

Constructivism's Relevance to The United Kingdom As A Global Climate Leader: A Case Study Of Climate Change Issue As UK's Foreign Priority In 2021

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Abstract: *The UK government has been proclaiming its position as a global leader on climate change for several years. While the origins of this claim can be traced back to Margaret Thatcher's time, it has gained traction in the years since the 2015 Paris Agreement. The declaration of the UK's position as global climate leader became stronger in 2021, coinciding with the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, which the UK was appointed to host. Though the event has occurred, the UK has set ambitious goals for international agreements and firmly positions itself as the leader of the movement among all other countries. This declaration is also mentioned in the UKEF Climate Change Strategy and the Net Zero movement. Based on these, this article seeks to investigate the United Kingdom's climate change strategy and efforts to cement their position as a global climate leader, as reflected primarily in their policies in 2021.*

Keywords: *climate leadership; United Kingdom; climate change strategy; net zero.*

Introduction

On the eve of a global climate summit, the UK's transition from fossil fuels to sustainable energy is on display. The UK government set what it called "the world's most ambitious climate change objective" when it voted its sixth carbon budget into law on April 20, 2021, to coincide with World Earth Day and the US President's global climate summit (Department for BEIS, 2021a). They declared that one of their main climate objectives would be raised by enacting a 78 percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2035. To achieve it, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government has set a

series of eye-catching targets: by 2030, all gasoline and diesel-fueled cars will be off the road; by 2035, all coal and gas-fired power plants will be decommissioned; and by 2035, all fossil-fueled home heating systems will be decommissioned. This sixth Carbon Budget restricts greenhouse gas emissions for a 5-year period from 2033 to 2037, putting the UK more than three-quarters of the way to net zero by 2050, as recommended by the independent Climate Change Committee (Climate Change Committee, 2020).

In order to achieve this goal, the UK hosted and presided over the 26th conference (COP26) in Glasgow from

October 31 to November 12, 2021. As president, the United Kingdom has set ambitious goals for international agreements, including achieving net zero emissions by 2050, moving more quickly on climate change adaptation, enabling and encouraging countries affected by climate change to build defenses, warning systems, and resilient infrastructure, and increasing funding to support these goals.

Since then, a prominent component of the UK government's policy objective has been to reduce the construction sector's considerable carbon footprint, especially from construction processes, materials used, and decommissioning, as well as figure out how to make existing buildings more energy efficient. According to the UK Green Building Council, the built environment accounts for around 40% of the UK's overall carbon footprint, with nearly half of that coming from the building process rather than "functional operation."

While newly constructed buildings are more energy efficient, repairing and/or repurposing older buildings will be a top priority for the UK to ensure their energy efficiency (for example, in how they are insulated and heated). When industrial operations are factored in, heating accounts for around 37% of the UK's carbon footprint (Department for BEIS, 2018). Heating in our houses accounts for around 13 to 14 percent of this, so it's no surprise that the government has been focused on a heating and building plan. Furthermore, the UK claimed to have decreased emissions by 44% since 1990 by constructing the world's largest offshore wind sector. According to the Climate Action Tracker, a scientific review of countries' policies, its goal of cutting emissions by at least 68 percent by 2030 is one of the most ambitious of any large country.

With all of the UK's objectives and efforts on display, many people are questioning if all of these statements are true. When we include the entire spectrum of UK emissions, such as imported product consumption, international aviation, and shipping, the reduction is closer to 15%. This excludes biomass combustion, such as at Drax's Selby facility, a heavily subsidized so-called "renewable" power plant that, according to studies, is the UK's and Europe's third-largest single CO2 emitter. Various critiques and questions have been raised concerning the United Kingdom's climate leadership. According to *The Independent*, a British newspaper, the idea that the UK is a "climate leader" is deceptive and a cause for concern. The reason for this is that it is generally accompanied by a graph depicting a rapid downward trend in British carbon dioxide emissions during the 1990s, as well as a reference to the UK's "world-leading" net zero objective for 2050. This is a goal that is neither adequate nor realized in reality. As a result, one would question why the government still considers the UK to be a global leader on climate change.

