

# **Climate Diplomacy in the Danish Foreign Policy Strategy**

A Study of Danish Climate Diplomacy to Champion Human Rights in  
Saudi Arabia

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## Abstract

Climate diplomacy is central to realizing Denmark's long-term strategy for global climate action. The foreign political strategy, *A Green a Sustainable World*, outlines the global climate initiatives and declares that climate diplomacy will build upon Denmark's role as a champion for human rights. However, the strategy's primary focus is increasing trade and green export. Saudi Arabia is a Danish export market with a significant increase in trade, with green export taking a continuously larger export share. However, Saudi Arabia is a state known to violate human rights.

Therefore, this thesis answers the research question: *Why is climate diplomacy a means for Denmark to build upon its role as a champion of human rights when operating in Saudi Arabia, which is known to violate human rights?* Hence, the analysis performed is a deductive qualitative case study of why Danish climate diplomacy can champion human rights in Saudi Arabia. With the central empirical data being *A Green a Sustainable World* and other documents relating to the Danish foreign policy strategy, elaborated in discourse, the analysis draws upon but is not limited to a *what is the problem represented to be?* (WPR) approach to policy analysis. Also, the research design includes the international relations theory of neoliberalism.

The research literature suggests that the Danish foreign policy strategy holds a continuously increased focus on trade and economic diplomacy, nation branding, and that the role of the EU in carrying out Danish foreign policy is growing. These aspects are in line with this thesis' analysis. The analysis suggests that the objective of the climate diplomacy effort is to advance the goals of the Paris Agreement and ensure sustainable development following the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The strategy problematizes global climate change and represents the problem that the largest emitters, developing states, and emerging economies do not live up to the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The analysis implies that the strategy securitizes global climate change by combining global climate change with security issues.

Furthermore, the analysis suggests that a vast part of the strategy promotes Danish soft power resources. In that sense, Danish climate diplomacy draws upon a strategic narrative perceiving Denmark as an innovative pioneer and leader in the green transition. The current government's foreign policy strategy draws upon the same pioneer narrative, which subsequent Danish governments have used and interpreted differently. The analysis further suggests

detachable features in the strategy relating to development aspects of climate diplomacy, which promote human rights through synergy between sustainable development following the SDGs. Nonetheless, it is not explicitly clear how climate diplomacy intends to champion human rights. However, the analysis argues that this can be explained using neoliberalism.

The analysis expresses that Danish trade with Saudi Arabia is continuously increasing, though Denmark is a less significant trading partner to Saudi Arabia. However, the EU represents an essential trading partner, therefore, as does Denmark, by its membership. The analysis argues that the EU has a substantial strategic interest in continuously increasing its relationship with Saudi Arabia. This is evident from the EU's efforts to negotiate a Free Trade Agreement and enter a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council. The analysis argues that in line with neoliberalism, these efforts are seen as initiatives to formalize the cooperation in official agreements and pursue absolute gains in a rules-based setting fostering reciprocity, trust, and further cooperation.

Following neoliberalism, the analysis argues that the EU, through increased trade and cooperation, has expanded the channels of dialogue to move these beyond trade issues. The EU has dialogues with Saudi Arabia and the GCC states about human rights, and the states to take more responsibility in the region. Following neoliberalism, the analysis argues that the EU can advocate for Saudi Arabia to take regional responsibility and promote human rights. This can be done by ending the Saudi-led bombing campaigns in Yemen, where critical water and food infrastructure is destroyed, causing severe scarcity. Human rights can be improved, and the EU can advocate that Saudi Arabia assists the impoverished state with the green transition by taking regional responsibility. Thereby, the analysis argues that neoliberalism can explain why climate diplomacy is a means for Denmark to champion human rights in Saudi Arabia by virtue of its EU membership.

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## Introduction

In October 2020, the government of Denmark published the Danish strategy for global climate action. Hence, *A Green and Sustainable World* was released as the latest addition to the Danish foreign policy strategy. The strategy depicts a world facing crucial climate change and global warming challenges. A global consensus on the need for change to avoid a significant rise in global temperatures was reached in 2015 with the Paris Agreement and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. However, global efforts to translate the consensus into action have been severely insufficient as the strategy proclaims. Therefore, a drastic effort is needed to raise the global climate ambitions and ensure a global green transition.<sup>1</sup>

According to the strategy, Denmark sets unprecedented climate goals and has a moral and historical responsibility to lead the global green transition. However, Denmark only accounts for 0,1 per cent of global emissions, which is why the strategy emphasizes the crucial necessity of influencing the rest of the world to move in the same direction. To accommodate the need, the strategy introduces climate diplomacy as a means to influence foreign states to raise their climate ambitions and promote the global green transition. According to the strategy and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, climate diplomacy draws upon a wide range of foreign political instruments. It embodies aspects of classic foreign policy, trade policy and economic diplomacy, nation branding and public diplomacy, and development policy and cooperation.<sup>2</sup>

As such, the ambition of the Danish climate diplomacy effort is declared to make Denmark into a green superpower and increase the Danish sphere of global influence. The strategy significantly focuses on trade, economic diplomacy, and export. Nonetheless, the strategy also proclaims that climate diplomacy can build upon Denmark's role as a champion for human rights.<sup>3</sup> However, it is not further emphasized in the strategy. Therefore, the question remains, how can climate diplomacy accommodate the objective of championing human rights?

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<sup>1</sup> The Government. 2020. *A Green and Sustainable World: The Danish Government's long-term strategy for global climate action*. Copenhagen: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs & The Ministry of Climate, Energy, and Utilities, p. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. & Jeppe Kofod as quoted in: Linde, Kerrin. 2020. "Jeppe Kofod (S): Klimadiplomati skal sikre Danmark øget global indflydelse – og gøre verden mere grøn." *Kristeligt Dagblad*. Accessed: 25/05/2022. <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/udland/klimadiplomati-skal-sikre-danmark-oeget-global-indflydelse-og-goere-verden-mere-groen>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. & The Government, 2020, p. 12.

## Research Question and the Objective of the Thesis

In 2019 it was politically decided that the focus on climate efforts and sustainability must be the driving force in all aspects of Denmark's foreign policy, trade policy, and development cooperation.<sup>4</sup> As such, *A Green and Sustainable World* results from that increased focus on Denmark's ambition to take global climate action. Hence, climate diplomacy appears to be a central term in the Danish foreign policy strategy, however, used broadly and embodies several interrelated aspects of Danish policy. Therefore, its definition and understanding remain contested. This is the case as the strategy for global climate action holds a significant focus on export, investment, and industry. It simultaneously declares that climate diplomacy will build upon Denmark's role as a champion for human rights.

As the championing of human rights is not further addressed directly within the strategy, it is arguably relevant to examine how climate diplomacy contributes to reaching the objective. This is especially the case due to the strategy's primary focus on increasing and strengthening trade and export. In that sense, Saudi Arabia is a Danish export market that has witnessed a significant increase over the past years and where green export takes up a consciously larger export share.<sup>5</sup> However, Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy internationally known to violate human rights, marginalize the rights of women and minorities, have high sentence numbers of executions, e.g., concerning political activists and minorities, use torture, and restrict the freedom of speech.<sup>6</sup> Hence, the increasing trade relations arguably expose a conflicting relationship between Denmark's commercial interests in Saudi Arabia and the Danish position as a champion for human rights.

Consequently, with the declaration in *A Green and Sustainable World* that climate diplomacy can champion human rights, this thesis considers it highly relevant to analyze how

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<sup>4</sup> Linde, 2020 & Udenrigsministeriet. 2022 (A). "Dansk klimadiplomati". *Danmark.dk*. Accessed: 20/05/2022. <https://denmark.dk/cop-26/subpage-4>.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. 2022. *Economic Country Note – Saudi Arabia* & Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. 2021. *Economic Country Note – Saudi Arabia* & The Trade Council. 2022 (A). "Situationsrapport fra eksportmarkedet Saudi-Arabien." Accessed: 16/05/2022. <https://thetradecouncil.dk/situationsrapporter-fra-danske-eksportmarkeder/saudi-arabien>.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Rasheed, Madawi. 2019. "The New Saudi Diaspora: Why MBS Should Worry About Asylum Seekers." *Foreign Affairs*. Accessed: 11/05/2022. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/saudi-arabia/2019-05-01/new-saudi-diaspora>.

the objective is intended to be reached concerning Saudi Arabia. With this overall objective, the analysis performed in this thesis intends to answer the following research question:

*Why is climate diplomacy a means for Denmark to build upon its role as a champion of human rights when operating in Saudi Arabia, which is known to violate human rights?*

Hence, based upon the above considerations and in accordance with the research question, the following sections of this chapter will establish a brief insight into the existing literature most relevant to this thesis. Furthermore, the sections will introduce the international relations theory of neoliberal institutionalism, which is incorporated in the analysis of this thesis to answer the research question. In addition, the sections will reflect upon the methodical considerations behind the thesis – choice and use of the method, data, and limitations.

Furthermore, the analysis of this thesis is divided into two main chapters, which in correlation with each other, answer the research question. The first chapter, *Danish Climate Diplomacy*, intends to establish an understanding of Danish climate diplomacy as outlined in the Danish foreign policy strategy. To accommodate this purpose, the chapter is divided into three sections. The first section, *Climate Diplomacy and the Problematization of Climate Change*, analyzes the critical components of climate diplomacy as outlined in the strategy. Additionally, the section analyzes how global climate changes are problematized in the strategy and how the problematization legitimizes the Danish climate effort. Furthermore, the second section, *The Green Leadership Narrative*, analyzes the strategic narrative of Denmark as a green pioneer and leader in the green transition. Hence, the intention is to dive deep into the leadership narrative to analyze how this narrative is a crucial part of climate diplomacy. Finally, the third section, *Human Rights in Climate Diplomacy*, analyzes how human rights are addressed in the strategy.

The last chapter of the analysis, *Danish Climate Diplomacy Effects and the Case of Saudi Arabia*, builds upon the findings and arguments made within the previous chapter. In addition, it places them into the context of Danish climate diplomacy as performed in Saudi Arabia. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section, *Human Rights Violations in Saudi Arabia*, analyzes the contemporary human rights violations in Saudi Arabia. The analysis is primarily based upon the critique voiced by the UN and by Denmark by its membership of the UN Human Rights Council. Furthermore, the second section, *Economic Diversification and*

*Green Transition*, analyze the context of Saudi Arabia's ongoing economic diversification commenced by the ambitious reform program *Vision 2030*. This context is essential to understand how foreign actors, such as Denmark and the EU, approach Saudi Arabia and the Saudi market. Moreover, the third section, *The European Union's Strategic Interest in Saudi Arabia*, analyzes the relationship between the EU and Saudi Arabia and analyzes the strategic interest of the EU in strengthening its ties with Saudi Arabia. The fourth and final section of the chapter, *Championing Human Rights*, analyzes why Danish climate diplomacy as carried out through the EU can play a part in championing human rights in Saudi Arabia. Finally, in accordance with the research question, the conclusion will conclude on the combined analysis.

## Litterateur Review

This section intends to establish a brief insight into the existing litterateur most relevant to this thesis. Concerning climate diplomacy, the field of existing litterateur is considerably limited. Therefore, will this literature review address the literature concerning a number of the central aspects of Danish climate diplomacy and the contemporary Danish foreign policy strategy

Martin Marcussen is a prominent scholar dealing with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomacy. Marcussen's study field of Danish foreign affairs is considerably wide, as it encompasses all aspects of the Ministry's function and Embassies and diplomat's practice of diplomacy.<sup>7</sup> Concerning the strategical aspects of Danish foreign policy, among Macussen's key arguments are that economic diplomacy and export promotion has gained continuously higher focus in the Danish foreign policy.<sup>8</sup> Hence, Marcussen argues that economic diplomacy is the type of diplomacy that mobilize economic means being put into use to realize broader foreign policy objectives.<sup>9</sup>

In that sense, Marcussen argues that Danish diplomacy's classic understanding and practice have undergone significant transformation since the Second World War. According to Marcussen, this transformation intensified after the Cold War with increased globalization.

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<sup>7</sup> Marcussen, Martin. 2016. *Diplomati: Et portræt af den moderne udenrigstjeneste*. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 277-315 & Marcussen, Martin. 2014. "Økonomisk diplomati: Det nye sort i udenrigstjenesten". *Tidskriftet Ræson*. April 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Marcussen, 2016, p. 281.

During this period, Marcussen argues that the classic understanding of diplomacy, as negotiations between states, has been fragmented into several areas, which is why Marcussen argues that a sort of *hybrid diplomacy* has emerged in Danish foreign affairs. Following the increased focus on economic diplomacy and Danish commercial interest, the period has seen the privatization of diplomacy. According to Marcussen, more private actors, e.g., private businesses, conduct diplomatic relations with foreign states.<sup>10</sup>

Another scholar, Mads Mordhorst, has studied the strategies of reputation management, nation branding, and public diplomacy in the Danish foreign policy strategy. Hence, analyzing Denmark's image in a global setting and international arenas. According to Mordhorst, Denmark has always engaged in imaging and branding activities, a tendency that has been continuously increasing in the previous decades. In that sense, Mordhorst's study focuses on international communication and Denmark's adapting hereto while balancing discourse in specific international events and crises, e.g., the Cartoon Crises of 2006 and the Global Financial Crises of 2008. Furthermore, Mordhorst argues that the role of the purposes of states has changed in the recent decades with the increased focus on nation branding. Consequently, public diplomacy and reputation management has become an increased part of the Danish foreign policy strategy, according to Mordhorst.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, Henrik Larsen analyzes Denmark's state identity and actorness regarding the EU and the Danish foreign policy strategy. Larsen analyzes the "we" in the Danish foreign policy strategy and official statements through discourse analysis. He distinguishes between different aspects of when "we" are addressed regarding the relationship between the EU and Denmark. This is done in two parts – a pre-and post-Lisbon Treaty era. Consequently, Larsen concludes that the independent Danish actorness in the conduction of foreign policy has declined after implementing the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. As such, Larsen argues that Danish influence and approach to global politics, through the EU as the central actor, have increased. Thereby, Denmark carries out central aspects of its foreign policy through the EU.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Marcussen, Martin. 2013. "Det klassiske diplomati fragmenteres og hybriddiplomatiet opstår." *Samfundsøkonomen* no. 2, May 2013: 5-11.

<sup>11</sup> Mordhorst, Mads. 2015. "Public Diplomacy vs Nation Branding: The Case of Denmark after the Cartoon Crises." In *Histories of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding in the Nordic and Baltic Countries: Representing the Periphery*. Edited by: Louis Clerc et al. Boston: Brill Nijhoff: 237-256.

<sup>12</sup> Larsen, Henrik. 2014. "Discourses of state identity and post-Lisbon national foreign policy: The case of Denmark." *Cooperation and Conflict* vol. 49, no. 3: 368-385.

Denmark's green leadership is studied by Helene Dyrhaug, who argues that the Danish climate leadership became a political myth that successive Danish governments have actively used in their foreign policy strategy. Dyrhaug's study analyzes how Danish governments have interpreted the political myth of Danish pioneership in their climate and energy policies and how these policies have influenced the Danish leadership position.<sup>13</sup> In that sense, Dyrhaug differs between three leadership positions: pioneer, symbolic, and pusher. A pioneer leader has high domestic policy goals and is a forerunner in implementing and developing policies. Symbolic leaders have low domestic policy ambitions but high external ambitions. Finally, pushers have high domestic and foreign policy ambitions, so they can use their policy achievements as leverage to pursue their objectives in international negotiations, e.g., in the EU or UN.<sup>14</sup> Following that understanding, Dyrhaug compares the climate and energy policies of the governments of Helle Thorning-Schmidt (2011-2015) and Lars Løkke Rasmussen (2015-2019). Her study concludes that both governments re-interpreted the political myth of Danish green pioneership and altered it to accommodate their political priorities.<sup>15</sup>

## Theory

To answer the research question, the argumentation made within the analysis of this thesis is supplemented and supported by the international relations theory of neoliberal institutionalism, also referred to as neoliberalism. This section intends to present the theory and identify its essential core aspects relevant to its application in the analysis of the thesis. In addition, the broader application of the theory is further touched upon in *Method and Research Design*.

