepal p.1

<sup>252</sup> Slovakia p.2

large emitters with their insatiable appetite for advancement are continuing to abuse our environment threatening our very survival.”<sup>253</sup>

When it comes to multilateralism, especially new multilateralism, it should deliver security.<sup>254</sup> The security aspect of climate change was apparent in almost all of the speeches and the proposed, coordinated, actions are meant to solve this issue.

It is with the hope, that this COP26 is a testament to the genuine partnerships and collective responsibilities of all parties, in raising their ambition and actions towards achieving the goals, of the Paris Agreement.<sup>255</sup>

In the theory of multilateral cooperation, it is defined as collective action, shared decision making and coordination of national policies in groups of states. COP26 in itself represents coordinative decision making but it will depend on the participating states how much will they decide to coordinate their policies in the end.

#### **6.9.4. Politics**

There is some reoccurring, political topics in the speeches. All of the speeches are political in one way or another, and not all of these states’ contexts are familiar to me. In that sense I will only write about those political questions that were expressed quite directly or otherwise known since the main focus in this thesis is in multilateralism after all.

The topics that came up were following: EU-candidacy, support for EU, occurring conflicts or political instability in the area, colonial past/post-colonialism and also Australia’s former prime minister Scott Morrison’s known reluctance towards the fight against climate change. For instance, the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines<sup>256</sup> makes a reference to their post-colonial challenges.

This past year has been the most challenging period in St. Vincent and the Grenadines’ post-colonial history. We continue to grapple with the challenges precipitated by the COVID-19

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<sup>253</sup> Palau p.1

<sup>254</sup> Winkler & Beaumont 2010, 643

<sup>255</sup> Tonga p.4

<sup>256</sup> Saint Vincent and the Grenadines p.1

pandemic, the devastation caused by the explosive eruption of the La Soufriere Volcano, and severe floods and landslides due to more extreme weather phenomena.

Both the representative of North-Macedonia and Montenegro mention their EU-candidacy and how they are thus lining with the EU's "climate acquis". Three political instabilities were mentioned in the speeches: the Korean one, Taiwan's position and the one between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The representative of Korea mentioned promotion of "peace in border areas" and couple of states asked Taiwan to get "a seat at the table" and to be "admitted to the Convention".<sup>257</sup> The representative of Armenia and Azerbaijan basically blamed each other for the conflict and talked about the national negative impacts of the conflict. The representative of Estonia also mentioned the displacement of Myanmar nationals or the Rohingya people. One could ponder how bringing up these political questions impacts the negotiations. On the one hand, they can add some tension between states or take the attention away from the issue on hand (climate change). On the other hand, it shows that COP26 is held as an important enough of an arena to raise these issues in.

#### **6.9.5. Other**

The speeches in COP26 included lots of issues and topics that were not directly linked to multilateralism. Some of these I will focus shortly now in order to provide a clearer picture of the speeches and the atmosphere of the negotiations. Some of the speeches represent sustainable development thinking by expressing how economic growth and environmental actions are possible simultaneously.<sup>258</sup> The representative of Kenya mentions the value of indigenous knowledge and Korea gives nature its own value with its distinct rhetoric: "Nature has long been waiting for us. Now, it is our turn to act and return love to nature." Religious rhetoric can be found from the representative of Holy See's speech. Many of the speeches are science based which is a positive thing from the perspective of the climate. The representative of Pakistan, as well as Australia, gives the idea that the power is not in these negotiation rooms as in the representatives of the states but rather on private sector. One can ponder whether this means shifting the blame or is it rather realistic.

The silver linings of this process are not found in this room but on the sidelines – the Pavilion Zone - where the private sector initiatives are gaining ground, the technologies becoming available and affordable and some new innovative financial mechanisms like the "Energy Transition Mechanism.