Because there is a distinction between self-declared leadership and leadership recognized by prospective followers, the fragmentation of the climate leadership landscape highlights the need for evaluating the nature of leadership (Karlsson et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2015). A strong leader on climate change is unquestionably required. To lead others, the ones following must believe the leader is trustworthy. Promises must be honored in order for followers to believe the actor; nevertheless, while planning a successful project or summit may increase credibility, it is not sufficient to demonstrate leadership. It is not sufficient to be the leader; to be a worldwide leader for the cause, consistency is required

(Astrom, 2017). While Elinor Ostrom argues that it might be harmful to focus too much on finding a world leader on climate change, today's debates and the Paris agreement of 2015 indicate otherwise. States, being the main actors due to their capability of making legally binding commitments and implementing them in their countries, are essential for the development of a potential leader.

Constructivism

Constructivism's growth in the field of international relations is commonly related to the conclusion of the Cold War, an event that was missed by classic ideas like realism and liberalism. Its failure can be linked to some of its basic premises, including the belief that governments are self-interested people fighting for power and that the uneven distribution of power across nations dictates the balance of power between them. Because of their major focus on the state, traditional theories have left little opportunity for examining human agency. After all, it was ordinary people's actions, not the actions of states or international organizations, that brought the Cold War to a close. Constructivism claims that social reality is something we make, which explains the dilemma (Onuf 1989). Through their activities and contacts, actors (usually powerful persons such as leaders and notable citizens) influence and shape the character of international relations.

Constructivism believes that the world, as well as our knowledge of it, is socially constructed. This point of view relates to the nature of reality and the nature of knowledge, which are referred to as ontology and epistemology, respectively, in research jargon. Alexander Wendt (1995) presents an excellent instance of the social construction of reality when he explains why 500 British

nuclear weapons constitute less of a danger to the United States than five North Korean nuclear weapons. The root of these identifications is not the actual structure of nuclear weapons (the material structure); rather, the meaning ascribed to the material structure is the reason (the ideational structure). It is crucial to note that the social ties between the US and the UK, as well as the US and North Korea, are regarded in similar ways by both nations, since this shared understanding (or intersubjectivity) forms the cornerstone of their interactions. The incident also shows that nuclear weapons are useless unless we understand the social context in which they are employed. It also shows that constructivists take into account the effect of ideas and beliefs on global politics as well as material reality. This suggests that reality is always being constructed, allowing for the potential for change. To put it another way, meanings change with time and are influenced by the actors' ideas and beliefs.

According to constructivists, agency and structure are mutually created, implying that structures influence agency and agency influences structures. Structure refers to the material and intellectual components of the international system, whereas agency relates to a person's power to act. Returning to Wendt's example, the social relation of enmity between the US and North Korea is represented by the intersubjective structure (that is, shared ideas and beliefs among both states), whereas the US and North Korea are the actors with the capacity (that is, agency) to change or reinforce the existing structure or social relationship of enmity. Both states' beliefs and ideas eventually influence this change or reinforcement. If these beliefs and concepts change, the social connection might evolve into one of

friendship. This position differs dramatically from that of realists, who believe that the anarchic character of the international system influences state action. Conversely, constructivists believe that "anarchy is what states build of it" (Wendt, 1992). As a result, anarchy may be interpreted in a number of ways, depending on how the participants interpret it.

Climate Leadership

Before the "sustainable transformation" narrative became popular in the 1990s, the function of climate leadership in eliciting change was researched (Wurzel et al. 2019). Climate leadership has been highlighted in both mitigation and adaptation efforts, and many styles of leadership have been characterized at various levels (Torney 2019). Although climate change leadership has been confused with environmental leadership at times, it has developed its own research niche. The rationale for distinguishing climate leadership as a separate phenomenon, even if it is connected to other forms of leadership, can be traced all the way back to the beginnings of the crisis. The complexity, unpredictability, abstractness, and vastness of climate change provide particular challenges to individuals wanting to lead, as well as to the leadership structure. As a result, experts have advocated that all industries and levels of government must take leadership on climate change (Torney 2019). The advent of the transformation imperative in climate change discourse highlights the possibility for climate leadership to shift roles, not just in terms of polycentric leadership but also in terms of a greater focus on collectives rather than individual leaders. (Kuenkel 2019).