Drawing upon different strands of classical liberal political and economic thought, the core features of what would later be termed neoliberalism was first indicated in 1977 in the book *Power and Interdependence* by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye. The book introduced the theory of complex interdependence. The theory has three central characteristics. Firstly, multiple channels connect societies which can be understood as interstate, trans governmental, and transnational relations. Secondly, there exists an absence of hierarchy among

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<sup>13</sup> Dyrhaug, Helene. 2021. "Political Myths in Climate Leadership: The Case of Danish Climate and Energy Pioneership." *Scandinavian Political Studies* vol. 44, no. 1: 13-33, p. 13-14.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17-18.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

issues in international relations. Therefore, military security does not dominate the agenda. Thirdly, states do not use military force toward other states when complex interdependence prevails, as states will have no initiative to use military force when bound together by trade and economic ties.<sup>16</sup>

The theory was essential by breaking earlier liberal thought by accepting central assumptions of realism or neorealist international relations theory. Neorealism assumes that the world is anarchical and conflictual by its nature. Therefore, states aim to continuously increase their power as states fear that other states might become more powerful than themselves, so their survival could threaten. Neoliberalism shares the core assumption that states remain the central actors in international relations and pursue self-interests, particularly material interest and security in an anarchic world system. The main difference is neoliberalism's assumption that there is a far greater scope of international cooperation. Such cooperation is assumed not only likely, but also lucrative for states, and that international institutions play a significant part in facilitating this cooperation. So, despite sharing several core assumptions with neorealism, neoliberalism is characterized by a more optimistic worldview.<sup>17</sup>

Neoliberalism is part of the liberal paradigm composed of several strands of interconnected theories stretching back to the Age of Enlightenment. Initiated by central thinkers such as John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and Jeremy Bentham, political and ideological liberalism focuses on values and principles such as democracy, individual liberty, political freedom, freedom of speech, and equality. Occasionally this strand is also referred to as republican liberalism, and from an international perspective, democracy is believed to be more peaceful than non-democratic states. In the democratic peace theory, it is assumed that democracies will never go to war with one another due to their shared norms, values, and principles.<sup>18</sup> Adam Smith first formulated the economic approach to the theory of liberalism during the Age of

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<sup>16</sup> Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye Jr. 1977. *Power and Interdependence*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 2012. Glenview: Pearson, p. 20-24 & Richardson, James L. 2010. "The Ethics of Neoliberal Institutionalism". In *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*. Edited by Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 222-233, p. 222-225.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. & Keohane & Nye, 1977, p. 20-33 & De Buck, Denise and Madeleine O. Hosli. 2020. "Traditional Theories of International Relations". In *The Changing Global Order: Challenges and Prospects*, edited by Madeleine O. Hosli and Joren Selleslaghs. Cham: Springer: 3-21, p. 10-11.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 11-12 & Dunne, Tim. 2020. "Liberal Internationalism". In *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*. Edited by John Baylis et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 103-114, p. 104-109.

Enlightenment. The economic aspect of the theory emphasizes the free market conditions for trade and peaceful relations between states. Therefore, markets should operate with little political interference causing an *invisible hand* to generate favorable economic conditions and welfare gains. Also, the concept of comparative advantages is essential in economic liberalism, meaning that states should focus on producing and exporting the certain products they produce best and at the lowest cost. As such, international trade would increase, and states would refrain from pursuing nationalism and self-sufficiency, hence increasing interdependence and cooperation and, as such, refrain from engaging in conflict with one another.<sup>19</sup>

Hence, these political, ideological, and economic aspects of liberal strands of thought have been incorporated under the neoliberal approach to international relations. Among the core features are the assumptions that states act rationally in an anarchic world system. Hence, drawing upon the assumption of Keohane and Nye that multiple channels connect society and, therefore, in addition to states, there are several actors in international relations which can influence global politics and how states conduct foreign affairs. As such, neoliberalism assumes that domestic politics and international institutions shape the priorities of governments and thereby influence how they act in the international arena. Hence, international institutions and organizations play a significant role in neoliberalism. These are often referred to as *regimes* and are assigned the most prominent position in the international system. This is the case as regimes like the UN or the EU can guide and shape member states' behavior through established agreed-upon rules encompassing shared norms, values, and principles.<sup>20</sup>

Among the primary reasons for regimes' high standing in neoliberalism is that it is assumed that regimes influence how states define their self-interest. It is supposed that regimes provide rules-based platforms or an environment in which states, over time, can learn to prioritize pursuing collective profits of *absolute gains*. Furthermore, neoliberalism believes that states do not see international relations as a *zero-sum game*, in which a profit for another state is a loss for oneself. Therefore, states pursue absolute gains, which refer to a general increase in profit and welfare for all involved partners in the cooperation or trade. All participants gain

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 104-109 & Estrup, Hector. 2013. "Tidligere teorier og klassisk økonomi." In *Den økonomiske teoris historie – en introduktion*. Edited by Hector Estrup et al. Copenhagen: Jurist- og Økonomiforbundets Forlag: 33-64, p. 43-47 & De Buck & Hosli, 2020, p. 11-12.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 13 & Levy, Marc A. et al. 1995. "The Study of International Regimes". *European journal of international relations* vol 1, no. 3: 267-330, p. 274.

to some degree; however, not all partners may necessarily gain equally. This aspect sharply contrasts neorealism which assumes that states pursue *relative gains*. Hence, neorealism accounts that states always measure their increase in profit and welfare relative to other states and may withdraw from, e.g., cooperation or trade if it makes other states stronger relative to themselves.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, regimes provide crucial platforms for states to share information, e.g., about each other's points of view, concerns, and interests. Consequently, neoliberalism assumes that the dialogue facilitated through the regimes can, over time, generate shared norms, values, principles, trust, empathy, and reciprocity among the participating states. Thus, regimes are essential, as such are rules-based, which is why devious behavior is punished. When states fail to cooperate or cheat in the cooperation, other states may not want to engage in future additional cooperation with that state. Neoliberalism holds that this has severe consequences for the cheating state, as its reputation is damaged, and unable to profit from the cooperation and then share the absolute gains.<sup>22</sup>

It is also essential to distinguish neoliberalism's consideration of power in the international community. In that sense, neoliberalism concurs that power is the ability to dominate other states and maintain control over others. To this end, *hard power* is essential such as material factors, e.g., military capability, the seizure of the population, territorial aspects, economy, and the number of natural resources. As such, hard power is the ability to get others to do what they otherwise would not do using the threat of punishment or the promise of reward. However, neoliberalism also considers a state's *soft power*, a term first introduced by Joseph Nye. According to Nye, soft power capabilities relate to a state's ability to achieve the desired outcome through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. As a result, other states are convinced to agree and follow norms and institutions that produce the desired outcome. This is the case as soft power is connected to the appeals of a state's norms, ideals, ideology, or culture and the ability to set standards in institutions that shape the preferences of other states.

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<sup>21</sup> Keohane & Nye, 1977, p. 8-9 & De Buck & Hosli, 2020, p. 13 & Maisei, Jeffrey W. 2017. "Liberalism". In *International Relations Theory*. Edited by Stephen McGlinchey et al. Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing: 22-27, p. 25.

<sup>22</sup> De Buck & Hosli, 2020, p. 13.

Hence, when a state is considered legitimate and attractive, other states may be attracted to follow its lead and implement similar norms, values, ideology, or culture.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, neoliberalism holds that peaceful relations among states in the international community are feasible. Through regimes, states can adapt to each other, achieve reciprocity, and discover that cooperation is a better strategy in the international arena and more beneficial than engaging in conflict with other states. As such, neoliberalism assumes that if states regularly engage in trade, economic cooperation, and other commercial relations, channels of dialogue are opened. Here the partner states can exchange information, and over time such dialogue can breed trust and shared norms. So, over time, the dialogue can move beyond the realm of narrow trade and economic subjects and, due to the shared norms and identity, concern additional aspects that would be unthinkable for the states to discuss in other circumstances. For this purpose, using soft power capacities can further attract, influence, and persuade other states to align with shared norms, values, and principles. Hence, neoliberalism holds that peaceful relations between states are possible and sustainable through ongoing cooperation facilitated by international regimes.<sup>24</sup>

## Method and Research Design

To address the research question and the overall objective of this study, the research design of this thesis is constituted upon a deductive qualitative case study of why Danish climate diplomacy can champion human rights in Saudi Arabia. Hence, as political strategies are elaborated in discourse, it is relevant to engage in the form of discourse analysis to reach this objective. Therefore, the research design of this thesis draws upon a *what is the problem represented to be?* (WPR) approach to analyzing policy introduced by Carol Bacchi. The analytical framework is constituted of six interconnected and overlapping elements. Therefore, drawing upon but not limiting itself to these interrelated and overlapping elements, the analysis will take a point of departure following a WPR-approach.

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<sup>23</sup> Keohane & Nye, 1977, p. 216-217 & Nye Jr., Joseph S. 1990."Soft Power". *Foreign Policy* vol. 80: 153-171, p. 154.

<sup>24</sup> De Buck & Hosli, 2020, p. 11-13.

The goal of the first element of a WPR approach is to identify the implied problem representation in a specific policy. The analysis must work backward to identify this objective. The analysis takes a starting point by examining the concrete proposals put forth. Based on these proposals, it is possible to identify the problem representation.<sup>25</sup> Once the implied problem representation is identified, a WPR approach intends to shed light upon the underlying understandings and assumptions lodged within the problem representation. This objective is done following the remaining steps of the WPR approach.

Hence, the second element aims to identify the *conceptual logic* underpinning the problem representation. According to Bacchi, conceptual logic refers to the underlying meanings, principles, mechanisms, and systems that must be in place for a problem representation to cohere and make sense. Hence, the analysis does not intend to deal with the policymakers' assumptions, beliefs, motives, or inducements. Instead, the aim is to identify deep-seated cultural premises and values which underpin the problem representation and the policy itself. The discourse analysis of the second step focuses on identifying the construction of the problem representation: the *binaries*, *key concepts*, and *categories* operating in the policy. With Binaries or dichotomies, it is essential to distinguish where such appear in the policy and how they purpose to shape the understanding of the issue. Policies are filled with concepts; therefore, identifying the key concepts and analyzing the meaning given to those is essential. Categories are concepts that play an essential part in government practices. When analyzing categories outlined in policies, the analysis must focus on how the categories function to give shape and meaning to the problem representation.<sup>26</sup>

The third element of a WPR approach intends to identify how the problem representation came about and, therefore, if the policy can be considered part of a more significant tendency. As such, the analysis has two interrelated objectives. First, to analyze the decisions and developments that played the foundation for the rise of the problem representation and the policy. Second, to understand that problem representations are developable rather than part of natural progress, certain conditions allowed a particular problem representation to come about. Hence, the analysis considers the history and origin of the problem representation and the

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<sup>25</sup> Bacchi, Carol. 2009. *Analysing Policy: What's the problem represented to be?* Pearson Education: Frenchs Forest, p. 2-4 and p. 55 & Bacchi, Carol & Susan Goodwin. 2016. *Poststructural Policy Analysis: A Guide to Practice*. New York: Palgrave McMillan, p. 20-21.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. & Bacchi, 2009, p. 4-9.

policy.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the fourth element of a WPR approach analyzes potential silences in the problem representation and the policy. This is done by reflecting on aspects of the policy which are left unproblematic and not addressed.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, the fifth element analyzes and critically reflects upon which effects the problem representation produces. In that sense, three types of interconnected and overlapping effects are elaborated by Bacchi: *Discursive effects* meaning the effects which follow the limits about what can be thought and said imposed by the policy and the problem representation. *Subjectification effects* are how subjects are constituted in the discourse of the policy. Finally, *lived effects* are impacts of the problem representation and the policy. As such, lived effects relate to how people's life is directly affected by the problem representation.<sup>29</sup> Hence, this thesis focuses on the lived effects since Danish climate diplomacy, as practiced in Saudi Arabia, is a lived effect of the Danish global climate action. Finally, the sixth element of the WPR approach asks where and how the representation of the problem has been produced, disseminated, and defended, and, additionally, how it could be questioned, disrupted, and replaced.<sup>30</sup>

Hence, the analysis of this thesis will draw upon and consider these interrelated and overlapping elements. Moreover, as touched upon, the research design of this thesis includes the international relations theory of neoliberalism to provide a theoretical perspective to the analysis and argumentation made within it. Hence, neoliberalism plays a significant part in providing an answer to the research question. The theory is included in the argumentation throughout the analysis. However, the theory's inclusion will be most prominent in analyzing and conceptualizing the components of Danish climate diplomacy. However, most profoundly, neoliberalism is included to answer the research question, as the analysis shows that the theory can establish an understanding of why climate diplomacy can build upon Denmark's role as a champion for human rights.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 10-11.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 12-13.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 15-18.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

## Choice and Use of Data

As touched upon in the previous section, the analysis of this thesis is a deductive qualitative case study of Danish climate diplomacy and why its practice in Saudi Arabia can champion democracy and human rights. Hence, the analysis of this thesis is constituted by qualitative data, serving as empirical verification throughout the analysis. In addition, specific quantitative data are included in the analysis. These are export numbers and economic and trade-related calculations to strengthen the analysis's argumentation. The included quantitative data are produced by reliable sources: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, The European Commission, Oxford Economics, and the Economist Intelligence Unit.

As further touched upon in *Research Question and the Thesis' Objective*, Danish climate diplomacy is a contested term encompassing several aspects of Danish diplomacy. Therefore, the first part of the analysis dives deep into what characterizes Danish climate diplomacy, which components it embodies, and, in accordance with the research question, analyzes how it can champion human rights. For this purpose, the analysis will include several qualitative documents produced by the Danish government. However, since the focus of the analysis is on climate diplomacy, the principal document of the analysis is the English version of *A Green and Sustainable World: The Danish Government's Long-Term Strategy for Global Climate Action*. This document outlines the government's international climate action strategy, as the title indicates. In addition, the document describes several aspects of Danish climate diplomacy; therefore, it is considered the foremost source included in the analysis.

The strategy was published in October 2020 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Climate, Energy, and Utilities. However, the strategy was produced in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs, the Ministry of Environment and Food, the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry of Transport and Housing.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the strategy covers various aspects of the government. The strategy is divided into six separate chapters and a preface. The first two sections relate to how Denmark must be a global force in the green transition and how Denmark intends to raise global climate ambitions.<sup>32</sup> The content of the subsequent three sections follows the objectives

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<sup>31</sup> The Government, 2020, p. 5 & p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 6-14.

of the Paris Agreement, the framework for the Danish climate effort. So, these chapters outline the Danish initiative to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, and that development cooperation must focus on achieving climate adaptation and resilience, and, finally, shifting global financial flows in a green direction.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the last chapter outlines initiatives to cooperate with the Danish business community in the private green sector to achieve the climate efforts.<sup>34</sup>

The analysis will be primarily supplemented by two additional strategies produced by the Danish government. First, *The World We Share: Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation* was published in August 2021 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs department for development cooperation, known as DANIDA. The development strategy is valid until 2025 and is based on a broad political agreement in the Danish Parliament to replace the previous development strategy. The strategy outline two main strategic tracks in Danish development cooperation. Firstly, to combat global poverty, inequality, human rights abuses, conflict, and migration. Secondly, to promote the green transition by focusing the development efforts on achieving sustainable development and climate adaptation and resilience.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the development strategy is relevant as a supplementary document in the analysis as it deals with the Danish climate effort and climate diplomacy.

