

"EU Arctic policy in the making: Climate Change as legitimization strategy"

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ABSTRACT

This research questions climate change as a political concept in the EU Arctic policy.

The issue areas that this article focuses on are climate change leadership, Arctic governance, EU Foreign policy.

The article presents a critical discourse analysis of the official documents of EU Arctic policy from a constructivist and post-structural approach.

Through this analysis, the research focuses on analysis of the discourse, strategies and outcomes of this EU policy.

This article concludes that the legitimization strategy of the EU in the Arctic is contested between its climate change leadership and its geopolitical ambitions.

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1. Introduction:

A helicopter crosses the Ilulissat Fjord and lands in a mining site in Greenland. A Canadian expert walks towards a group of workers who hand him a mineral sample. "Congratulations boys" he said, "you found oil". This fictional scene on the opening last season of the TV show "Borgen" is not that far from reality.

With an increasing interest from an array of disciplines, the Arctic region has also become an area in dispute for economic, military and political reasons (HDRR 2004, Nuttall 2018, Norden 2015). This global interest faces the dilemma now of how to reconcile the economic growth and environmental protection of a region that is already highly affected by climate change (IPCC 2019). It is also due to climate change that the region will probably face more activity in the future (AMAP 2021), and the idea of keeping the Arctic as a non-explored territory seems sometimes difficult. The global climate system has been regulated since 1994 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides the regime law for the Arctic Ocean and its seas. The establishment of key players such as the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) in 1977 and the Arctic Council (AC) in 1996 has been shaping the political rules for a space that goes beyond a single geographical territory. The inclusion of observers in the Arctic Council of non-arctic states such as China, India, Singapore, Spain, Italy, and Japan among others, shows as well the increasing interest to be part of the future developments in the Arctic. It is in this context that the EU is aiming to become a relevant actor.

In the first Joint Communication from 2008 this aim is established in the first lines: "*The European Union is inextricably linked to the Arctic region*" (European Commission 2008:2), while in the last Joint Communication the opening line is: "*The European Union (EU) is in the Arctic*" (European Commission 2021:1). Why and how did the EU move from this aim to be in the Arctic to declare that it is already part of the Arctic?

This research aims to explore this process focusing on the role of climate change as a political concept in the EU policy towards the Arctic region. The fact that climate change questions many of the concepts of the International Relations studies make it relevant to analyse from a political point of view. Notions such as sovereignty, security, and coalitions are challenged due the fact that climate action must be addressed as a global issue and not from a single state point of view. In the same line, climate change has turned into a key issue in several policies from the EU, ranging from energy, environmental and foreign and security policy. The EU policy towards the Arctic region also shows this diversity of interests. Even though this policy is still in early stage development, it is already an interesting corpus of

analysis. The analysis of this policy allows us to see the development from the first Joint Communication in 2008 to the latest one in 2021. Moreover, questioning a concept that seems to be normal and neutral such as climate change as a drive to the EU Arctic policy, this research aims to debate around its political character, and its role in the construction of a legitimization strategy.

This research is organised in five chapters. In Chapter 1 the problem formulation is introduced, followed by literature review. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework applied to this research, which included concepts from Constructivism and Post structuralism theory. Chapter 3 comprises the methodology used by this research, introducing choice of data and research design. Having defined the analytical framework, Chapter 4 consists of the analysis, to conclude with Chapter 5 presenting the conclusions.

1.1 Problem formulation

The Arctic region has several aspects that make it interesting for an actor such as the EU. Its geopolitical value has been increasing in the last years due to climate change, but it is also the home of citizens from the eight Arctic states including indigenous population, and the place where rare mineral reservoirs are located. In this scenario the EU have the opportunity to propose policies in different areas, for example environmental, security, maritime, energy, democracy or even transport. The question is then, why climate change seems to be at the core of the EU Arctic policy?. Furthermore, in order to debate and examine the concept of climate change as part of this specific EU policy, the background research questions for this analysis are: ***Why is climate change used as a legitimization strategy of the EU to become a relevant actor in the Arctic region? Furthermore, how is climate change constituted as a main problem in the EU Arctic policy?***

The EU Arctic policy is still in the process of establishment. It is the objective of this research to interrogate about this development, and try to understand why climate change seems to be the problem “chosen” by the EU to build a policy in this specific region.

With the aim to ask about this specific issue, climate change will be approached as a problem that has been “built” by the EU. To address this question, a post structural policy analysis will be carried out using the analytical strategy *What’s the problem represented to be* (WPR) (Bacchi), aiming to discuss the climate change problematization rather than just describing the policy making process. Furthermore, to try to understand why and how the issue of climate change is being problematized in the EU Arctic policy.

Having defined the problem formulation it is necessary to provide an overview of relevant literature review. One relevant area of literature will be concerning the

connection of climate change and the specific field of International Relations, while another relevant area of literature will be related with the aspect of legitimization strategy of the EU in the Arctic region. Both aspects can give us input concerning the research question, the data to analyse and the theoretical framework.

1.2 Literature review

As it was mentioned earlier, for the purpose of this research two main areas are considered as part of the literature review, on the one hand literature on climate change in connection with governance and International Relations, and on the other hand literature concerned with the role and dynamic of the EU as a global actor in the international system, furthermore, with the strategy of legitimization and leadership in the Arctic region. Both areas of literature will provide a framework for the analysis, as they give us insight in the topics around this research, and could assist us to understand different aspects of the problem formulation.

1.2.1 Climate change governance and climate change and IR:

As a starting point it is relevant to present a brief overview of the climate change problem from a political point of view. A relevant author in this sense is Dipesh Chakrabarty (2017). The author reflects on two different focuses about the climate change problem. A first focus is on the technical aspect of reducing greenhouse gases (GHGs) to avoid surpassing the 2° limit set by the Cancun Agreement in 2010. According to the author this first focus is concerned with how to provide energy for an increasing population and how to make a transition towards renewable sources as fast as possible (Chakrabarty 2017:26). This approach however presents several conflicting ideas. According to the author, different solutions have been proposed. A majority focused on the replacement of fossil fuel energy while maintaining the system of production (Ibid), others will agree on the energetic transition but criticise the capitalism system of production that has provoked climate change in the first place (Ibid.:27). Some will argue towards de-growth scenarios that promote social justice as well (Ibid.), and lastly, some advocate for capitalism *with* sustainability (ibid.).

As an opposite second approach, the author reflects on climate change as part of bigger interrelationship dilemmas (Ibid.). Making a connection with the "*human's ecological footprint*" (Ibid.:28) Chakrabarty argues that the human scale of growth and consumption allowed humans to intervene in the climate and allocation of resources of the planet (Ibid.), therefore the climate change problem is a deeper ecological problem that is confronting humanity (ibid.:29). An interesting point by Chakrabarty is the criticism about who is constructing the problem of climate change. Arguing that scientists and intellectuals from developed countries are the main

spreaders for information regarding global climate, the author points out the fact that this will have an impact when it comes to global forums and meetings discussing and agreeing on international issues (Ibid.:35). Moreover, the author argues that the discussion prevails in “*the experiences, values, and desires of developed nations*” (Ibid.). This will be connected with the problem of this research, knowing that this specific EU policy is linked with a vast territory out of the EU geographical scope including indigenous population. Therefore, it will be pertinent to connect this discussion around who is producing the discourse about the climate change problem with our analysis.

A similar approach is presented by Mello and Margarido Moreira (2016), where the authors reflect on the disparities between developed and developing countries when it comes to global climate issues. Reflecting on the field called “critical international eco-politics”, the encounter of political ecology and IR discipline, the article debates on concepts such as environmental justice and its role in the international climate governance debate. The authors argue that the dominant theoretical perspectives in IR are not debating critically the causes of the environmental crisis and the role of globalisation (Mello and Margarido Moreira 2016:222). Furthermore, the article made a critique of the colonial approach of the environmental global policies between Global South and Global North, with the South still in the periphery of the international agenda (Ibid.:226). In connection with this research the aspect of colonial approach will be pertaining to the situation of indigenous population in the Arctic region, therefore, to add to the analysis the question about dominance of discourse in global climate matters.

Narrowing the literature review regarding the specific connection of climate change and international relations that is part of this research, we found literature that touches upon the clashes between fundamental concepts of IR such as state sovereignty and the global character of climate change. For instance, Sending et al. (2020) reflects about the importance of including climate change as part of the IR discipline since international system structure can be heavily affected by global warming. Highlighting the low presence of climate change on IR research, with only 0,76 per cent of articles between 2015 and 2019 in the major IR Journals (Sending et al. 2020:184), the authors argue that climate change demands a bigger attention from IR scholars. Furthermore, the article proposes five areas where IR discipline could increase future debate and research: sovereignty, security, energy geopolitics, status and reputation, and norm and coalitions (Ibid.:2020).

In the search of specific literature for specific concepts about climate governance or climate leadership there is abundant literature on these topics from a state actor perspective. Certainly acknowledging that our case study refers not to a single state actor but to the EU as a state-based organisation, some aspects of how state actors

face climate change are relevant as well for this research, and it is possible to extend some of the main ideas to our case study.

Continuing with this reflection, Biermann and Gupta (2011) debate about the importance of the concepts of accountability and legitimacy as the key towards further democratic Earth System Governance. The authors argue that when it comes to global climate challenges both concepts are under constraint. Moreover, they identify five aspects that are pressuring accountability and legitimacy in order to achieve democratic governance: spatial interdependence, functional interdependence, uncertainty, temporal interdependence and extreme events (Biermann and Gupta 2011). Furthermore, the authors raised the questions about accountability, legitimacy, and the role of stakeholders in global governance. Proposing an increase of voices from civil society in public and private instances in order to have a more balanced participation, the authors suggest a global network formed by citizens that can participate in earth system governance. (Ibid.:1863). In connection with our research this article opens the question about what type of strategies the EU is using to build this legitimacy in the global climate change governance system. Moreover, what is the space for civil society actors in the EU Arctic policy?

