



How the global and national levels interrelate in climate policymaking: Foreign Policy Analysis and the case of Carbon Capture Storage in Norway's foreign policy



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HIGHLIGHTS

- A Foreign Policy Analysis framework is used to explain foreign policy in the energy-climate domain.
- Norway's external strategy to promote CCS globally is traced and explained.
- Both external and domestic factors influenced Norway's CCS policymaking.
- Both ideational and material factors were important to legitimize this strategy.

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ABSTRACT

States struggle to develop adequate climate change mitigation policies, especially when national energy interests conflict with collective environmental concerns. It is therefore crucial to understand how viable solutions may find political support on these terms. As one such case, this paper examines Norway's explicit foreign policy to promote Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) as a mitigation measure. I suggest that a Foreign Policy Analysis framework with a norm-centered constructivist focus allows for new insights into how climate policies function as balancing strategies between external normative pressures and important domestic concerns. It reveals how Norway's CCS policy represents an extraordinary effort to bridge seemingly contradictory agendas. The Norwegian CCS case highlights how a state may engage in innovative foreign political engineering to promote solutions to its international climate commitments on terms that fit national energy needs. It shows that climate political success may depend on successfully linking the international and domestic levels by simultaneously appealing to established norms within each system.

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1. Introduction

In 2015, the international climate regime finally landed a global coordination framework, the Paris agreement (UNFCCC, 2015). But three decades of global climate politics have illustrated states' persistent challenges when looking for concrete remedies to a collective problem that is long-term and for which local solutions threaten vested interests in the energy political economy (Bernstein and Cashore, 2012; Moe, 2010). Bridging such apparently conflictual agendas is no trivial task when normative pledges at the global level run counter to pressing societal interests at home.

It is therefore uncertain whether states will pool the necessary means to realize the Paris agreement's shared ambition (Edenhofer et al., 2014).

The fundamental importance of this issue calls for an elaborated focus on what states can deliver on their international climate commitments in ways that are compatible with competing national concerns. It is therefore crucial to understand how viable climate strategies can be decided on these terms. To what extent are they products of material self-interests, idealistic aspirations or external normative pressures for compliance? In the post-Paris setting, the ambition of a universal carbon price has been abandoned and the emphasis is placed on states' ability to present concrete solutions (Purdon, 2015; Victor, 2015). These questions

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will therefore become even more relevant as the Paris agreement's pledge and review system requires each party to present its national contributions for international scrutiny.¹

The aim of this article is to explain climate policymaking under such circumstances. Empirically, it is the single case study of Norway's globally oriented policy to promote Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) as a mitigation measure. After developing CCS as a domestic solution in the 1990s, Norway made it a foreign policy priority since the 2000s. It is an excellent example of how climate policies are designed to harmonize potentially conflictual agendas between global and national demands. At home, Norway's primary source of income is petroleum production for exports. Internationally, Norway promotes ambitious climate change mitigation. Also within Norway, some influential actors push for swift emission cuts. How can we explain Norway's CCS foreign policy as a balancing strategy between these pressures?

I suggest that using a Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) framework allows for new insights into how climate strategies are determined. The two-level game metaphor is well-known from other topic areas, but it is underutilized in the climate politics setting (Harris, 2009; Putnam, 1988). While many perspectives focus on either the national or the international level (e.g. Compston, 2009; Young, 2010), an FPA approach accounts for how the national and international levels *together* influence climate policymaking. It responds to recent calls for analyses that expose how the national level poses "political constraints" to international level solutions (and vice versa) (e.g. Harrison and Sundstrom, 2010; Purdon, 2014: 302). Taking both domestic and international influences seriously is exactly what an FPA perspective offers (Hudson, 2013). For the Norwegian CCS case, I argue that focusing the FPA analysis on *motives, national identities* and *legitimacy* helps us see how the state has taken extraordinary steps to simultaneously accommodate at least two important but seemingly contradictory agendas on terms that resonate with values that are key to Norwegian identity. This multi-level framework and the methods used are elaborated in Section 3 below.