Furthermore, the analysis is supplemented with *Foreign and Security Policy Strategy*, published in January 2022 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The broad foreign and security policy strategy outlines the values that will drive all Danish foreign and security policy aspects. These values are outlined in the *value-compass* guiding the priorities for Denmark and are: climate, freedom, safety, equality, democracy, human rights, justice, welfare, and sustainability. Taking a point of departure in these values, the strategy deals with several aspects of Danish foreign affairs and diplomacy regarding values, safety, migration, economy, and climate.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the strategy is relevant as a supplementary document in the analysis, as it defines the values driving the priorities of Danish foreign affairs and deals with climate diplomacy.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 14-26.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 26-28.

<sup>35</sup> The Government. 2021. *The World We Share: Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation*. Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark/DANIDA & Udenrigsministeriet. 2021. "Dansk udviklingspolitisk strategi 2021-2025: Fælles om verden". Accessed: 23/05/2022. <https://um.dk/danida/strategi-og-prioriteter>.

<sup>36</sup> The Government. 2022. *Foreign and Security Policy Strategy*. Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

In addition to these three central documents, the analysis will be supplemented by strategies published by earlier Danish governments under Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, and Helle Thorning-Schmidt. These documents are included in the analysis to consider how Danish climate diplomacy evolved over time and as empirical verification that *A Green and Sustainable World* is part of a larger strategic narrative produced and expanded by shifting governments. In addition, the qualitative data of the analysis includes official statements and documents produced and published by the UN and the EU. Also, the data includes the reform program of Saudi Arabia, *Vision 2030*, which is included to analyze the context of economic diversification in Saudi Arabia. This context is essential in understanding the foundation for foreign actors, such as Denmark and the EU, access to Saudi Arabia and the Saudi market, and why it is considered in the analysis. Finally, the argumentation of the analysis is supported and strengthened by relevant research literature throughout.

## Limitations

Several limitations have been made concerning the analysis of this thesis. First, regarding the use of international relations theory, the liberal theory includes various aspects concerning, e.g., political thought, ideology, and economics, as further described in *Theory*. However, the argumentation of the analysis is limited to only being supplemented and drawn upon by neoliberalism as it is introduced and described in *Theory*. Furthermore, concerning the empirical data of the analysis relating to Danish climate diplomacy, the primary source is *A Green and Sustainable World*, as introduced in the previous section of this chapter. However, the argumentation of the analysis is supplanted and supported by the additional foreign political strategies, as touched upon. Nevertheless, the analysis will occasionally refer to the Danish foreign policy strategy concerning global climate action in general when addressing climate diplomacy. Thereby, the analysis will draw upon all three foreign policy strategies in correlation with each other, as all three documents share elements and initiatives relating directly to climate diplomacy and the Danish global climate action. However, the analysis also considers each strategy individually, which is made clear in the analysis.

## Danish Climate Diplomacy

In accordance with the research question and the considerations outlined in the previous chapter, the analysis provided in this chapter intends to dive deep into Danish climate diplomacy. The analysis draws upon the Danish foreign policy strategy concerning global climate action and climate diplomacy. As such, the analysis is divided into three sections and draws upon *A Green and Sustainable World*, *The World We Share*, and *Foreign and Security Policy Strategy*. The first section analyzes how the Danish foreign policy strategy outlines climate diplomacy and how it problematizes global climate change. The second section analyzes the narrative of Danish green leadership and identifies the soft power resources upon which the strategy draws. Finally, the third section of this chapter analyzes how the Danish foreign policy strategy concerning global climate action addresses the championing of human rights concerning climate diplomacy.

### Climate Diplomacy and the Problematization of Climate Change

This section intends to analyze how Danish Climate Diplomacy is outlined in the Danish foreign policy strategy and how global climate change is problematized in the strategy. Finally, the analysis considers how the problematization strengthens and legitimizes the Danish climate diplomacy effort. *A Green and Sustainable World* is the long-term strategy for global climate action and encompasses efforts relating to economic diplomacy and export and trade-related issues, public diplomacy, and development cooperation. As introduced in *Choice and Use of Data*, the strategy is divided into six chapters. Each chapter outline different aspects of the government's strategic initiatives and efforts concerning climate action. Hence, the first chapter proposes the government's intention to position Denmark as:

“(...) a green pioneer in the global climate effort so we can inspire and influence the rest of the world. Denmark will once again take leadership in the green transition (...) and actively advance the Paris Agreement and sustainable development in line with the SDGs.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The Government, 2020, p. 6.

The government's proposal is arguably to position Denmark internationally as a leading state in the global green transitioning and to position Denmark as an internationally: "(...) green superpower."<sup>38</sup> As such, The government proposes to focus Denmark's international climate efforts on ensuring sustainable development in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and actively advancing the three main objectives of the Paris Agreement, which are defined in Article 2 of the Agreement:

"(a) Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;

(b) Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production; and

(c) Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development."<sup>39</sup>

The confidence in international regimes and institutional agreements is in accordance with the liberal vision of order, which is considered rules-based. Accordingly, it is assumed that a state's behavior is shaped by rules, institutions, and agreements fostering an environment of reciprocity and cooperation where states peacefully can pursue their self-interests.<sup>40</sup> Hence, throughout the strategy, it is evident that Denmark's climate diplomacy efforts are devoted to international cooperation following the UN: "The Government wants to strengthen the UN Climate Convention, maintain the Paris Agreement as a global framework (...)."<sup>41</sup> So, in line with the liberal vision of order, Denmark's climate diplomacy is arguably constituted around the underlying assumption that international regimes and agreements adopted herein can serve as a proper framework for pursuing and advancing Danish interests.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> United Nations. 2015. *Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, Dec. 12, 2015, T.I.A.S. No. 16-1104, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Ikenberry, G. John. 2020. *A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 35 & Ikenberry, G. John. 2011. *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crises, and Transformation of the American World Order*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 91.

<sup>41</sup> The Government, 2020, p. 9.

Following the first objective of the Paris Agreement, the government proposes a course to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally by leading the way in the green transition. As such, the climate diplomacy efforts must focus on: “(...) the largest emitters, as well as other emerging economies and developing countries, which will be the source of increased greenhouse gas emissions in the future.”<sup>42</sup> Based on this presumption, the government suggests several concrete proposals. Among these are to promote the phasing out of coal globally and to promote a focus on the value chains of Danish and international companies to reduce the climate footprint.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the government will inaugurate further bilateral strategic sector cooperation and partnerships worldwide. Such partnerships must include several emerging economies.<sup>44</sup> Finally, the government suggests that Denmark must use its own experience and competencies in the green transition to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions through long-term and in-depth collaboration.<sup>45</sup>

Pursuing the second objective of the Paris Agreement, the government proposes to: “(...) drive adaptation and resilience initiatives in the fight against climate change.”<sup>46</sup> Hence, the government proposes to make climate and environmental support central in Denmark's development policy and assistance. In that sense, the government proposes giving special priority to Denmark's development programs for green transition in line with the SDGs and promoting resilience towards climate changes by promoting clean water, clean energy, and sustainable food production in developing countries. In that sense, concerning the strategic sector cooperation with developing states, the Government proposes to prioritize the area of climate adaptation and resilience. Also, the development aspects of climate diplomacy focus on creating green jobs and training in developing states to ensure the green transition does not foster further inequality.<sup>47</sup> This aspect is in accordance with the liberal vision of order to foster progressive social purposes. In that sense, it is assumed that cooperation can drive the world's

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 14-18.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 15-16 & The Trade Council. 2022 (B). “Strategic Sector Cooperation: More Denmark in the World.” Accessed: 06/04/2022. <https://thetradeCouncil.dk/en/services/growth/strategic-sector-cooperation>.

<sup>46</sup> The Government, 2020, p. 19.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 19-21.

societies and peoples in a progressive direction with the rise of living standards, improved health, enhanced security against violence, increased rights, and social justice.<sup>48</sup>

In accordance with the third objective of the Paris Agreement, the Government proposes to shift global finance flows in a green direction. Hence, the strategy outlines several strategic initiatives. Among these is pushing the European Commission to make ambitious proposals supporting development, standardization, and acceleration for green and sustainable financing. Also, through bilateral and multilateral efforts, Denmark must work on improving framework conditions for the green transition and mobilize additional private capital for sustainable investments through financing instruments and public-private partnerships. Furthermore, the government suggests ensuring sufficient financing for climate adaptation in developing countries where market financing is challenging.<sup>49</sup>

Arguably, a crucial ongoing element in realizing the proposals of the strategy is the suggested general increase and strengthening of Denmark's green sector and the export of green technology and solutions: "The Government will work to ensure the spread of Danish businesses' green solutions through a focused export promotion initiative and by further strengthening green economic diplomacy."<sup>50</sup> As further emphasized:

"When we strengthen our global efforts for the green transition, it benefits Denmark beyond the mere fact that we are contributing to a greener, more sustainable and equal world. The spread of Danish green solutions also contributes to green exports, growth and employment in Denmark."<sup>51</sup>

Hence, the Government proposes to strengthen and advance Denmark's commercial diplomacy. Being a strand of the economic diplomacy umbrella, commercial diplomacy is defined as: "(...) an activity conducted by state representatives with diplomatic status in view of business promotion between a home and a host country."<sup>52</sup> As such, strengthening and enhancing Denmark's green economic diplomacy arguably is a prominent feature of the Government to achieve its proposals in the strategy. Arguably, this aspect is in line with neoliberalism, as it is

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<sup>48</sup> Ikenberry, 2020, p. 40-41.

<sup>49</sup> The Government, 2020, p. 22-25.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Naray, Olivier. 2008. "Commercial Diplomacy: A Conceptual Overview." *7<sup>th</sup> Conference of TPOs*. The Hauge, p. 2.

assumed that trade and exchange are understood to be vital components of modern society and sources of stable economic growth and peace. Therefore, openness and trade are vital elements in neoliberalism and the liberal vision of order as states must have access to each other's societies, markets, and economies to establish trade relations that can foster further collaboration over time.<sup>53</sup>

So, the strategy relies on strengthening green economic diplomacy and the strongholds of Danish businesses in the green sector. Additionally, a significant focus exists on communicating Denmark's successful green transition to claim a leading position in the global green transition: "With its high national ambitions and decades of experience in green transition and climate adaptation, Denmark is a leading country with a unique platform for inspiring the rest of the world to adopt high ambitions and take action now."<sup>54</sup> Hence, the strategy indicates that climate diplomacy must draw upon Denmark's soft power resources relating to its international reputation as a responsible state with outstanding green achievements.

Climate diplomacy arguably embodies aspects of public diplomacy – the diplomatic instrument to promote Denmark's soft power abroad.<sup>55</sup> According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the international branding of Denmark has a significant influence on Denmark's global sphere of influence, tourism, export, and the general perception and treatment of Danish citizens abroad.<sup>56</sup> Such public diplomacy aspects are arguably seen in, e.g., the appointment of a climate ambassador and the establishment of Green Frontline Missions. These are meant to brand Denmark as a green nation and conduct climate diplomacy to: "(...) influence other countries to commit to ambitious goals and take action to meet these goals."<sup>57</sup> Denmark's use of soft power regarding climate diplomacy is further analyzed in *The Green Leadership Narrative*.

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<sup>53</sup> Ikenberry, 2020, p. 33-34.

<sup>54</sup> The Government, 2020, p. 8 & Regeringen. 2020. "En grøn og bæredygtig verden – regeringens langtidssigtede strategi for global klimaindsats." Accessed: 07/04/2022. <https://www.regeringen.dk/nyheder/2020/en-groen-og-baeredygtig-verden-regeringens-langsigtede-strategi-for-global-klimaindsats/>.

<sup>55</sup> Andreasen, Uffe. 2007. *Diplomati og globalisering: En introduktion til Public Diplomacy*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, p. 28.

<sup>56</sup> Udenrigsministeriet. 2022 (B). "Public Diplomacy". Accessed: 05/04/2022. <https://um.dk/om-os/organisation/public-diplomacy>.

<sup>57</sup> The Government, 2022, p. 32-33 & the Government, 2020, p. 9-10.

Furthermore, the strategy focuses on Denmark's participation in the EU. It is emphasized that Danish climate diplomacy must be carried out through active participation in the EU. In addition, the strategy indicates that Denmark must take a leading role within the EU to make it a global leading force in the green transition:<sup>58</sup>

“We will increase Denmark's climate diplomacy influence by working harder through the EU. The EU must lead by the power of the green example (...) The EU must lead the way globally and set an example (...) This will put the EU in a strong position to advocate for higher ambitions in the rest of the world – and Denmark will make a strong contribution to this effort.”<sup>59</sup>

For Denmark to pursue its climate diplomacy efforts in the EU is in accordance with the argument that small states in international regimes benefit from specializing in specific competencies, policies, or practices. Therefore, smaller states assumably often seek this approach within the regimes.<sup>60</sup> Hence, the strategy is arguably driven by an underlying ambition to promote Denmark's green competencies to pursue its interest within the EU.

Thereby, in line with neoliberalism, the strategy arguably encompasses the underlying assumption that participation in international regimes allows Denmark can best pursue its interest. Consequently, the strategy implies that Denmark must take a leading position within the regime so Denmark can increase its sphere of influence through the promotion of its specialized strongholds in the green sector.<sup>61</sup> For this purpose, the strategy relies on strengthening the EU's alliances with foreign states and non-state actors and activating all parts of the EU's external diplomacy to promote the green transition. Additionally, the EU's development assistance must be a platform to support climate adaptation. The EU's trade policy must focus on climate, environment, and commitments to implement the Paris Agreement. In addition, the Government proposes to make regulatory and competitive conditions for businesses in the green sector and to work on ensuring that the EU's research and innovation policies will contribute to reaching the climate ambitions.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 8-11 & the Government, 2022, p. 31-33.

<sup>59</sup> The Government, 2020, p. 11.

<sup>60</sup> von Dosenrode, Søren. 1994. “Western European Small States in International Regimes.” *History of European Ideals*, vol. 19, No. 1-3, p. 245-252.

<sup>61</sup> The Government, 2022, p. 31-33 & the Government, 2020, p. 8-11.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

Consequently, Denmark's strategic initiatives and efforts to counter global climate change focus on intensifying international cooperation, climate adaptation and resilience in development cooperation, and working through international regimes. To this end, the UN SDGs and the Paris Agreement serve as the framework for the climate diplomacy effort. However, as pointed out in the strategy: "Denmark is leading the way (...) but Denmark only accounts for 0.1% of global emissions, so it is essential that the rest of the world moves in the same direction."<sup>63</sup> Hence, the Government implies that the world must follow the Danish example to lower greenhouse gas emissions following the commitments outlined in Article 2 of the Paris Agreement. Thereby, throughout the strategy, there arguably is understood the viewpoint that the need to advance the Paris Agreement's objectives is needed. This position is further expressed in the strategy:

"Immediate action is needed. Despite consensus on the Paris Agreement among the vast majority of the world's nations, we are not yet on track to limit temperature increases to below 2 degrees or striving for 1.5 degrees. We must break the curve of global greenhouse gas emissions (...) In other words, significantly higher ambitions are needed."<sup>64</sup>

As such, the government arguably problematizes the notion that numerous states fail to live up to the commitments of the Paris Agreement. As a result, is indicated the strategy's representation of the problem of global climate. The strategy defines the world's largest emitting states, including the EU member states, as a central aspect of the problem and emphasizes:

"It is also important to maintain a focus on developing countries, and particularly emerging economies, which are already responsible for the majority of global emissions, and whose energy and resource needs will continue to grow, thus amplifying the trend of increased greenhouse gas emissions."<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, addressing developing states, the strategy stresses that: "(...) climate change has the potential to roll back decades of development progress and intensify problems relating to poverty, inequality, migration and displacement, conflict, security and instability, and

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

shortages of, for example, water.”<sup>66</sup> The policy connects climate change with the potential roll-back of development efforts and a dramatic increase in global humanitarian and security issues. The problematization embodies the interrelationship between climate change and circumstances such as migration, conflicts, scarcity of food and water, human rights issues, and additional human suffering.<sup>67</sup>

Hence, it is arguable that the strategy securitizes global climate changes due to its devastating effects, resulting in security issues following, e.g., conflicts, migration, instability, and humanitarian aspects. According to securitization theory and the Copenhagen School, using specific rhetoric actors can frame issues as severe threats to security. Furthermore, by labeling issues as security matters, the theory suggests that they automatically become of utmost priority, why they must be handled with extraordinary means.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, it is arguable that the problematization of global climate change serves as a legitimizing factor for the Danish climate diplomacy effort. As a result, the problematization also legitimizes Denmark positioning itself as a leading state in the global green transition and, therefore, within the EU. Hence, this aspect of Danish climate diplomacy aiming to position Denmark as a green leader is dived deeper into in the following section of this analysis.

