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## Unveiling the Drivers:

A Multidimensional Analysis of the Determinants Shaping the European Union's Global Gateway Initiative.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Little is known about the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Some argue that it is a geo-political challenge to China's Belt and Road Initiative, while others claim that it satisfies an existing demand for infrastructure funding. This dissertation uncovers the relevant determinants in the emergence of Global Gateway. Using global governance as a theoretical framework and a case study research design, it argues that the EU economy, the global demand for infrastructure funding, and the geo-political challenge from China are the main determinants in the emergence of Global Gateway. It also discards the role of less-considered determinants, such as the leadership of Ursula von der Leyen, in the emergence of the Initiative. In doing so, this dissertation confirms a number of hypotheses established through the literature review and chosen theoretical framework, which offer broader insights into the emergence of Global Initiatives. It also opens avenues for future research, while staying conscious of potential limitations.

**Keywords:** *Global Governance, Global Initiatives, EU, EU Global Gateway Initiative, China, Belt and Road Initiative, US, G7, Build Back Better World Initiative, Case Study Research Design*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the People's Republic of China launched the Belt and Road Initiative, also known as "the 21st century's Silk Road" (Damuri et al., 2019). The Initiative provides infrastructure funding in order to "improve the global economy and international trade", satisfying the global public good deficit (Ibid.). China has invested an estimated \$1.01 trillion, deriving from a mixture of state-owned and private Chinese banks, demonstrating a strong commitment to satisfying infrastructure needs in middle- and low-income states (Feingold, 2023). In doing so, the Republic of China has managed to sign an estimated 146 Memorandums of Understanding, becoming the most established global public good provider (Green Finance and Development Center, 2023a). However, the Belt and Road Initiative has not gone undetected. It has received significant criticism from the Western world. Critics of the Belt and Road Initiative have claimed that China aims to induce debt on poor states in order to acquire leverage over their governments, furthering its structural positioning (Mishra & Mishra, 2021). It has also been criticized for human rights abuses and for lacking transparency, showing China's purported disregard for normative perception (Haibing et al, 2019). To counterbalance this Initiative, the Group of 7 (G7 - Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) launched the Build Back Better World Initiative, in partial collaboration with the European Union (EU), in 2021 (Scull & Healy, 2022). This Initiative aims to invest \$40 trillion up until 2035 in order to address the infrastructure needs of low- and middle-income states and to address strategic competition with China (Ibid.). In terms of funding, the Build Back Better World significantly overshadows the Belt and Road Initiative, representing an important structural challenge to China as a global public good provider. Signed in the backdrop of COP26, the Build Back Better World Initiative also brands itself as part of the climate pacts aimed at keeping global warming below 1.5°C, demonstrating the G7's commitment to normative objectives. In fact, this normative emphasis is also seen in other Initiatives. Recently, the United Kingdom launched the Clean, Green Initiative. The Initiative includes a package of £3 billion to support clean infrastructure projects worldwide (United Kingdom Government Investments, 2022). While this Initiative does not present a significant structural challenge to the Belt and Road Initiative, it does further the United Kingdom's normative positioning and its perception as a global public good provider. The Initiative's strong commitment to furthering green technology in developing states demonstrates this (Ibid). In fact, Western Global Initiatives juxtapose themselves with China's Belt and Road Initiative. Their challenge is not always structurally significant, but always normatively loaded. For this reason, Chinese response to these has been critical. At China's Belt and Road Initiative international conference, President Xi Jinping of China argued that the Belt and Road Initiative meets "practical and existing needs", while the United States and its allies "seek a geopolitical advantage" (Crabtree, 2023). This statement about Western Global Initiatives may be true, but not for the aforementioned reasons. While the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative challenges China on a structural and normative basis, other

Initiatives, such as the United Kingdom's Clean, Green Initiative, only challenge China on a normative basis.

Shortly after this statement, the European Union launched the Global Gateway Initiative. Like other Western Initiatives, it operates on a structural and normative basis. Launched on the 1st of December 2021, the Initiative aims to “boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport sectors and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the world”, resulting in the acceleration of green and digital infrastructure development (European Commission, 2024a). Global Gateway operates in five areas: digital, climate and energy, transport, health, and education. It aims to transcend traditional dependency dynamics and encourage equal partnerships (Ibid.). At the core of the Initiative lies a strong commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, highlighting the Initiative's normative emphasis (Ibid.). Simultaneously, the Initiative comprises a structural challenge. It includes a significant investment package of €300 billion, comprising both public and private funds (Ibid). Investments derive from the entire European Union, including resources from the European Commission and member states, as well as financial institutions such as the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Ibid.). In its first year, the prospective projects funded under Global Gateway for 2023 were allocated to places in Africa and the Indo-Pacific, with Latin America a distant second and states of the Middle East and North Africa last, demonstrating the EU's commitment as a global public good provider (Rizzi & Varvelli, 2023).

Global Gateway's structural and normative emphasis has led to different interpretations. On the one hand, the Global Gateway Initiative claims to satisfy an existing need for infrastructure development across the world. This interpretation sees the European Union as a global public goods provider, and represents a noticeable shift from Jean-Claude Juncker's administration of the European Commission, which saw a comprehensive recovery plan to address the remnants of the financial and economic crisis in the EU (European Investment Bank, 2019). An explanation for this may be that while the Juncker Plan did help the EU economy recover, the European Union lost out its geopolitical positioning against rising players such as China. Therefore, some interpret the EU Global Gateway Initiative, like the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative, as a structural challenge and a geo-political countermeasure to China's Belt and Road Initiative (Bassot, 2020). In fact, this is in line with current European Commissioner Ursula von der Leyen's wish of turning the European Commission into a “geopolitical Commission” (Dejonghe, 2023).

On the other hand, the European Union insists that the Global Gateway Initiative offers an “innovative choice for global infrastructure development, based on the need of [its] partners” and demonstrates how democratic values provide certainty and transparency for investors (European Commission, 2024b). It

aims to offer financing under fair and favourable terms in order to limit the risks of debt distress, signalling high normative value to subscribers of the Initiative. This presents the European Union as a normative ally in global governance, offering fair economic terms while furthering democratic values globally (Ibid.). Yet, in doing so, the Initiative implicitly challenges China's scandal-plagued Belt and Road Initiative, revealing an on-going geo-political battle for legitimacy in global governance.

For this reason, this dissertation asks the following research question: **Which determinants have influenced the emergence of the European Union's Global Gateway Initiative?** Here, I understand the word "determinants" as the relevant independent variables. These are divided into two categories: structural and normative determinants. My understanding of "structural" comprises the tangible and measurable elements of international relations, such as economic needs and demands, while my understanding of "normative" comprises the non-tangible and non-measurable elements of international relations, such as norms, ideas, and beliefs. Under structural determinants, I explore the global demand for infrastructure funding and the EU's structural positioning. In contrast, under normative determinants, I explore the EU's normative obligations as well as its normative positioning. In addition to these determinants, I also consider a number of rival determinants through the case studies in this dissertation. Subsequently, I adopt the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative as a dependent variable. In doing so, my analysis reveals a nuanced picture of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Using global governance as a theoretical framework and case study research methodology, I argue that the global demand for infrastructure funding, the EU economy, and China's geo-political challenge are the true determinants in the emergence of the European Union's Global Gateway Initiative. In doing so, my conclusions do not diverge much from existing interpretations in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Nonetheless, it analyses less-considered factors in the literature, recognizes the previously-ignored role of the EU economy in this puzzle, and opens avenues for future research.

After this introductory chapter, I carry out a literature review where I explore the literature on Global Initiatives, the literature on the EU and its role in global governance, and the literature on the EU Global Gateway Initiative. I also explore the gaps in the literature which this dissertation seeks to fulfil. In chapter three, I explore the relevant concepts of global governance and justify its use as a theoretical framework in this dissertation. In chapter four, I justify my methodological choices for this dissertation. Thereafter, I explore the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative and compare and contrast it to other relevant Global Initiatives. In chapter six, I use case studies to illustrate the role of the Juncker Plan, the importance of Ursula von der Leyen's leadership, and the rebranding of the EU Global Gateway Initiative to uncover less-considered perspectives in the emergence of the Global Gateway Initiative. In chapter seven, I discuss the determinants in the emergence of the European Union's Global

Gateway Initiative. Finally, in chapter eight, I summarise my findings, evaluate the limitations of my research, and explore avenues for future research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this literature review, I explore the relevant research enabling me to answer the question at hand. First, I provide an overview of the literature on Global Initiatives. This reveals the general trends of Global Initiatives in the literature. Second, I explore the literature on the EU Global Gateway Initiative. This offers an overview of Global Gateway, provides an understanding of how it operates, and gives some indications of potential determinants behind the Initiative. Third, I explore the literature on the European Union and its role in global governance. Because this dissertation directly addresses the structural and normative role of the European Union in global governance, understanding its positioning is of paramount importance for my analysis. In particular, I investigate how the European Union operates and perceives itself in the current world order. Finally, I explore the gaps in the literature which this dissertation seeks to fulfil.

I start with an overview of Global Initiatives. A way to characterize Global Initiatives is to identify what they do not encompass (Weiss & Wilkinson, 2014). For example, Global Initiatives do not seek to alter the world order through military power. Instead, they respond to structural demands, such as global public good deficits, and in doing so, advance structural and/or normative positioning (Ortega, 2007). Lately, China has been accused of utilizing “soft power” (used interchangeably with normative power) through its Belt and Road Initiative (Mishra & Mishra, 2021). These accusations have led to an exaggeration and misinterpretation of the term. A general understanding is that through the Belt and Road Initiative, China uses “soft power” to indebt states and have leverage over their governments (Ibid.). Whether these accusations are true or not, this is actually an example of structural power, given that the economy is used as a coercive tool. This misinterpretation has led to the term “soft power” acquiring a negative connotation. In reality, all Global Initiatives advance interests through normative or “soft power”, including the EU Global Gateway Initiative. In fact, Joseph Nye, who coined the term “soft power”, argued that the European Union epitomised the idea through its emphasis on democratic values (Ortega, 2007). For this reason, while Global Initiatives do not make use of military power, they do respond to existing structural needs, and in doing so, advance structural and normative interests.