Because there is such a large body of current literature on leadership in general, it is necessary to make a selection of leadership theories that are particularly useful for researching leadership for climate adaptation. The decision is based on the essential aspects of climate change adaptation as well as related leadership difficulties. First, when it comes to climate adaptation, government actors and public policy play a critical role (Biesbroek et al., 2010). Climate adaptation may need the participation of both private and governmental actors. Citizens, companies, and farmers may be able to adapt on their own, such as by moving out of flood-prone regions or planting different crops. Public policy, on the other hand, is critical to climate adaptation in modern civilizations. In some ways, this is predictable, given that many of the recommended policy choices for adaptation—for example, the reinforcement of dykes or the provision of river space—are collective action issues that require government intervention (Osberghaus et al., 2010).

Second, climate adaptation necessitates collaboration among many levels, actors, and sectors. Knowledge and other resources are dispersed throughout a network of participants, as they are in many other policy domains. In a world of "shared power," there is a need for coordination across different levels of government, policy sectors, and public and private players (Martins and Rodriguez Alvarez, 2007). Third, climate change adaptation programs must include the importance of linkages between social and natural systems (Folke et al., 2005). The majority of adaptation alternatives have an influence on natural or ecological systems, such as water systems, agricultural land, or nature, and natural system feedback, such as flood occurrences, drought times, or heat waves,

plays a significant part in the adaptation process. Because of these linkages between social and ecological systems, it is necessary to be aware of feedback mechanisms and to predict climate change's long-term repercussions.

It is critical to take a long-term approach to planning and implementing adaptation options: new dikes are being built to assure safety for at least a few decades. In order to handle future increases in peak river flows, we also need to set up spatial reserves for future water retention sites today. Finally, the issue of climate change adaptation is characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability. Osberghaus et al. (2010) distinguish three types of uncertainty: macro-uncertainty refers to uncertainty about the phenomenon of climate change—that is, about the speed and degree of change; micro-uncertainty refers to uncertainty about the impact of climate change on a specific region; and technological uncertainty refers to uncertainty about future mitigation and adaptation options.

There is also uncertainty about how society will adapt to climate change and the interconnections between social and natural (ecological) systems, in addition to these uncertainties in natural system behavior and technology development. Complexity, diversity, spontaneity, and nonlinearity describe social-ecological systems, which are non-decomposable systems (Gallopin, 2006; Huitema et al., 2009). Due to this uncertainty and inherent unpredictability, socio-ecological systems' adaptive capacity or flexibility must be strengthened, and leadership should make room for or encourage variation and experimentation (Olsson et al., 2006). Similarly, research on adaptive governance or adaptive co-management implies that learning and experimentation

improve a governance system's adaptive potential (Huitema et al., 2009).

Method

A qualitative method is employed in this article. Qualitative research methods emphasize the researcher's own observations; thus, the quality of qualitative research carried out by the researcher is fundamentally dependent on the researcher's foresight in seeing the study object (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Thus, qualitative research methods are highly reliant on the researcher's own abilities. For data gathering procedures, literature studies are used, with a focus on different literary mediums such as print and internet media. When using a qualitative research methodology, a literature study is a strategy that is frequently employed by researchers. Literature study is a method of gathering data that entails searching for sources in the form of writing, such as books, journals, scientific papers, scientific periodicals, and so on, in order to assess the research completed. In another sense, literature study is a data-gathering approach that requires the researcher to read the library sources directly in order to investigate the research under consideration.

The researcher uses analytic descriptions, which is a study that develops methodical, factual, and correct descriptions and paintings based on facts, qualities, and the link between the phenomena that the writer is investigating and the approaches used in writing and data analysis. This type of descriptive study may provide a thorough picture of settings, conditions, and social interactions. Its primary goal is to serve as an information tool that can later be used to explain events that are related to one another. After that, the data will be searched as part of the research process to

produce a generalization and may be used as a foundation for a more comprehensive and in-depth study.