## The Green Leadership Narrative

As analyzed in the previous section of this analysis, a significant focus of the strategy relies on positioning Denmark as a leader in the global green transition. In that sense, the strategy indicates that due to Danish pioneership in the green transition, Denmark has a historical and moral responsibility to take the lead.<sup>69</sup> Hence, the strategy indicates a narrative about Denmark as a green pioneer; such narratives can be grasped as: “(...) means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behavior of domestic and international actors.”<sup>70</sup> In that sense, narratives can be understood as a soft

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 8-12 & p. 19-21 & the Government, 2021, p. 28-37 & the Government, 2022, p. 31-33 & p. 40-41.

<sup>68</sup> Eroukhmanoff, Clara. 2017. “Securitisation Theory”. In *International Relations Theory*. Edited by Stephen McGlinchey et al. Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing: 104-109, p. 104-109.

<sup>69</sup> The Government, 2020, p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> Miskimmon, Alister, et al. 2013. *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order*. New York: Routledge, p. 105.

power resource, as people and states are drawn and influenced by specific descriptions of a state which seem appealing.<sup>71</sup> Hence, this section intends to analyze this narrative to identify the soft power resources upon which the strategy draws and analyze how these are used to support climate diplomacy.

According to the concept of strategic narratives as introduced by Laura Roselle, Alister Miskimmon, and Ben O'Loughlin, the national narrative of a state sets out the identity the state wants to be recognized by the international community. Consequently, the national narrative describes the state's story and defines the values and goals it is characterized by.<sup>72</sup> It is relevant to consider how the strategy promotes the soft power resource as a state's political norms, values, principles, and ethics of Denmark and its foreign political morale.<sup>73</sup> In that sense, the foreign policy of Denmark is stressed to be value-driven. Concerning climate diplomacy, the strategy highlights that climate changes are global. However, the impacts are skewed: "The world's poorest people and countries are the hardest hit. They also have the fewest resources for adapting to a warmer climate (...)." <sup>74</sup> Simultaneously, the Government promotes Denmark as a: "(...) green watchdog for socially just green transition (...)." <sup>75</sup>

Arguably, the Government builds upon a national narrative promoting Denmark and Danish climate diplomacy as progressive and socially just. This ambition is in line with the neoliberal vision of order, in which it is assumed that states must foster progressive social purposes, e.g., improved rights and social justice.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, the strategy emphasizes: "We will ensure green development cooperation rooted in solidarity."<sup>77</sup> Thus, the socially progressive aspect of Danish climate diplomacy can be considered a soft power resource. This is further emphasized by the strategy's notion that climate diplomacy will build upon Denmark's role as a champion for democracy and human rights, as touched upon in this thesis. However, this aspect of the strategy is further addressed in *Human Rights in Climate Diplomacy*.

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<sup>71</sup> Roselle, Laura et al. 2014. "Strategic Narrative: A New Means to Understand Soft Power." *Media, War & Conflict* vol. 7, no. 1: 70-84, p. 74-77.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 76 & Miskimmon et al., 2013, p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Andreasen, 2007, p. 26.

<sup>74</sup> The Government, 2022, p. 8-11 & the Government, 2020, p. 19.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>76</sup> Ikenberry, 2020, p. 40-41.

<sup>77</sup> The Government, 2020, p. 19.

Moreover, as analyzed, the strategy emphasizes Denmark's international stronghold position in the green sector. Throughout the strategy, Denmark is perceived as: "(...) a green entrepreneurial nation with strong knowledge institutions, and exports of green technology, solutions (...)." <sup>78</sup> Hence, the Danish stronghold green sector is considered another soft power resource, as it contributes to the overall perception of Denmark as an entrepreneurial state with a strong business community and research institutions. Therefore, the soft power resource intends to attract and influence other states through innovation appeal. <sup>79</sup> In that sense, the green sector and research community also relate the soft power resource of a state's behavior, as further stressed in the strategy: "(...) we have ensured a smooth transition to a green economy in Denmark over the past 50 years." <sup>80</sup> The strategy indicates that Denmark, with its successful own green transition, has established a strong foundation for its green sector and the overall promotion of the global green transition.

Hence, the behavior of Denmark arguably serves as a soft power resource for attracting other states to follow a similar transition to a green economy. In that sense, the strategy emphasizes: "We have a historic and moral responsibility to take the lead. We have the experience, and we have the green solutions." <sup>81</sup> Hence, the government arguably draws upon Denmark's history in the green transition as part of the narrative aiming to position Denmark as a green leader. However, it is arguably relevant to distinguish the Danish national narrative concerning its green leadership position into two divisions. Arguably, a pioneer narrative can be identified, drawing upon Denmark's behavior in the domestic green transition as a soft power resource. In addition, there can be identified a *green export narrative* or a *business narrative* drawing upon Denmark's innovation and strongholds in the green sector.

Following the green pioneer narrative, the Danish pioneer position in the green transition arguably began in the 1970s. During the Oil Crises, where, e.g., academics and the wind energy industry pushed the government to implement alternative energy policies adopted in the early 1980s. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, shifting governments established extraordinary and front-running domestic environmental and energy standards policies. The correlation between the high standards and ambitious policies established an exemplary leadership,

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>79</sup> Andreasen, 2007, p. 25-26.

<sup>80</sup> The Government, 2020, p. 4.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

frontrunner, and pioneer position in the European environment and energy policies.<sup>82</sup> According to Dyrhauge, the Danish climate actions in the period established the political myth of Denmark as a leader in climate and energy, as described in *Literature Review*. Hence, in line with Dyrhauge, it is arguable that this additional period laid the foundation of the green pioneer narrative, which the strategy draws upon as a means of soft power to legitimize and realize a green global leadership position.

As such, the national narrative of Denmark as a green pioneer was arguably established because of early governmental policies and standards. However, it is argued that the national narrative of Denmark as a state with strongholds in the green sector and exporter of green technology and solutions was laid in the 2000s under the governments of Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Lars Løkke Rasmussen (2001-2011). This is the case as the 2000s saw a turning point with a substantial increase in Danish green export of energy solutions. This was due to the Fogh Rasmussen governments, which dismantled existing policies by, e.g., canceling domestic offshore wind park projects due to the 2003 government strategy for the environment; referred to as *green realism*.<sup>83</sup> However, in 2007 the Government published a long-term strategy for a transition of the energy sector. By setting ambitious goals that renewable energy had to account for 30 per cent of the total domestic energy consumption by 2025 and making the renewable energy approach market-driven, the new strategy reversed the green realism.<sup>84</sup> Hence, during the 2000s, the policies of the governments were characterized by adopting business-friendly and market-driven solutions to resolve climate and energy policy issues.<sup>85</sup> This tendency resulted in the national narrative evolving to perceive Denmark as a robust green technology and solutions exporter. Hence, this other narrative supplemented the previously established pioneer narrative.

Furthermore, during the governments of Helle Thorning-Schmidt (2011-2015), it is arguable that both narratives were further strengthened. This was the case because of the ambitious approach to climate and energy policies outlined in the green growth strategy and the

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<sup>82</sup> Dyrhauge, 2021, p. 16 & Eikeland, Per Ove & Tor Håkon J. Inderberg. 2016. "Energy System Transformation and Long-Term Interest Constellations in Denmark: Can Agency Beat Structure?". *Energy Research and Social Science* vol. 11, 164–173, p. 166-169.

<sup>83</sup> Regeringen. 2003. *Grøn markedsøkonomi – mere miljø for pengene*. Copenhagen: Miljøministeriet & Dyrhauge, 2021, p. 19.

<sup>84</sup> Regeringen. 2007. *Mulighedernes samfund: Regeringsgrundlag*. Copenhagen: Statsministeriet, p. 46-47.

<sup>85</sup> Dyrhauge, 2021, p. 20.

growth plan for energy and climate. Following the Financial Crises, the government's key focus was to kick-start the economy, create jobs, support the transport sector, and internationally promote the strongholds of the green sector to increase green export rapidly.<sup>86</sup> The green growth strategy explicitly recognized the connection between domestic priorities and Denmark's international reputation. Dyrhauge argues that the government aimed to transform the Danish leadership position into a *pusher* position. As described in *Litterateur Review*, a *pusher* is characterized by a state with high domestic and external policy ambitions. The high domestic policy ambitions were emphasized with Denmark's first Climate Law of 2014, while the external ambitions were sought in the EU.<sup>87</sup> The policy of the successive governments of Lars Løkke Rasmussen (2015-2019) focused on economic efficiency and that climate and energy policies should not affect market competitiveness. In addition, through an export-oriented green energy technology strategy, the government made a great effort to promote Danish green technology export. Arguably, this effort was built upon the pioneer narrative as the argumentation highlighted Denmark as a frontrunner in green energy technology.<sup>88</sup>

However, according to Dyrhauge, the Løkke Rasmussen government conducted weak domestic climate and energy policy ambitions. Therefore, Dyrhauge argues that the leadership position once again changed, so Denmark became a symbolic leader. This is the case as the environmental effort gained a symbolic position, as the government focused on external economic policy priorities. Hence, Denmark pursued economic interest abroad instead of the domestic climate agenda.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, it is arguable that the export-oriented narrative of Denmark starting in the early 2000s was further emphasized and strengthened during this period. However, the Løkke Rasmussen government's narrow market approach to climate and energy policy, focusing on exporting Danish solutions instead of adopting ambitious domestic climate policies, contrasted with the Thorning-Schmidt government's approach. This is the case as Thorning-Schmidt offered a more holistic approach through the green growth strategy, focusing on ambitious domestic and external climate and energy policy objectives and the export

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p. 21-23 & Regeringen. 2011. *Danmark der står sammen: Regeringsgrundlag*. Copenhagen: Statsministeriet, p. 26-34 & Regeringen. 2013. *Danmark i arbejde: Vækstplan for energi og klima*. Copenhagen: Erhvervsministeriet.

<sup>87</sup> Dyrhauge, 2021, p. 21-23.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 23-26 & Regeringen. 2018. *Danmark som foregangsland på energi og klima: Status på den grønne omstilling*. Copenhagen: Energi-, Forsynings- og Klimaministeriet, p. 4-5.

<sup>89</sup> Dyrhauge, 2021, p. 26 & p. 17.

focus. However, it is essential to notice that both governments and the Fogh Rasmussen governments have roots in the pioneer narrative starting in the 1970s.<sup>90</sup>

Arguably, as emphasized throughout this analysis, the current government of Mette Frederiksen follows the tendency of changing governments and draws upon the pioneer narrative. This is evident in *A Green and Sustainable World*, as the strategy promotes the holistic approach to climate diplomacy. This is the case as the strategy highlights and draws upon high domestic climate ambitions, such as the Climate Act of 2020, aiming to reduce emissions by 70 per cent in 2030 compared to 1990 and attain climate neutrality by 2050.<sup>91</sup> The combination of the high domestic policy ambitions, the export-oriented focus on Danish green technology, and the efforts at the EU level to provide exemplary leadership make up the holistic approach to climate diplomacy. The strategy arguably positions Denmark in a pusher position, with high domestic and external policy ambitions. *Pushers* can use their domestic policy achievements as legitimacy to gain leverage in external climate negotiations, for instance, in the EU or UN.<sup>92</sup> Hence, it is arguable that the strategy is part of a larger national narrative rooted in the political myth of Danish green pioneership, established and evolved by succeeding governments. In that sense, as outlined in this section, the national narrative arguably contributes as a soft power resource for Denmark.

## Human Rights in Danish Climate Diplomacy

As described in this thesis, human rights are at first only mentioned one time in *A Green and Sustainable World*. However, arguably detectable aspects of the strategy can promote and improve human rights in developing states. Therefore, in accordance with the research question, this section intends to analyze how the championing of human rights concerning climate diplomacy is addressed in the foreign policy strategy. As analyzed, part of the government's problematization relies on the assumption that several states do not live up to the commitments of the Paris Agreement. These states do not simply cause environmental consequences but also critical human costs: "Climate changes are global, yet the impacts are skewed. The world's

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 28-29.

<sup>91</sup> The Government, 2020, p. 4 & Folketinget. 2020. "L 117: Forslag til lov om klima." Accessed: 02/05/2022. <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20191/lovforslag/1117/index.htm>.

<sup>92</sup> Dyrhauge, 2021, p. 18.

poorest people and countries are the hardest hit. They also have the fewest resources for adapting to a warmer climate (...).”<sup>93</sup> The assumption that the world’s poorest people and developing states are the severest affected by climate change relates to the perception that climate changes increase inequality and bring about human rights issues. Therefore, the strategy proclaims that increasing climate diplomacy can: “(...) save human lives, reduce inequality, prevent conflict and displacement, and support positive economic development in the years to come.”<sup>94</sup>

Additionally, the problem representation indicates that developing states and emerging economies are accountable for most of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, the strategy implies an extraordinary focus on these state categories in the climate diplomacy efforts, which must embody: “(...) far higher climate ambitions, with a stronger focus on adaptation and sustainable development in the poorest and most fragile developing countries, where more people must have access to clean energy and clean water.”<sup>95</sup> Consequently, there is arguably an established binary between Denmark and developing states. Denmark has the green technology and resources to ensure a green transition in this binary, while the developing states, considered poor and fragile, need Danish development assistance to achieve climate adaptation and resilience. In that sense, the strategy emphasizes that Danish climate diplomacy will promote: “(...) a fair transition to sustainable societies for the benefit of the world’s peoples (...).”<sup>96</sup> As such, this binary relationship arguably indicates an underlying assumption that Danish efforts are needed to benefit the world’s peoples, which contributes to the conceptual logic.

Additionally, the binary further strengthens and legitimizes Danish global climate action to achieve sustainable climate adaptation and resilience in developing states. As touched upon, a significant part of the Danish global climate action relies on increasing the Danish green export: “The strong Danish competencies and solutions in climate adaptation and sustainable development must be actively applied to the rest of the world.”<sup>97</sup> Through Danish climate diplomacy and increased Danish green export, the strategy highlights that: “(...) we can avoid and minimize the damage from climate change as far as possible and prevent climate change from causing increased global inequality.”<sup>98</sup> Thereby, it is arguable that the strategy

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<sup>93</sup> The Government, 2020, p. 19.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

makes countering inequality a key concept. This concept further legitimizes Danish climate diplomacy's significant focus on export and trade since it is assumed that the green technology must be implemented to achieve a global green transition: "(...) in which civil societies – particularly vulnerable groups and young people – are involved in shaping the green future."<sup>99</sup>

Thus, the strategy arguably categorizes vulnerable groups and young people. According to the strategy, Denmark is leading the way in engaging these groups in the green transition and decision-making processes. Concerning young people, the strategy emphasizes: "Young people are hard hit by climate change. At the same time, young people have an important voice in the climate debate (...)." <sup>100</sup> Thereby, the strategy implies that young people, as a category severely affected by climate change, but at the same time must play a crucial role in shaping a greener future. However, concerning developing countries, the strategy indicates that young people's involvement in civil societies through workforce participation is severely struggling: "Developing countries are facing enormous challenges in creating jobs for millions of young people."<sup>101</sup> Thereby, the objective of the Government, to involve young people in developing countries in a socially just green transition, is facing significant obstacles. The strategy stresses: "(...) Denmark must show the way to a socially just and cost-effective transition that does not result in job losses, unequal redistribution, and increased inequality, but rather in new green jobs and opportunities for more people."<sup>102</sup> Hence, the government aims to increase young people's involvement in developing states, thereby promoting norms of democracy.