Global Initiatives serve a structural purpose, but not necessarily for the reasons often given. Initiatives such as the EU Global Gateway Initiative and the G7’s Build Back Better World Initiative have been characterized as geo-political manoeuvres to counter China’s Belt and Road Initiative (Crabtree, 2023). These criticisms imply that Western Global Initiatives represent a significant structural and normative

challenge to China's Belt and Road Initiative. While the EU's Global Gateway Initiative does not affirm these claims, the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative does. The White House (2021) asserts that the Build Back Better World Initiative seeks to address "strategic competition" with China, while furthering the Green Agenda. But just because one Western Global Initiative seeks to challenge China, it does not mean that all Global Initiatives have geo-political motivations. For example, the government of the United Kingdom does not present a significant structural challenge through its Clean Green Initiative, which only aims to invest £3 billion (United Kingdom Government Investments, 2022). Nonetheless, by offering normative advantages to subscribers of the Initiative, the United Kingdom has the potential to advance its normative positioning. For this reason, while Global Initiatives can serve structural purposes, not all do so. In fact, some Global Initiatives primarily offer normative advantages to partners and providers.

This may be due to the fact that different types of actors advance Global Initiatives. While groupings of states have advanced some of the most significant Initiatives, such as the G7's Build Back Better World and the EU Global Gateway Initiative, individual states have matched the dimensions of these Initiatives on their own accord. The primary example of this is China's Belt and Road Initiative, which in terms of scope, matches the G7's Build Back Better World. Nonetheless, other states, such as the United Kingdom, have launched their individual Initiatives, further demonstrating that these do not need to come from groupings of states or international institutions (United Kingdom Government Investments, 2022).

Additionally, current Global Initiatives share a focus on infrastructure funding in middle- and low-income states. With the exception of the UN's Global Development Initiative, Global Initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, Build Back Better World, and Global Gateway share an emphasis on infrastructure funding. The reason for this is to fulfil the extreme need for infrastructure funding in middle- and low-income states, as well as to open up less accessible areas of the world to international trade (Mishra & Mishra, 2021). For example, in Asia, the Asian Development Bank estimates infrastructure needs to be around \$26 trillion through 2030 (Asian Development Bank, 2017). Similarly, the African Development Bank estimates Africa's infrastructure needs to be between \$130 billion and \$170 billion yearly, signalling a significant global public good deficit (African Development Bank, 2023). In contrast, the UN's Global Development Initiative adopts a "people-centered approach" (UN SDG, 2021). This approach places an emphasis on poverty alleviation, food security, and pandemic response (Ibid.). Yet, it is clear that the bulk of existing Global Initiatives focus on infrastructure funding and investment, primarily to further international trade and accessibility to markets.



Lastly, ongoing Global Initiatives share a geographical preference. These Initiatives have identified Africa as the region needing the most funding, with Latin America and the Indo-Pacific as a close second and third. This is true for strategic Initiatives, such as the Build Back Better World Initiative and the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as for humanitarian Initiatives, such as the UN's Global Development Initiative. While the motivations behind their choice for Africa may differ, there exists a consensus that Africa as a continent demands global public good funding the most.

Next, I explore the literature addressing the role of the European Union in global governance. Ortega (2007) argues that the European Union has been contributing to global governance "since the very moment" of its creation. He notes that one of the main ways it has done so has been through region building, which directly contributes to global governance in two ways (Ibid.). First, the European integration process serves as a model for other regions (Ibid.). The reason for this is that, despite widespread conflict in the 20th century, Western Europe has achieved relative peace and stability (Ibid.). Therefore, the European model of integration serves as a blueprint for other continents. Indeed, while European integration cannot be exactly replicated in continents with different political, economic, and cultural contexts, Ortega (2007) maintains that European integration serves and will continue to serve as inspiration for other continents. This highlights Europe's high normative positioning.

Second, Ortega (2007) argues that the European Union has become a powerful international actor. It has defined a foreign and security policy where diplomacy, cooperation and resolution of disputes are at the forefront (Ibid.). He writes:

*"The EU is not attempting to compete militarily with other world powers, the EU is not building up a military capacity independent of that of its member states, the EU is not trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction, the EU has no territorial claims to make, the EU does not intend to intervene militarily to change regimes, and the EU is determined to work hand-in-hand with the United Nations. In short, as it embodies a new category of international actor, the EU's approach to global relations is different from the traditional approach of major powers. As a consequence, the rest of the world welcomes the European Union as a new kind of more constructive actor in global relations."* (Ibid.).

The fact that the EU participates in a majority of international issues and that it has established formal relationships with all states and international organisations highlights its relevance as a global actor (Ibid.).

However, the literature has also questioned the European Union's ability to stand up to rising international actors. This literature explores how the European Union should adapt to the notion of

global governance, and whether it should embrace its role or reject it. Ortega (2007) investigates the role of internal and external factors on the future of the European Union. In terms of internal factors, he identifies six factors which can influence the European Union's international presence (Ibid.). The first of these is the relationships between EU member states (Ibid.). Ortega (2007) argues that worsening relationships between leaders in the European Union could lead to an inability to reach consensus regarding common policies. While not directly an EU issue, Hungary's recent blocking of Sweden's entry to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization demonstrates a possibility of clashes between member states, hindering the ability to produce a common policy between states (Bayer, 2024). The second of these is the emergence of constitutional arrangements towards a permanent division of labour in international affairs between member states and the European Union (Ortega, 2007). Depending on which constitutional arrangement the European Union opts for, the emergence of such changes could severely impact the EU's efficiency and executiveness in international affairs. For this reason, a permanent division of labour could have an unknown impact on the EU's international presence and participation in international affairs. The third is the decision-making process that is agreed among states to define the EU's foreign policy on specific issues (Ibid.). Similar to a permanent division of labour, a change in the decision-making process could either restrain or encourage institutional executiveness in the EU, which is also reflected in the fourth factor: the coherence and efficiency of the EU's institutional setting in Brussels (Ibid.). EU inability to react efficiently or coherently in a global setting can have a significant impact on its international presence. A simple explanation for this is that relevant partners may become aware of incoherentness and inefficiency, which in turn deters willingness to cooperate. Moreover, the fifth factor is the capabilities given to EU institutions to carry out their tasks (Ibid.). Should these be reduced, the European Union would face significant restrictions in its desire to be a relevant international actor. Finally, the sixth factor is the size of the European Union itself (Ibid.). Indeed, this can have positive or negative outcomes. For example, a larger membership may make it harder for member states to reach a consensus. Nonetheless, newer member states can lead to greater funding and an ability to increase the scope and reach of Global Initiatives. For this reason, the very size of the European Union can either hinder or encourage its future role in global governance. In sum, the literature reveals that the European Union needs to stay vigilant of the aforementioned factors, which have the potential to affect its ability to exercise global governance.

Ortega (2007) argues that five different external factors can influence the future of the European Union in global governance. The first of these is a peaceful or violent international environment (Ibid.). Indeed, it is difficult to predict the impact of either of these scenarios on the role of the European Union, since success or failure will ultimately depend on how it manages to navigate the international environment. For this reason, a peaceful or violent international environment can either be beneficial or detrimental to the European Union's role in global governance. Similarly, the second of these factors is the foreign

policy of the United States (Ibid.). EU foreign policy has traditionally aligned with that of the United States. The normative similarities between the EU Global Gateway Initiative and the G7's Build Back Better World highlight that this alignment is still relevant today. Therefore, the foreign policy of the EU's closest ally continues to have a significant impact on its ability to exercise global governance. Meanwhile, the third factor is the political and foreign policy of other major powers, including China and other emerging powers (Ibid.). Because Chinese foreign policy can stir reactions from close EU allies, as can be seen in the structural challenge of the Build Back Better World Initiative, there is no doubt that a well-positioned China can have a significant impact on future EU actions and its participation in global governance. The fourth factor is the situation in the EU's neighbourhood and whether there are direct threats to the EU (Ibid.). The war in Ukraine has left a visible mark on EU member states. It has exposed the European Union's dependence on Russian natural gas and Ukrainian wheat and corn (European Council, 2023). This had led the EU to spend a significant part of its budget on addressing energy shortages and on rebuilding Ukraine (Ibid.; European Commission, 2022). While the European Union does its best to address these weaknesses, there is clear evidence that the situation in the EU's neighbourhood can have a significant impact on its participation in global governance. This is also highlighted in the fifth and final external factor. Ortega (2007) states that unexpected events, crises, or man-made and natural catastrophes could bring about a change in European attitudes, which is also highlighted in the previous example. In sum, the European Union needs to stay vigilant of these external factors which also have the potential to affect its ability to exercise global governance.

Moreover, Ortega (2007) predicts four possible futures for Europe in global governance. The first of these is the "Disunited States of Europe", which envisions a European Union where states have decided to go back to national sovereignty as the primary form of carrying out internal and external policies (Ibid.). This leads to member states forming their own economic and security blocks (Ibid.). Ortega (2007) argues that strong disagreement on key issues, such as energy policy, environmental policies, or Russia and the Middle East could bring about such change. A current example of this is the aforementioned disagreement between Sweden and Hungary over North Atlantic Treaty Organization membership (Bayer, 2024). As a result, disagreement on key issues between EU member states can hinder cooperation and drive them apart, greatly impacting the EU's role in global governance. The second possible future of the EU is the Commercial Union, which envisions a future European Union as a vibrant trade region (Ibid.). In this instance, there would be no expectation for member states to cooperate on foreign affairs and security, greatly diminishing the European Union's role in global governance and its reputational power. The third of these is the Little Europe (Ibid.). Here, Ortega (2007) envisions a group of member states who decide to create an organisation within the European Union, while the European Union continues to exist as a super-union open for all members to use. In this scenario, it is theorized that the European Union will serve to coordinate foreign policies, while the

Little Europe serves to coordinate the interests of like-minded members. Should the like-minded members of the Little Europe reach consensus on key issues, there exists a possibility that this Union becomes an executive committee of the more influential EU member states. In this case, the Little Europe approach can serve as a means to revitalize EU relevance in global governance in the face of diminishing normative and structural power. Finally, the fourth scenario is the Great Europe (Ibid.). Here, a new version of the Constitutional Treaty is negotiated and agreed, and a European Minister of Foreign Affairs is named (Ibid.). This scenario represents a deeper European integration, and a more executive constitutional set-up. Should this scenario become a reality, the EU would be encouraged to act more efficiently, amplifying its structural and normative positioning. Currently, there are no plans for the EU to adapt in the manner described. Additionally, the EU enjoys a similar institutional and bureaucratic set-up as it did at the time of Ortega's (2007) writing. Nonetheless, the examples given demonstrate that the EU is susceptible to internal and external factors, and that these have a significant impact on the EU's role in global governance. For this reason, it is important to keep these scenarios in mind when exploring the potential determinants behind the EU Global Gateway Initiative.