Another interesting article regarding climate leadership is presented by Eckersley (2016) with the case of Norway and Germany. Doing a comparative analysis of the discourses on climate by leaders of both countries, the author argues that the legitimization strategy has been constructed using concepts of Green growth and innovation (Eckersley 2016:194). Furthermore, the discourses regarding climate appeal to leadership positions at the same time as presenting an international collaborative aspect (Ibid. 195). A difference between both is given by the “security framing” (Ibid.) that Germany adds to its climate discourse. According to the article, Germany’s security concerns are not only concerned with energy threat issues on the domestic level but also as part of Europe, and beyond, globally. (Ibid.). This security frame issue is relevant for our research, due the connection that the EU is also making between climate and security.

1.2.2 Role and dynamics of the EU as a global actor in the Arctic

Even though it was possible to find abundant literature about the EU involvement in the Arctic, a precise connection with climate governance was not always specific enough. In this sense, the most relevant approach is given by Raspotnik and Stępień (2020). The authors give an extensive account of the EU approach towards the Arctic, identifying different angles: research, environmental, economic, and legal. In relation with the specific EU policy the authors provide an overview of the EU actions until 2017, criticising the lack of proper policy development (Raspotnik and Stępień

2020:140) and the difficulties in the engagement with some of the Arctic states, especially Iceland and Norway (Ibid.141). This will be interesting for our analysis regarding how this policy has been contested and challenged.

Giving another input about the EU role in the Arctic region, Dobson and Trevisanut (2018) debate about the conflict that arises for a so-called double role of the EU, between climate change action promoter and energy supplier for the Arctic region. According to the authors the EU's "*self-declared climate leadership*" (Dobson and Trevisanut 2018:381) clashes with the EU energy policy, having according to the article an economic purpose behind (Ibid.:385). The paper criticised as well the lack of commitment towards a clear ban of exploitation of hydrocarbons in the Arctic (Ibid.:392), a fact that shows, according to the authors, that the real interest is mainly economic with the aim to explore the energy supplies located in the region (Ibid.:393-394). This conflicting aspect of the EU energy policy will be relevant for our problem formulation, as a possible contrast with the EU Arctic policy.

In relation with the role and dynamics of the EU as a global actor, Raspotnik and Østhagen (2021) focuses on the EU's efforts to become a relevant geopolitical actor in the Arctic region, through an analysis of EU engagement between 2008 and 2018. The authors argue that the EU builds on the so-called Northern dimension in order to establish a presence in this area. The article makes an account of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), that as the author argues, is part of the effort of the EU external aspect and geopolitical integration towards the closest neighbourhood (Raspotnik and Østhagen 1153, 1157). Furthermore, the authors argue that with the accession of Finland and Sweden the EU obtained a natural northern dimension (Ibid.) that eventually could help as well to bolster cooperation with Russia. However, the article points to the delay of the EU in properly impulsing a EU Arctic policy, furthermore, presenting internal and external obstacles that makes complex a full EU geopolitical presence in the Arctic (Ibid.:1166). These aspects will be relevant when we analyse how the problem of climate change entered the discussion in the EU policymaking, particularly the connection with the Foreign policy and European Neighbourhood Policy.

Another interesting input is given by Stępień et al. (2015), that debate about the contradictions of the EU presence in the Arctic. They identify contradictions at internal, institutional and vertical levels. At the EU internal level the authors argue that the interest appeared only when the region become an "*(...) international hot topic*" (Stępień and Koivurova 2015:22), having previously showed little interest in the work of the Arctic Council or the participation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (Ibid.:25). Regarding the institutional level, the article presents the EU institutional actors leading the Arctic policy making process. Starting in 2007, associated with the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP), and led by the DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, the process culminated with the first Joint Communication from 2008. As a second

institutional key actor the article points towards the role of the DG External Relations and the European External Action Service EEAS. In the case of the EU Parliament, the focus is on political input and resolutions, while the EU Council is the “*key formal decision-maker*” (Ibid.:27) for a consistent policy towards the Arctic region. The authors present some of the problems between these actors and the Arctic States, such as the proposal of an Arctic Treaty for the EU Parliament (Ibid) or the appeal for a moratorium on energy resources in the Arctic region (Ibid.28). In relation to our problem formulation this article provides relevant questions regarding the internal competition for the Arctic issue in the European Union.

In relation to the question about how the EU can build a territorial presence outside of its borders, two articles give us an interesting input.

Méndez-Pinedo and Fralova (2019), analyse the EU Arctic policy using Tocci’s perspective. In the article the authors argue that through goals of “possession” and “milieu” the EU is building its role as an actor in the Arctic region. In the case of the Arctic this possession goal is to have recognition as a relevant actor (Méndez-Pinedo and Fralova 2019:36). In the case of milieu goals, the EU’s aim is to be a normative power and increase its share of international legislation (Ibid.:37). Furthermore, the article makes a criticism of this desire of a normative power in a political and geographical space that already possesses a political structure (Ibid.:38). The authors argues as well that the EU legal framework to operate in the region is still “*discontinuous and fragmented*” (Ibid.:39), a fact that together with the EU desire of playing solo in the region removes its legitimacy in both international and European law (Ibid.:40).

Weinzierl (2021) focuses on the concept of territoriality of non-state or supra-state actors such as the EU, and how this concept can be expanded beyond a geographical notion. This idea creates tension at the supranational and national levels, and can have an impact on regulation, legitimacy, and territory. Applying concepts from EU law, political theory and political geography, the author argues that the EU’s presence challenges the current legitimacy aspect of territoriality (Weinzierl 2021:651). Further, the author argues that state territoriality concept is still the dominant expression of territoriality (Ibid.:652).

These two last articles open some relevant questions regarding how the aspect of territorial presence could affect the EU aspirations for being a legitimate climate leader in the Arctic region.

Lastly, as part of the literature review and preparation for this research, Knecht and Laubenstein, presents a useful account of the Arctic governance research topic. After an analysis of 398 articles between 2008 and 2019, the authors found four

main restraints for the full potential of this research area. As a first limitation the authors name an “*Academic immaturity*” ((Knecht and Laubenstein 2000:5), after identifying an excess of descriptive accounts of Arctic policy with focus on Arctic states and the Arctic Council as a main actors.

As a second obstacle, the authors talk about “*Methodological monoculturalism*” (Ibid.:6), finding that 75% of the research analysed is based in a single case study (the Arctic states mainly), therefore lacking a comparative perspective. This is connected, according to the authors, with another restraint called “*State-centrism*” (Ibid.:7), or an excessive focus on the state level as a unit of analysis.

Lastly, the authors identify a tendency to inward perspective, focusing only on a single level (mainly at regional level) instead of interaction with other non-state actors. This limitation, called “*Analytical parochialism*” (Ibid.:8), is seen, for example, in the fact that only 3% of studies focus on international interactions (Ibid.:9), hence the possibility to explore and research the Arctic region in a holistic and global way is diminished (Ibid).

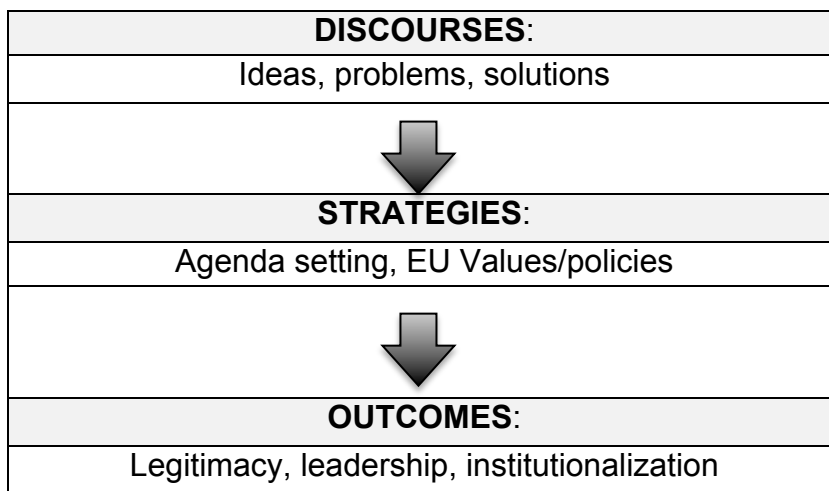
Having this literature review as a reference, with both inputs from climate change governance and the role and dynamic of the EU in its quest as a global actor in the Arctic, many questions remain open. Which ideas or problems are presented in association with climate change in the EU Arctic policy? Where do these ideas come from? What are the solutions that the EU is trying to propose to solve these problems? Furthermore, how has this policy been contested and challenged? And are the strategies of the EU interacting with the legitimization process?

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical ground for the analysis. Having as a starting point a special focus on the discourse in the process of building an identity, and considering this as the first step of a legitimization strategy, we will choose as theoretical framework concepts from Constructivism and Post-structuralism theories.

These theories will help to analyse the levels of Discourse (ideas, problems, solutions), Strategies (agenda setting, EU values/policies) and Outcomes (legitimacy, leadership, institutionalisation) as we can see in the following figure:

Figure 1. Levels of analysis:



Source: own creation

Constructivism has been chosen as a main theory, incorporating authors such as Wendt regarding identity, Finnemore & Sikkink regarding the global process of norm formation, and adding as well as a theoretical input the concepts of Soft Power (Nye) and Leadership (Young). Post-structuralism has been chosen as a complementary theoretical input, in order to provide a definition of discourse, drawing on Foucault and Hajer ideas.

2.1 Constructivism

Wendt says “*Identities are the basis of interests*” (Wendt 1992:398), actors therefore establish their strategies according to the circumstances where they are (Ibid). For our specific case of study this is relevant as our research question aims to understand why a specific issue (climate change) is part of this EU narrative that supports its interest in this concrete region.

In the case of an institution Wendt argues that it can be defined as more or less fixed group of identities (Ibid, 399) with the aim of creating “(...) *collective knowledge*(...)” (Ibid, 399). This collective knowledge will be then part of the political power of an organisation, in our case, the EU as a global actor.