Though the category of young people is mentioned several times in the strategy, the vulnerable groups category is not further specified. Moreover, it is not further explicit which groups of people are included in this category. However, as the strategy emphasizes: "There are also great opportunities for positive synergy between a green transition, climate adaptation and achieving the other SDGs (...)." <sup>103</sup> Therefore, the strategy arguably indicates that the vulnerable groups' category encompasses people whose lives are intended to be affected by sustainable development efforts following the SDGs. Arguably, this is, e.g., the case concerning the mentioned obstacles in developing states to create jobs. In addition to other objectives, Goal

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

no. 8 on decent work and economic growth targets full and productive employment for all people by 2030. Furthermore, this is arguably the case with Goal no. 5 concerning gender equality.<sup>104</sup> As stressed in the strategy: “Investments in women’s and girls’ education and sexual and reproductive health and rights contribute to improving the inclusion of women in political and economic life and help break the population curve.”<sup>105</sup> As such, the strategy links the green transition, climate adaptation, and resilience to be a means to promote and realize gender equality and the inclusion of women in decision-making processes. Hence, women and girls in developing states arguably constitute part of the vulnerable groups category.

Moreover, the strategy proclaims: “Access to water and energy is the basis for life and sustainable development. But many millions of people (...) lack access. Therefore, the Government is working to ensure access to clean water and clean energy (...).”<sup>106</sup> This relates to Goal no. 6 on clean water and sanitation and Goal no. 7 on affordable and clean energy.<sup>107</sup> It is assumable that people without access to clean water and energy are among the people of the vulnerable groups category. Though the people included in this category are not specified in the strategy, it is arguable that these people are identified as groups whose lives are envisioned to be affected by sustainable development efforts following the SDGs. Furthermore, it is arguable that these categories further strengthen the legitimization of the Government’s proposals, e.g., to strengthen Danish green export relating to climate resilience and adaptation.

As such, *A Green and Sustainable World* addresses the championing of human rights concerning the development aspects of Danish climate diplomacy. However, it remains uncertain how climate diplomacy intends to build upon Denmark’s role as a champion of human rights. However, in *The World We Share*, it is stated that: “Our overall development interventions will rest on democratic values and human rights (...) we must stand guard over human rights and international rules-based order.”<sup>108</sup> Hence, stressing that democratic values and human rights constitute the foundation for Denmark’s development efforts. In that sense, it is also

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<sup>104</sup> United Nations Development Program. 2022 (A). “Goal 5: Gender Equality”. Accessed: 15/03/2022. <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals#gender-equality>.

<sup>105</sup> The Government, 2020, p. 20.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> United Nations Development Program. 2022 (B). “Sustainable Development Goals”. Accessed: 15/03/2022. <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>.

<sup>108</sup> The Government, 2021, p. 5.

stressed that Denmark is a global leader in promoting human rights.<sup>109</sup> Hence, In line with the liberal vision of order, the development cooperation is rooted in international rules-based conformity, corresponded by: “(...) the Danish Act on International Development Cooperation, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN conventions on human rights, and with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the central pivot.”<sup>110</sup> Taking that starting point, it is emphasized that climate action advances human rights. Several proposals are introduced to how climate diplomacy can play a part in realizing this advancement:

“Our climate and environment interventions must strengthen human rights and ensure that no one is left behind. For instance, Danish water sector interventions must advance gender equality and the rights of women and girls. It is also vital to ensure local involvement of citizens in green initiatives.”<sup>111</sup>

Thereby, the focus on the rights of women and girls and the inclusion of civil communities in decision-making processes are in line with the established people categories. However, though the government proposes a crucial focus on advancing human rights, how climate diplomacy can be a means to achieve this objective remain silent. In addition, *The World We Share* proposes to use the access to EU markets and regional trade cooperation to promote human rights:

“Denmark works to facilitate better access for developing countries to the European market, partly through EU trade agreements and the EU schemes for market access for developing countries, particularly poor and fragile countries. These efforts must (...) promote sustainable development and human rights (...).”<sup>112</sup>

Hence, the proposal follows the aspect of carrying out the Danish climate diplomacy effort through the EU. The proposal is to engage in commercial relations with developing states and establish access to EU markets and trade agreements. Arguably, the proposal is in accordance with the neoliberal assumption that regularly engaging in trade relations opens channels of dialogue. Here states can exchange information about each other's needs and interests. As described in *Theory*, such channels of communication can move beyond economics and trade-related issues. Moreover, shared norms and identity are established through generated mutual

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

trust between the trading actors.<sup>113</sup> Hence, following the neoliberal assumption, the proposal to increase trade and commercial relations with developing countries through the EU, the channels of communication can be expanded to address additional issues such as human rights.

However, climate diplomacy's ability to champion human rights is not addressed further. It arguably remains unclear how climate diplomacy is intended to promote human rights. The aspect arguably remains unproblematized in the strategy, and, as a result, it arguably reveals a silence. Following the publication of *A Green and Sustainable World*, Danish NGOs dealing with, e.g., development cooperation, human rights, and environment protection, addressed this silence. They expressed criticism for the lack of further problematization of climate diplomacy's embracement of human rights issues regarding climate change. It was addressed that the strategy's focus on export overshadows other crucial aspects of the climate effort. It was emphasized that Denmark has an outstanding obligation to promote human rights in any climate context. According to the NGOs, this was especially the case in the light of Denmark's membership of the UN Human Rights Council during the strategy's publication. Therefore, human rights aspects should be vitally integrated into all Danish climate actions. According to the critique, a human rights-based approach to global climate action should be the starting point in Danish climate diplomacy, which the strategy does not emphasize sufficiently.<sup>114</sup>

However, this thesis argues that part of the underlying assumption, or the conceptual logic, behind the government's strategy for global climate action is conceptualized using neoliberalism. Therefore, as illustrated in this analysis, Danish climate diplomacy can be understood through a neoliberal lens. However, as analyzed in this analysis, it is unclear how climate diplomacy can build upon Denmark's role as a champion for human rights. Therefore, in accordance with the research question and the objective of this thesis, the following chapter will dive deeper into how climate diplomacy can achieve the government's objective of promoting human rights. This will be done by shedding light upon the Danish effort in a state with conflicting norms, values, and principles known to commit human rights abuses and a state with which Danish trade is continuously increasing – Saudi Arabia.

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<sup>113</sup> De Buck & Hosli, 2020, p. 12.

<sup>114</sup> United Nations. 2020. "Elections and Appointments: Election of the Human Rights Council (13 October 2020)." Accessed: 17/04/2022. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/75/meetings/elections/hrc.shtml> & 92-gruppen & Globalt Fokus. 2021. *Danmark som foregangsland og brobygger i international klimahandling: Løfter regeringen Danmarks ansvar i den globale strategi?*

# Danish Climate Diplomacy Effects and the Case of Saudi Arabia

In accordance with the research question, this chapter analyzes the effects of the Danish climate diplomacy as conducted in Saudi Arabia. As such, the central purpose of the chapter is to analyze why climate diplomacy, as analyzed in the previous chapter, can build upon Denmark's position as a champion of human rights. To accommodate this objective, the analysis of this chapter is divided into four separate sections. The first section analyzes the human rights violation occurring in Saudi Arabia and abroad which Riyadh is considered responsible for. In addition, the section analyzes the international critique of Saudi Arabia concerning human rights violations. The second section analyzes the contemporary context in which foreign states conduct trade relations in Saudi Arabia, defined by the reforms outlined in the reform program *Vision 2030*. The third section analyzes the strategic interests of the EU in Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf Region, as the Danish climate diplomacy efforts are carried out through the EU. Finally, the fourth section analyzes why Danish climate diplomacy, carried out through the EU, can champion human rights in Saudi Arabia.

## Human Rights Violations in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a state internationally known to commit human rights violations, marginalizing the rights of women and minorities, sentencing high numbers of death convictions, e.g., concerning political activists and minorities, use of torture, and sharply restricting the freedom of speech.<sup>115</sup> This section intends to shed light upon the human rights violations in Saudi Arabia. The analysis of this section is based upon the critique voiced by the UN over Saudi Arabia's methods, in which criticism Denmark has played a significant part. In that sense, the UN addressed the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia on several occasions. Most recently, in March 2022, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, condemned the mass beheading of 81 prisoners:

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<sup>115</sup> Al-Rasheed, 2019.

“I condemn Saudi Arabia’s mass execution on Saturday of 81 people on terrorism-related charges (...) I understand that 41 belonged to the Shiite minority and had taken part in anti-government protests in 2011-2012 calling for greater political participation. A further seven were Yemenis and one was a Syrian national.”<sup>116</sup>

Bachelet addresses that UN monitoring indicates that some of those executed were sentenced to death without meeting a fair trial. She stresses that death sentences following trials that do not offer the required fair trial guarantee are illegal due to international human rights and humanitarian law.<sup>117</sup> The mass execution was the largest conducted in Saudi Arabia for years, surpassing the total executions of 67 persons in 2021, the 37 persons executed for terrorist offenses in April 2019, and the 47 persons executed for terrorist offenses in January 2016. In all instances, the vast majority belonged to the Shiite Muslim minority, who have long undergone systematic discrimination and violence by the Saudi government.<sup>118</sup>

Arguably, the Saudi counterterrorism legislation is a central concern of the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi *Penal Law for Crimes of Terrorism and its Financing* of 2017 builds upon the 2014 counterterrorism law. Both laws were met with vast international criticism, especially for the overly broad definition of terrorist acts. These acts, e.g., cover obstructing the fundamental law, disturbing public order, and portraying the King and Crown Prince in any way that brings religion and justice into disrepute. In that sense, there are several documented cases where, e.g., human rights defenders, women and minority rights activists, journalists, and protesters against the Royal Family have been sentenced by the counterterrorism law.<sup>119</sup> The UN also addresses the legislation and the broad Saudi definition of terrorism:

”I am concerned that Saudi legislation contains an extremely broad definition of terrorism, including non-violent acts that supposedly “endanger national unity” or

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<sup>116</sup> United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. 2022. “Comment by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet on the execution of 81 people in Saudi Arabia.” Accessed: 11/05/2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/03/comment-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-michelle-bachelet-execution-81-people>.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. & Human Rights Watch. 2022. “Saudi Arabia: Mass Execution of 81 Men.” Accessed: 11/05/2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/15/saudi-arabia-mass-execution-81-men>.

<sup>119</sup> United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. 2018. *Annual Report 2018 – Tier 1: USCIRF – Recommended Countries of Particular Concern (COP) – Saudi Arabia*, p. 86.

“undermine the State’s reputation”. This risks criminalizing people exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.”<sup>120</sup>

Therefore, in addition to calling upon Saudi Arabia to halt all executions, Bachelet urges the Saudi government to: “(...) bring the country’s counterterrorism laws fully into line with international standards.”<sup>121</sup> Thereby, the legislation, and the broad scope of charges which fall under the category of terrorism, appear to be a central concern of the UN. Furthermore, the legislation was a central concern in the Joint Statement led by Denmark, on behalf of 33 states, on the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia at the 45<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council.<sup>122</sup>

“Civil society, human rights defenders, journalists and political opposition still face persecution, detention and intimidation (...) We reiterate our call for the release of all political detainees and are particularly concerned about the use of the counterterrorism law and other security provisions against individuals peacefully exercising their rights (...) We strongly oppose the death penalty, including against minors and for non-violent crimes.”<sup>123</sup>

The statement’s message was a continuation of the 40<sup>th</sup> session in 2019, when Iceland delivered a similar statement and led joint efforts to call on Saudi Arabia to improve its human rights situation. The statement of 2019 followed the international outrage at the brutal murder of the Saudi-born US citizen and journalist for the Washington Post, Jamal Khashoggi, commissioned by the Crown Prince, Mohamed bin Salman al Saud, the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia. In addition, it was a turning point since it was the first time that Saudi Arabia was collectively subject to criticism before the UN Human Rights Council.<sup>124</sup> The Joint Statement led by Denmark was addressed by the government in *Foreign and Security Policy Strategy*. Here the

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<sup>120</sup> United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, 2022.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Creuz, Katja. 2021. “Nordic Experiences in the UN Human Rights Council: A *Tour d’Horizon* of 2019 with Iceland and Denmark.” *Nordic Journal of Human Rights* vol. 39, no. 1:18-32, p. 24-25.

<sup>123</sup> Australian Government. 2020. “Joint Statement led by Denmark on the human rights situation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the Item 2 General Debate”. Accessed: 11/05/2022. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/human-rights/hrc-statements/45th-session-human-rights-council/joint-statement-human-rights-situation-kingdom-saudi-arabia-item-2-general-debate>.

<sup>124</sup> Creuz, 2021, p. 21-22 & Government of Iceland. 2019. “Joint Statement on the Human Rights Situation in Saudi Arabia.” Accessed: 11/05/2022. <https://www.government.is/diplomatic-missions/embassy-article/2019/03/07/Joint-statement-on-the-human-rights-situation-in-Saudi-Arabia/>.

statement was emphasized among the most significant foreign and security policy initiatives since the government's accession in 2019:

"At a meeting in the Council in September 2020, Denmark was responsible for a statement that received record backing (33 countries). The statement criticised the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia with a focus on the suppression of women's rights, the continued use of torture, and the persecution and the use of the death sentence for political dissidents."<sup>125</sup>

Hence, *Foreign and Security Policy Strategy* defines Denmark's participation in the Human Rights Council as active and value-based.<sup>126</sup> In that sense, it is arguable that the membership, therefore, the Joint Statement, builds upon Denmark's national narrative, as analyzed in *The Green Leadership Narrative*. The membership and Joint Statement support Denmark's national narrative portraying Denmark as an international leader in human rights, as emphasized in *The World We Share* and further addressed in *Human Rights in Danish Climate Diplomacy*.<sup>127</sup>

Furthermore, in 2018 Denmark voiced international criticism and condemnation of the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and the Saudi-led coalition's participation in the Yemeni Civil war. The criticism culminated with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Anders Samuelsen's decision to have the Ministry of Foreign Affairs suspend all approvals for the Danish export of weapons to Saudi Arabia. The export ban further included all products in the category of *dual-use*, which have potential civilian and military use, e.g., surveillance equipment, as it was feared that Saudi authorities could use such equipment to violate human rights.<sup>128</sup> Besides Denmark, the Saudi-led intervention in the Yemeni Civil War started in 2015 and met with vast international criticism and condemnation. Saudi Arabia has played a significant part in the conflict due to the continuing destruction caused by significant airstrikes against the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. Additionally, the combination between the Saudi-led blockade of Yemen's ports and Houthi interference with the delivery of humanitarian aid has left more than

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<sup>125</sup> The Government, 2022, p. 7.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> The Government, 2021, p. 14-17.