Meanwhile, to be able to develop deeper analysis in this article, the author uses secondary data sources in the form of books, journals, articles, and documents from various institutions, as well as annual official reports on the UK's climate policy in 2021. Furthermore, the value of an idea and theory in analyzing and dissecting a study's material. The author's point of view in collecting or compiling the substance of the writing to determine to what degree and how the research is carried out necessitates the use of these concepts and theories. As a result, the writer's theories are altered after assessing the research facts.

This study uses secondary data collection methods to explain the political philosophy and climate change policy ambitions of the UK government. For data collection, a document-based and an internet-based approach were used. Methods for collecting secondary data using documents were acquired from books, journals, papers, and documents from various organizations, as well as from annual official reports on the UK government, which were then reprocessed according to research needs. Internet-based data collection methods are taken from UK government websites and news portals both domestically and internationally to ensure the accuracy of the data used.

Result and Discussion

The UK Climate Leadership History

Following 9/11, the United Kingdom's foreign policy has focused on concerns such as international terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and global poverty alleviation. While climate change and environmental concerns are key foreign

policy issues, they have only recently gained prominence. In doing so, the UK has attempted to strike a balance between trade, development, and climate change. This aids the United Kingdom in maintaining not just its worldwide competitiveness but also in energizing British business to be at the forefront of innovative green technology. Furthermore, by progressively transitioning to a low-carbon economy through voluntary measures, the United Kingdom is in a position to lead the discussion on climate change and reclaim its status as an engaged and purposeful global participant.

Since 1997, the Labor Party has been praised for its ability to mobilize bipartisan support for global leadership on climate change. There has been a determined push to include climate change in UK foreign policy, which is unsurprising. Building a domestic constituency in support of a climate-friendly policy is regarded as important to its long-term success. As a result, the UK parliament has empowered the government to develop a plan that positions the country as a leader in the EU's climate change debate. At the same time, it helps the UK get out from under the shadow of its transatlantic partner, the US. Detractors have referred to the Bush administration's two years in office (2000–2008) as an "oil government," with no particular interest in ratifying the Kyoto Protocol. In contrast, the UK's climate change foreign policy is essentially Eurocentric, both in terms of aim and commitment, and it has effectively decoupled itself from the US's "go it alone" plan.

Acceptance of the Kyoto Protocol and a concomitant reorientation of the UK's energy strategy have highlighted the UK's attitude toward climate change. It has

aggressively pursued a program of reducing fossil fuel usage and increasing renewable energy generation since signing the Kyoto Protocol in 1998 and ratifying it in 2002. It has promised to reduce emissions of six greenhouse gases by 12.5% below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012 by ratifying the Kyoto Protocol. In reality, the United Kingdom has gone above and beyond this goal, promising to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 20% by 2012. (Sinha, 2010). This plan must be weighed against the EU-15 objectives of lowering emissions by 8% by 2012. Each of the EU-15 member states has a "differentiated emissions goal," as you might expect (European Commission, 2006).

As a result, the United Kingdom wishes to move beyond the established framework and establish a worldwide carbon market centered in London, based on the EU's Emission Trading Scheme concept. It's also worth noting that the UK's aggressive approach has sparked continental competition, with EU nations like France and Germany aspiring to take the lead on climate change as well. According to reports from 2010, France's president, Nicolas Sarkozy, and Germany's chancellor, Angela Merkel, have been pressing for cutbacks of more than 20% by 2020. (Sinha, 2010). Indeed, the European Union's tagline of '20-20 by 2020', which aimed for a 20% reduction in emissions and a 20% growth in renewable energy by 2020, was heavily influenced by UK initiatives.

The UK Energy White Paper (2003) emphasized energy efficiency and advocated generating 20% of power from renewable sources by 2020, with a 10% first target by 2010. This strategy demonstrates that the UK has taken global warming seriously and recognizes the need to participate in and adhere to

international treaties and conventions. Furthermore, by setting objectives that go above the Kyoto Protocol's established carbon targets, the United Kingdom has emerged as a climate change leader. "Ambitious new objectives to develop renewable energy and enhance energy efficiency" have also been set (UK Environmental Secretary, 2003). Ambitious goals serve a political purpose, but they can also lead to a confidence crisis. While the objective of a 20% reduction in emissions by 2012 has improved the UK's worldwide image as a caring actor promoting a noble cause, it has put great pressure on the domestic economy to meet the target. The Labour administration has won three elections on a platform of cutting emissions by 20% by 2010. While greenhouse gas emissions have decreased significantly since 1990, the overall drop from 1990 has only been 8.5 percent, according to 2007 data (Jowit, 2009).