The analysis shows that Norway's CCS policy makes a remarkable solution to the dilemma of how to reconcile a petroleum exports-based economy with an ambitious mitigation policy. It exposes how climate politics in Norway is not an exercise in domestic politics or international bargaining alone. Instead, it is about finding legitimate solutions that simultaneously appeal to the norms that matter within each of the political systems. This is what makes decision-making over mitigation measures so complex. In its essence, it is foreign policy. Once we acknowledge that complexity, we understand why developing concrete solutions to climate change is tough – but we are hopefully also more aware of the factors that determine if proposed solutions are within political reach. For the foreseeable future, political feasibility seems to trump economic efficiency in global climate politics. It is therefore time to seriously assess the terms on which states can participate to materialize viable and globally relevant contributions to climate action. This holds particularly true when the successful realization of national climate policy goals depends on international cooperation. Norway's CCS foreign policy represents an intriguing example of exactly this. The empirical data on Norway's CCS strategy is presented in Section 4, followed by the findings from the analysis in Section 5. Finally, conclusions and policy implications are discussed in Section 6. First, Section 2 below offers a brief background on the politics of CCS.

2. Background: CCS and climate politics

The CCS term refers to technological value chains where CO₂ is captured and stored away from the atmosphere in order to reduce climate impacts, typically from fossil energy combustion (Gibbins and Chalmers, 2008; IEA, 2013). It is widely acknowledged that achieving the Paris agreement's 1.5 degree target is highly unlikely without CCS. This means that CCS technologies may be in greater demand in the future and also from other emission sources than fossil fuels based power production (Edenhofer et al., 2014). When compared to more radical alternatives, CCS is thought to face less opposition from within the energy political economy. It is because carbon sequestration does not require transitioning energy systems away from fossil fuels (Unruh, 2000, 2002). Yet, actual CCS deployment remains incremental to date (GCCSI, 2014). Skeptics have criticized CCS policies as being merely tactical or rhetorical devices to legitimize business as usual (L'Orange Seigo et al., 2014; Lock et al., 2014). In some polities, such as in Germany, CCS has been less viable for such reasons and because of concerns over the safety of geological CO₂ storage (Inderberg and Wettstad, 2015). Also in growing economies that heavily rely on coal, such as in China and India, the potential for CCS is significantly underutilized (Liu and Gallagher, 2010; Román, 2011). The small but vibrant literature on the politics of CCS suggests that the concept has been used to align environmental and industry interests in industrialized fossil fuel-producing economies (Meadowcroft and Langhelle, 2009; Pollak et al., 2011). But attempts to coordinate various national CCS efforts have hardly resulted in strengthened international cooperation (de Coninck and Backstrand, 2011; Stephens et al., 2011). Despite this, a handful of countries push globally to make CCS a reality. Among these few long-standing proponents, we find Norway (Tjernshaugen, 2008).

3. Theory and methods

3.1. Balancing between extremes: Norway's CCS policy as a bridging strategy

In terms of ideal-type alternatives, Norway could hypothetically pursue one out of two extreme scenarios. At one end of the scale, Norway opposes all pressures for mitigation action and push to maximize domestic petroleum production. The argument would be that Norway accounts for only a tiny 0.1% of global annual emissions and that the societal costs from structural change would be unacceptable (WRI CAIT, 2016). To the extent that domestic actors require some sort of climate action, emission quotas could be purchased as contributions to solving a global problem by global means. The other extreme is a Norway that fully adheres to international normative pressure by cutting domestic emissions to the bone. It would entail phasing out petroleum production and accepting the subsequent economic and social consequences. In this scenario, curbing domestic emissions would be a type of leading by example in a global context. Reality obviously lies in between these extremes. Let us see how an FPA framework helps us understand why Norway instead chose a *balancing strategy* where a CCS foreign policy serves to bridge these seemingly opposing concerns.

3.2. A constructivist foreign policy analysis approach to climate policymaking

The analytic focus in FPA is to explain public policymaking that affects or is affected by entities outside the nation-state (Hudson, 2013: 4). It is therefore actor-oriented,² geared towards multi-

¹ Mitigation is defined as "(a) human intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases (...)" (Allwood et al., 2014: 1266).

² Humans make the decisions on behalf of the state!

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