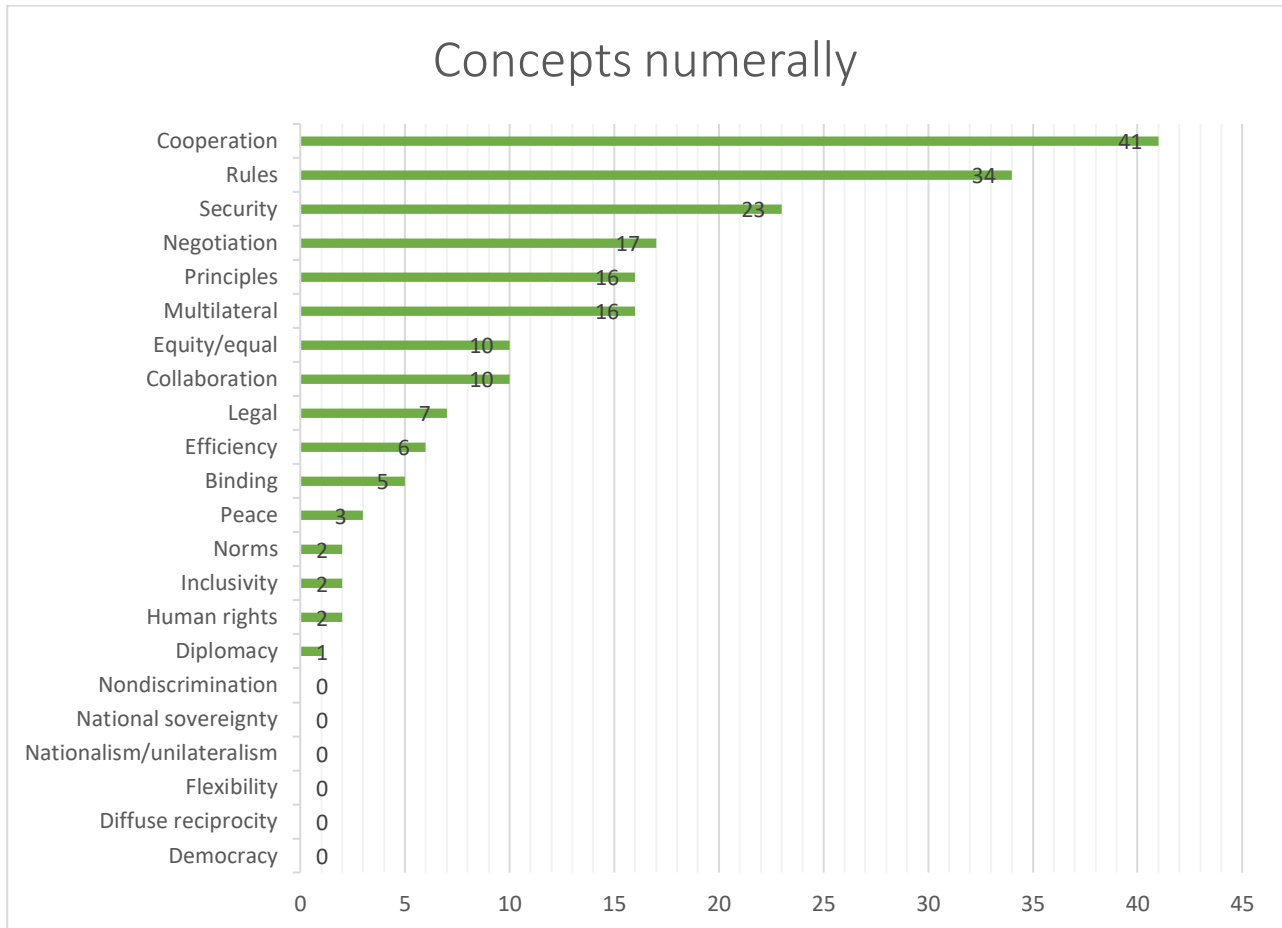
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<sup>257</sup>For instance by Saint Kitts p.4 and Eswatini p.3

<sup>258</sup>For instance by Liechtenstein p.3

## 7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From all the analysed 89 speeches I searched the prechosen concepts listed below with the help of the Atlas.ti software. The results can be seen in the table below.



Although the numerical results give only a partial viewpoint to understanding the role of multilateralism in the COP26 speeches, it can still reveal something about the importance of certain concepts. The contexts however need to be analysed more carefully which I did when doing the analysis of the speeches manually.