The second phase of the United Kingdom's climate change policy from 2005 onwards was stressed at the G-8 discussion at Gleneagles, Scotland, in July 2005. The 31st G-8 summit, hosted by the United Kingdom, brought together 20 major energy-seeking nations, including emerging economies such as Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa, and kicked off a climate change dialogue. The dialogue came to a successful conclusion with agreements on: (i) a political statement on the importance of climate change; (ii) a new dialogue on climate change, clean energy, and sustainable development (the "Gleneagles Dialogue"); and (iii) the establishment of the "Gleneagles Plan of Action" (Sinha, 2010), which outlined measures to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate change issues have gradually been "instrumentalized" and

"geopoliticized" in the United Kingdom's broader foreign policy framework over time. During this period, the Labour Party was resolved to pursue "a pioneering and successful foreign policy," as its leader and UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown put it. In keeping with this philosophy, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) issued a pamphlet with the tagline "Better World. Better Britain," emphasizing that "the UK can be a worldwide center in the twenty-

first century" and that the "FCO is determined to play its part in making that happen." As a result, it established clear policy objectives, with climate change taking center stage. It was seen as vital for the development of international organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union, as well as the prevention and resolution of conflicts that may arise as a result of resource shortages and extensive migration.

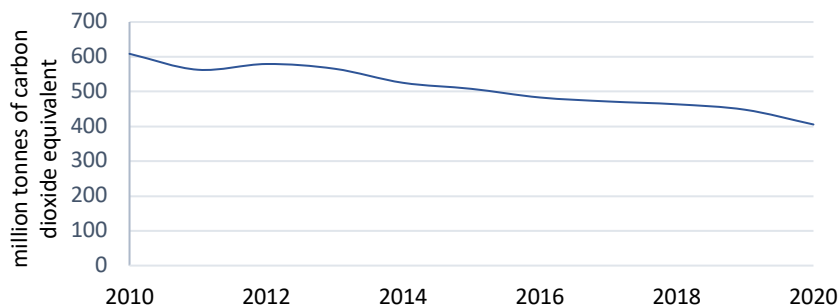


Figure 1. Annual change in UK greenhouse gas emissions from 2010 to 2020

Source: UK greenhouse gas emissions national statistics, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), March 2022

Over the last decade, the UK's governments of all parties have worked hard to ensure that the UK is prepared to lead the way with innovative climate commitments, laws, and policies. This is shown by the UK's seriousness about decreasing its greenhouse gas emissions. As this chart illustrates, the UK has already taken significant measures to reduce its emissions in the past ten years. The figures

are in millions of tons of CO2 equivalent per year. It can be seen that emissions in 2020 were around 400 million tons of carbon dioxide, quite a drop compared to the 2010 figure of approximately 600 million tons. In comparison to 2010, the country has experienced around 200 million tons of reduction, according to the provisional figure for 2020.

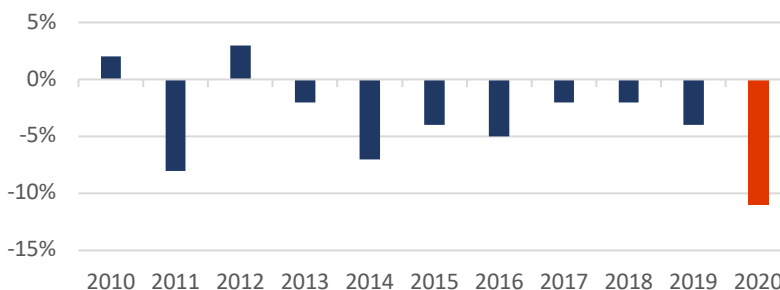


Figure 2. Annual change in UK greenhouse gas emissions from 2010 to 2020, %

Source: UK greenhouse gas emissions national statistics, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), March 2022

In 2020, the UK's emissions declined at their fastest rate in at least ten years. The pattern of emissions reductions in 2020 was considerably different from prior years, owing primarily to the unique effects of the coronavirus pandemic. According to official data on energy consumption, UK greenhouse gas emissions decreased by 11% in 2020. As shown in the graph above, this would be the highest percentage decline since at least 2010.