<sup>128</sup> Udenrigsministeriet. 2018. "Udenrigsministeriet suspenderer godkendelser af eksport af våben til Saudi-Arabien." *Ritzau*. Accessed: 16/05/2022. <https://via.ritzau.dk/pressemeddelelse/udenrigsministeriet-suspenderer-godkendelser-af-eksport-af-vaben-til-saudi-arabien?publisherId=2012662&releaseId=13564469> and Reuters. 2018. "Denmark suspends Saudi weapon export approvals over Khashoggi, Yemen concerns." *Reuters*. Accessed 16/05/2022. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-khashoggi-denmark-idUSKCN1NR0G6>.

half of the Yemeni population at risk of starvation and widespread diseases. The war in Yemen has resulted in a quarter of a million deaths and billions of dollars in economic damage. Consequently, observes refers to the situation as the world's worst manmade and ongoing humanitarian catastrophe.<sup>129</sup>

In addition, it is arguable that the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen plays into the broader picture of the interrelationship between climate change and human rights. This is the case as the Middle East is already among Earth's hottest and driest regions. Between 1961 and 1990, temperatures in the region rose by 0,2 degrees Celsius, and the temperature could increase by up to seven degrees by the end of this century.<sup>130</sup> The Danish government estimates that Yemen is among the most fragile countries regarding climate change.<sup>131</sup> The Saudi-led intervention in Yemen has shown Saudi Arabia's willingness to deny access to people's basic needs, such as water and food, whose scarcity is driven by climate change. This is evident as Saudi forces cut off Yemenis' access to clean water and sanitation, increasing the risk of illness and outbreaks of epidemics. In that sense, Save the Children categorized the 2016 outbreak of cholera epidemic as a man-made crisis. As a result, the scarcity was arguably weaponized by the Saudis.<sup>132</sup>

Additionally, the people's insecure access to food supplies due to climate change has been heavily exacerbated by the Saudi-led blockade of important ports where 80 per cent of Yemen's food imports enter the state. This resulted in the UN categorizing the situation in Yemen as the world's most extensive famine.<sup>133</sup> Also, the devastating destruction of infrastructure, especially in the water sector, has severely aggravated the lack of access to water. The international community also shares concerns about the effects of the infrastructure destruction

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<sup>129</sup> Orkaby, Asher. 2021. "Saudi Arabia's Other Yemen War: The Decades-Long Assault on the Yemeni Economy." *Foreign Affairs*. Accessed: 16/05/2022. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/saudi-arabia/2021-11-03/saudi-arabias-other-yemen-war> & Malley, Robert and Stephen Pomper. 2021. "Accomplice to Carnage: How America Enables War in Yemen." *Foreign Affairs* vol. 100, no. 2: 73-90.

<sup>130</sup> Daoudy, Marwa. 2022. "Scorched Earth: Climate and Conflict in the Middle East." *Foreign Affairs* vol. 101, no. 2: 51-58, p. 51.

<sup>131</sup> The Government, 2021, p. 28.

<sup>132</sup> Al-Rasheed, Madawi. 2021. "The Only Stable Saudi Arabia is a Democratic Saudi Arabia: Why Biden Must Push the Monarchy to Tie Its Own Hands." *Foreign Affairs*. Accessed: 16/05/2022. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/saudi-arabia/2021-03-15/only-stable-saudi-arabia-democratic-saudi-arabia> & Daoudy, Marwa, 2022, p. 52

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 52-56 & BBC. 2017. "Yemen conflict: UN officials warns of world's biggest famine." Accessed: 16/05/2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-41923769>.

on the Yemeni authority's ability to manage environmental risks, such as extreme natural events, swarms of locusts, and massive flooding. Hence, outbreaks of such extreme natural events can have severe humanitarian consequences.<sup>134</sup>

In the UN's condemnation of the Saudi mass execution of March 2022, Bachelet expressed great concern that some of the executed appear to be linked to the war in Yemen. Consequently, she highlights that these executions may amount to a war crime, as the executed did not meet a fair trial.<sup>135</sup> Hence, the UN's condemnation and concern follow some of the critiques of Saudi Arabia's approach to the Yemeni Civil War and the consequences to the Yemeni population, which contribute to worsening the humanitarian crisis. This aspect is also illuminated by the Saudi termination of work visas for tens of thousands of Yemeni migrant workers, starting in 2021. This has forced the Yemenis to return to a war-torn state in an ongoing humanitarian crisis where the UN estimate that more than 14 million people are in acute need and more than three million people have been displaced since 2015.<sup>136</sup> Hence, it is arguable that the actions and policies of Saudi Arabia contribute to worsening the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia but also through the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen.

## Economic Diversification and Green Transition

Denmark's relations with Saudi Arabia are primarily based on trade, commercial, and economic relations. In recent years Saudi Arabia has been a growing export market for Denmark, with the green sector representing a continued increase in the combined export to Saudi Arabia.<sup>137</sup> Since Denmark has no strategic partnerships with Saudi Arabia or the Danish Embassy in Riyadh being a Green Front Post Mission, the Danish climate efforts in Saudi Arabia are primarily driven by the green economic diplomacy aspects of climate diplomacy. Therefore, this section intends to analyze the current context in which foreign states conduct trade relations in Saudi Arabia, fundamentally defined by the reforms outlined in the ambitious reform program *Vision 2030*.

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<sup>134</sup> Daoudy, 2022, p. 52-56.

<sup>135</sup> United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, 2022.

<sup>136</sup> Orkaby, 2021 & United Nations: Yemen. 2022. "The United Nations in Yemen." Accessed: 16/05/2022. <https://yemen.un.org/en/about/about-the-un>.

<sup>137</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. 2022 & The Trade Council. 2022.

As such, *Vision 2030* was launched in 2016 on the initiative by the Crown Prince and prepared by the McKinsey Group.<sup>138</sup> Driven by the Vision, Saudi Arabia is currently undergoing tremendous social and economic transformation affecting all parts of society. The primary motivation for the reforms is to decrease Saudi Arabia's vital economic dependence on the oil sector.<sup>139</sup> As emphasized in the Vision: "We are determined to reinforce and diversify the capabilities of our economy, turning our key strengths into enabling tools for a fully diversified future."<sup>140</sup> As such, the main incentive is to achieve economic diversification. This is defined as how states shift their economy from a mono-source income economy to having a broader range of sectors produce income from several separate sources. Consequently, economic diversification's central target is to improve the state's economic performance to realize sustainable economic growth.<sup>141</sup>

However, it is essential to notice that the economic diversification efforts are a newly pursued objective in Saudi Arabia. This is the case as Saudi Arabia, along with several additional oil-producing states, traditionally have been defined as rentier states. The term describes economies primarily driven by dependency on income from natural resources or additional assets representing high value by foreign actors.<sup>142</sup> Arguably, Saudi Arabia's economy suffered the so-called Dutch disease, describing a situation where one specific economic sector improves hastily. In most cases relating to natural resources. This leads to one sector becoming the driving force in the entire state's economy while other economic sectors decline and become underprioritized, making the economy enormously sensitive and fragile.<sup>143</sup>

Saudi Arabia's dependency on its oil sector is evident from the notion that the state is the largest exporter of oil globally. The Saudi oilfields were discovered in 1938, just six years after the state's founding in 1932. The entire 95 per cent of the state budget was driven by

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<sup>138</sup> Faudot, Adrien. 2019. "Saudi Arabia and the rentier regime trap: A critical assessment of the plan Vision 2030." *Resources Policy* vol. 62, August 2019, p. 14 & Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 2016. *Vision 2030*.

<sup>139</sup> Miniaoui, H la (Ed.). 2020. *Economic Development in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: From Rentier States to Diversified Economies*. Springer: Singapore, p. vi.

<sup>140</sup> Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 2016. *Vision 2030*. Riyadh, p. 7.

<sup>141</sup> Miniaoui, 2020, p. vi.

<sup>142</sup> Moshashai, Daniel et al. 2020. "Saudi Arabia plans for its economic future: Vision 2030, the National Transformation Plan for Saudi fiscal reform." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* vol. 47, no. 3: 381-401 & Hilmi, Natalie et al. 2020. "Why Saudi Arabia should Diversify its Economy?" In *Economic Development in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: From Rentier States to Diversified Economies*. Ed. H la Miniaoui. Springer: Singapore: 89-109.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89-90 & Moshashai, et al., 2020, p. 388.

income from oil export in the 1960s and 1970s while decreasing in the 1990s to 75 per cent and 72 per cent in 2021.<sup>144</sup> Due to the substantial dependency on oil export, diversifying the economy was discussed several times throughout Saudi Arabia's history. However, the need for economic diversification arguably became evident in 2014, when economic crises hit the oil-exporting states. A substantial price drop in oil occurred in the global oil market, as the price per oil barrel dropped from USD 114 in April 2014 to USD 50 by the end of 2014.<sup>145</sup> Arguably, the crises exposed the vital need for Saudi Arabia to diversify the economy and strengthen other economic sectors to make the economy less dependent on oil export, which has proven to be vulnerable to global price drops.

Ultimately, the objective of Saudi Arabia is to diversify the economy through the established Public Investment Fund, with the goal to: "(...) unlock strategic sectors requiring intensive capital inputs. This will contribute towards developing entirely new economic sectors and establishing durable national corporations."<sup>146</sup> The investment capabilities of the Fund are driven by the transfer of ownership of Saudi Aramco, the national oil company, which in 2022 was declared to world's most vulnerable company, to the Public Investment Fund, making it the most extensive sovereign wealth fund in the world.<sup>147</sup> Capitalizing on the enormous investment abilities, the Vision outlines three central goals: Saudi Arabia must become the leading Arab and Islamic state, Saudi Arabia must be transformed into a global investment powerhouse, and Saudi Arabia must be a global hub connecting three continents –Asia, Europe, and Africa.<sup>148</sup>

In many of the sectors addressed in the Vision, there exist a focus on achieving and advancing sustainability. As the Vision highlights, this is, e.g., evident regarding the Saudi water sector: "We will also promote the optimal use of our water resources by reducing consumption and utilizing treated and renewable water."<sup>149</sup> Saudi Arabia is among the states with the scarcest water resources in the world, and, simultaneously, Saudi Arabia has one of

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid. & Hilmi et al., 2020, p. 89-90 & Oxford Economics. 2021. *Country Economic Forecast: Saudi Arabia*, p. 7 & Faudot, 2019, p. 4.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. & Moshashai, et al., 2020, p. 388 & Oxford Economics, 2021, p. 7.

<sup>146</sup> Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016, p. 42.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. & Al Sayegh, Hadeel and Saeed Azhar. 2022. "Saudi Aramco net profit soars 82% in Q1 on high oil price". *Reuters*. Accessed: 20/05/2022. <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/saudi-aramco-net-profit-soars-82-q1-high-oil-prices-2022-05-15/>.

<sup>148</sup> Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016, p. 6-13.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

the world's highest water consumptions. The water sector is undergoing massive improvement and development to reduce water use and prevent unnecessary waste. This also impacts other sectors, such as the agriculture and food sectors, which account for considerable water consumption due to the harsh climate.<sup>150</sup> The food and agriculture sector is undergoing radical development as well. The Vision outlines reforms to achieve a high amount of self-sufficiency, as approximately 80 per cent of the Saudi food consumption is imported.<sup>151</sup> As the Vision stresses: "We will continue to build safe and sufficient strategic food reserves (...)." <sup>152</sup> According to the Royal Danish Embassy in Riyadh, the food and agriculture sector accounted for 82 per cent of the combined domestic water consumption in Saudi Arabia in 2019. Thus, the goal of developing the agriculture sector places substantially higher pressure on the water sector, which emphasizes the need for development, improvement, and sustainability.<sup>153</sup>

Hence, the objective of diversifying the economy fostered a need to achieve sustainability both concerning the economy itself and the sectors undergoing development. In that sense, the Vision outlines: "We will seek to safeguard our environment by increasing the efficiency of waste management, establishing comprehensive recycling projects, reducing all types of pollution, and fighting desertification."<sup>154</sup> The Vision also outlined Saudi Arabia's first steps in a green transition. However, according to the Royal Danish Embassy in Riyadh, it is essential to notice that the central motivation behind the green transition is economic growth and job creation in the new non-oil sectors and industries.<sup>155</sup>

In addition, it is arguable that a significant part of Saudi Arabia's focus on achieving sustainability and a green transition relates to the overall focus on nation branding. Branding is the instrument through which an entity communicates and defines its identity and lays the foundation for the customer's perception. In that sense, nation branding is a similar instrument employed at the state level. Hence, nation branding based on a positive, responsible, credible, and economically reliable image is vital for states to attract investment, tourists, a talented

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<sup>150</sup> The Royal Danish Embassy in Riyadh. 2021(A). "Ambassadørens industrianalyse: Øget fokus på privatisering og ambitiøse målsætninger indenfor vand- og miljøsektoren i Saudi-Arabien". P. 1.

<sup>151</sup> The Royal Danish Embassy in Riyadh. 2021(B). "Ambassadørens industrianalyse: Omstilling til en bæredygtig landbrugs- og fødevarerproduktion". P. 1.

<sup>152</sup> Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016, p. 65.

<sup>153</sup> The Royal Danish Embassy in Riyadh. 2021(A), p. 1 & The Royal Danish Embassy in Riyadh. 2021(B), p. 1.

<sup>154</sup> Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016, p. 23.

<sup>155</sup> The Royal Danish Embassy in Riyadh. 2022. "Ambassadørens industrianalyse: Ambitiøse målsætninger for Saudi-Arabien's grønne omstilling", p. 1.

workforce, boost export, etc.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, the Vision points out: “Our goal is to attract and retain the finest Saudi and foreign minds and provide them with all they need. Their presence in the Kingdom will contribute to economic development and attract additional foreign investment.”<sup>157</sup> Thereby, attracting investment and skilled workers is a fundamental objective of realizing Saudi Arabia’s ambitions.

By focusing on sustainability and a green transition, it is arguable that Saudi Arabia promotes an identity as a responsible state, which can attract investors. The Climate ambitions of Saudi Arabia were addressed with the reveal of the Saudi Green Initiative in October 2021 by the Crown Prince. Hence, Saudi Arabia’s ambitions are to achieve net-zero emissions by 2060. According to the Crown Prince, this ambition is reached with diverse initiatives, e.g., the ambition to plant 450 million trees, rehabilitate 8 million hectares of degraded lands by 2030, reduce 200 million tons of carbon emissions, and use renewable energy sources to generate 50 per cent of the domestic energy need by 2030 and to transform Riyadh into one of the most sustainable cities in the world.<sup>158</sup> In addition, the Crown Prince also launched the Middle East Green Initiative, focusing on bringing together regional leaders to reduce emissions and climate change-related impacts in the Middle East.<sup>159</sup>

Nevertheless, both Initiatives and Saudi Arabia’s ambition to achieve net-zero emissions by 2060 have been met with vast international skepticism, and the Initiatives has been labeled *greenwashing*. The Crown Prince proclaimed that Saudi Arabia could become a global green leader. However, Saudi Arabia views renewable energy as a compliment, not a substitute, for oil and fossil fuels, and due to the economic diversification, Saudi Arabia has shown no signal not to keep oil as its primary source of income and export. Therefore, critiques are questioning the sincerity of Saudi Arabia’s ambitious green leadership position while simultaneously being the world’s largest exporter of oil. In addition, international climate groups and experts have labeled Saudi Arabia’s climate efforts as critically insufficient. They have raised

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<sup>156</sup> Zeineddine, Cornelia. 2017. “Employing nation branding in the Middle East – United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar.” *Management & Marketing. Challenges for the Knowledge Society* vol. 12, no. 2: 208-221, p. 208.

<sup>157</sup> Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016, p. 37.

<sup>158</sup> Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 2021. “Press Release: His Royal Highness the Crown Prince announces the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s aims to achieve net zero emissions by 2060.” *Saudi Green Initiative*, p. 1-3.