Furthermore, in relation with the specific international regime where our problem formulation occurs, we can follow Finnemore and Sikkink’s constructivist idea that “*international structure is determined by the international distribution of ideas*” (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998:894), expliciting the importance for an actor such as the EU to be part of this international arena. Moreover, Finnemore and Sikkink provide an interesting approach to the process of international norm formation of the international organisations, which can be useful as a frame in the analysis of the EU as a global actor in the Arctic region.

Figure 2. Stage of norms according Finnemore and Sikkink

	Stage 1 Norm emergence	Stage 2 Norm cascade	Stage 3 Internalization
Actors	Norm entrepreneurs with organizational platforms	States, international organizations, networks	Law, professions, bureaucracy
Motives	Altruism, empathy, ideational, commitment	Legitimacy, reputation, esteem	Conformity
Dominant mechanisms	Persuasion	Socialization, institutionalization, demonstration	Habit, institutionalization

Source: Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998:898

Acknowledging that this model has been produced for international organisations, there are some elements that can be applied to our research. For example, in the process of stage 2 (norm cascade) the level referred to Motives (Legitimacy, reputation) seems appropriate for analysing the connection with the analytical level of Strategies and effects of the Arctic Policy. Furthermore, the level of Dominant mechanisms (socialization, Institutionalization) can be connected with the level of Outcomes, and how this process has been promoted and contested.

Soft power, high and low politics

If we consider the interest from the EU in climate change as part of a legitimization strategy the concept of high and low politics can also be relevant as part of our theoretical frame. As a basic concept high politics alludes to issues such as security

while low politics make reference to matters that do not put a state on stake such as social policy (Brown et al. 2018). Low politics has been connected as well with areas such as cultural cooperation, scientific research support and even sports. It is from this basis that we can connect with the concept of soft power (Nye, 2004). Nye explores the complexity of the concept of power in international politics, defining two sides: hard and soft power. While the first is connected with assets such as the use of military force or economic sanctions, the so-called soft power is connected with policies and values that have the capacity to attract and change behaviour (Nye 2014:8).

Furthermore, Nye proposes a categorization of three types of power in relation with behaviours, medium and government strategies:

Figure 3. Three types of power according Nye

	Behaviours	Primary currencies	Government Policies
Military Power	coercion deterrence protection	threats force	coercive diplomacy war alliance
Economic Power	inducement coercion	payments sanctions	aid bribes sanctions
Soft Power	attraction agenda setting	values culture policies institutions	public diplomacy bilateral and multilateral diplomacy

Source: Nye 2014: 31

For our research question the concept of soft power will be relevant. Being a type of power that builds on diplomacy and multilateralism in order to gain legitimacy and successfully “(...)framing the agenda(...)” (Nye 2011:19), in opposition to economic and military power, we argue that this type of power is the one presented in the EU Arctic policy. If the EU aim is to establish a climate leadership in the Arctic, soft power concept became a relevant theoretical concept.

In relation with foreign policy the author coined as well the concept “smart power” (Nye 2011) in order to establish that soft power alone is not a guarantee of a successful foreign policy strategy, proposing smart power as “(...)strategies that successfully combine hard and soft power resources in differing contexts(...)” (Nye 2011:20). Having the intuition that economic and security concerns are also part of the struggle in the legitimization strategy of the EU in the Arctic, the concept of smart power can be useful to include as part of our theoretical input. Furthermore, to debate how the climate change problem could eventually stress both hard and soft power.

Leadership

In order to understand and analyse the level of Outcomes of the EU Arctic policy, the concept of leadership in international regimes is also relevant to include as part of our theoretical framework. Young defines three main types of leadership when it comes to the international level agenda setting regimes: structural leadership, entrepreneurial leadership, and intellectual leadership (Young 1991). The structural type will base its leadership on structural power, meaning material resources (Ibid.:288) having as main drive the advocacy for their “*own values*” (Ibid.:293), the entrepreneurial type will use its negotiation and diplomacy expertise (Ibid.), while the intellectual type will base its leadership on framing ideas capacity (Ibid.). Furthermore, Skodvin and Steinar, influenced by Young and Underdal, proposes a leadership conceptualization regarding the specific stage of negotiation phase in international regimes instead of agenda setting stage (Skodvin and Steinar 2006), defining three types of leadership: power based, directional and entrepreneurial (Ibid.14). The power based type will be the ability to control over others in key situations (Ibid), the direction type will be connected with the idea of “unilateral action” (Ibid.:15) while the entrepreneurial type will build on political expertise (Ibid.). As all these authors mention, it is important to remember that these characteristics can co-exist, so we need to see the international leadership as a flux rather than a fixed construction.

As we argue that the EU is in process of building a strategy when it comes to the Arctic policy, these theoretical inputs will help us to analyse the specific dynamics of our problem formulation, especially in the level of outcomes regarding how this representation has been presented and contested.

2.2 Post-structuralism

If we argue that the EU is creating a narrative towards the Arctic as part of its establishment as a relevant actor, the concept of “*narrativizing of reality*” (Campbell in Devetak 2013:191) will be interesting for this analysis. Post-structuralism argues that “*narrative is central, not just to understanding an event, but to constituting that event*” (Devetak 2013:190). The underpinned idea of this argument is given by one of the main post-structuralist authors, Michel Foucault, when it comes to the relationship between knowledge and power: “*Power and knowledge are mutually supportive; they directly imply one another*” (Foucault in Devetak 2013:188). This reflection on knowledge and power will have an impact on how post-structuralism sees political identity, and in particular the notion of sovereignty. According to post-structuralism, the paradigm of sovereignty limits our capacity to analyse the current dynamics in international politics (Devetak 2013:209). Following this idea Campbell proposes to “*(...) understands the transversal nature’ of world politics*” (Campbell in Devetak 2013:210). This means to pay attention to the multiple synergies and processes of globalisation that challenge the geopolitical states borders (Devetak

2013:210), or what the author calls “*activities that destabilize the paradigm of sovereignty*” (Ibid.).

Regarding discourse, Foucault pays attention to how the interests and ideas sustain the discourse, impacting on the agency aspect (Foucault in Corneloup and Mol 2014:284). Moreover, he calls for a critical interrogation about how those interests and ideas can problematize specific issues (Foucault in Bacchi 2015: 6), the main objective being to analyse and interrogate the problems within policies (Ibid.:4). This critical view regarding policy discourses is based on the assumption of the impact that dominant policies can have in the individual citizens, therefore Foucault stresses the importance of acknowledging and analysing these apparently neutral practices (Ibid.:7)

As a complement for our definition of discourse, Hajer highlights the importance of agency and subject in the process of discourse creation (Hajer in Corneloup and Mol 2014: 284), defining discourse as a “*specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities.*” (Ibid.)

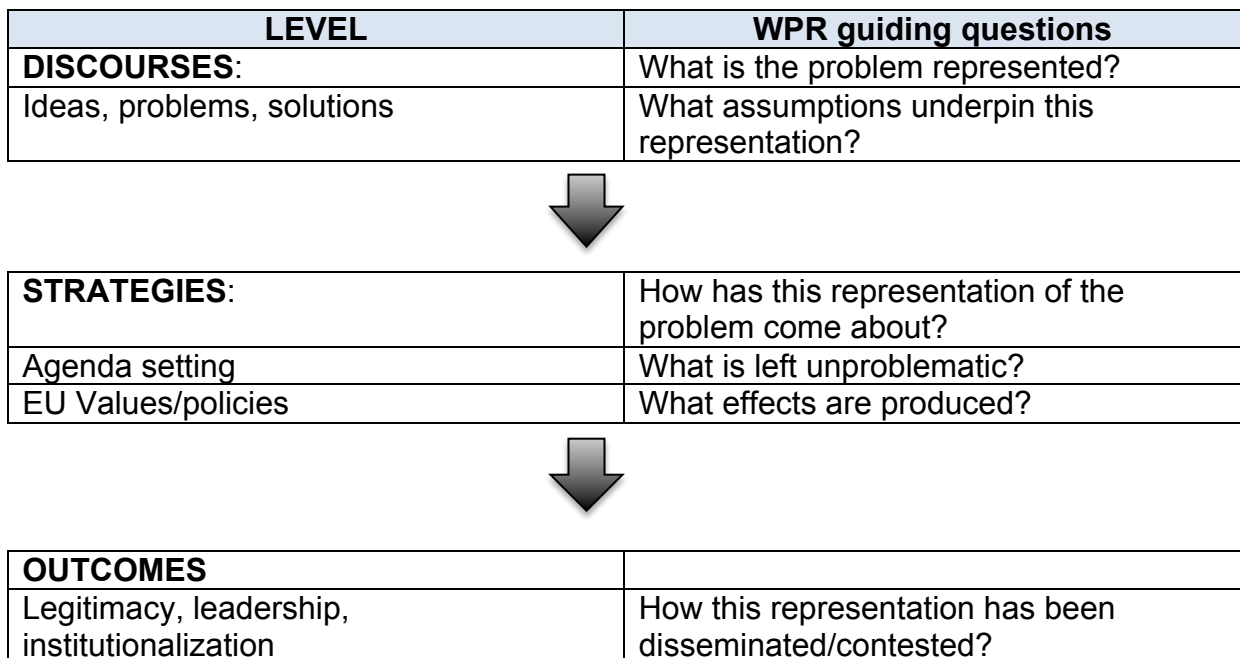
Having defined our theoretical framework, we move to the next chapter, where we explain in detail the methodology chosen to address the theoretical questions.

3. Methodology

In order to analyse and debate our problem formulation we propose a methodology that can guide us to understand why and how the EU seems to be using the climate change issue as part of its strategy to become a relevant actor in the Arctic region, through the analysis of three levels mentioned in the theoretical framework: discourse, strategies and outcomes.

These levels will be analysed by using the guiding questions from the analytical tool called *What is the problem represented to be*, or in short, WPR approach (Bacchi 2009), as presented in the follow figure:

Figure 4: Analytical framework:



Source: own creation

The aim with these guiding questions is to inquiry practices or concepts that could appear neutral such as climate change. Understanding as well that the problem representations are usually “*nested*” within others, using Bacchi and Goodwin’s words, (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016:24), the analytical framework is expected to help in providing the overview needed for this specific problem representation.