The UK Climate Leadership in 2021

Fast forward to 2021, when the UK released its 2021-2024 Climate Change Strategy, demonstrating the UK's leadership position in worldwide climate change. They've also set ambitious goals for international agreements, such as getting countries to commit to net zero emissions by 2050, accelerating climate change adaptation, allowing and encouraging climate-affected nations to create defenses, warning systems, and resilient infrastructure, and boosting money to achieve these aims (UKEF, 2021).

The Net Zero Strategy lays out how the UK will meet its goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. It lays out strategies for a greener, more sustainable future, including assisting companies and consumers in switching to renewable energy, thus creating hundreds of thousands of well-paid jobs and leveraging up to £90 billion in private investment by 2030. This plan is predicated on the premise that increasing renewable energy production will safeguard consumers from global price hikes by lowering Britain's reliance on imported fossil fuels (Department of BEIS, 2021b). People's energy expenses will be reduced by 2024 as a result of the strategy's energy efficiency measures, lowering renewable

energy costs, and other measures, compared to if no action was taken, especially when gas prices rise.

The UK will have to take drastic measures to decarbonize its energy consumption in order to meet the net zero goal. A major revolution like this necessitates a switch from carbon-based to renewable energy sources. The government has focused on establishing a "thriving low-carbon hydrogen industry" as part of its strategy to "build back better" with a cleaner, greener energy system, among the several proposals now under research on how to decarbonize the UK's heat supply.

In addition, the UK's climate change plan is reflected in the UK Export Finance (UKEF) Climate Change Strategy 2021–2024. According to the UK's Secretary of State for International Trade, trade and climate change are inextricably intertwined; therefore, addressing climate change via decarbonization would necessitate a massive, long-term international effort involving long-term public-private partnerships. UKEF's role is to launch its climate change strategy in order to boost green exports. UKEF wants to help rebuild a cleaner and greener world as the global economy rebounds from the COVID epidemic by assisting the UK's clean exports.

The UKEF's initiatives for achieving the goal include expanding support for clean growth, climate adaptation, and resilience sectors, as well as supporting global mitigation and adaptation activities; they also develop a better knowledge of the impact of their support on greenhouse gas emissions and set intermediate goals to guarantee that they are on pace to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. evaluate the potential for climate-related financial risks in the existing portfolio and in future transactions and take steps to

limit these risks; report on the UKEF's climate-related obligations, allowing interested parties to track their progress; Finally, they should urge their colleagues to follow the lead of the UK in setting lofty climate goals and increasing the international standard for export finance.

Furthermore, reducing the construction sector's significant carbon footprint, as well as determining how to make existing buildings more energy efficient, is an important component of the UK government's policy goal. The built environment accounts for roughly 40% of the UK's overall carbon footprint, according to the UK Green Building Council, with over half of it coming from the construction process rather than "functional operation." (CIOB, n.d.).

Based on this perspective, the United Kingdom has stated that climate change, when combined with other major global concerns, might act as a potent "force multiplier" on already strained regions of the world, jeopardizing international order. Because of the global ramifications, the UK has made climate change a priority in its foreign policy, aiming to take the initiative and lead on the issue. Many analysts have pointed out that this is a departure from the UK's usual tactic of supporting the US position on global issues in international forums.

The Construction of UK as a Climate Change Leader

The UK's role as a leading country in the international climate change movement is constructed through various statements and demonstrations shown by the UK government. In 2021 specifically, it was highly demonstrated during the moment the UK hosted the crucial UN climate change conference COP26 in Glasgow, where they clearly stated their goal, including reaching net zero

emissions by 2050, moving more quickly on climate change adaptation, allowing and encouraging climate-affected countries to create defenses, warning systems, and resilient infrastructure, and boosting funds to achieve these aims, which are led by the UK as the leader (UKEF, 2021).