<sup>159</sup> Saudi Green Initiative. 2022. “The Middle East Green Initiative is a catalyst for action”. Accessed: 17/05/2022. <https://www.saudigreeninitiative.org/about-middle-east-green-initiative/>.

grave concerns about the Saudi climate plans lack of concrete policies and actions on accommodating the objective of net zero-emission.<sup>160</sup>

Therefore, it is arguable that part of the intention behind the green transition and the climate leadership ambition is primarily driven by the focus on nation branding and the overall agenda of attracting foreign investment critical to realize the Vision's ambitions. However, the Royal Danish Embassy in Riyadh emphasizes that the green transition in Saudi Arabia presents substantial business opportunities for Danish companies in the green sector. Saudi Arabia's green transition requires highly advanced and innovative technology and know-how. Danish companies have terrific qualifications to deliver such requirements due to Denmark's long experience in the green transition, as touched upon throughout this thesis. This is further apparent from the past years' continuous increase in Danish green export to Saudi Arabia in several new sectors, e.g., water, renewable energy, and district cooling.<sup>161</sup>

## The European Union's Strategic Interest in Saudi Arabia

As described throughout this thesis, Denmark has stronghold competencies in the green sector, accounting for a continuing larger share of the combined Danish export. However, addressing Danish trade with Saudi Arabia, the total Danish export only accounts for 0,6 per cent of the total Saudi import. Making Denmark Saudi Arabia's 34<sup>th</sup> largest import market and the 72<sup>nd</sup> largest export market representing just 0,01 per cent of the combined Saudi export.<sup>162</sup> As such, Denmark by itself appears to be a less significant trading partner. Nevertheless, when looking at Denmark as a trading partner in the light of Denmark's membership in the EU, the picture becomes different. The combined export of the 27 EU member states accounts for the entire

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<sup>160</sup> Daoudy, 2022, p. 55-56 & Ottaway, David. 2021. "Saudi Arabia's Green Initiative Aims to Exonerate Fossil Fuel Advocacy". *Wilson Center*. Accessed: 17/05/2022. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/saudi-arabias-green-initiative-aims-exonerate-fossil-fuel-advocacy> & Azhar, Saeed and Yousef Saba. 2021. "Saudi Arabia outlines plans under Mideast Green Initiative". *Reuters*. Accessed: 17/05/2022. <https://www.reuters.com/business/cop/mideast-green-initiative-invest-104-bln-says-saudi-crown-prince-2021-10-25/> & Middle East Monitor. 2021. "Saudi Arabia: 'green initiative' raises serious questions, say experts". Accessed: 17/05/2022. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20210831-saudi-arabia-green-initiative-raises-serious-questions-say-experts/>.

<sup>161</sup> The Royal Danish Embassy in Riyadh, 2022, p. 1-5 & The Trade Council, 2022 (A) & The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2022.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

21,9 per cent of the total Saudi import, surpassing China with a share of 20,2 per cent and the United States with a share of 11,1 per cent.<sup>163</sup> Thereby, the combined export of the EU member states emphasizes the EU's position as Saudi Arabia's largest trading partner concerning the import, while China remains the largest export market for Saudi Arabia.<sup>164</sup>

Consequently, the EU is a significant and vital trading partner to Saudi Arabia, so it arguably makes sense that the Danish climate diplomacy efforts are primarily carried out through the EU, as emphasized in *A Green and Sustainable World*. Therefore, this section intends to analyze the strategic interest that the EU and Denmark, by Denmark's membership, have in Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf region. This objective is in accordance with the research question, as it is necessary to understand the EU's relationship with Saudi Arabia to analyze why Danish climate diplomacy, as carried out through the EU, can enhance human rights.

Saudi Arabia is among the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases, and the context of the ongoing economic diversification has made climate diplomacy efforts realizable, which is why Saudi Arabia arguably is a relevant state to enhance the green transition.<sup>165</sup> In that sense, having Saudi Arabia as a significant trading partner is of great interest to the EU in several important policy areas, and Saudi Arabia has traditionally been a vital partner for Western democracies. In addition, Riyadh shares crucial and valuable intelligence in combatting terrorism, plays a central part in stabilizing global energy markets, acts as a regional bulwark against Iran's aggressive expansion, and offers a lucrative market for financial investments and export.<sup>166</sup>

Traditionally, the partnership between Western democracies and Saudi Arabia has been driven and led by the United States to a large extent. However, the strong partnership between Saudi Arabia and the United States has recently declined. This tendency started during the Obama administration when the United States entered negotiations with Iran over Iran's nuclear program. The negotiations culminated in 2016 with entering the *Joint Comprehensive*

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit. 2021. *Country Report: Saudi Arabia*. London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, p. 6 & The Royal Danish Embassy in Riyadh, 2022, p. 1.

<sup>166</sup> Al-Rasheed, Madawi. 2021. "The Only Stable Saudi Arabia Is a Democratic Saudi Arabia: Why Biden Must Push the Monarchy to Tie Its Own Hands". *Foreign Affairs*. Accessed: 18/05/2022. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/saudi-arabia/2021-03-15/only-stable-saudi-arabia-democratic-saudi-arabia>.

*Plan of Action* (JCPOA).<sup>167</sup> For decades Saudi Arabia and Iran have been engaged in ongoing hostility and rivalry over status as the leading state in the Gulf region. The struggle has been referred to as a Cold War in the Middle East. The two states engage in regional power struggles and several proxy wars, most recently during the Yemen Civil War, where Iran supports the Houthi rebels against the Saudi-backed government.<sup>168</sup>

The Obama administration and Saudi Arabia were on a collision course with each other as Saudi Arabia viewed Iran as the sole destabilizing factor in the region, while Obama saw the rivalry itself as the destabilizing reason. When the JCPOA was entered, Saudi Arabia felt betrayed by the United States.<sup>169</sup> Traditionally, Saudi Arabia relied on containment strategies to prevent the expansion of Iran's sphere of influence. This approach was characterized by Saudi Arabia heavily relying on vast support from external actors – especially from the United States and Western democracies. In that sense, Saudi Arabia was arguably a status quo power relying on the United States' engagement to preserve order with the exclusion of Iran in regional decision-making.<sup>170</sup> The entering of the JCPOA indicated a turning point in the United States' guarantee to preserve the status quo as the United States showed a willingness to deal with Iran. However, the Trump administration heavily supported Saudi Arabia and showed immense hostility towards Iran and the JCPOA, culminating with the United States' withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018.<sup>171</sup> During the 2020 United States' presidential election campaign, Joseph R. Biden declared that the United States could potentially return to the agreement. In May 2021, negotiations to revive the JCPOA were initiated by the United States and the EU. However, these talks have stalled as the Republican-led Congress pushed the Biden administration away from pursuing negotiations with Iran.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ahouie, Mahdi. 2020. "Exploring President Rouhani's Foreign Policy Doctrine 2013-2017". In *Foreign Policy of Iran under President Hassan Rouhani's First Term (2013-2017)*. ED Luciano Zaccara. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan: 15-41, p. 20.

<sup>168</sup> Hiro, Dilip. 2018. *Cold War in the Islamic World: Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Struggle for Supremacy*. London: Hurst & Company, p. 281 & Partrick, Neil. 2018. "Saudi Arabia and Iran". In *Saudi Arabian Foreign Policy: Conflict and Cooperation*. Updated Edition. ED Neil Partrick. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd: 111- 130, p. 111.

<sup>169</sup> Parsi, Trita. 2017. *Losing an Enemy: Obama, Iran, and the Triumph of Diplomacy*. London: Yale University Press, p. 322 & p. 357-358.

<sup>170</sup> Partrick, 2018, p. 117 & Rich, Ben. 2019. "From Defence to Offense: Realist Shifts in Saudi Foreign Policy". *Middle East Policy*, vol. XXVI, no. 3: 62-76, p. 65.

<sup>171</sup> Taylor, Kirsten L. 2019. "Nuclear Weapons: A New Arms Race?". In *Foreign Policy Issues for America: The Trump Years*. ED Richard W. Mansbach and James M. McCormick. New York: Routledge: 133-147, p. 136.

<sup>172</sup> Biden Jr., Joseph R. 2020. "Why America Must Lead Again: Rescuing U.S. Foreign Policy After Trump".

In addition, during the Biden administration, tensions between Saudi Arabia and the United States increased dramatically. In 2021, United States' intelligence concluded in a report that the Crown Prince, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, was responsible for approving the murder of the American-Saudi journalist, Khashoggi. Though the United States did not sanction the Crown Prince directly, the conclusion did have severe consequences for American-Saudi relations. As a result, the United States sanctioned 76 unnamed Saudis, including members of the Crown Prince's protective force, who carried out the murder of Khashoggi. In addition, Biden called for an end of the war in Yemen, suspended all United States military and political support for the Saudi campaign, and appointed a special envoy to negotiate a ceasefire. Also, the Biden-administrations have followed the foreign political track initiated by the Obama administration to change the United States' focus from the Middle East to East Asia. Thereby concentrating resources and strategic interest on countering China's rising influence and power.<sup>173</sup>

With the United States' shifting focus away from the Middle East and the recent tensions in the American-Saudi relationship, it is arguable that the EU has a significant strategic interest in increasing its sphere of influence in the region. This effort must also be seen in the light of Western democracies' foreign policy priorities to counter a rising China. China's ties to Riyadh had grown increasingly stronger since King Abdulla's reign from 2005 to 2015 when financial ties to China and Russia were intensified.<sup>174</sup> Besides before mentioned interest of the EU to partner with Saudi Arabia is especially the economic incentives, as Saudi Arabia is the largest economy and market in the Middle East and a G-20-member state. Also, Saudi Arabia is the largest of the EU's trading partners in the Middle East, except for Turkey.<sup>175</sup> Moreover,

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*Foreign Affairs*, vol. 99, no. 2: 64-76, p. 75 & Murphy, Francois, and John Irish. 2021. "EU envoy upbeat on Iran nuclear talks, European powers prudent". *Reuters*. Accessed: 18/05/2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/eu-top-negotiator-says-confident-deal-will-be-reached-iran-nuclear-talks-2021-05-19/> & Desiderio, Andrew. 2022. "Congress fires its first warning shot on Biden's Iran deal." *Politico*. Accessed: 18/05/2022. <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/05/05/congress-warning-biden-iran-deal-00030448>.

<sup>173</sup> Parsi, 2017, p. 354 & Indyk, Martin. 2021. "The Saudi Test Case: How to Put Values Into Biden's Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs*. Accessed: 18/05/2022. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/saudi-arabia/2021-03-10/saudi-test-case> & Al-Rasheed, 2021.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. & Indyk, 2021.

<sup>175</sup> European Commission. 2022 (A). *EU27 Trade in Goods by partner (2021, excluding intra-EU trade)*. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate General for Trade, p. 1 & The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021 & The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2022, p. 1.

Saudi Arabia is the absolute dominant state in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), consisting of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>176</sup>

The priority of the EU to keep the GCC, its sixth-largest export market, as a central partner is arguably evident from the EU's recent efforts to pursue greater cooperation with the GCC. All official relations between the EU and the GCC are based on the Cooperation Agreement of 1988, established to improve trade relations and stability in the Gulf region. By establishing a Joint Council and Joint Cooperation Committee, the Agreement provided a framework for economic and political relations and a platform for regular dialogue about trade and investment issues and macro-economic matters. The dialogue intensified in 2017 to focus more on increasing trade and investment involving the private sector to enhance cooperation.<sup>177</sup>

In addition, the pursuit of stronger relations is evident with negotiations for a significant Free Trade Agreement between the EU and GCC. These talks were launched in 1990 and were meant to bring about progressive and reciprocal liberalization of trade. Unfortunately, the negotiations stalled and were suspended in 2008 due to several obstacles and disagreements. Nevertheless, the EU Ambassador to Saudi Arabia revealed that the EU reopened the Free Trade Agreement negotiations in the fall of 2021.<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, in May 2022, the EU and the GCC launched a Strategic Partnership with the overall aim to: "(...) broaden and deepen the European Union's cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council and its Member countries."<sup>179</sup> As emphasized further by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell:

"At a time of insecurity and significant challenges to the rules-based international order (...) the European Union and Gulf countries stand to gain from a stronger and more strategic partnership stretching over a number of key areas. We need to work more closely together on stability in the Gulf and the Middle East, on global

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<sup>176</sup> European Commission. 2022 (B). "Trade: Gulf region". Accessed: 18/05/2022. [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/gulf-region\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/gulf-region_en).

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. & The Council of the European Communities. 1989. *Official Journal of the European Communities: No. L 54/1*. Brussels.

<sup>178</sup> European Commission, 2022 (B) & Arab News. 2021. "GCC and Europe to revive free trade talks: EU Ambassador." *Arab News*. Accessed: 19/05/2022. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1938636/business-economy>.

<sup>179</sup> European Commission. 2022 (C). "Press Release: GCC: The EU Unveils Strategic Partnership with the Gulf." Brussels, p. 1.

security threats; energy security, climate change and the green transition, digitalisation, trade, and investment.”<sup>180</sup>

Hence, it is evident that the EU makes a great effort to strengthen its relationship with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. The efforts to formalize the partnership, e.g., through the strategic partnership and the potential Free Trade Agreement, can arguably be seen from a neoliberal perspective. As such, by formalizing the trade cooperation in an official international agreement, the rules-based liberal vision of international order is upheld. Neoliberalism assumes that states can pursue interests peacefully and without conflicts through agreements and institutional cooperation. This is arguably the case, as the agreed-upon rules foster an environment for reciprocity and cooperation. Hence, such agreements create an international setting in which the trading partners pursue common interest and absolute gains, as neoliberalism assumes that states do not view international relations as a *zero-sum game*, in which a profit for another means a loss for oneself.<sup>181</sup> As such, the pursuance of absolute gains in the EU-GCC cooperation is stressed by the European Commission: ”Increased cooperation and exchanges between the EU and GCC countries will ultimately be beneficial also for the people of both regions.”<sup>182</sup> Hence, the Commission stresses the mutually beneficial aspects of more extensive cooperation and the pursuance of absolute gains in line with neoliberalism.

## Championing Human Rights

Based upon the findings of this analysis, and in accordance with the research question, this section intends to analyze why climate diplomacy is a means for Denmark, by virtue of its EU membership, to build upon its role as a champion for human rights when operating in Saudi Arabia.

As analyzed in the previous section, it is arguable that the EU makes a great effort to strengthen its relations with Saudi Arabia and the GCC states. In addition, the Strategic Partnership includes aspects that are not directly related to trade and investment: “Closer intercultural cooperation, mobility for youth and students, higher education cooperation and

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<sup>180</sup> Josep Borrell, as quoted in: European Commission, 2022 (C), p. 1.

<sup>181</sup> Ikenberry, 2020, p. 35 & Ikenberry, 2011, p. 91 & De Buck and Hosli, 2020, p. 12-14 & Maiser, 2017, p. 25.

<sup>182</sup> European Commission, 2022 (C), p. 1.

exchanges will improve mutual understanding and trust.”<sup>183</sup> Thereby, there is arguably seen an example of the neoliberal assumption that if states regularly engage in trade and commercial relations with one another, channels of dialogue are opened. Neoliberalism assumes that such dialogue between the trading partners can move beyond the realm of trade and economics and, in time, generate trust, reciprocity, and consensus on shared norms. Thereby, neoliberalism assumes that, over time, the channels of communications will expand and address additional aspects beyond trade and commercial issues.<sup>184</sup>

The European Commission highlights: “As a strong defender of multilateralism and social transformation including human rights and gender equality, the EU will continue to foster political dialogue on such matters with the Gulf countries.”<sup>185</sup> Borrell further emphasized this position on his first official visit to the GCC and Riyadh in the Fall of 2021. Concerning EU-GCC relations, Borrell remarked: “(...) we want to go beyond economics and to widen the scope of our interaction — to make it more strategic, also on regional issues and global challenges such as the green transition, climate change (...).”<sup>186</sup> Though the EU and the Gulf relations were almost exclusively based on economic and trade issues, Borrell now emphasized that the relations must move beyond trade. In that context, Borrell highlighted: “Gulf states are increasingly interested in taking on global responsibilities and are ready to engage with us. The EU now has human rights dialogues with all Gulf states, and we launched such a dialogue with Saudi Arabia this week.”<sup>187</sup> Following neoliberalism, it is arguable that the development in the EU-GCC relationship indicates that communication has moved beyond pure trade and economic related issues.