3.2 Choice of data:

In order to carry out this analysis of the EU Arctic Policy four EU official documents (Joint Communications) were gathered. The European Commission has released these documents in the years 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2021, and they comply with the criteria of authenticity and meaning (Scott in Bryman 2016). Furthermore, due the fact that the documents that form this data corpus follow a similar structure, and it is

possible to compare and analyse the development over time, we can comply with the criteria of representativeness (Ibid). Lastly, regarding the criteria of credibility (Ibid) we face the problem of biases. However, following Abrahams we can propose that the bias is exactly the interesting aspect of researching these official documents (Abrahams in Bryman 2016:553). Other documents concerning the Arctic released by the Council and the EP have not been considered as the main data for this analysis¹, even though they have been part of the background reading and information. Having defined the EU as a global actor the data selected is the one produced by the Commission as responsible for the policy initiation process and its agenda-setting role. Nevertheless, the specific role of the EEAS and the HR is also part of the frame of this research, as the foreign policy of the EU is closely connected with the premise of this research of the EU as a global actor, and with the concept of leadership, meaning that some of the statements from the HR will be included as a complement for this analysis, as well from the EU Ambassador for the Arctic.

Having the main four documents as data, the analysis has been done following a combination of inductive category development (Mayring 2020) and the WPR approach (Bacchi) in order to understand why and how the problem of climate change is represented in the EU Arctic Policy and which categories are part of it, as Bacchi points out “(...) *to put in question their underlying premises, to show that they have a history, and to insist on questioning their implication*” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016:16).

WPR approach consists in six questions that structure the analysis. For this specific research the following questions will be used:

1. *What's the 'problem' of climate change represented to be in the EU Arctic policy?*
2. *What presuppositions underpin this representation of the 'problem'?*
3. *How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?*
4. *What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences?*
5. *What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?*
6. *How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been disseminated by the EU? How has this representation been contested?*

This strategy allows us to step by step deconstruct this specific policy, and to complement as well with our theoretical framework in order to answer the research

¹ Council Conclusion on Arctic issues 2009, EP Resolution on a Sustainable EU policy for the High North 2011, EP Resolution on EU Strategy for the Arctic 2014, Council Conclusion on Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic region 2014, Council Conclusion on the Arctic 2016, EP Resolution on An Integrated EU Policy for the Arctic 2017.

question. The relevance of this post structural analysis is that it allows us to interrogate specific policies, and critically ask why a specific problem is chosen. Furthermore, it allows us to ask in which ways some specific topics can be problematized (Bacchi 2015:6). Moreover, this post structural policy analysis proposes, “(...) *to consider places as political creations*” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016:95), an aspect relevant for this specific policy towards the Arctic region.

Ultimately, and as it was presented at the end of the literature review section, the aim of choosing a post structural analysis is to contribute as well to expand the analytical approach to the Arctic Governance Research in International Relations.

4. Analysis:

4.1. What is the ‘problem’ of climate change represented to be in the EU Arctic policy?

The objective of this first question is to “*open up for questioning something that appears natural and obvious*” (Bacchi and Godwin 2016:20).

To put climate change as a main drive of the policy towards the Arctic can be seen as a reasonable choice. However, the aim with this first question is to open the level of Discourse regarding climate change from the EU, and see which ideas and concepts are associated with the main concept *Climate change*. The overview of the problem representation across the EU Joint Communications from 2008 to 2021 will provide the foundation for the analysis of the levels of Strategies and Outcomes.

In order to do this, the four documents have been read and examined regarding the main concept: “Climate change”, but also including concepts such as “Environmental changes”, “Global warming”, “Environmental issues” and “climatological changes” as part of the same conceptual group (Appendix 1). The main concept appeared in the four documents with different emphasis that will be presented in this section.

As a starting point, there is a certain agreement regarding the EU’s belated political approach to the Arctic (Raspotnik and Østhagen 2021, Méndez-Pinedo and Fralova 2019, Stępień et. 2015), as Raspotnik points out “(...) *before 2007, the Arctic remained ‘a marginal note in EU policy – a periphery of the periphery’*” (Raspotnik and Østhagen 2021:1159).

Furthermore, the fact is that in 2008 the first EU Joint Communication was released. Under the title “*The European Union and the Arctic region*”, the presence of the EU is based on a set of “common” aspects with the region. Historical, geographical,

economic and scientific cooperation aspects are named by the EU as proof of this “*inextricable*” connection (EU Commission 2008:2), including the shared EU-Arctic States (Denmark [Greenland], Sweden and Finland), and a major destination of Arctic resources. Rapidly, this argument is being connected with global warming and effects of climate change: “(...) *environmental changes are altering the geo-strategic dynamics of the Arctic with potential consequences for international stability and European security interests calling for the development of an EU Arctic policy*” (Ibid.). The problem of climate change is accordingly presented as a menace for both, international and European secureness. Moreover, climate change is called a “*threats multiplier*” (Ibid.), picturing a scenario where EU citizens are at risk, thereupon arguing for the EU involvement as “*imperative*” (Ibid.).

Following these opening arguments the policy set up three main objectives: *Protecting and preserving the Arctic in unison with its population, Promoting sustainable use of resources, and Contributing to enhanced Arctic multilateral governance* (Ibid.:3). As part of the first objective climate change problem is characterised as “*global*”, “*challenge*”, “*negative*” (Ibid.), while the Arctic environment is introduced as “*harsh*”, “*vulnerable*” (Ibid.). The EU role on the other hand is presented as “*leader in fighting climate change and in promoting sustainable development*” (Ibid.).

The second policy objective follows a similar pattern. First the region is highlighted for its “*harsh conditions and multiple environmental risks*” (Ibid.:6), “*vulnerability*” (Ibid.:7), and at risk of “*unregulated*” (Ibid.) activities due to climate change. Secondly, the EU is displayed in possession of “*edge (...) technologies*” (Ibid.), “*guarantee (of) long term-conservation*” (Ibid.) regarding natural resources, promoter of “*safety and environmental standards*” (Ibid.8) and “*major contributor to Arctic research*” (Ibid.5) regarding effects of climate change.

Lastly, regarding the last objective of *Contributing to enhanced Arctic Multilateral governance*, the Arctic governance is depicted as legally fragmented and without a comprehensive policy framework (Ibid.:10) while the EU is presented as provider of “*security and stability*” (Ibid.), with capacities in “*environmental management*”, “*sustainable use of resources*” and international political power (Ibid.11).

The discourse is strongly constructed in base to oppositions: presenting the Arctic region as vulnerable and in exceptional danger, while the EU is presented as a source of security, stability and environmental leadership.

Moving to our second policy document, we analyse the EU Joint Communication from 2012 titled “*Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region: progress since 2008 and next steps*”. This Joint Communication is presented around three main objectives: knowledge, responsibility and engagement. The role of the EU in the Arctic is based on similar attributes than the previous Joint Communication, presenting itself this time “*as a key supporter of the Arctic region*” (EU Commission 2012:2).

In this document climate change is presented again as a threat, but adding this time the aspect of urgency, depicting the urgency for action in this specific region: *“Nowhere is climate change more visible than in the Arctic”* (Ibid.), connecting again with the idea of exceptionality that we found in the previous document.

The velocity of the climate change problem is reinforced using statements such as *“the rapidity of change”* (Ibid.), *“dramatic effects of climate change in the Arctic”* (Ibid.), *“the evident speed of change in the Arctic”* (Ibid.:5) or *“the scale and speed of climate change in the Arctic”* (Ibid.:6). The problem of climate change is hence represented with the idea of urgency and crisis in specific connection with this region. This “urgent call” is thus used to justify the EU involvement: *“Indeed, the rapidity of change in the Arctic provides a strong rationale for the EU's commitment to environmental protection and the fight against climate change”* (Ibid.:2). Consequently, the EU is presented not only as the global climate change leader but also as the bearer of knowledge about sustainable resources, climate change and environmental protection, as we can see in the follow statement: *“The European Union is the world's strongest proponent of greater international efforts to fight climate change, through the development of alternative energy sources, resource efficiency and climate change research”* (Ibid.3). As Nye points out Europe develops a big part of its soft power committing to solve global challenges (Nye 2004:80). The EU climate leadership discourse is then reinforced and connected with its soft power currencies for the Arctic region: energy policies, scientific research, and innovation.

Moving to the third Joint Communication released by the European Commission in 2016, we observe that the climate change problem in the Arctic is presented as part of the global warming problem.

With the title *“An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic”*, the problem of climate change in the Arctic is represented in connection with what happens outside of the Arctic region, as part of a wider environmental crisis, highlighting for example the *“(…) role of Arctic as a regulator for the climate of the planet”* (EU Commission 2016:3). In this way, the EU role in the region is presented as part of a broader action towards climate change, connected with the international agenda for climate action, including the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Agenda 2030 of Sustainable Development Goals by the UN.

Setting three objectives: climate change, sustainable development and international cooperation, this document outlines a representation of the region where the region itself holds a bigger importance for the problem. This can be seen in the following statements: *“In recent years, the Arctic's role in climate change has become much more prominent”* (Ibid.:2), or *“more recently there has been growing awareness that feedback loops are turning the Arctic into a contributor to climate change”* (Ibid.). Returning to the idea of “problematization of places” (Bacchi), and thinking in the Arctic region, not as a fixed entity but as a space under construction (Bacchi and

Goodwin 2016:90), we can argue that the presence of the EU in the region requires to problematize the Arctic region on a broader level, in order to connect with its legitimization strategy as climate leader.

In that sense, it is interesting that the concepts of adaptation and resilience appear for the first time related with the problem representation, using remarks such as “*mitigate and adapt to climate change in the Arctic*” (Ibid.), “*transition to a climate resilient, climate neutral global economy.*” (Ibid.:3), “*developing an ambitious climate adaptation agenda for the Arctic region*” (Ibid.7). We can argue that the discourse from the EU attempts to connect these ideas of adaptation in the problem representation, elaborating a solution that suggests that the climate change problem will be solved through adjustment and resilience, influenced as well by the UN SDG discourse about sustainability.