The British Embassy in Berlin acknowledged this leadership declaration in a 2019 publication, claiming that in Britain, both the public and the political establishment recognized the urgency of the climate crisis early on and responded by putting in place measures that have contributed to the UK's positive climate record. The "UK Climate Change Act," the world's first climate protection measure with ambitious aims and an independent supervisory body, had overwhelming support in the House of Commons as early as 2008.

The Climate Change Act was amended in June 2019 to incorporate a goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. Since 1990, UK emissions have decreased by 42%, but economic production has increased by two-thirds. This is due mostly to the loss of coal-fired electricity and the rise of renewable energy sources, particularly offshore wind. Coal power plants provided 40% of British electricity five years ago; currently they provide little under 5%. Science is contributing significantly to the development of new techniques and more efficient technology.

On the international level, the United Kingdom is also involved in advocating for climate protection. It makes a financial contribution by sponsoring programs throughout the world that try to reduce and adapt to climate change. Politically, the UK is also at the vanguard, co-hosting COP 26, the UN's climate summit, in 2020 with Italy—a watershed moment on the road to implementing the

Paris Agreement's conditions. Britain contributes to science as well by doing basic research and creating technology in conjunction with foreign partners such as Germany. In addition, as a major financial center, the UK has a responsibility to play in promoting improved financial sector sustainability (British Embassy Berlin, 2019).

The UK government touted itself as a "leader" on the subject, claiming to be "the first country in the world to explain how it will decrease emissions under the Convention." They have also made a statement in their own strategy emphasizing their role as leaders in the climate change movement. In contrast, a poll conducted by the Development Engagement Lab (DEL) from September to October 2021 indicated that 49% of people in the United Kingdom feel the government should do more to combat climate change (DEL, 2021).

However, the position is complicated by the fact that the UK has been shown to be inconsistent and lax in applying the law that supports the allegation. The UK government wants to be viewed as a global leader on climate change. Yet companies continue to take advantage of the UK's "light-touch" corporate regulation to perpetrate climate crimes overseas, even as the country makes poor progress in decarbonizing its economy at home. The six-month investigation by DeSmog reporter Chloé Farand revealed how a group of businesses listed on London's junior stock exchange, the Alternative Investment Market (AIM), were exploiting fossil fuel resources across Africa by taking advantage of the UK's lax regulation. Her reports revealed that there is some shady business going on behind London's green exterior. AIM was created to make it simple for businesses to raise money, with

significantly less regulation than the bigger London Stock Exchange. Fashion stores Asos and Boohoo, as well as the upscale tonic water business Fever-Tree, are examples of household names that have expanded extraordinarily quickly as a result of this approach (Hope, 2019).

There is no indication that those businesses did anything illegal, and they are frequently cited as shining examples of how a lack of government intervention can spur innovation. This method, however, has a bad side. With AIM's regulatory approach, scores of tiny oil and gas businesses have been able to acquire cash with the goal of exploiting Africa's natural resources with minimum monitoring.

Such a situation has reflected how there are still gaps hindering the UK's efforts in constructing its position as a global climate leader. Even though the UK government has been showing its firm stance in terms of global climate leadership, plenty of debates and questions regarding their declaration as leaders are still going on and being disputed by various figures, including the youth climate activist Greta Thunberg, who claimed that there are no real climate leaders yet (Thunberg, 2021). Thus, this constructivist effort is found to have failed to convince the global community.

Conclusion

The UK's means of constructing its position as the global climate leader have been carried out through various efforts. The establishment of the Net Zero goal and 2021–2024 Climate Change Strategy has continuously highlighted that the UK will walk along with global nations in this movement as a leader that they can follow. This declaration regarding their position as global climate leaders has also often been brought up and highlighted with the holding of COP26, where the UK was

appointed as host last year. They try to emphasize their success in reducing carbon emissions by 44 percent from 1990 levels, as well as their experience as the first country to legally require greenhouse-gas emission reductions under the Climate Change Act of 2008. However, the findings discussed in this paper led to the conclusion that although the UK has pushed its claim of being the global climate leader for the last several years, they have failed to ensure the public that they are worthy of the claim. Thus, the UK government may have to pour more effort into proving and convincing not only the public but also nations that they are worthy of the title "global climate leader," which may be far from close.

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