As can be seen from the table, the number of times the listed concepts are explicitly mentioned in the speeches varies from 41 to zero. Cooperation is mentioned most often, then rules, which is mentioned 34 times. The terms security, negotiation, principles, multilateral, equity/equal, collaboration and legal are also mentioned quite often. Efficiency, binding, peace, norms, inclusivity and human rights are mentioned a couple of times. Diplomacy is mentioned only once. The concepts that were not mentioned at all explicitly in the speeches were following: democracy, diffuse reciprocity, flexibility, nationalism, unilateralism, national sovereignty and non-discrimination.

Simply put, and as defined in the theory chapters, multilateralism is a form of cooperation, it is based on known principles and norms<sup>259</sup>, is open to all states who follow the rules<sup>260</sup> and decisions made follow the common long-term interests instead of national ones.<sup>261</sup> From the viewpoint of the theory of multilateralism, the most important core concepts are equality, norms, principles, non-discrimination, diffuse reciprocity and national sovereignty in addition to the obvious multilateral, collaboration and cooperation. From these national sovereignty, non-discrimination and diffuse reciprocity were not mentioned and norms only twice.

There are a couple of options for results like this. Firstly, some of the concepts are quite synonymous with other concepts that are mentioned more often in the speeches. For instance, non-discrimination is close to inclusivity and equity and norms is close to principles. However, they still have a slight difference in the meaning: while equity and inclusivity are more positive in their meaning, non-discrimination is more specific and thus possibly harder to follow. The same goes with norms and principles. As defined previously, principle controls or explains action while norm is more of an accepted way of doing things. Secondly, although the concepts would not be mentioned explicitly due to the difficulty of the concept for instance, they might be taken into account in the speeches more implicitly. This will be explained more later on. Thirdly, the concepts might not be mentioned –that frequently- because the states do not see them as important or connected to the COP26 negotiations.

When looking at the verbal analysis in addition to the numeral results gotten from the Atlas.ti one can make following conclusions in relation to the theory of multilateralism. Next, I will focus on what the literature is saying about the strengths and weaknesses of multilateralism and also to its core values and principles to try and see how do the COP26 speeches represent multilateralism.

Successful multilateralism is said to be inclusive, efficient, legitimate that benefits all the members and in which the members are treated equally. These are to be discussed later on because they are also part of multilateralism's core values and principles. Thus if multilateral cooperation follows multilateralism's values and principles it should also result in successful outcomes, at least if the possible weaknesses are not too overbearing.

The literature about multilateralism listed the following issues as the weaknesses of it: governments trying to hide their real preferences, having interest to free-ride, it would be difficult to organize<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Newman et al. 2006, 1; 57–59

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Zartman and Touval 2010, 40

<sup>262</sup> Keohane & Victor 2016, 570–572

and thought as too constraining for great powers<sup>263</sup>, it might not lead to concrete actions<sup>264</sup> and also that the weakness is in the multilateral organizations' ability to regulate "the behaviour of different actors."<sup>265</sup>

To the question of hiding true preferences the answer would be yes and no. The speeches do not have some list of national interests but some of the speeches do give out for instance these normally kept interests of states such as economic growth and wellbeing -for instance Australia "pitching" its technology and also the universal hope for security. On the other hand, collaboration is kept highly important and there are various reasons for this. For instance, can this partially be explained so because the states do not want to bear the responsibility on their own and want to put the blame on others too, or could it be some kind of "greenwashing" to attend the negotiations and say nice things there. In addition, it must be remembered that multilateralism means different things to different countries and for instance China can see it partly as a way of decreasing the substantial power of the West. One of the weaknesses in climate multilateralism was seen in how economic benefits were still given a priority as a norm or value instead on environmental values and nature. The speeches represented sustainable development thinking by saying that the economic growth can happen simultaneously with climate actions. When looking at the science this is only partially true if even that. About the concreteness and ability to regulate the behaviours of actors is discussed in the following chapter(s) since they are part of the principles and values of multilateralism.

As stated in the previous chapter:

Simplifyingly and as defined in the theory chapters, multilateralism is a form of cooperation, it bases on known principles and norms<sup>266</sup>, is open to all -states- who follow the rules<sup>267</sup> and decisions made follow the common long-term interests instead of national ones.