Moving to the last EU Joint Communication, “*A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic*” from 2021, the climate change problem is presented this time in strong connection with the idea of security from a geopolitical perspective.

Building on the previous representations, climate change is once again problematized as a menace: “*Climate change is the most comprehensive threat the Arctic is facing and has reached an unprecedented crisis point*” (EU Commission 2021:2). This representation of a threat presented in the previous policies, is connected as well with the idea of urgency, as we also pointed earlier. Through the use of notions such as “*irreversible*”, “*accelerate*”, “*degradation*”, the problem representation adds this layer of critical situation.

Having as main objectives: *Keep the Arctic safe and stable*, *Action to tackle climate change* and *Inclusive and sustainable development*, this last policy builds the problem in close connection with the notion of security. Is important to mention that in the previous documents the security aspect was presented mainly in connection with environmental and maritime safety issues (See Appendix 2), however, the latest policy seems to take a stronger approach when it comes to the security concept and the implications for European and international stability.

We found for example specific statements regarding stability: “*keep the Arctic safe and stable*” (Ibid.:2), or the need of the EU to improve its foreknowledge regarding the security scenario in the area (Ibid.:3) in order to be prepared for “*emerging security challenges*” (Ibid.:2). Further, the importance of the partnership with NATO is for the first time mentioned, the same regarding the increase of military activity. For the first time specific security concerns regarding Russia and China are mentioned as we can see in the follow statements:

“*Military build-up across the Russian Arctic seems to reflect both global strategic positioning and domestic priorities, including dual use of infrastructure*” (ibid.:3)

“(...) Russia’s increased assertiveness in Arctic waters and airspace. There has also been an upturn in the activities of other actors, including China, and growing interest in areas like ownership of critical infrastructure, the construction of sea cables, global shipping, cyberspace and disinformation” (Ibid.)

The climate change problem representation is therefore highly connected with security, building the role of the EU in association with this concept, as is stated in the document: *“The EU’s full engagement in Arctic matters is a geopolitical necessity”* (Ibid.). In this way, we can argue that in the case of this last policy, the role of the EU is presented as part of a global security agenda discourse, moving from a concept of threat associated with the environment towards a threat associated with security from a more realistic point of view. The mention of big players such as China and Russia can be also seen as a move towards a smart power (Nye) strategy.

To sum up, as we have seen in this first section, the problem of climate change has been at the core of the EU policy since 2008, nonetheless, the representation of this problem has been adding levels of complexity across the years. As we see in the next figure the problem representation has been fluctuating over the years, impacting as well in the strategies and outcomes that the EU is aiming with this policy.

Figure 5: Climate change Problem representation over the years:

Year	2008	2012	2016	2021
Problem representation	Establishing the problem as a threat	Giving urgency to the threat/risks	Making the problem global (outside of the Arctic scope)	Adding security implications
Main objective of EU policy	“Protecting the Arctic and its population”	“Knowledge about climate change in the Arctic”	“Climate change”	“Keep the Arctic safe and stable”

Source: own creation.

Having this overview, we can argue that the problem representation of climate change in the EU Arctic policy is built around a core concept: threat. As we can see in figure 5, this concept of threat is connected as well with the primary objective that each document defined. The 2008 policy defines as a first objective “Protecting the Arctic and its population” that is constructed as part of establishing the problem of climate change as a threat. In the second policy from 2012, the primary objective “Knowledge about Climate change” is constructed as part of the urgency of this threat, and the need of understanding the impact of climate change in the region. The third policy from 2016 connects this threat with the global warming situation,

moving this concept of threat outside of the Arctic region. Finally, the latest policy from 2021 states as part of its first objective “keep the Arctic safe and stable” adding then this layer of security implications to the concept of threat.

Another important concept to mention as part of this climate change problem representation, is exceptionality. This concept is presented across the documents, reinforcing the problem representation as a threat in this specific place/region.

This process in the representation of the problem traced across the EU policies need to be seen not as fixed units but in an interconnected way. As we have mentioned, the discourse builds a concept from a previous one.

This first section gives us interesting first findings regarding how this representation creates the basis for the EU presence and actions, and will be the ground for the following chapters.

4.2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the ‘problem’?

According to Bacchi the aim with this question is to identify “(...) *presuppositions, assumptions (...) knowledges/ discourses*” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016:21) under the problem representation. These terms refer to “*background knowledge*” (Bacchi 2009:5), in order to reveal the conceptual logic underneath the problem representation.

In order to do this, the main objective in this question is to analyse key concepts, categories and binaries or dichotomies that are part of the problem representation of climate change for the EU.

As we argued in the previous section, the problem representation of Climate change in the EU Arctic policy discourse is built around a main conceptual idea: a threat that occurs in an exceptional place.

The concept of threat in this policy is used to refer to diverse categories, namely environmental, population, and security. Thereby, the concept of threat is presented as a multidimensional one, impacting as well in an extreme scale and speed this specific region. This can be seen from the first Joint Communication in 2008: “*Impacts resulting from climate change represent a challenge of paramount importance for the region at present and also for the future*” (EU Commission 2008:3) to the latest one in 2021: “*Climate change is the most comprehensive threat*

the Arctic is facing and has reached an unprecedented crisis point” (EU Commission 2021:1).

In order to understand more clearly this point we propose to debate a little further in the EU political identity process in the Arctic.

In the Arctic context sovereignty is mainly about possession of territory and resources (Griffiths in Raspotnik and Østhagen 2021:1155). And even though the EU has been appealing to a commonality with the Arctic region through the shared member states that also are Arctic states, the reality is the EU presence lacks a proper and basic geographical territoriality. In this context, it seems to be then that climate change and its possible effects on reconfiguring the geographical area open in a way a space for the EU policy to operate. As Wegge and Keil argue: *“Eventually, climate change was not only re-shaping the physical geographies of the Arctic but essentially also its commercial, political, and scientific relevance and importance”* (Wegge and Keil in Raspotnik and Østhagen 2021:1155).

If this is the case, and the EU sees in the climate change an opportunity to be in the Arctic, why frame this situation as a threat?

Campbell, when referring to the building of a political identity in foreign policy setting, argues for the usefulness of statements of risk (Campbell in Devetak 2013:205). Following this idea, the establishment of a political identity will benefit from the articulation of danger (Ibid.) Taking into account these ideas, we suggest as a first assumption that the concept of threat is part of the EU strategy in the region. As we discussed earlier, the legal framework for the EU presence in the Arctic is to say the least weak (Raspotnik and Østhagen 2021, Dobson and Trevisanut 2018). Therefore, there is a real need from the EU to create legitimacy in the region, and it seems to be that the representation of a threat as part of its discourse is part of this strategy.

Furthermore, as we mentioned earlier, the idea of threat is connected as well with the aspect of exceptionality of the region where this EU policy operates.

Even though a political identity does not necessarily require to be built in opposition to others, the security and foreign policy discourses are prone to produce this effect (Devetak 2013: 206). And in this specific policy we can identify some presuppositions about this “other” that is connected with this idea of exceptionality.

The policy creates an image of the Arctic region as fragile, vulnerable and in danger: *“Nowhere is climate change more visible than in the Arctic (...)”* (EU Commission 2012:1). This idea includes not only the geographical space but also its population, as is stated clearly in 2016 Joint Communication: *“Adaptation strategies are needed to help Arctic inhabitants respond to the serious challenges they face because of climate change”* (EU Commission 2016:3).

The logic behind is that the Arctic needs to be protected. And this protection is built around these binaries of vulnerable/stable, exceptionality/commonality, particular/global. With this idea of exceptionality comes as well the idea of specific needs. The climate change effect in this specific area must be targeted through specific policies, specific research and specific actions. The concept of soft power is relevant to mention here. As Nye argues, it is the values, policies and institutions that can carry enough power to lead outcomes in international politics (Nye 2014). If the EU's purpose is to establish itself as a relevant actor in the Arctic, the Arctic in "need" for policies, research, and overall guidance fits in this logic.

The following figure complements figure 5 about the climate representation problem, in order to have a final overview of the EU discourse level over the years.

Figure 6. Final overview EU discourse level:

Year	2008	2012	2016	2021
Problem representation process	Establishing the problem as a threat	Giving urgency to the threat/risks	Making the problem global (outside of the Arctic scope)	Adding security implications
Main objective of EU policy	"Protecting the Arctic and its population"	"Knowledge about climate change in the Arctic"	"Climate change"	"Keep the Arctic safe and stable"
Policy title	"The European Union and the Arctic region"	"Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic region"	"An integrated European Policy for the Arctic"	"A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic"
EU discourse	"call for engagement"	"key supporter"	"duty to protect"	"full engagement"

Source: own creation

After these two first sections we have this first overview of how the level of discourse of the EU is constructed and developed so far. The use of the concept of threat as the key aspect of the problem representation of climate change, and the use of binaries vulnerable/stable, exceptionality/commonality, particular/global, gives a first foundation to move with the analysis. The following three sections will be concentrated in the level of strategies from our analytical framework, therefore paying attention to aspects such as agenda setting and EU values and policies in connection with the Arctic policy and climate change.

In the next section we will start debating further on the specific developments, policies and agreements that provide the basis for this identified problem representation process.

4.3. How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?

Following the analysis, the intention with this question is to understand “*the non-discursive practices*” (Bacchi 2009:10) that allowed the creation of this problem representation. For this purpose I propose to pay attention to the main developments in the EU regarding climate change. Tracing the climate change in the EU policies forces us to have a look at not only the environmental policy area, but also energy, and foreign security policies.

Regarding the legal context of the EU environmental policy, currently the article 191.1 of the TFEU gives the EU the competency of “*promoting measures at international level to deal with regional or worldwide environmental problems, and in particular combating climate change*” (TFEU 2012). Starting in 1972 with the Environmental Action Programme, the environmental policy is one of the most systematised policy making areas. With an emphasis on regulatory mode, the environmental policy had the focus at the beginning on the standardisation of the internal common market (Lenschow 2020: 299). A key change in this development happened during the Barroso II Commission, where the focus turned towards a global climate action agenda (Ibid. 298). Two points show this process: in 2010 the climate policy was separated from the Environmental DG and the position of Commissioner for Climate action (DG CLIMA) was created in the Commission (Ibid.:304).