Next, I explore the literature comparing the EU Global Gateway Initiative to other Global Initiatives. Doing so reveals the normative and structural roles that existing Global Initiatives have in global governance, furthering our understanding of potential determinants. Men (2023) explores Chinese perspectives on the similarities between the EU Global Gateway Initiative and China's Belt and Road Initiative in the literature. Using three examples in Chinese literature, Men (2023) reveals that almost all interpretations advance the idea that the EU Global Gateway Initiative serves a geo-political purpose. These argue that the EU Global Gateway Initiative attempts to reduce structural dependence on China and seeks to address economic threats (Ibid.). In doing so, the EU Global Gateway Initiative serves both as a "geo-economic" and "geo-political" Initiative directly aimed at China (Ibid.). In contrast, Tagliapietra (2024) proposes that the EU Global Gateway serves an existing structural and normative need. She states that infrastructure investments are "the material way of turning sustainable development goals into practice", and that the Initiative enables the EU to meet its international pledges on climate finance (Ibid.). This implies that the Initiative has a normative purpose free of geo-political intentions. An example of this is the Initiative's arrangement of investment opportunities, which are a mix of grants, soft loans, and guarantees. China's Belt and Road Initiative only offers a fixed type of loan, which indicates that the Initiative offers genuine alternatives for states looking to attract European industry (Ibid.). Similarly, Rock & Hamlet (2023) argue that while China's Belt and Road Initiative has a strong emphasis on physical infrastructure, the EU's Global Gateway Initiative emphasises elements relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals. For this reason, the Initiative seeks to satisfy the normative needs of middle- and low-income states wishing to improve global perception of them. Yet, Western literature does not offer the same interpretations. Teevan et al. (2022) offer a historical interpretation. They argue

that Africa has traditionally been Europe's core sphere of influence, and that Chinese presence in the region threatens to shift the balance of power. For this reason, the EU Global Gateway Initiative's focus on Africa is an attempt to reclaim structural positioning in the African continent.

While the literature offers numerous comparisons between the EU Global Gateway Initiative and China's Belt and Road Initiative, there are limited comparisons between the EU Global Gateway Initiative and the G7's Build Back Better World. Scull & Healy (2022) offer such a comparison. They argue that both Initiatives aim to address a "massive infrastructure funding gap" through sustainable means and transparency (Ibid.). This interpretation advances the idea that the need for global infrastructure funding is the main determinant behind these Initiatives. Nonetheless, this interpretation also advances the idea that these Initiatives stand as a significant normative challenge to China's Belt and Road Initiative, which has traditionally lacked an emphasis on climate concerns. In doing so, they seek to further the EU's and the G7's normative positioning.

Finally, I address the numerous gaps in the literature. The first of these is a gap in the literature investigating EU Global Initiatives. While there exists abundant literature on the European Union's policies and its role in global governance, the EU Global Gateway Initiative is relatively new. This Initiative represents a step-up in global reach and influence, meaning that its impact in global governance is still not fully understood. By directly addressing the determinants behind the EU's Global Gateway Initiative, I seek to satisfy this gap in the literature.

Second, while there are numerous comparative analyses on the EU Global Gateway and other Global Initiatives, there are a limited number of analyses doing so with academic rigor. By sticking to a codified theoretical framework and a recognized methodology, this dissertation seeks to satisfy the gap in academic literature offering a comparative analysis on Global Initiatives with academic rigor.

Third, this analysis explores less-considered determinants impacting the emergence of Global Initiatives. Currently, the literature places a heavy emphasis on geo-political determinants. This is particularly true of the literature addressing the role of the European Union in global governance, where predictions on the future of the European Union mostly consider competition with China and strategic alliance with the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative. By considering specific economic determinants influencing the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative, my analysis explores less-considered determinants impacting the emergence of Global Initiatives.

Fourth and finally, while the literature has addressed the role of internal dynamics on the future of the European Union, it has not yet addressed the role of these on Global Initiatives. By using case study

analysis to explore the impact of Ursula von der Leyen's leadership as a determinant in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative, this dissertation satisfies the gap in the literature addressing the role of internal determinants on Global Initiatives.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

My analysis adopts global governance as a theoretical framework. First, I address why global governance is a suitable theoretical framework for this dissertation. Second, I explore relevant assumptions in global governance and their place in my analysis. Third, I outline the relevant terminology and concepts of global governance, and finally, I offer some hypotheses based on the literature review and the theoretical framework chosen in this dissertation.

According to Zhang & Ren (2021), the development of global governance in International Relations emerged from "the need to address diversified participants, complex interdependence, larger-scale financing for global public goods, and more variegated institutional arrangements." Given that this dissertation seeks to address a Global Initiative, global governance serves as a suitable theoretical framework. I propose that traditional International Relations theories are unable to successfully address the question at hand. The reason for this is that traditional International Relations theories adopt a state-centred approach (Wendt, 2004). This approach is not compatible with my analysis of the European Union as an international actor. Indeed, certain branches of traditional International Relations theory, such as neo-liberalism, do see the European Union as a platform for state cooperation (Richard & Van Hamme, 2013). Nonetheless, global governance as a theoretical framework offers a far more codified approach to the study of Global Initiatives addressed in this dissertation.

The Commission on Global Governance offers a standard definition for global governance:

*"Governance is the sum of the many ways that individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests could be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest."* (Zhang & Ren, 2021)

This definition implies two things. The first is that global governance has a broad understanding of international actors. According to this definition, actors down to individuals can have an impact on international relations, meaning that their role is equally valuable to that of states and international institutions. In doing so, global governance as a theoretical framework allows me to consider the role of

actors such as Ursula von der Leyen, offering an unconventional understanding of determinants behind the emergence of Global Gateway. Second, the definition given above implies that these actors act out of self-interest. This concept is not too unfamiliar in International Relations literature. Traditional International Relations theories, such as realism, assert that actors act in self-interest (Jervis, 1998). Yet, global governance as a theoretical framework can uncover interests at various levels. Uncovering these helps reveal less-considered determinants for the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative.

Over the years, global governance has evolved into a set of codified assumptions. I proceed to explore these and to explain their relevance in this dissertation. The first is that there is a “scarcity of material resources and means that satisfy people’s needs and interests” (Zhang & Ren, 2021). Global governance assumes that a growing global population puts a strain on the availability of material resources, and that over time, conflict between actors becomes probable (Ibid.). In such a context, global public goods become a necessity. These global public goods include “global peace and security, law and order, stable financial markets and monetary order, sustainable resources, and a good living environment.” (Ibid.) In the context of this dissertation, a “good living environment” translates to reliable infrastructure. In fact, the Global Initiatives addressed in this dissertation advance the notion that middle- and low-income states currently lack such a “good living environment”, and therefore demand infrastructure funding. The second assumption is that all players act to maximize their own interests (Ibid.). This leads to a global context where players have both common and conflicting interests. For example, Western international actors agree on a number of security issues, which is why international security alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization exist. But not all actors agree with this alliance, meaning that there exist both common and conflicting interests in global governance. The same is true of the Global Initiatives addressed in this dissertation. The EU Global Gateway Initiative and the G7’s Build Back Better World Initiative highlight that their investments promote transparency and democracy, while China’s Build Back Better World does not signal these things. The latter is not necessarily a contradiction of the former, but this example serves to reveal the existence of common and conflicting interests in the Global Initiatives addressed in this dissertation. Yet, the third assumption is that there are common interests for mankind (Ibid.). Global issues such as preventing climate change and the spread of global pandemics reveal that global cooperation is of paramount importance. The governance of such issues goes beyond the capacity of individual states, so cooperation is an interest to all international actors (Ibid.). In other words, global governance embraces the nature of international challenges and advocates cooperation to provide global solutions to global issues. This is relevant to this dissertation since the normative foundation of some of the Global Initiatives discussed are to address sustainable development and climate change, which can be understood as a common interest for all international actors. Finally, the fourth assumption is that there is no world government. Global governance argues that “there is no authoritative organisation that can maintain order like a central

government” (Ibid.). The reason for this is that no authority has the power to tax at a global level, making it hard to raise funds for carrying out governance (Ibid.). In this sense, global governance shares the assumption of anarchy with traditional International Relations theory (Milner, 1991). Nonetheless, global governance differs from traditional International Relations theories in that it advocates that this very anarchy is what brings about a layered governance network (Zhang & Ren, 2021). Therefore, without anarchy, there is no multi-actor global governance. Similar to global governance’s broad assumption of actors, this assumption is relevant for my analysis as it helps explain the totality of actors and their impact in international relations.

In addition to these basic assumptions, global governance literature establishes a number of concepts. Global governance understands “global issues” as “cross-border problems” (Ibid.). It is understood that globalization brings out these issues, and that they have a spill over effect in international relations (Ibid.). Meanwhile, “global public goods” are the “mechanisms and institutions” designed to deal with global issues and serve as the basis for financing governance (Ibid.). The Global Initiatives addressed in this dissertation are examples of global public goods. These typically have a number of financing methods, based on urgency or necessity (Ibid.). Zhang and Ren (2021) measure these through exclusivity and rivalry. For example, “non-excludable and non-rivalrous” public goods, such as global warming and global pandemics, require public funding and benefit all states and peoples (Ibid.). Meanwhile, public goods which are not completely non-excludable and non-rivalrous, such as “fishing rights and the protection of forests,” require international coordination, but often receive private funding for their execution (Ibid.). Then there are “club goods” (Ibid.). These are “semi-public goods” which also are “relatively excludable and partially rivalrous” (Ibid.). Examples of these platforms in global governance are the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the G7, which demonstrate obvious group preferences and are often involved with issues of crucial national interest. While Global Initiatives such as the EU Global Gateway Initiative may appear to be non-excludable and non-rivalrous, the use of virtue signalling demonstrates that they are semi-public goods. As will be evidenced, this virtue signalling greatly impacts my analysis of determinants in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative.