Arguably, following neoliberalism, the EU can advocate that Saudi Arabia and the wealthy Arab Gulf states take more responsibility in the region through the extended channels of dialogue. Among crucial contemporary issues are global climate change and its devastating impacts, especially in the Middle East, which is already the world's hottest and driest region,

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> De Buck & Hosli, 2020, p. 12.

<sup>185</sup> European Commission, 2022 (C), p. 1.

<sup>186</sup> Josep Borrell, as quoted in: Saudi Gazette. 2021. “EU, GCC begin new era in relationship.” *Saudi Gazette*. Accessed: 19/05/2022. <https://www.saudigazette.com.sa/article/613799/World/Europe/EU-GCC-begin-new-era-in-relationship>.

<sup>187</sup> Borrell, Josep. 2021. “The EU's stakes and options in a changing Gulf region.” *EEAS*. Accessed: 19/05/2022. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu's-stakes-and-options-changing-gulf-region\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu's-stakes-and-options-changing-gulf-region_en).

as touched upon in *Human Rights Violations in Saudi Arabia*. This reality has fostered increasing pressure on human rights and exposed the devastating interrelationship with climate change. Furthermore, the pressure on human rights concerns the intensified scarcity of food and water due to climate change and global warming. However, this development was rapidly intensified because the scarcity was weaponized, e.g., in the Yemeni Civil War. In addition, the region is subject to mass migration due to climate changes and is currently hosting 45 per cent of all refugees registered by the UN.<sup>188</sup>

Another reason for the mass migration is the region's extreme economic inequality, which is severely threatened to be exacerbated by climate change. This is the case as the wealthy Arab Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia, are based on nonagricultural economies and undergoing rapid economic diversification. As a result, these states have the financial and technological resources they need to lower their emissions and protect their citizens and environment from the effects of climate change. Moreover, due to the economic diversification, in a future where the demand for oil declines, these states will be well-positioned to become exporters of alternative energy sources, e.g., solar energy and green hydrogen. In contrast, impoverished and war-torn states such as Yemen, Syria, and Libya will not be able to adapt to climate changes by themselves.<sup>189</sup>

The international community arguably has a severe interest in enabling the wealthier Arab Gulf states to take regional responsibility regarding climate change and climate adaptation. Arguably, this primarily concerns Saudi Arabia as it is the largest state and economy in the region, also, Saudi Arabia position itself as the regional leader. This effort could help the impoverished states to implement energy transition plans, re-build the infrastructure destroyed by war, and make it resilient to climate change. Nevertheless, the wealthy Arab Gulf states have so far dragged their feet on undertaking this effort and showing regional responsibility. In contrast, they have faced international criticism and skepticism, as touched upon in *Human Rights Violations in Saudi Arabia*. The states have been accused of greenwashing initiatives, paying lip service to concerns about climate change, and safeguarding and empowering vulnerable states and populations in their region severely affected by climate change.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Daoudy, 2022, p. 54-56.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p. 54-56 & The Royal Danish Embassy in Riyadh, 2022.

<sup>190</sup> Daoudy, 2022, p. 54-56.

However, as touched upon, Borrell stressed that the Arab Gulf states show increasing interest in taking on global responsibilities, indicating that the channels of dialogue can encompass cooperation with the EU on this matter. Furthermore, Borrell emphasizes that the ongoing dialogue must encompass matters such as climate change and green transitioning to establish stability in the region.<sup>191</sup> The European Commission further emphasizes this aspect: "The Gulf region is particularly impacted by climate change, and the EU, a pioneer in initiatives for a climate transition, can be a partner in developing the know-how and expertise to address this challenge."<sup>192</sup> Hence, the Commission indicates that the European climate diplomacy effort is an additional pathway to increase cooperation. Thereby, it is arguable that the ongoing economic diversification in Saudi Arabia, and the GCC, have made it possible for the EU to use its stronghold competencies in the green transition to achieve further cooperation in the Arab Gulf region. Consequently, the EU and the partner states can pursue absolute gains from this cooperation. Essentially, the EU can move the channels of dialogue beyond trade and, through achieving reciprocity, extend the cooperation to enhance norms of regional responsibility.

Arguably, if the wealthy Arab Gulf states take more significant regional responsibility in the green transitioning, it can have long- and short-term effects on enhancing human rights. Such long-term effects are arguably achieved by implementing, e.g., regional green energy transition plans and the construction of crucial infrastructure resilient to climate change. However, as analyzed in *Human Rights Violations in Saudi Arabia*, environmental stress and scarcity of food and water in impoverished and war-thorn states, such as Yemen, are also caused by the devastating effects of the interventions of the Saudi-led military campaign. Therefore, Saudi Arabia could arguably enhance regional stability by restraining targeting critical water infrastructure and weaponizing the current scarcity caused by climate change. By having Saudi Arabia take regional responsibility, human suffering could be instantly limited in Yemen, and human rights could be promoted.<sup>193</sup>

Hence, as emphasized further in *Human Rights Violations in Saudi Arabia*, Saudi Arabia is known to commit human rights abuses, which sharply contrasts with the position of the EU, which, in line with Denmark, defines itself as a strong defender of human rights.<sup>194</sup> Due

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<sup>191</sup> Saudi Gazette. 2021 & European Commission, 2022 (C), p. 1.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Daoudy, 2022, p. 53-56.

<sup>194</sup> European Commission, 2022 (C), p. 1.

to this opposite aspect, the increasing trade has opened a dialogue about human rights in Saudi Arabia and throughout the Gulf region, as pointed out by Borrell. According to neoliberalism, trade facilitated through, e.g., official agreements, regimes, and institutions, provide platforms where reciprocity and shared norms will occur over time. Additionally, devious behavior, cheating, or states failing to cooperate can be punished within these binding systems and rules. Notably, such behavior can lead to a damaged reputation of the cheating state, why other states may not wish to cooperate with the cheating state, leading to the state's inability to profit from the absolute gains facilitated by cooperation. Therefore, once states enter formalized cooperation, cheating, or devious behavior is undesirable.<sup>195</sup>

As such, it is arguable that the EU's intensified dialogue with Saudi Arabia and the GCC, starting in 2017, now including the strategic partnership and potentially the Free Trade Agreement, holds objectives beyond trade and economic profits. Hence, following neoliberalism, the dialogue can also be explained from the assumption that intensified formalized cooperation can, over time, generate reciprocity and shared norms, such as championing human rights. Moreover, as touched upon, the EU is among Saudi Arabia's largest trading partners. Thereby, the shared profit and absolute gains, facilitated only through the formalized cooperation, can motivate Saudi Arabia to accomplish reciprocity and, over time, accept the norms of the EU, such as taking on regional responsibility and promoting human rights.

As described in *A Green and Sustainable World*, Denmark aims to carry out its climate diplomacy efforts via the EU. In addition, *Foreign and Security Policy Strategy* highlights that the EU is essential for realizing the values of the Danish foreign policy. Additionally, the strategy stresses: "The EU is absolutely crucial in the global fight over values (...) With its economic and political strength, the EU both can and must lead the way in the fight for democracy, human rights, the climate, sustainable development (...)." <sup>196</sup> When operating in Saudi Arabia and following neoliberalism, this approach to the EU goes beyond narrow economic interests. This is the case, as this analysis argues that the EU can extend the channels of dialogue with Saudi Arabia. As a result, through the EU's more influential voice and position concerning Saudi Arabia, compared to Denmark itself, this analysis argues that Denmark can champion human rights through climate diplomacy.

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<sup>195</sup> De Buck & Hosli, 2020, p. 13.

<sup>196</sup> The Government, 2022, p. 28.

## Conclusion

In accordance with the research question and based on the analysis, this thesis can conclude the following. First, based upon Denmark's foreign political strategy for global climate action, it is concluded that Danish climate diplomacy intends to ensure sustainable development in line with the UN SDGs and actively advance the objective of the Paris Agreement. Hence, the strategy's objectives are to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, make climate adaptation and resilience central in Danish development cooperation, and shift global finance flows in a green direction. Furthermore, it is concluded that Danish climate diplomacy embodies several different components. Among these is the central element of increasing Danish export of green technology and solutions and strengthening Danish green economic diplomacy. Additionally, central to realizing the climate objectives is to carry out Danish climate diplomacy through the EU, where the strategy further aims to position Denmark as a leading green state.

It is concluded that the strategy embodies an underlying assumption that neoliberalism can explain. Hence, the assumption is that Danish climate diplomacy and the climate objectives are best realized through participation in regimes and international cooperation and increasing export and trade in line with neoliberalism. Furthermore, it is concluded that the strategy problematizes the notion that numerous states do not live up to the commitment of the Paris Agreement. This is especially the case with the largest emitting states, developing states, and emerging economies. Hence, this indicates the government's problem representation of global climate change. By connecting climate change with immense security threats and human suffering, it is further concluded that the Government securitizes global climate change, thereby using the problematization to legitimize Danish global climate action.

Moreover, it is concluded that a vast part of the strategy relies on public diplomacy and promoting Denmark's soft power resources. In that sense, it is concluded that the strategy and Danish climate diplomacy draws upon a narrative about Denmark as a green pioneer, understood as a soft power resource. Hence, it is concluded that the national narrative portrays Danish climate action as socially just progressive, in line with neoliberalism and the liberal vision of order. In addition, the national narrative embodies a perception of Denmark as a responsible, innovative, and entrepreneurial state with international strongholds in the green sector and moral and historical responsibility to take the lead in the global green transition. Hence,

it is concluded that the strategy draws upon the Danish green pioneer narrative established in the 1970s and is drawn upon and interpreted differently by subsequent governments. Therefore, it is concluded that the present government of Mette Frederiksen uses the pioneer narrative and promotes a holistic approach to climate diplomacy. Due to the high domestic policy ambitions and high external policy ambitions of the government, it is concluded that Denmark takes a pusher position.

Furthermore, the analysis concludes that though human rights are only mentioned once in *A Green and Sustainable World*, several detectable aspects can promote human rights, through climate diplomacy, in developing states. These aspects followed the strategy's establishment of people categories encompassing *young people* and *vulnerable groups* in developing states. To promote the human rights of these groups, the strategy relies on engaging them in decision-making processes, promoting a socially just green transition, and establishing new green job opportunities. In addition, the strategy relies on the assumption that there exists a positive synergy between a green transition, climate adaptation, and achieving additional SDGs. Therefore, climate diplomacy can address other SDGs and, e.g., promote the rights of women and girls, create jobs, and provide water, food, and clean energy following the SDGs.

Likewise, it is concluded that the strategy indicated binaries and key concepts concerning the developing states, which further legitimizes Danish global climate action. In addition, it is concluded that the strategy does not explicitly address how climate diplomacy builds upon Denmark's role as a champion for human rights. Hence, this aspect of climate diplomacy remains unproblematized in the strategy, and therefore, it is concluded that it represents silence. As a result, the aspect of the strategy addressing the championing of human rights received critique by Danish NGOs, arguing that the strategy holds a too significant focus on export and businesses.

Moreover, it is concluded that Saudi Arabia is a state known for committing human rights violations, marginalizing the rights of women and minorities, executions of political activists and minorities, using torture, and restricting freedom of speech. Consequently, it is concluded that Saudi Arabia has, on several reason occasions, been subject to criticism and condemnation by the UN and by Denmark by virtue of its membership of the UN Human Rights Council. Furthermore, it is concluded that a significant part of the critique revolves around

executions due to charges of terrorism. As some of the executed did not meet a fair trial and were Yemenis, the UN is concerned about possible war crimes committed by Saudi Arabia.

Addressing the internationally highly criticized Saudi-led intervention in the Yemeni Civil War, it is concluded that Saudi Arabia has contributed to influencing the catastrophically manmade humanitarian situation in Yemen severely. In addition, the ongoing bombing campaigns of Yemen exposed the interrelationship between climate change and human rights issues. The region is already among the world's warmest and driest places. As a result, climate changes and global warming have resulted in Yemen's scarcity of water and food. Consequently, the Saudi-led bombing of critical water infrastructure and the blockade of ports has increased the scarcity and caused additional human suffering and severely worsened the Yemeni authority's ability to manage extreme natural events. Therefore, it concluded that Saudi Arabia had weaponized the scarcity existing due to climate changes.

Furthermore, it is concluded that Denmark's relations with Saudi Arabia are based mainly on trade and commercial relations, with a continued increase in trade. Therefore, the Danish climate diplomacy effort in Saudi Arabia is primarily driven by the export aspects of climate diplomacy, which is why it is considered an effect of the Danish strategy for global climate action. It is concluded that Saudi Arabia is undergoing significant social and economic transformation due to the economic diversification agenda driven by the reform program Vision 2030. The economic diversification context has fostered a focus on achieving sustainability and a green transition in Saudi Arabia. Hence, foreign green technology and solutions are in high demand. However, it is concluded that the green transition in Saudi Arabia is driven by economic incentives and a nation-branding agenda promoting Saudi Arabia as a responsible state to attract foreign investment – essential in realizing the ambitions of Vision 2030. In addition, the Saudi Green Initiative and the Middle East Green Initiative were met with international skepticism, and critics have labeled the Initiatives as greenwashing.

Moreover, it is concluded that Denmark is a less significant trading partner to Saudi Arabia, as Danish export only accounts for 0,6 per cent of the total Saudi import. However, the EU is Saudi Arabia's largest import market making the EU, and Denmark, by virtue of its membership, a highly significant trading partner. In that sense, it is concluded that the EU has considerable strategic interests in Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf Region. This is the case as the United States is changing its foreign political focus away from the Middle East to focus on

East Asia. Also, recent tensions between the United States and Saudi Arabia have amplified the EU's interest in increasing its sphere of influence in the region. This is evident from the ongoing efforts of the EU to increase trade relations between the EU and the GCC. This is seen with the negotiations of a Free Trade Agreement with the GCC and the Strategic Partnership.

In line with neoliberalism, it is concluded that these initiatives are seen as efforts to formalize cooperation in official agreements, to pursue absolute gains in a rules-based environment fostering reciprocity and further cooperation. Following neoliberalism, it is concluded that the channels of communication between the EU and Saudi Arabia, and the rest of the GCC states have moved beyond narrow trade issues. Hence, it is concluded that the EU is having human rights talks with Saudi Arabia and all the GCC states, and according to the EU, the Arab Gulf states are willing to take more significant responsibility in the region. In that sense, due to the extended channels of dialogue, it is concluded that the EU could advocate for Saudi Arabia to take more significant regional responsibility and advocate for the protection of human rights. It is concluded that such responsibility could be to seize the devastating bombings of critical water infrastructure in Yemen and stop the weaponization of the scarcity. As such, human rights could be improved in Yemen. However, the war-torn improvised states in the Middle East, such as Yemen, Syria, and Libya, will not be able to adapt to climate changes on their own. The wealthy Arab Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia, could help drive the regional green transition and promote climate adaptation and resilience in the impoverished states by taking immense responsibility.

Therefore, following neoliberalism, and based on the analysis' findings, and in accordance with the research question, this thesis is finally able to conclude that climate diplomacy is a means for Denmark to build upon its role as a champion of human rights when operating in Saudi Arabia. This is the case as climate diplomacy carried out through the EU intends to formalize the trade and cooperation between the EU and Saudi Arabia in line with the liberal vision of order. Both parties can pursue absolute gains, avoid conflicts, and foster further cooperation and reciprocity through formalized trade. The channels of dialogue were expanded to embody aspects not relating to trade – consequently championing human rights.

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