As a global actor in environmental policy, the EU has built a strong legal position through international agreements. Having signed more than 30 multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) at national, regional and international levels, the EU established itself as a key partner. In addition to this, its presence as a UN observer and the participation in COPs are part of this international role (Ibid.:316). We could argue then that the stage of the EU environmental policy is close to what Finnemore and Sikkink point as final stage of internalisation, when norms “*become institutionalized in international law, in the rules of multilateral organizations, and in bilateral foreign policies*” (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998:900). However, in order to exert a solid international leadership regarding climate change, which in our case is situated in an area outside of its geopolitical scope, the EU needs more than the institutionalisation of internal environmental policies. We will go further in this point in question 6, when we discuss how this representation has been contested.

Now, returning to the trace of the climate change problem within the EU policies, it is interesting to have a look at the Energy Policy. Having as main goals to regulate the energy market, secure energy supply, develop interconnected networks, and

promote clean and low cost energy (Buchan 2020:324), the energy policy under the Treaty of Lisbon (ToL) still gives member states the right to decide their own energy strategies. According to Buchan, climate change is probably the most eager aim within the EU energy policy, with the EU considering themselves as “*pioneers in developing both international and domestic measures to mitigate climate change*” (Buchan 2020:336). Some of these actions include the negotiations at the Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement and the EU Emission trade system (ETS), “*the world’s first major carbon market and (...) the biggest one*” (EU 2022). However, the ambition of being the climate diplomacy leader has clashed with internal struggles for achieving the greenhouse gases reduction set by the EU. Some member states still rely strongly on carbon and not all member states’ economies share the same infrastructure and economies in order to achieve EU reduction goals. Policies regarding climate change rely on a balance between economy and environment (Buchan 2020:340), something particularly challenging in the Arctic.

As we can see the development of the EU Energy policy has been affected by economic, environmental and security issues, however climate change can be seen now as “*the great federator of energy policy*” (Ibid.:341). This shows the challenge of climate change when it comes to defining a global and consistent policy, having a diversity of areas from which it is possible to act.

Lastly, it is relevant to see how the climate change problem is treated in the EU Foreign, Security and Defence policy.

An interesting point of departure is to think about the global aspect that the EU Arctic policy put into climate change, especially since 2016 Joint Communication. As Vennesson argues when referring to how the EU Security strategy has been conceptualised “*Globalization is European policy-makers’ mental image of today’s world*” (Vennesson in Cassarini 2007:16).

In the first strategy from 2003 during the term of the High Representative Javier Solana, “*A secure Europe in a better world*”, stated this scenario of global challenges, where conflicts in Korea or Sub-Saharan Africa are listed as part of the threats that the EU must face and defend with its security and values (EU Commission 2003).

With the rationale that “*In an era of globalisation, distant threats may be as much a concern as those that are near at hand*” (Ibid.6), we can trace points of departure of this climate change problem representation as a threat that happens in the Arctic but affects globally. Is in this context of globalisation that the EU started building this desire of involvement, further defining its role as a global leader in the Arctic. With global warming being a wider security concern, the logic of the EU is that this would affect not only Europe but also the whole world.

If we jump now to the 2009 EU Global Strategy, it is possible to find that climate change appears explicitly as part of the security discourse. Calling for an effort on climate security due the “*threat multiplying effect of climate change*” (EU

Commission 2019:26), using the same wording that we found in 2008 Joint Communication: “(...) *the role of climate change as a “threats multiplier”*” (EU Commission 2008:2). Additionally, the EEAS document listed climate change together with terrorism, hybrid threats, energy insecurity (Ibid.37) as part of the security concerns for the EU. This is consistent with the data analysed from our four policy documents, where the concept of Security is presented from 2008 to 2021 with different emphasis, and as we mentioned earlier mainly in association with a) European and global security issues, b) maritime/shipping safety matters c) environmental issues and research, d) resources and e) civilian protection. As the EU Arctic policy develops over the years we see an increase of “security threats” produced by climate change that become connected with a global security agenda more than with an specific security issue in the Arctic region (Appendix 2).

These concepts are also connected as part of the knowledge and research needed for the region (space surveillance for example), that can be associated as well with the aspect of “exceptionality” and with the presupposition of “specificity” mentioned earlier. Furthermore, actions such as space surveillance open the question about possible connection with the security concerns of the EU in the region.

This last point brings us again to our research question, trying to understand why climate change seems to be at the core of the legitimization strategy of the EU in the Arctic region. We can argue that if the problem of climate change is represented as global, and threatening an exceptional place, the EU is called to participate. The EU's identity of pioneer against climate change is therefore adequate: “*A global leader in fighting climate change needs to be politically present in the region most affected by climate change*” (Raspotnik and Østhagen 2021:1161). In this regard, the presence of the EU in the Arctic could be seen as part of its own soft power consciousness, knowing that in the international system the EU is seen “*as a positive force for solving global problems*” (Nye 2004:78). However, we can stress the fact that the EU is bringing this identity to a place that is already complex not only in terms of its geopolitical challenges but also in a sociocultural level. In this sense, the quest for the Arctic presents some similarities with the logic behind the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and this idea of “*making regions for EU action*” (Jones in Raspotnik and Østhagen 2021:1153). Holding in the shared memberships with the Arctic States it has been proving to be a weak ground (Raspotnik and Stępień 2020), and with EEA members such as Iceland and Norway being as well active in protecting the Arctic interests over the EU (Ibid:141). Moreover, the fact that the EU Nordic countries, Denmark, Sweden and Finland have some reservations against this EU policy, has been seen as a way to avoid undermining the already consolidated group of Arctic Eight (Kobza 2015:12). Is worth to ask at this point what are the underlying tensions of this problem, and go further in the analysis of the underlying assumptions in the EU Arctic policy.

4.4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences?

The aim of this section is to ask “*what fails to be problematised*” (Bacchi 2009:12), to discuss then topics or angles that are silenced in the problem representation, moreover to discuss “*tensions and contradictions*” (ibid.:13) in the problematic.

As a starting point it is relevant to go a little further in the policy framework in the Arctic Region. Since its establishment in 1996 the Arctic Council (AC) has been the main conclave for Arctic issues (Prip 2020). With the presence of the eight Arctic states, six Indigenous Peoples’ organisations as Permanent Participants, and a growing group of Observers that include non-Arctic states (such as China, India, UK, Germany among others), Intergovernmental and Interparliamentary organisations (including bodies such as IMO and UNDP), and Non-Governmental Organisations (WWF, IASC and Northern Forum along with others), the AC has developed over the years from its primarily focus on environmental protection to sustainable development matters, with focus on the Arctic population (Ibid.). The release in 2004 of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), “*the first comprehensive multi-disciplinary assessment of the impacts of climate change in the Arctic*” (AC 2005), altered dramatically the vision of the Arctic region. This led to a shift in the objectives of many of the AC working groups, focusing on the consequences of climate change, and as Koivurova points out, “*These ‘second generation’ assessments examine in more detail some of the consequences to the Arctic environment and the growing interests of the business community in making use of the Arctic.*” (Koivurova 2010:150).

This openness for possible resources and trade prospects increased as well the opportunities for non-Arctic states in the application for Observers status in the AC (only in 2013 six countries received Observer status: Italy, Japan, China, India, Korea and Singapore), putting the AC closer to foreign policy and international trade issues than before. As Prip argues: “*Unlike before, the Arctic states are now represented by foreign ministers at the AC meetings, which receive much media attention*” (Prip 2020:2). It is in this context that we can identify one of the big tensions in the EU Arctic policy, namely the fact that the EU has not been accepted as an Observer in the AC. Listed as one of the key action points in the 2008 Joint Communication, the EU applied for a permanent observer status in the AC the same year, rejected in 2009 at the 6th Ministerial meeting in Tromsø, Norway (Phillips 2009), and applied again in 2011 (EU Commission 2012). However, as announced by the AC, they received affirmatively the application in the Kiruna Meeting in 2013 “*but deferred a final decision*” (Arctic Council 2022).

The fact is that without a proper seat in the main regional body the EU must rely then on other strategies of legitimization. Even though there have been critics regarding the absence of regulatory capacity from the AC (Durfee and Johnstone in Prip 2020),

the fact is that after the Kiruna Meeting the AC declared its aim to move from “*policy-shaping into policy-making*” (Arctic Council 2013:5).

In connection with this we can point the expansion towards business opportunities in the region with the creation of the Arctic Economic Council (ACE). Created under the AC proposal during the Canadian chairmanship in 2014, shows the AC’s aim of becoming a stronger interstate organisation. This could lead to clashes with the EU’s own proposals for economic development for the region.

A clear example of this dispute is the case of the EU ban on seal products in 2009, that provoke not only a huge impact on the Inuit communities (Prip 2020, Raspotnik and Østhagen 2021) but a legal controversy with Canada and Norway, that some authors connect with the rejection of the EU observer application in the AC (Sellheim and Wegge in Raspotnik and Østhagen 2021).

As Østhagen well argues “(...) *the EU’s very self-perception as an epitome of what is right and safe (...) was not necessarily well- perceived by some of the region’s dominant actors*” (Ibid.: 2021:1162). This is a starting point for analysing a second tension or contradiction, connected with the population of the Arctic.

With a population of more than four million (Arctic Council 2020) spread across the Arctic region, the people from the Arctic are far from homogenous. Composed by a diverse group of indigenous habitants, non-indigenous people with ancestors from non-Arctic states that migrated a long time ago, other recent migrants from non-Arctic states, and habitants with mixed ethnic background (Norden 2015:83) the Arctic population possess a cultural identity complexity that cannot be diminished.