Another concept of global governance is the “overcoming or participation in the cooperation dilemma” (Ibid.). Global governance does not reject power relations. It “advocates executive power through coordinating and empowering institutions”, but not in a completely unproblematic manner (Ibid.). Global governance needs to overcome a “public goods deficit” and the “tragedy of the commons”, but common interests do not always equate to collective action (Ibid.). The reason for this is that it is in the interest of actors to become “free-riders” while also limiting others from becoming “free-riders” (Ibid.). This perfectly illustrates the notion that “if it’s everybody’s business, it’s nobody’s business”, and that collective action is not always easily achieved (Ibid.). In fact, most of the time actors strive to limit their



“governance cost” (Ibid.). This refers to the sum of the costs that players pay to address global issues, which in the case of Global Initiatives can be the amount invested. This is often done out of self-interest, and with the intention to become a “free rider” in the resolution of a global issue (Ibid.). A global context where there’s constant competition to minimize governance cost means that it is difficult to achieve “governance equilibrium” (Ibid.). This is the balance achieved between the supply and demand of global public goods. For this reason, at the centre of global governance is the dilemma of which factors decide the player’s participation, which is precisely what this dissertation seeks to address in relation to the determinants behind the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Yet, global governance maintains that actors can maximize self-interest while also taking into account the other player’s interest (Ibid.). Under “Pareto improvement” and the “Kaldor-Hicks improvement”, actors can maximize self-interest while taking into account the other player’s interest (Ibid.). By ensuring that beneficiaries will make a corresponding compensation to actors that have suffered a relative loss, broader cooperation is promoted. In sum, these assumptions and concepts are utilized throughout this dissertation, and will help make sense of the various determinants and actors behind Global Initiatives.

In addition to these concepts, global governance acknowledges the impact of geo-politics in international relations. To illustrate this, Tallberg (2021) uses the example of the Western liberal international order, which had its climax in the 1990s. He argues that in recent years, rising powers have put this world order into question, and have labelled it as “biased, unjust, and unreflective of economic and political realities” (Ibid.). In particular, there has been a greater demand for “representation, influence, and recognition” from BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) (Ibid.). Tallberg (2021) establishes that these claims serve as deliberate efforts at delegitimation, designed to put moral pressure on the current power holders in this international liberal order for purposes of achieving a “rebalancing of privileges”. If and when power holders yield to demands for equal representation, the result is institutional reforms to the existing global governance structure, which are attempts of re-legitimation to increase support for relevant governance instruments (Ibid.). In fact, institutions are constantly going through the processes of trial and error and adjusting accordingly, adding complexity and layering to global governance. As John Ikenberry (2018) explains, global governance is a “crisis of legitimacy and social purpose”, where contenders strive to deteriorate legitimacy and power holders strive to justify social purpose, ultimately influencing geo-politics. This means that social perception can influence geo-politics.

Using survey data from the World Values Survey (WVS) and the LegGov survey, Tallberg (2021) investigated whether new-style governance is perceived as more legitimate than old-style governance. “New-style governance” is understood as “transgovernmental networks, transnational hybrid institutions, and transnational private arrangements”, while old-style governance institutions refer to “hierarchical international organizations” (Ibid.). Because the EU Global Gateway Initiative and other

Global Initiatives such as the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative offer diverse transnational public-private partnership arrangements, these Initiatives might be characterized as new-style governance institutions. Nonetheless, their association to well-established international organizations signal that they are in reality old-style governance institutions. Using elite opinion, Tallberg (2021) finds that "new-style governance" is not necessarily perceived as more legitimate. The reason for this is that citizens typically make use of heuristics when forming legitimacy beliefs, which is advantageous to old-style governance institutions that are more established (Ibid.). It is for this reason that social perception can influence legitimacy, which in turn influences geo-politics. This is relevant for the question at hand since an attempt to improve public perception can easily be a justification for launching a Global Initiative.

Having done a comprehensive literature review and exploring the theoretical framework chosen for this dissertation, I offer some hypotheses. My first hypothesis is that actors down to the individual level, such as Ursula von der Leyen's leadership of the European Commission, can have a significant impact in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Global governance literature differs from traditional International Relations theory in its understanding of actors. Global governance recognises that individual actors can have a great impact on international relations. It is therefore coherent with the literature review and the theoretical framework to recognize the impact which these individuals can have in the emergence of Global Initiatives. The second hypothesis is that a global need for infrastructure funding has a significant role in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. According to the literature review, a noticeable public goods deficit has spurred the launch of a number of the Global Initiatives addressing the lack of infrastructure in middle- and low-income states. For this reason, I argue that this tangible public good deficit is a significant factor in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. The third hypothesis is that normative determinants may have had an impact in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. According to the literature review, Global Gateway adopts significant normative instruments. Furthermore, according to the theoretical framework, certain styles of governance may offer increased perception of legitimacy. For this reason, I hypothesize that normative considerations have had an impact in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway theory. The fourth hypothesis is that strategic considerations have also had a considerable impact in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. According to the literature review, the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative had explicit geo-political underpinnings, and while the EU Global Gateway Initiative does not, it explicitly sides with it. Additionally, the theoretical framework chosen for this dissertation recognises the impact which geo-politics has on global governance. For this reason, I maintain that structural considerations have had a traceable impact in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Fifth and finally, I hypothesize that the EU strives to become a free-rider through the Global Gateway Initiative. Because Global Gateway only commits to invest a fraction of what other Global

Initiatives invest, I consider the possibility that Global Gateway represents an attempt from the EU to become a free-rider in the realm of infrastructure funding.

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

In this section, I outline the relevant elements in my methodology. First, I justify the choice of a qualitative approach over a quantitative approach. Second, I outline the data collection methods used in this dissertation, and distinguish between primary and secondary data collection. Third, I justify the choice of a case study research design. Fourth, I outline the relevant ethical considerations, and finally, I consider the relevant limitations of my dissertation.

I argue that the research question is best answered through a qualitative approach. There are two reasons for this. The first is the nature of the variables. The research question investigates the determinants behind the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. This means that the independent variables in my research puzzle are the relevant structural and normative determinants, while the dependent variable is the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Under structural determinants, this dissertation places an emphasis on the global demand for infrastructure funding, the EU economy and leadership, and the EU's structural positioning. Meanwhile, under normative determinants, I explore the EU's normative obligations and normative positioning. These determinants are hard to quantify, meaning that a qualitative approach is adequate. This is also true of the dependent variable. Given that the EU Global Gateway Initiative is relatively new and that elements of its emergence are unclear, a quantitative approach is unrealistic. For this reason, I find that the research question is better addressed using a qualitative approach.

The second is the theoretical framework chosen. The choice of global governance as a theoretical framework involves the use of theoretical assumptions which are hard to quantify. Indeed, certain studies in the global governance literature do make use of quantitative methods, such as Tallberg's (2021) study of public perception on modes of governance. Nonetheless, a qualitative approach in global governance literature is the norm. I therefore employ a qualitative approach in accordance with the chosen research paradigm.

This dissertation employs two types of data collection methods. The reason for this is the types of variables investigated. Given that no single data source covers both structural and normative determinants, data collection must be varied. The same is true about the dependent variable. Given that official European Union sources offer limited information on the EU Global Gateway Initiative, data

collection needs to be varied. I have therefore chosen to use primary and secondary data collection. For primary data, I make use of official EU documents and websites, such as the European Commission's official website, and for secondary data, I make use of academic literature, think-tank analyses, and news articles.

To evaluate the impact of the aforementioned determinants in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative, I make use of case studies as a research method. This method is widely used in qualitative social science research, and provides an in-depth understanding of the variables investigated. Berg & Lune (2017) argue:

*“Case studies can provide a kind of deep understanding of phenomenon, events, people, or organizations, similar to Geertz's (1973) notion of “thick description.” In essence, case studies open the door to the processes created and used by individuals involved in the phenomenon, event, group, or organization under study”.*

Based on this description, the case study research method lends itself well to the research question at hand. The reason for this is that this dissertation explores less-considered determinants, such as the leadership of Ursula von der Leyen, and that case studies offer the depth needed to explore her relevance in the emergence of the Global Gateway Initiative.

Yet, this approach and my intended data collection method implies certain ethical considerations. In order to avoid these, I incorporate adequate adjustments in my research. To begin with, I stay conscious of any potential conflict of interests that may arise in the course of my research. Carrying out research under a Western context involves the risk of incorporating beliefs into my analysis, particularly when addressing non-Western Global Initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative. Here, I stay conscious of my beliefs and make sure to include balanced sources in this dissertation. Doing so ensures that I do not fall into dichotomized interpretations. Similarly, I ensure data integrity and seek to ensure data accuracy. I do so by using reliable sources, verifying information, and accurately representing the views and statements of my sources. Moreover, I stay conscious of the potential impact which my research can have. As previously mentioned, the topic of Global Initiatives is polarized, meaning that misuse of my research may have severe consequences. I therefore go out of my way ensure that my research is not used for any other purpose other than academic purposes. Additionally, I seek to avoid harm. By staying conscious of the potential impact my research can have on stakeholders, I limit the exposure of my research to avoid misuse. Similarly, I stay conscious of local laws and regulations. In my research, I make sure to adhere to local laws and regulations, and I stay aware of any legal restrictions on data collection and dissemination. Finally, I am transparent about my chosen methodology. I carry out a

thorough literature review, I outline my theoretical framework, and inform readers of my methodology, including data collection and analysis methods. This allows readers and reviewers to assess the rigor of my study and understand how I arrived at my conclusion. Through these steps, I ensure the integrity of my study and mitigate any potential ethical concerns.

Nonetheless, my research design carries a number of limitations. The first is the complexity of factors. Structural and normative determinants are multifaceted and interrelated, meaning that it is difficult to isolate specific factors and to accurately assess their individual impact in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Similarly, limiting my analysis to structural and normative determinants may result in negligence of other relevant determinants in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. The second limitation relates to data availability. There is limited access to internal decision-making processes within the EU, meaning that it is hard to get an accurate picture of the processes behind the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Without access to interviews with stakeholders in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative, my research will be limited in the depth of insights obtained. Third, temporal constraints affect the validity and reliability of this dissertation. The time-frame chosen for developing this dissertation limits its ability to capture the full evolution of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Changes in political leadership, the state of the world economy, and global events may occur beyond the dissertation's scope, impacting the future validity and reliability of my analysis. Fourth, this research may not be completely generalizable. The dissertation's findings primarily apply to the specific context of the EU Global Gateway Initiative and might not be directly generalizable to other Global Initiatives, such as the Build Back Better World Initiative. This may be due to differences in investment quantities, contextual differences, and differing objectives. Fifth, my interpretation of data risks being subjective. As previously mentioned, my interpretation of structural and normative determinants and their influence in the emergence of Global Gateway Initiative may involve sub-conscious judgements. Therefore, my research biases, perspectives and theoretical frameworks risk influencing the analysis and potentially affecting the objectivity of the findings. Sixth, it is hard to establish direct causality. Establishing causal relationships between structural and normative determinants and the Global Gateway Initiative's emergence can be complex. Although the chosen method strives to distinguish between the relevant determinants, the method does not provide certainty of causation. Seventh and finally, I have an overemphasis on qualitative data. While relying solely on qualitative data for my analysis may give me depth of understanding of complex structural and normative dynamics, the lack of quantitative data may result in me missing other general and macro-level trends.