<sup>268</sup> From the viewpoint of the theory of multilateralism, the most important core concepts are equality, norms, principles, non-discrimination, diffuse reciprocity and national sovereignty in addition to the obvious multilateral, collaboration and cooperation.

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<sup>263</sup> Eckersley 2012, 12

<sup>264</sup> Keohane & Victor 2016, 570

<sup>265</sup> Meyer et al 2021, 35

<sup>266</sup> Newman et al. 2006, 1; 57–59

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Zartman and Touval 2010, 40



In the speeches there are certain principles and norms that were repeated. Collaborative and efficient action is seen as a solution for climate change and principles like common but differentiated responsibilities, sustainability, and loss and damage were mentioned several times. What comes to the norms, the protection of the vulnerable and security are highlighted and most common. The participation to COP26 negotiations was generally on a good level. Taiwan's participation was hoped for<sup>269</sup> and also many countries participated although they had differences with other states, for instance Pakistan and Azerbaijan. However, the leaders from China (Xi Jinping) and Russia (Vladimir Putin) were absent and the reasoning for this was the Covid-pandemic.<sup>270</sup> As one of the biggest emitters this was a failure both for multilateral cooperation and climate actions more generally.

In terms of diffuse reciprocity, there is five speeches that represent clearly this type of thinking by talking about the need for a bigger change or more long term future oriented decisions. The literature on climate governance also highlights the need for structural changes and more ambitious action. The future survival of peoples was talked quite lot so in that sense one could argue that most of the speeches do represent at least mid-term thinking. What was not talked about was how the decisions made in this COP should represent all of the actors attending it or the average of the attendants. However, it may seem quite obvious that the decisions made will be compromises.

Quite similar to the diffuse reciprocity theme is the equal treatment of all the members. While all the members got to keep their speeches from their own viewpoint, the literature review implied the developed countries still having asymmetric power in the negotiations.<sup>271</sup> The COP26 speeches took equity as one of the important issues addressed in connection to the climate actions. Equity was also connected to the developing countries position and other social inequalities. National sovereignty is not mentioned in the speeches. Thus it is difficult to assess how much power are the states ready to give out.

Multilateralism, collaboration and cooperation were clearly the most common concepts in the speeches. They were seen necessary –in the action against climate change- and often connected to solidarity. Even though multilateralism and cooperation can hold a bit different meanings to different countries it is significant that the concepts were mostly spoken on a positive note.

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<sup>269</sup> Taiwan is not part of the United Nations and thus did not attend the meeting. This is largely due to its relations with China. Taiwan had sent non-governmental organizations as observers however. (Taipei Times 2021 & Taiwans News, 2021)

<sup>270</sup> The New York Times, 2021

<sup>271</sup> Eckersley 2012; 31, 34–35

The other values connected to multilateralism are also addressed. The decisions are hoped to be concrete, including implementation. This was seen both a challenge and a goal of the negotiations. The COP26 and COPs in general could have significant impacts if the assistance to developing countries for instance is agreed<sup>272</sup> on and implemented. Both flexibility and democracy can lead to more legitimate and resilient decisions. They are both taken into account in the speeches. It should also be kept in mind that flexibility and democracy as concepts can be used as excuses to not do more, for instance by saying that our country does not have enough resources or the people of the country are not willing for very ambitious actions. However, the whole idea of multilateralism in my opinion is about the willingness to make changes that promote the common good and trusting the others do the same. Human rights were taken less into consideration directly. Still, the talks about equity, protecting the most vulnerable and the other negative impacts of climate change are all connected to human rights.

What does this all mean for multilateralism then? On the basis of the concept analysis, successful multilateralism seems possible but it is not without challenges. Do the states have the courage to limit their national sovereignty in order to make global commitments, are all the states supported enough, are all the states heard in similar manner when making decisions and do the states follow common principles, rules and norms – that should be agreed on. The positive thing is that the countries seem to be quite aware of many challenges like the effectiveness and equity related issues. The question however remains, whether they have the political will and resources to address those issues in a timely manner. On top of that, are the states willing enough to limit share their national sovereignty and get over political differences in order to get well-functioning multilateral cooperation? Are the countries willing enough to make unselfish and long-term looking decisions?