The Arctic states have different strategies for the categorization of its population (Norden 2015:85), and the indigenous population have the frame of the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous People that provides the right of a nationality (United Nations 2007). With this scenario it does not seem adequate to make a generic or homogenous categorization. The idea of trying to represent the Arctic population as a uniform group clashes with the reality of the region, and in the EU Arctic policy we found very little nuances in this representation. Across the four Joint Communications we found two main categories of people: local/Arctic inhabitants and Indigenous people. And even though the aim for engagement with both populations, but especially with the indigenous population is constantly stated, we can find some ambiguities in the actual actions from the EU. An example is the case of the last “EU Arctic Forum and Indigenous Peoples’ Dialogue” done in 2021 in Brussels. This forum is part of the action points of the EU Arctic Policy, and as the program stated the objective was to: “*provide a strategic outlook for the updated EU Arctic policy and delve into topics that are of particular significance for the Arctic’s inhabitants*” (EU Newsroom 2021).

The event presented a two full day conference with a heavy presence of different EU authorities and experts, including HR Joseph Borrell and EU Commissioner for

Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus Sinkevičius. The absence of indigenous representation from key Arctic states such as Greenland (represented only by the Head of Representation of Greenland to the EU) or the total absence from Russia representatives shows some contradictions. What is the situation with Greenland after they left the EU in the 1985 referendum? Or what will be the real engagement with Russia in this EU Arctic policy?

As a matter of fact, in 2015 the Arctic Human Development Report developed by The Nordic Council of Ministers stated that “*An increasing trend of legitimate participation in Arctic decision- making and continued innovation in governance can be observed at all scales*” (Norden 2015:22), however it also state the need of fulfilling in a better way the requirements of indigenous and local citizens (Ibid.).

The issue of indigenous participation in global climate change agreements seems to be a problematic not too distant from the specific situation in the Arctic, even with the current forum around the AC. As Schroeder argues, amidst the increase of indigenous people in international instances of climate negotiations, there is still a lack of proper engagement and representation when it comes to global deliberation (Schroeder in Lövbrand and Linnér 2015:54)

A difficult aspect of the problem representation of the Arctic in the EU Arctic policy is connected with what Prozorov debates regarding how Europe creates its own identity in contradiction with the Other (non-Western), picturing itself as “*progressive and peaceful*” (Prozorov in Devetak 2013:206). This idea connects with the goal that the EU states in the last Joint Communication regarding its involvement: “*(...) working to ensure that it remains safe, stable, sustainable, peaceful and prosperous*” (EU Commission 2021:1), projecting for one side this concept of vulnerability (The Arctic in need) that we identified previously, but also presenting itself in the forefront of what the region needs. Allowing Europe to express on behalf of history and modernity (Chakrabarty in Devetak 2013:206) reveals a contradiction in a complex region as the Arctic, which already holds colonial issues in countries such as Canada or Greenland. Statements such as “*(...) to help Arctic inhabitants respond to the serious challenges they face because of climate change*” (EU Commission 2016:3, emphasis added) show these internal contradictions within the EU Arctic Policy, and the unproblematized aspect of the climate change representation that the EU is building around these binaries of us versus them, vulnerable versus stable.

The EU foreign policy has not been exempted from critics of its postcolonial approach, especially in the building of the ENP, where it is called to pay attention to the “*static, homogeneous and Eurocentric view*” (Dimitrova and Kramsch 2017:798) that it is creating around the areas where these policies operate. The fact that for example the EU Arctic Forum and Indigenous Peoples’ Dialogue mentioned earlier is categorised under the tags *European Commission, Enlargement, external relations and trade* for the same EU, reveals that its strategy of legitimization in the Arctic is

more complex. The problem of climate change certainly opens a space for the EU presence as a global actor, however it is worth asking again if this is only about environmental concerns.

If we look at some background information on the Arctic from the EU it is worth paying attention to two documents.

The first document is the “*Climate change and international security Paper*” from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council released in 2008, before the first Joint Communication about the Arctic. Prepared after the UN Security Council from 2007 where the security issues connected with climate change were highlighted, the EU listed the main threats and geographical areas in higher risk (Council of the European Union, European Commission 2008), including areas in Africa, South Asia and Latin America. Regarding the Arctic the paper states:

“The resulting new strategic interests are illustrated by the recent planting of the Russian flag under the North Pole. There is an increasing need to address the growing debate over territorial claims and access to new trade routes by different countries which challenge Europe’s ability to effectively secure its trade and resource interests in the region and may put pressure on its relations with key partners” (Ibid.:8)

A second document is the article published by HR Joseph Borrell after the opening of the Arctic Frontiers conference in 2021. In this article the security aspects of the EU needs for involvement are explicit, following the previous pattern that we analysed in connection with 2021 Joint Communication. Referencing directly to Russia (“*Russia, for instance, is rebuilding many of its Arctic military capabilities that had fallen into disrepair at the end of the Cold War*” (Borrell, J. 2021)), and other big powers such as US and China (“*The US together with NATO forces have carried out exercises in Arctic waters, and China is becoming increasingly interested in the economic potential of the region*” (Ibid.)), this speech is openly stating the security concern from the EU towards the presence of the big players in the international arena.

However, in this article the economic interest is more openly presented than in the Joint Communications, giving specifics about the Arctic resources that are yearned by the EU:

“The Arctic offers huge potential as a test-bed for geothermal, wind and hydro projects, the carbon-free production of steel, greener battery production and the like. This is important for the peoples who live there, but their innovation and sustainable use of resources can also become key to Europe’s strategic autonomy. As Europe transitions to a carbon-neutral future, it will require supplies of critical minerals, many of which are present in Arctic regions.” (Ibid.)

This is an interesting statement, where the needs of Europe for achieving “strategic autonomy” are entangled with the natural resources presented in the Arctic. In this sense it is relevant to connect with Paterson’s analysis of the global environmental problem, in the sense that it is not possible to apprehend this problematic, without being aware of the association of the power structures in world politics, such as capitalism, knowledge and the state system (Paterson in Mello y Margarido 2016:233). As the author argues, the global climate problem cannot be solved with the same global structure that provokes it (Ibid.). If the EU is defining climate change as the main problem in order to build its legitimization strategy in this region, and is at the same time aiming for security and economic gains, where is the EU policy left? Is the EU moving towards what Nye calls “smart power”? And moreover, what effects are produced already?

4.5. What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?

The aim with this section is to discuss some of the effects that this specific policy produces from this specific representation of the problem.

These effects can be separated into discursive effects, subjectification effects, or lived effects (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016:20). In this section we will focus first on what is called the discursive effects, that must be understood as the political significance or effect (Ibid.23). Furthermore, the attention will be on the effect that this representation has on the associated EU discourse of climate resilience, and how this debate has been shaped. After that we will discuss some of the lived effects of this policy.

As we argue earlier, the use of concepts such as mitigation and adaptation start to appear more strongly in the Joint Communication from 2016 onwards, with statements such as “*Adaptation strategies are needed to help Arctic inhabitants*” (EU Commission 2016:3), or “*The EU should work with regions in the Arctic to draw up appropriate adaptation and mitigation measures (...)*” (EU Commission 2016:7). In this year the concept of resilience appears also for the first time in connection with climate change, and with more emphasis in the follow Joint Communication of 2021, with statements such as: “*Making the Arctic more resilient to climate change*” (EU Commission 2021:2), “*strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change*” (Ibid.:7). Furthermore, the concept of resilience is connected with the Arctic population: “*contribute to the resilience of indigenous people in the face of climate change effect*” (Ibid.:10) or “*sustainable development and resilient societies*” (Ibid.:13), expanding this connection from the Arctic as a place towards its population.

This discourse about climate resilience can be traced in other EU discourse, for example, in the case of the last EEAS strategy it is stated that: “*Climate resilience is now a priority of our foreign policy*” (EEAS 2019:40). Another recent EU relevant

discourse is the paper “A Climate Resilient Europe”, published by the European Commission and the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation in 2020. With the objective to “*turn the urgent challenge of adapting to climate change into an opportunity to make Europe resilient*” (EU Commission et al. 2020:3), the paper states the mechanism for this required resilience, focusing on investment, knowledge, sustainable business and innovation (Ibid.:5), announcing a 25% of the EU budget dedicated to climate adaptation, and no less than 30% to the InvestEU Fund with the same focus (Ibid.:18). This matches with the actions proposed in the last Joint Communication for the Arctic region, where it is stated the focus on sustainable development and climate adaptation, green transition and innovation (EU Commission 2021:14).

This relationship between adaptation to climate change and the opportunity for Europe can be seen as one of the relevant effects that the EU Arctic policy produces at the discursive level. It is difficult here not to mention the connection with the SDG Agenda and the sustainable development discourse that has become mainstream in the last years.

As Bjørst well argues “*climate change is often considered a challenge to ‘achieving sustainable development’, which, in turn, is often described as the end goal*” (Bjørst 2018:122). A similar effect seems to be the one created by the problem representation of climate change in the EU policy. By making this connection between climate change and climate resilience, the sustainable development discourse can be introduced.

Moving now to the lived effects, we need to pay attention towards “*the material impact of problem representations*” (Bacchi 2009:17).

The first is directly concerned with the problem representation of climate change as a main threat in the exceptionality of this geographical region. The need for specific knowledge has been driving the major funding schemes from the EU in the Arctic. At the same time the EU has been building an extensive network of scientific knowledge in the region through the EU Polar net initiative. From a poststructuralist point of view we can argue that there is a connection among “*claims to knowledge and claims to political power and authority*” (Devetak 2013:216)

The constant support for Arctic research has been until now one of the most successful areas where the EU has promoted its climate leadership. As it was stated early in the 2012 Joint Communication the situation in the Arctic ““(…) *calls for increased EU investment in climate change research in the Arctic, as a basis for further global and regional action*” (EU Commission 2012:2). Under the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7), the EU funded projects for around EUR 200 million during the years 2007-2013 (EPRD 2021). More recently, the EU has provided funding for more than EUR 200 million as part of the specific Arctic call in the Horizon 2020 Framework Program as part of the

Europe 2020 Strategy (EPRD 2021). Furthermore, funding for EUR 225 million in Greenland as part of the OCT support, EIB support for green energy, EU satellite systems and Connecting Europe Facility among others (EU Commission 2021).