## **5. THE EU GLOBAL GATEWAY INITIATIVE AND OTHER GLOBAL INITIATIVES**

In this section, I outline the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative and that of other Global Initiatives. First, I provide an overview of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Doing so offers the necessary foundation for identifying the determinants behind the Initiative. Second, I compare and contrast the EU Global Gateway Initiative with other Global Initiatives, such as China's Belt and Road Initiative and the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative. This process is relevant for the discussion since a technical understanding of the similarities and differences between these Initiatives allows me to understand the broader structural and normative drivers behind them. In turn, this facilitates my understanding of the European Union's structural and normative positioning.

First, I outline the basic elements of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. The Initiative was launched on the 1st of December of 2021 under Ursula von der Leyen's presidency of the European Commission (European Commission, 2024a). The key objectives of the Initiative are to "foster global connectivity and partnerships, enhance economic relations with strategic partners worldwide, and to promote sustainable development and digital connectivity" (European Commission, 2019). These objectives are to be achieved through infrastructure funding focused at "exposed sectors", such as "digital, climate and energy, transport, health and education, and research" (Ibid.). The European Union's emphasis on these exposed sectors reveals a number of alternative objectives. These include the wish to "facilitate trade and investment with key partners through agreements and collaborations", while "integrating sustainability goals into international partnerships" (Ibid.) The EU also strives to "promote digital infrastructure and technology cooperation", with "an emphasis on digital transformation and innovation as key components of the Initiative", revealing both structural and normative objectives (Ibid.).

If successful, the Initiative has the potential to strengthen the EU's structural and normative positioning. The ability to influence diplomatic, economic, and strategic relations with partner states are among the expected advantages which the Initiative brings. This is done under an old-style form of governance, which as Tallberg (2021) argues, typically offers a greater perception of legitimacy. Global Gateway sees collaboration with "international organizations, partner states, and other stakeholders" to establish "partnerships" and achieve common objectives (European Commission, 2024a). EU member states coordinate policies and actions among themselves, and funding is partly sourced through EU financial institutions such as the European Investment Bank and the European Central Bank (Ibid.). Further funding stems from member states and private sector engagement (Ibid.). This is not too different from previous EU Initiatives, such as the EU Neighbourhood Policy, which saw funds being raised through the EU's financial institutions, EU member states, and the private sphere. The implementation of the

Team Europe platform, which offers close cooperation between member states and the EU's financial institutions, does represent a new modality of cooperation within the Union. Nonetheless, the use of an old-style form of governance indicates that the Initiative may be an attempt to foster normative legitimacy.

In fact, the EU Global Gateway Initiative seeks to further its structural and normative positioning in specific geographical contexts. The Global Gateway Initiative established the Africa-Europe Investment Package, which dedicates half of the EU Global Gateway Initiative budget to the African continent in order to “bolster cooperation with African partners” (Ibid.). This geographical preference was also seen in the European External Investment Plan during Jean-Claude Juncker's administration, which mobilized a number of private investments in the African continent (European Investment Bank, 2024). While the EU Global Gateway Initiative thwarts the investment quantities of the European External Investment Plan, a geographical preference for Africa is not unheard of, and might reveal structural and normative motivations behind the Initiative.

However, the EU Global Gateway Initiative is not set in stone. In the literature review, I explored Ortega's (2007) predictions on the future of Europe. He offered a number of external and internal impacts which could influence the future of the European Union, which also apply to the Global Gateway Initiative. A changing geopolitical landscape, global challenges, and other strategic adjustments will continue to influence the Initiative's investment arrangements and normative obligations. This became evident in 2022, where Global Gateway mobilized €150 million for upgrading Moldova's roads and highways in order to keep grain moving out of Ukraine and aid moving in (European Investment Bank, 2023). Similarly, in 2023, the European Union stunted the development of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor as a result of the Hamas-Israel war (Tocci, 2023). While doing so, it also increased conflict resolution efforts in order to secure the future of this crucial Global Gateway project. As such, global governance is not set in stone, and will continue to evolve according to structural and normative conditions in global governance.

In fact, the EU Global Gateway Initiative has received significant criticism for not introducing new funds. Critics argue that Global Gateway is nothing more than a stunt to further EU legitimacy and visibility. One of the main examples of this is seen in the budget of the EU's Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument for 2021-2027 (Bilal et al., 2021). This budget was already set before the launch of Global Gateway, meaning that the Global Initiative did not represent the emergence of new funds. The same is true of the European Fund for Sustainable Development (Ibid.). These funds were established before the creation of Global Gateway, but the European Union has opted to use them under the Initiative banner. In fact, the only true development which Global

Gateway has brought is the coordination among EU institutions and member states under the Team Europe platform. Nonetheless, these cooperation processes occur behind closed doors, meaning that it will remain unclear whether EU member states and financial institutions have committed to offering new funds.

Second, while the EU Global Gateway Initiative shares a number of structural and normative objectives with other Global Initiatives, there are also significant technical differences between them. A technical understanding of these offers hints about broader structural and normative motivations behind Global Initiatives, which in turn facilitates a greater understanding of the European Union's role in global governance. I start by outlining the differences between the EU Global Gateway Initiative and China's Belt and Road Initiative. In terms of investment quantities, China's Belt and Road Initiative trumps the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Until now, the Belt and Road Initiative has invested an estimated \$1.01 trillion, while the EU Global Gateway has only allocated €300 billion for infrastructure funding (Green Finance and Development Center, 2023b; European Commission, 2019). Furthermore, in terms of duration, China's Belt and Road Initiative started in 2013, and is expected to run its course in 2049 (Green Finance and Development Center, 2023c). In contrast, the EU Global Gateway Initiative commenced in 2021 and is expected to run its course in 2027 (European Commission, 2019). Based on these metrics, the Belt and Road Initiative has the potential to have a bigger impact on China's structural positioning than Global Gateway on the EU's structural positioning. This is accentuated through the objectives of these two Global Initiatives. In terms of objectives, China's Belt and Road Initiative strives to increase economic connectivity between Asia, Europe, and Africa to create one large market while also facilitating trade and investment (Green Finance and Development Center, 2023c). Implicitly, the Belt and Road Initiative is expected to further the renminbi as a currency for global transactions and to reduce dependency on the United States as a global governance provider (Car, 2017). Meanwhile, the EU Global Gateway Initiative aims to "boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport sectors and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the world", resulting in the acceleration of green and digital infrastructure development (European Commission, 2024a). There are further significant structural differences between the EU Global Gateway Initiative and China's Belt and Road Initiative. The Belt and Road Initiative sets out a concrete economic goal: to facilitate trade with less-accessible markets, which in turn helps it establish itself as a go-to economic partner for middle- and low-income states. Meanwhile, the EU Global Gateway Initiative does attempt to further economic connectivity, but it does so while attempting to further the EU's normative perception. This is seen in its discourse, where there is an emphasis in "clean" and "secure" infrastructure instead of broader structural goals (Ibid.). This difference is also accentuated through the modus operandi of both Initiatives. In terms of sustainability and environmental impact, China's Belt and Road Initiative has shown disregard for normative concerns through their overuse of natural



resources, the disruption of ecosystems, and the emission of pollutants (Shah, 2016). In contrast, the EU Global Gateway Initiative places sustainability as one of its top priorities, enabling recipient states to further their economic growth through sustainable and environmentally-conscious projects (European Commission, 2024a). In terms of transparency, there are also noticeable differences. China's Belt and Road Initiative has encountered serious criticism for human rights violations (Chang, 2019). It has also received criticism for its investment terms, where rights to mine, access to ports, and high interest rates are used to back loans, creating what critics have framed as "debt-trap diplomacy" (Mishra, 2021). Critics argue that China deliberately forces recipient states into debt, thereby securing political and economic influence over them (Ibid.). In contrast, the EU Global Gateway Initiative aims to provide certainty, transparency, and financial sustainability (European Commission, 2021). The Initiative offers open access to public procurement and promotes equal partnerships between investors and recipient states (Ibid.). It also aims to establish strong representation, engagement and inclusivity policies in its investments (Ibid.). These characteristics highlight different structural and normative emphases between the EU Global Gateway Initiative and China's Belt and Road Initiative. By demonstrating disregard for sustainability, transparency, and human rights, China adopts a practical approach to enhancing its economic influence around the world. In contrast, by taking into account the aforementioned elements, the EU demonstrates a desire to advance its normative positioning. An explanation for this difference is that the European Union cannot challenge China's structural objectives, meaning that it chooses to challenge China's lack of normative consciousness instead. This is reflected in their respective governance structures. The Belt and Road Initiative makes use of a mixture of state-owned and private Chinese banks, and the general investment guidelines come from the Chinese government (Green Finance and Development Center, 2023c). In contrast, the EU Global Gateway Initiative funding derives from the entire European Union, including resources from the European Commission and member states, as well as financial institutions such as the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (European Commission, 2024a). Investment directives come from Team Europe Initiatives, where the EU, EU member states, as well as financing entities coordinate investment efforts under the Global Gateway Initiative (Ibid.). China adopts a far more centralised approach, since the Chinese government pursues a clear economic objective that aims to increase its relative structural positioning (Green Finance and Development Center, 2023c). In contrast, the EU's processes are more democratic and collaborative (European Commission, 2024a). This decentralised approach is a reflection of the desire to increase normative positioning, where member states have varying roles on a broad, but normative-heavy agenda.