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<sup>272</sup> The Loss and Damage Fund for developing countries was agreed on in the COP27, still some concretia missing about who pays and how much (UNFCCC, 2022)

## 8. CONCLUSION

As stated in the beginning of the research, the climate governance architecture has become more fragmented over time, for instance due to new private actors. However, the UNFCCC and COPs are still at the centre of the climate governance architecture and climate actions in general. The UNFCCC has the legitimacy in agenda-setting and COPs are important forums in drawing attention to the issue in hand and communicating about the urgency of the crisis. The aim of this study was to analyse the state of multilateralism in the COP26 by identifying the principles and values of multilateralism in the speeches given by the state and the EU representatives in the COP26.

The theory behind this research and thus the whole concept analysis was based on the literature about the theory of multilateralism. In my opinion, and based on the results, the pros of multilateralism are available and the challenges are taken into account. On the basis of this research, one can conclude that multilateralism is supported in COP26 negotiations but not all of its preconditions – core principles and values – perhaps fully understood or followed through for other reasons. Although cooperation is seen necessary, the states are still reluctant to share their national sovereignty. Climate change all in all is seen as a security threat which we need to tackle together with solidarity and equity. From the identified concepts, majority of them was mentioned in some of the speeches of the states and the EU representatives. The support for equal, secure and efficient collaboration seems to be strong on the basis of the speeches.

From the 22 identified concepts, only six were not mentioned explicitly. On the basis of the analysis it seems that ambitious principles like diffuse reciprocity and limiting of national sovereignty were not supported. Collaboration that is based on certain rules or principles is supported but one can see that the more specified the values of multilateralism go, the fewer times they are mentioned in the speeches. In other words, cooperation and rules are explicitly the most often mentioned terms, whereas human rights and inclusivity are mentioned only couple of times. One could ponder whether this says something about the difficulties of getting concrete and ambitious results out of global negotiations like COPs.

The level of ambition varies between states. The importance of public opinion to the matter is clear. Many of the speeches refer to citizens, especially youth, and to the obligation of leaders. Sustainable development, economic benefit, technological solutions, and the responsibilities of others are still seen part of the solution, which may decrease the level of ambition or slow down the pace of actions.

As stated before, multilateralism is an important part of the international relations and the results from this research are a part of the wider discourse about well-functioning global cooperation since multilateralism is one way in which to coordinate relations. In addition, one can conclude that if multilateralism is followed in the negotiations it would also lead to legitimate climate actions since equity, common rules, flexibility and diplomacy are important part of multilateral decision-making. The more legitimate and just the decisions made in COPs are, the more resilient the decisions could be expected to be. Just decisions are also part of what brings peace to societies<sup>273</sup>. In addition, justice and solidarity should be important aspects of the climate negotiations due to the fact that developing countries face the impacts of climate change more strongly despite the fact they have contributed less to the issue. Restorative justice was in fact mentioned in some of the speeches.

Something that was missing from this thesis and could be researched further is to compare multilateral organizations and organizations that would not represent multilateralism speeches or other documents and try to identify differences in attitudes to multilateralism or in results wise. I could have also compared the attitude towards multilateralism between different states that were participating the negotiations. This could have however direct the attention of this research elsewhere.

The challenge of COPs and multilateralism more generally is to be efficient and get binding results – or enough actors on board. The more participants, states, are part of the negotiations –the COPs in this case – the more pressure one could expect it to create for others to join as well and follow the decisions made there. As stated before<sup>274</sup>, both small and bigger states have interests to be part of multilateral negotiations. On top of that, it is important to take national interests into account in global cooperation in order it to function and to be flexible enough but at the same time succeeding multilateral cooperation has preconditions – the principles and values – that states need to follow. The chapters two and three of the research – as background and theory chapters – also give insightful suggestions for better functioning global cooperation. For example, big multilateral cooperation such as COP does not exclude simultaneous cooperation in smaller, and often more flexible, groups.<sup>275</sup> After all, resilient and reciprocal arrangements for the issue of climate change are needed with multilateral cooperation part of this solution.

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<sup>273</sup> CMI X The Ulkopolitist (6.4.2023)

<sup>274</sup> Martin 1999, 40

<sup>275</sup> Winkler & Beaumont 2010, 651

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