The Arctic research funding is probably the main primary currency (Nye) that the EU has for this policy, however, it is important to mention here at least two possible future contradictions. One is the issue that some scholars already have pointed out regarding the still exclusion of indigenous knowledge as part of the mainstream in Arctic research (Pfeifer 2018, Sörlin 2013) and the need to increase a community based participatory research (Rink et al.2013, Ren et al.2018). The second, is the fact that what the EU is funding will be part of the foundation of the future EU Arctic policies, in this sense it is necessary to pay attention to future announcements and actions in this specific region.

Another lived effect that is worth paying attention is the announcement of the establishment of a EU Commission office in Nuuk. Named as one the key action points in the last Joint Communication from 2021, the opening of a physical space in Greenland can be seen as direct action towards a stronger establishment in the region. Even though it is not clear yet when this office will be operative, it was announced in the local and international media, and as one of the local media states the announcement needs to be seen “*as part of the fight against climate change*” (Sermitsiaq 2021). The development of this lived effect will be interesting to analyse in the future, considering that in the first Greenland Foreign and Security policy survey published in 2020 showed that still a 60% of Greenlanders are against reincorporation to the EU (Ackrén and Nielsen 2021:3), and at the same time 65% of Greenlanders think that Greenland should increase its cooperation with the European Union (Ibid.).

4. 6. How/where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been disseminated and questioned?

In this last section we aim to debate around how or where the problem of climate change as part of the legitimization strategy of the EU has been disseminated and disrupted. This will be in connection with the outcomes level from our analytical framework, therefore touching upon the concepts of legitimacy, leadership and institutionalisation.

In order to do this we propose to touch upon two areas, both in connection with the EU climate leadership strategy. One referred to the specific actions and discourse towards the Arctic region as part of the dissemination of this EU policy, and other regarding the questioning of the EU climate leadership in the COP15 in Copenhagen.

The dissemination of the EU representation of climate change has been mainly through the EU Commission and the HR, as well through the EU Arctic Ambassador Special Envoy, a position held currently by Michael Mann.

In this sense, recalling the leadership concepts presented in our theoretical framework, we can argue that the type of leadership presented by the EU in this policy is connected with what we mentioned as “entrepreneurial leadership” (Young), based on diplomacy and political expertise. This is specially clear for the figure of the current HR, Joseph Borrell, that has been compared to first HR Javier Solana in his style of being a extreme highly experienced diplomat that is not afraid to speak freely (Rettman 2020:23), and sometimes even without having the approval of all EU member states (Ibid.).

In the case of the EU Arctic Ambassador, who is the official voice from the EU in the Arctic, we can see a very active participation in the specific debate about the region, but also active presence in traditional and social media, that gives him as well some characteristic from the “intellectual leadership” (Young), in the sense of building leadership through framing ideas. With an agile activity on Twitter (with 29,1 K followers), the EU Arctic Ambassador is also a dedicated advocate in the construction of the official discourse and EU policy action in the Arctic, for example writing columns in magazines such as Time, being interviewed for international outlets and publishing last year the book “The new climate war”. As far as we can see, the combination of these two types of leadership seems effective in communicating the EU policy in the specific Arctic climate policy network. However, it is important to remember that some of the contradictions of the Arctic policy are connected with the problematic inclusion of the Arctic population in the policies for the region. As Forsyth argues: “(...) *evidence has suggested that climate partnerships might be motivated more out of public relations, brand management, or general advocacy rather than create the circumstances where citizens and civil society organizations can participate and deliberate with investors about the scope of*

effective and legitimate climate action” (Forsyth in Lövbrand and Linnér 2015:54). In that sense the action of dissemination of this policy must be seen as part of the official discourse pushed by the EU rather than a harmless action or concrete success in the legitimization strategy.

Regarding how this representation has been questioned, it is interesting to have a closer look about the contested EU global climate leadership in the Climate Summit Copenhagen in 2009.

Several authors mention the faux pas that the EU had during the climate negotiations in the COP 15 in Copenhagen in 2009 (Buchan 2020, Lenschow 2020, Vidal et al. 2009). During the summit, the EU aspirations of being a global climate leader were troubled after they could not achieve support enough to promote a binding agreement regarding cutting emissions (Buchan 2020:339). A miscalculation of the BRICs power, plus the failure to negotiate on time with developing countries and Small Island developing states pushed the signing of global agreements until 2015 (Lenschow 2020:317). This caused a big political impact on the EU ambitions of becoming an international leader in this area (Buchan 2020:339), and showed as well that the leadership cannot rely only on policies and directives. The situation in the Copenhagen Climate Summit showed as well the tension between developed and developing countries. The debate around the 1,5° or 2° as a maximum temperature increase turned highly politicised leaving little space for scientific reasoning (Corneloup and Mol 2014:288) and for the voices of developing countries, small islands developing states and non-governmental movements. Finally, the 1,5° proposal lost against the more powerful countries that decided to remain with the 2° (Ibid.).

Moreover, the presence of the US as a global climate leader “*completely by-passed*” (Buchan 2020:339) the EU aspirations. It was the US who finally took the lead in the final negotiations with China, South Africa, India and Brazil (Vidal et. al 2009). Furthermore, the presence of President Obama was seen as a comeback of the US leadership: “*The time has come for us to get off the sidelines and shape the future that we seek; that is why I came to Copenhagen*” (Ibid.).

Moreover, recalling the leadership types characterisation in international regimes, we can argue that the aim of being an entrepreneurial leader failed in this specific context, without being able to negotiate and lead a global agreement in the Climate Summit 2009. Furthermore, as Skodvin and Steinar argue, the EU has the capabilities for being a directional leadership in climate policy, however the lack of capacity of achieving its own targets leaves it in a weak leadership position (Skodvin and Steinar 2006:22). In the specific context of the Arctic, the position is not promising either.

As a last example of this contestation, it is interesting to mention the failed proposal for an Arctic Treaty made by EU Parliament. In the European Parliament resolution

of 9 October 2008 on Arctic governance, the EP suggested that the Commission should seek the adoption of a “(...) *international treaty for the protection of the Arctic, having as its inspiration the Antarctic Treaty (...)*” (European Parliament 2008:4). The idea of a treaty it was strongly rejected by the Arctic states and organisations (Raspotnik 2021, Stępień et al. 2015, Koivurova 2018), showing the lack of knowledge that the EU still has of the specific internal and domestic conditions of the region. This is particularly the case regarding domestic issues with Canada and Russia (Raspotnik and Østhagen 2021:1163), with for example the situation with the seal ban mentioned earlier.

As we have argued, the EU legitimization strategy through climate change in the Arctic relies on its global climate leadership identity. The crack shown in Copenhagen presents some of the aspects that keep the EU still in the periphery of the Arctic, with a leadership as Lenschow claims “(...) *sometimes more rhetorical than substantial (...)*” (Lenschow 2020:318).

The inclusion of non-governmental actors, developing countries and other actors such as scientific communities, is a key aspect in the climate action, however, as we have mentioned earlier, the spaces of discussion and decision still remain asymmetric. As Chakrabarty well points out “*Global warming is a planetary phenomenon. But as a subject of discussion, it seemed to be distributed very unequally in the world*” (Chakrabarty 2017:35). Without paying attention to these dimensions, the EU Arctic policy could remain in the margins of what can happen in the Arctic, amidst its claim of being in the Arctic.

5. Conclusion

After this analysis we can conclude that climate change as a political concept has been at the core of the EU Arctic strategy since the start of this policy development. This concept has been formed mainly with the idea of threat in an exceptional place.

However, as the analysis has shown, this idea of threat opened other associations, such as security issues. This seems to be the case especially in the latest Joint Communication, where we can see a move from climate concerns to security concerns.

Going back to our research question, asking why is climate change used as a legitimization strategy of the EU to become a relevant actor in the region, we can answer by paying attention to the following ideas.

First, we cannot argue against climate action per se, it is in that sense a very “secure” objective to choose to build a policy around. Climate change has pushed the political discussion more and more towards concrete actions, and it was not the aim of this research to question the importance of this. However, as the analysis has shown, the complexity of the Arctic region on the political, geographical and sociocultural level makes the legitimization strategy based on climate change a goal that is still difficult to achieve.

A second point is that amidst the analysed contestations and outcomes, the EU has been building an identity as global climate change leader. Therefore, the problem of climate change seems fitting in its legitimization strategy in a region outside its territorial border.

However, it seems to be that for this specific policy the territorial presence matters more than the EU thinks. If we also add the presence of other powerful leadership competitors such as the United States, Russia and Canada the competition for the EU seems not less complicated in the future.

Lastly, we analysed some of the internal pressures of the EU for being a climate leader while at the same time maintaining the status quo regarding the economic interest of the EU. We can conclude as well that the role of the EEAS is key to analyse. As we show in the analysis, the foreign policy in the Arctic moves between climate, maritime affairs, economic, and lately towards security issues. This array of interest showed as well the EU’s difficulties of building a consistent policy in this region. In the same line, this also put pressure on the leadership role. Even though climate policy is one of the areas where the EU has been consistently building an international leadership, the lack of definition regarding the Arctic can be seen as part of the resistance of this specific policy.

The current situation with Russia’s invasion towards Ukraine, and the effects on energy security will probably add more layers to the EU’s future presence and

engagement in the Arctic. At the time of writing this research, the EU has already pushed for an aggressive agenda towards green transition, moving towards a 45% increase in its share of renewable energy by the year 2030. What effects can this have in the Arctic? Is this announcement pushing the exploration of critical minerals in the Arctic in order to achieve Europe's strategic autonomy? Moreover, what will be the effect of this new EU agenda in its climate leadership role?

As the international situation develops, so do the climate change effects. The complexities in the region will also remain open, and this will remain as well a challenge for the EU legitimization strategy. Would the geopolitical leadership identity take over the environmental one? The development of the EU's strategy in the Arctic will require maybe a hybrid identity, in order to obtain the longed legitimacy in the Arctic. For now, the EU seems to remain as a secondary actor in the Arctic narrative.

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