Despite these differences, there are a number of technical overlaps between the two Initiatives. Understanding these enables me to identify shared structural and normative determinants. China's Belt and Road Initiative has had a broad geographic spread, investing heavily in regions such as the Indo-

Pacific, Africa, Latin America, and Central and Eastern Europe (Green Finance and Development Center, 2023c). Similarly, the EU Global Gateway Initiative has emphasized its focus on Africa and the Indo-Pacific, with other regions such as Latin America, the Middle East, and North Africa having lesser priority (European Commission, 2019). Furthermore, both Initiatives place a heavy emphasis on infrastructure. China's Belt and Road Initiative invests in mega infrastructure projects, which includes roads, railways, and ports in middle- and low-income states (Green Finance and Development Center, 2023c). Meanwhile, the EU Global Gateway Initiative's infrastructure projects place a heavy emphasis on these same infrastructure modalities in middle- and low-income states (European Commission, 2024a). While these overlaps in geographic preference and project type can be interpreted as direct competition, they are a reflection of structural realities. It is well documented that recipient regions are those with a higher need for infrastructure funding, although there may be geo-political exceptions, such as Global Gateway's investments in Moldova's roads and highways to ensure grain moving out of Ukraine and aid moving in (European Investment Bank, 2023). Nonetheless, geographical preferences are typically reflections of economic realities and geographic necessities rather than direct geo-political competition. The main difference lies in the fact that China's Belt and Road Initiative has a structural emphasis, while the EU Global Gateway Initiative has a normative emphasis. This indicates that although both Initiatives attempt to establish themselves in the same regions, they do so through different means.

I now explore the differences between the EU Global Gateway Initiative and the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative. There are a number of differences between the two Initiatives, which are a direct reflection of their differences in global governance objectives. In terms of funding, the Build Back Better World Initiative seeks to mobilize \$40 trillion by 2035, while the EU Global Gateway Initiative will only invest €300 billion over a period of six years (White House, 2021; European Commission, 2024a). While there is not as much difference in duration as with China's Belt and Road Initiative, the significant difference in budget indicates that the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative has more potential to advance the G7's structural positioning than Global Gateway's potential to advance that of the European Union. This is true when one looks at geo-political objectives behind the Initiatives. For the Build Back Better World Initiative, the White House (2021) asserts that the Initiative actively seeks to engage in strategic competition with China. This is not the case with the EU Global Gateway Initiative, which does not take an official geo-political stance other than asserting that it will complement "similar Initiatives" such as the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative (European Commission, 2021). In other words, the EU Global Gateway Initiative may have implicit geo-political leanings but refuses to claim these in an explicit manner. These differences shape the internal processes and structures of the two Initiatives. For example, the EU Global Gateway Initiative establishes clear protocols for investments and projects. The Initiative adopts investment directives from Team Europe Initiatives, where the EU,

EU member states, as well as the financing entities co-ordinate investment efforts under the Global Gateway umbrella (European Commission, 2021). In contrast, Build Back Better World Initiative's decision making is much more executive, where G7 partners are able to choose geographic orientations and contribute according to their relative economic strengths and expertise (White House, 2021). Additionally, G7 partners make use of their respective national development financing tools. In the case of the United States, the lead partner in the Build Back Better World Initiative, national entities such as the Development Finance Corporation, USAID, EXIM, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, and the Transaction Advisory Fund all play a role in development funding, representing a deeper structural challenge to China's Belt and Road Initiative (Ibid.).

Yet, there are also a number of similarities between the EU Global Gateway Initiative and the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative. These reveal common global governance objectives between the two Initiatives. In terms of geographical scope, the White House (2021) asserts that the Build Back Better World Initiative will primarily focus on Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and the Indo-Pacific. This is similar to the regions which the EU Global Gateway Initiative seeks to address, with the exception of the Middle East (European Commission, 2024a). Furthermore, the Build Back Better World Initiative and the Global Gateway Initiative directly address the global gap in infrastructure funding. The former states that its main purpose is to address the need for infrastructure funding in middle- and low-income states, while the latter also seeks to address these needs in the same type of states (White House, 2021; European Commission, 2024a). This is to be done through investments in similar areas. The G7's Build Back Better World Initiative focuses its investments on four sectors. These are climate, health and health security, digital technology, and gender equity and equality (White House, 2021). Similarly, the EU's Global Gateway Initiative focuses its investments on five sectors. These sectors are digital, climate and energy, transport, health, and education and research (European Commission, 2024a). While these Initiatives do not share areas such as education and research, and gender equity and equality, there is a clear overlap between the remaining investment sectors, revealing similar normative and structural objectives. This is particularly true when one looks at transparency. Both Initiatives seek to establish transparent partnerships between investors and recipient entities. The Build Back Better World Initiative places a strong emphasis on the need for transparent and financially sustainable partnerships (White House, 2021). This implies that existing alternatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, do not provide such transparency. Likewise, the EU Global Gateway Initiative emphasises the need for equal partnerships where transparency and financial sustainability are assured (European Commission, 2024a). The same is true of sustainability and environmental goals. The Build Back Better World provides environmental and sustainable guarantees that closely align with the Paris Agreement, while the EU Global Gateway also closely aligns itself with the Paris Agreement and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (White House, 2021; European Commission, 2021). Therefore,

while both strategies have differing structural ambitions and reach, they still share a normative alignment.

## **6. CASE STUDIES**

In the following section, I outline two case studies. As stated in section three, actors down to individuals can have an impact on international relations, meaning that understanding their role is equally important as understanding that of international institutions and states. For this reason, these case studies seek to provide a deeper understanding of the role of less-considered actors in the emergence of global governance. Additionally, these will serve as rival determinants in the discussion section of this dissertation. First, I explore the European Union under Jean-Claude Juncker's presidency of the European Commission. This furthers my understanding of the European Union's structural and normative positioning pre-Global Gateway. It also highlights the role of the EU economy as a foundation for carrying out global governance, and as a potential determinant in the emergence of Global Gateway. Second, I juxtapose Juncker's presidency with that of Ursula von der Leyen. This highlights the shifts in structural objectives and positioning in the EU, as well as the role which European Commissioners have on international relations. It also highlights the role of Ursula von der Leyen in the emergence of Global Gateway.

### **6.1 Jean-Claude Juncker as European Commissioner: Inward Look for a Recovering European Union**

When Jean-Claude Juncker assumed his role as European Commissioner, he inherited a struggling Europe. The EU had a significant infrastructure investment deficit and was suffering from the remnants of the 2007-2008 financial crisis (European Commission, 2019). He therefore sought to close the investment gap and transform the EU economy into a resilient economy. This culminated in the Juncker Plan (Ibid.). The Plan, implemented in 2014, mobilized more than €500 billion in investments throughout key sectors in EU member states, significantly surpassing the intended €315 billion set out at the start of the Initiative (Ibid.). It increased access to finance and offered guarantees for small and medium EU enterprises (Ibid.). In addition to this, the Plan doubled down on innovation and research (Ibid.). By supporting and financing these sectors, the Juncker Plan ensured that EU businesses remained competitive in the global market through the economic downturn (Ibid.). The Juncker Plan also significantly improved EU demographics (Ibid.). It created jobs for over a million people across strategic sectors such as infrastructure and renewable energy, fostering significant economic growth and bringing the EU economy back to pre-crisis levels (Ibid.).

Jean-Claude Juncker's presidency of the European Commission represented an inward emphasis. Nonetheless, the EU still offered considerable foreign investment during this time. In 2016, two years after the launch of the Juncker Plan, the European External Investment Plan was launched (European Investment Bank, 2024). This Plan mobilized private investment in partner states in Africa and the European neighbourhood to promote sustainable development, economic growth, and job creation (European Investment Bank, 2024). Nonetheless, the investment quantities of this plan were far smaller than those of the Juncker Plan and Global Gateway. The European Union contributed only €4.5 billion, and helped leverage another €88 billion in investments from the private sector (European Investment Bank, 2024). In addition to the European External Investment Plan, the European Union established Partnership Frameworks with priority states in Africa to address migration and refugee challenges, while also promoting development and stability (European Union, 2017). These resources were mobilized through the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and amounted to approximately €2.9 billion, with around €2.7 billion from EU Funds and €217.7 million from EU Member States and other partners (Ibid.). During Juncker's presidency, the EU also established the European Neighbourhood Policy (European Commission, 2017). This aimed to support political and economic reforms, enhance regional cooperation, and promote stability and prosperity in the EU's neighbourhood. Assistance under this policy included financial support, technical assistance, and increased dialogue. Finally, the European Commission under Juncker actively offered humanitarian assistance and responded to crises in various regions outside of Europe, including conflicts, natural disasters, and humanitarian emergencies (European Commission, 2024a). All in all, foreign investment quantities under Juncker's presidency are far lower than those of Global Gateway. Nonetheless, the investment quantities of the Juncker Plan overshadow those seen in Global Gateway, demonstrating that the primary objective of Juncker's presidency was to transform the EU economy and to recover from the remnants of financial crisis.

## **6.2 Ursula von der Leyen as European Commissioner: A Strategic European Union**

Ursula von der Leyen inherited an economically stable Europe. Nonetheless, throughout her campaign for European Commissioner, von der Leyen did not reveal any intentions of establishing a grandiose Initiative promoting the European Union as a global public good provider. In fact, Ursula's campaign for the presidency revolved around four key topics (Müller & Tömmel, 2022). Her campaign primarily focused on demographic change in the EU, economic globalization, the digitalization of work, and climate change (Ibid.). In terms of demographic change in the EU, Ursula emphasised the importance of facilitating legal migration pathways and improving migrant integration efforts in the face of illegal immigration and increasing demographic challenges in the EU's labour force (Ibid.). In terms of economic globalisation, von der Leyen emphasised the need to adapt the EU's trade policies to emerging challenges and opportunities as well as the need to promote fair competition in the global economy

(Ibid.). In terms of the digitalization of work, Ursula emphasised the need to strengthen digital infrastructure and innovation in order to accelerate the EU's digital transformation (Ibid.). Finally, in terms of climate change, von der Leyen proposed the creation of a European Green Deal, aimed at making the EU carbon-neutral by 2050 (Ibid.). Indeed, while some of these topics share normative elements with Global Gateway, they did not foretell the emergence of Global Gateway. In reality, Ursula von der Leyen's campaign focused far more on demographic change and the fight against illegal immigration than on any other topic (Ibid.).

This quickly shifted upon her election as European Commissioner, where Global Gateway was announced without precedence. After the unveiling of Global Gateway, von der Leyen has since emphasised the strategic advantages that the Initiative will bring (European Commission, 2023). Doing so has marked a lower priority for the topics addressed throughout her candidacy, and brought strategic considerations to the forefront. It also marked a dramatic shift to the foreign policies seen throughout Juncker's presidency. Ursula's discourse promoted the European Union as an important global public good provider, and a key ally to the G7. While the reasoning behind this sudden shift is unknown, it raises questions about the role of European Commissioners and their impact on broader EU Initiatives.

## **7. DISCUSSION**

In this section, I discuss the relevant determinants behind the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. I divide the discussion into two parts to explore the role of structural and normative determinants individually. Under structural determinants, I discuss the global demand for infrastructure funding and the EU's structural positioning. In contrast, under normative determinants, I consider the EU's normative positioning as well as its normative obligations. Under both sections, I also consider a number of rival determinants to discount possible determinants behind the EU Global Gateway Initiative.

### **7.1 Structural Determinants**

First, I discuss the global demand for infrastructure funding as a determinant in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative, while also considering the recovery of the EU economy as a rival determinant. As outlined in section five, the global demand for infrastructure funding is the primary driver for all Global Initiatives. The reason for this is that without a tangible public good deficit, there would be no foundation for the emergence of Global Initiatives. This indicates that the global demand for infrastructure funding is a determinant in the emergence of current Global Initiatives. This can be

illustrated using the example of China and its Belt and Road Initiative. Although this Initiative has been criticized for being a geo-political stunt, there exists a legitimate public good deficit in the middle- and low-income states which China invests in. In Asia, the Asian Development Bank estimates infrastructure needs to be around \$26 trillion through 2030 (Asian Development Bank, 2017). Surprisingly, if China were to double the Belt and Road Initiative, there would still be room for 10 Global Gateways in Asia. Similarly, the African Development Bank estimates Africa's infrastructure needs to be between \$130 billion and \$170 billion, signalling the need for more infrastructure funding than what is currently invested (African Development Bank, 2023). Therefore, while geo-political accusations plague Global Initiatives, there is a tangible structural demand for its existence.

Given that a structural demand for Global Initiatives existed long before the emergence of Global Gateway, one may ask why such an Initiative did not emerge earlier. To answer this, I draw from the first case study and propose that the state of the EU economy was not conducive to the emergence of such a Global Initiative before. In doing so, I argue that the EU economy is a determinant in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative.

During Jean-Claude Juncker's presidency of the European Commission, the EU sought to close the gap in infrastructure funding and to recover from the remnants of the 2007-2008 financial and economic crisis. As stated in the first case study, the Juncker Plan mobilized more than €500 billion in investments on key sectors across the EU, surpassing the intended €315 billion set out at the start of the Initiative (European Commission, 2019). This successfully fostered economic growth across the European Union, and successfully brought its economy back to pre-crisis levels. By increasing access to finance and providing guarantees, the Juncker Plan also supported a number of small and medium enterprises, deemed to be the backbone of the EU economy (Ibid.). In addition to this, the Juncker Plan doubled down on innovation and research. By supporting and financing these areas, the Juncker Plan ensured that EU businesses remained competitive in the global market through the economic downturn (Ibid.). Finally, the Juncker Plan fostered significant demographic change, creating jobs for over a million people across strategic sectors such as infrastructure and renewable energy (Ibid.).

I propose that the Juncker Plan established the foundation that enabled the EU to become a public good provider. There are two reasons for this. The first is that the Juncker Plan's bet on strategic sectors such as infrastructure and renewable energy allowed the EU to gain the expertise that it now shares through Global Gateway. The second is that the Juncker Plan helped close the infrastructure funding gap in the EU, generating a surplus that allowed it to offer infrastructure funding at a global level.

Yet, the EU has not been able to fully close the infrastructure investment gap. Klassen & Steffen (2023) carried out a macro-economic study that evaluated the European Union's infrastructure funding needs. They found a significant deficit, and argue that infrastructure investments in Europe need to increase to €302 billion annually until 2025 in order to achieve net-zero (Ibid.). In other words, the EU needs to increase its infrastructure funding by 41% in the first half of this decade, and by a further 14% after 2030 to close the gap (Ibid.). Concretely, the European Union faces a great demand for funding because of its renewable power plants, electricity grids, and rail infrastructure, and this demand grows yearly (Ibid.).

Nonetheless, these demands primarily stem from the European Union's Green Deal Policy and its wish to become independent from Russian energy sources. This has led to investment needs to go up by 60% in the short term (Ibid.). In fact, the EU's wish to become independent from Russian energy sources represents a large part of this increase (Ibid.). This is important to highlight since the EU's wish to become independent from Russian energy emerged as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which occurred shortly after the announcement of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. This means that the launch of the EU Global Gateway Initiative came at a time where the European Union's economy was not burdened. As such, the role of the EU economy as a determinant in the EU Global Gateway Initiative cannot be discounted.

Second, I consider the EU's structural positioning, while also exploring the role of Ursula von der Leyen's presidency of the European Commission as a rival determinant. Under structural positioning, I consider structural pressure from EU allies, as well as the geo-political challenge from China as determinants in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. As previously mentioned, the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative served as a forerunner to the EU's Global Gateway Initiative. Evidence of this can be found in their similarities. To begin with, the launch of the EU Global Gateway Initiative came shortly after the launch of the Build Back Better World Initiative. Although this may be down to chance, the existence of other similarities demonstrates a possible structural drive in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. For example, Global Gateway emphasises the need for investments in key sectors that closely overlap with those seen in the Build Back Better World Initiative (European Commission, 2024a). In addition to this, the Initiatives share geographic interests, with around half of investments of each Initiative going to Africa (Ibid.). Finally, the European Commission asserts that the EU Global Gateway is intended to complement the G7's Build Back Better World, revealing a tight-knit cooperation between the two (Ibid.).

Yet, these similarities do not mean that Global Gateway is a direct result of pressure from allies. In fact, one of the main differences in the strategies are their differences in scope and size. While the Build Back



Better World Initiative seeks to mobilize \$40 trillion by 2035, the EU Global Gateway Initiative will only invest €300 billion over a period of six years, showing a significant structural disparity (White House, 2021; European Commission, 2024a). As such, I propose that the interrelatedness of Global Gateway and Build Back Better World is more normative than structural. Since the only structural evidence for a common policy is the similarity between the two Initiatives, it is difficult to demonstrate structural pressure from allies, and even harder to establish causality.

In fact, a structural challenge from China is a more plausible determinant in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Global governance as a theoretical framework asserts that states operate in anarchy, which inevitably leads to competition between states (Zhang & Ren, 2021). The European Union and China are two of the largest trading partners in the world, meaning that from a theoretical perspective, it is likely that Global Gateway is a strategic response to China. The similarities between the Initiatives serve as evidence for this. For example, Global Gateway invests in the same type of projects as the Belt and Road Initiative. Additionally, it does so in the same regions. Their differences also serve as evidence. For example, Global Gateway offers a normative challenge to the Belt and Road Initiative. This is seen through its emphasis on normative elements such as transparency, democracy, and care for the environment (European Commission, 2024a). By promoting these elements, Global Gateway juxtaposes itself as a fair alternative to the Belt and Road Initiative, which has been heavily criticized for shortcomings in those areas.

Nonetheless, while the Belt and Road Initiative presents a structural challenge, Global Gateway only addresses it normatively. The reason for this is that the EU is unable to match China's investment quantities, and therefore chooses to challenge China on a normative plane. This can be seen in the differences between Global Gateway and other Western Global Initiatives. For example, the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative adopts a geo-political position, challenges China's investment quantities, and presents a normative contrast to the Belt and Road Initiative (White House, 2021). Meanwhile, Global Gateway does not commit to a coherent geo-political narrative, only offers a fraction of investment quantities seen in other Global Initiatives, but does challenge China's Belt and Road Initiative in a normative manner (European Commission, 2024a). For this reason, I establish that a structural challenge from China is a relevant determinant in the emergence of Global Gateway.

As a rival determinant, I evaluate whether a change in EU leadership had a role in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Given that the Initiative was announced shortly after Ursula von der Leyen's appointment, there exists a possibility that the emergence the Initiative is a direct result of her presidency. This perspective is in line with the choice of global governance as a theoretical framework.

Global governance understands that actors down to individuals can have an impact on international relations. For this reason, their role can never be completely discounted.

To do so, I explore whether the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative would have been possible during Jean-Claude Juncker's administration of the European Commission. I first consider the EU's external investments under Jean-Claude Juncker's administration. As established in the first case study, the most important foreign investment during this administration was the European External Investment Plan, launched in 2016 (European Investment Bank, 2024). The Plan mobilized private investment in partner states, particularly in Africa and the European neighbourhood, to promote sustainable development, economic growth, and job creation (Ibid.). The European Union contributed with €4.5 billion, and helped leverage another €88 billion in investments from the private sector (Ibid.). While the European External Investment Plan invested far less than what Global Gateway proposes to invest, there exist certain overlaps between the two, particularly in private sector engagement and infrastructure funding. In addition to the External Investment Plan, the EU under the Juncker administration also established Partnership Frameworks with priority states in Africa to address migration and refugee challenges while promoting development and stability (European Union, 2017). These frameworks aimed to strengthen cooperation on migration management, enhance support for sustainable development, and address the root causes of migration. While they did not involve significant investment sums, these agreements still share a number of objectives with Global Gateway, such as sustainable development and the creation of partnerships.

Nonetheless, EU external funding under the Juncker administration did not always focus on these sectors. For example, under the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU aimed to support political and economic reforms, enhance regional cooperation, and promote stability and prosperity in the EU's neighbourhood (European Commission, 2017). Assistance under this policy included financial support, technical assistance, and policy dialogue (Ibid.). Similarly, the EU under the Juncker administration actively provided humanitarian assistance and responded to crises in various regions outside of Europe, including conflicts, natural disasters, and humanitarian emergencies. In other words, not all external investments during the Juncker administration shared objectives with Global Gateway.

However, neither do EU current external action Initiatives, some of which provide humanitarian aid, technical assistance, and other relevant cooperation. But Global Gateway does represent a significant increase in foreign investment quantities. I consider two possibilities for this increase. First, the Juncker Plan led to significant economic growth and the recovery of the EU economy. With lower infrastructure needs in Europe, the emergence of Global Gateway became a reality. As such, I maintain that the EU economy functions as a determinant in this puzzle. Second, the leadership of Ursula von der Leyen has

had a significant impact on the European Union. Upon her appointment, EU discourse took a strategic turn. This changed the European Union's strategic considerations and led it to commit to its role as a global public good provider. Notwithstanding, there is no evidence that these developments could not have happened under a different European Commission president. Ursula's inheritance of a strong EU economy and the closure of the infrastructure investment gap enabled the EU to pursue a broader foreign policy. For this reason, I establish that Ursula von der Leyen's leadership has only had a superficial influence in the emergence of Global Gateway. I argue that macro trends, such as the Chinese geopolitical challenge, together with the demand for infrastructure funding and the help of a strong EU economy, are the true structural determinants in the emergence of the Global Gateway Initiative.

## **7.2 Normative Determinants**

As previously established, Global Gateway stands as a normative challenge to China's Belt and Road Initiative. The reason for this is that the EU is not able to compete with China's infrastructure investment quantities. A mechanism which the EU has used to challenge China's Belt and Road Initiative has been the symbolic rebranding of existing funds under the Global Gateway Initiative. The budget for the EU's Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument for 2021-2027 was already set before the launch of Global Gateway, meaning that Global Initiative did not represent the emergence of new funds (Bilal et al., 2021). The same is true of the European Fund for Sustainable Development. These funds were also established before Global Gateway, but the European Union has opted to use them under the Initiative banner (Ibid.).

I explore two possibilities for this rebranding. The first is the EU's normative obligations. Global Gateway was launched in the backdrop of COP26. At this conference, there was a strong emphasis on securing agreement between all the Paris Agreement signatories to set their nationally determined contributions to reduce emissions (UNFCCC, 2021). As previously established, the European Union represents a normative example for other states, not only in the realm of peace, but also in the realm of climate change and sustainable development. For this reason, the launch of Global Gateway may have served as a way for Paris Agreement signatories to further their green agenda. This is exemplified through the launch of the European Green Deal during Ursula von der Leyen's presidency of the European Commission (European Commission, 2024b). This Initiative introduced a just transition mechanism to provide financial and technical support to regions most in need of a Green Transition (Ibid.). In light of this, the launch of Global Gateway serves as a convenient solution to the European Union's normative obligations. Yet, it is hard to conceive that these obligations had a significant role in the emergence of Global Gateway. Indeed, the Initiative does comply with these, but so do many other EU Initiatives, such as the bi-lateral framework agreements with African states and the European

Neighbourhood Policy. For this reason, it is difficult to draw a relationship between normative obligations and the emergence of Global Gateway, and even harder to establish causality.

The second possibility for this rebranding is Global Gateway's normative challenge to China's Belt and Road Initiative. As established in the theoretical framework, actors of global governance constantly attempt to solidify their legitimacy. This is done through the employment of different forms of governance, where old-style forms of governance were shown to offer the highest perception of legitimacy (Tallberg, 2021). The EU's rebranding of existing funds under the Global Gateway Initiative serves a similar purpose. In light of China's structural challenge, the European Union has opted to improve its normative positioning and to further its legitimacy as an exemplary actor in global governance. Nonetheless, while the EU does attempt to improve its normative positioning, this cannot be misunderstood as a determinant in the emergence of the Global Gateway Initiative. The reason for this is that the European Union's normative challenge is the direct result of broader structural drivers. As such, it is not possible to establish any normative factor as a determinant in the emergence of Global Gateway. Instead, the EU's rebranding of existing funds is the mechanism through which the EU attempts to establish itself in global governance and challenge other Global Initiatives, but that is not to say that it is a determinant in the emergence of Global Gateway.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

In this dissertation, I sought to identify the relevant determinants in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. After a brief introduction, I carried out a literature review where I explored the literature on Global Initiatives, the EU Global Gateway Initiative, and the role of the European Union in global governance. This revealed the general trends seen in the literature, and greatly informed my discussion. I also outlined the gaps in the literature which this dissertation sought to fill. These included the gap of knowledge on the EU Global Gateway Initiative, the lack of comparative analyses of Global Initiatives, and the gap of knowledge of other less-considered determinants in the emergence of Global Initiatives.

Following the literature review, I outlined the chosen theoretical framework in this dissertation. I justified the use of global governance as a theoretical framework, arguing that traditional International Relations theory was unable to address the question at hand. Subsequently, I explored relevant assumptions and concepts in global governance. These laid the foundation for my analysis, and helped me establish my hypotheses.

After outlining the theoretical framework, I explained the methodology chosen in this dissertation. I justified the choice of a qualitative approach over a quantitative approach, and outlined the data collection methods used. Thereafter, I justified the use of a case study research design, explaining that it is one of the most common research designs in qualitative research. Finally, I outlined the relevant ethical considerations and limitations in my research design.

Subsequently, I outlined the details of the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative and that of other Global Initiatives. First, I offered an overview of the EU Global Gateway Initiative, which offered me the necessary foundation for identifying relevant determinants in the emergence of the Initiative. Second, I compared and contrasted the EU Global Gateway Initiative with other Global Initiatives, such as China's Belt and Road Initiative and the G7's Build Back Better World Initiative. This facilitated my understanding of the European Union's structural and normative positioning, as well as the general objectives and determinants of Global Initiatives.

Next, I outlined two case studies, which offered rival determinants in the emergence of Global Gateway. In the first case study, I explored the European Union under Jean-Claude Juncker's presidency of the European Commission. This furthered my understanding of the European Union's structural and normative positioning pre-Global Gateway. It also highlighted the significance of the EU economy in the emergence of Global Gateway. Second, I juxtaposed Juncker's presidency with that of Ursula von der Leyen. This highlighted the shifts in the EU's structural objectives, and the role which European Commissioners can have in the emergence of Global Initiatives. Additionally, these offered rival determinants for mainstream, structural interpretations of Global Gateway.

In the seventh section, I discussed the determinants in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. The relevant determinants identified were divided into two categories: structural determinants and normative determinants. Under structural determinants, I considered the role of the global demand for infrastructure funding and the EU's structural positioning. In particular, under the EU's structural positioning, I explored the pressure from EU allies and the geo-political challenge from China. I also considered the role of alternative determinants, such as the EU economy and the role of Ursula von der Leyen as European Commissioner. I established that the global demand for infrastructure funding is a determinant in the emergence of Global Gateway. The main reason for this is that without a gap in infrastructure funding, there is no foundation for the various Global Initiatives in existence. I also established that the EU economy acts as a determinant in the emergence of the Global Gateway Initiative. The reason for this is that without a healthy EU economy, the emergence of Global Gateway would not have been possible. This is accentuated through Jean-Claude Juncker's administration of the European Commission, which represents a dramatic inward look. After establishing the role of the

aforementioned determinants, I argued that pressure from allies in the emergence of Global Gateway was not a relevant determinant. The reason for this is that despite similarities with other Western Global Initiatives, there is not enough evidence to establish a significant relationship in emergence of Global Gateway. Nonetheless, I proposed that the geo-political challenge from China was indeed a relevant determinant in the emergence of Global Gateway. This is seen through the explicit normative challenge which Global Gateway presents to China's Belt and Road Initiative. The final structural determinant I considered was the role of Ursula von der Leyen as European Commissioner. Here, I proposed that her role is merely superficial, given that Global Gateway is a natural continuation of inheriting a strong EU economy. For this reason, the leadership of Ursula von der Leyen is not a determinant in the emergence of Global Gateway. Under normative determinants, I considered the role of the European Union's normative obligations and its normative positioning. Here, I found no significant relationship, since Global Gateway's normative challenges are merely a response to the aforementioned structural determinants.

In conclusion, I found that the geo-political challenge from China, the global demand for infrastructure funding and the EU economy were the true determinants in the emergence of Global Gateway. This has some implications for the hypotheses listed in section three. First, I discard the hypothesis stating that actors down to the individual level have had a significant impact in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. This is seen in the fact that Ursula von der Leyen's leadership was not a significant determinant in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Second, I accept the hypothesis stating that a global need for infrastructure funding had a significant role in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. In my discussion, I established that the global need for infrastructure funding is the foundational determinant in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Third, I discard the hypothesis stating that normative determinants may have had an impact in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. I argued that Global Gateway presents a normative challenge to China, but that structural factors are the true drivers behind this challenge. Fourth, I accept the hypothesis stating that strategic considerations have had a considerable impact in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. The reason for this is that my discussion establishes the geo-political challenge from China as a significant determinant in the emergence of Global Gateway. Finally, I accept the hypothesis that the European Union seeks to become a free-rider through Global Gateway. The reason for this is that it does not commit to investing the quantities which other Global Initiatives do, but aims to act as a complement to these instead.

In sum, this dissertation offered an innovative approach to understanding the emergence of Global Gateway. By employing global governance as a theoretical framework and case study methodology, this dissertation offered an analysis of less-considered determinants in the emergence of the Global Gateway

Initiative. While some of these less-considered determinants, such as normative determinants, were found to be insignificant in the emergence of Global Gateway, my analysis reveals a far more nuanced picture than what current research offers. This is exemplified in the significance of the EU economy as a determinant in the emergence of Global Gateway, which most analyses ignore.

Nonetheless, my analysis is not without limitations. First, by only considering structural and normative determinants, my analysis may have neglected other types of determinants in the emergence of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. Second, my analysis did not consider internal decision-making processes in the EU. The reason for this is that many of these processes typically occur behind closed doors, resulting in limited access to processes which may have shaped the emergence of the Initiative. Third, the time-frame chosen for developing this dissertation limits its ability to capture the full evolution of the EU Global Gateway Initiative. This impacts the future validity and reliability of my analysis. Fourth, this research may not be completely generalizable. This may be due to differences in investment quantities, contextual differences, and differing objectives between Global Initiatives. Finally, I have an overemphasis on qualitative data. While relying solely on qualitative data for analysis may have given me depth of understanding of complex structural and normative dynamics, the lack of quantitative data may result in me missing out on other general and macro-level trends.

Future research must address some of these limitations. First, researchers with better access to internal decision-making processes in the EU may provide a more nuanced picture of determinants in the emergence of Global Gateway. This can help future research escape the structural/normative dichotomy employed in this dissertation. Second, future research must consider the emergence of Global Gateway from start to finish. By considering determinants of an on-going Initiative, my research is unable to understand their full impact or relevance. For this reason, I suggest that future research revises these determinants after Global Gateway reaches its point of completion. Finally, I encourage future research to employ other types of research methods, such as quantitative methods, in order to bring to light hidden determinants in the emergence of Global Gateway. By only employing qualitative research, this dissertation cannot claim to offer a full picture of determinants in the emergence of the Global Gateway Initiative.

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