

The war in Ukraine and the European Green Deal

*To what extent has the war in Ukraine impacted the prioritisation of combatting
climate change in the European Green Deal?*

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Abstract

The European Union has over the last decades widely been seen a forerunner in climate action, passing its cornerstone European Green Deal (EGD) strategy to achieve climate neutrality. However, the Union also has a track recording of deprioritising climate policies whenever it faces a new crisis, a trend that has only started to be reversed with the COVID-19 pandemic. Most recently, the war in Ukraine has moved the EU into crisis mode once again, leading to the question of whether this new crisis will return the Union to its old patterns of de-prioritising climate change. Despite some research having partially started to look into this dynamic, the war is a recent and still evolving situation, meaning there is a relative scarcity of academic literature around it. This paper attempts to contribute to filling this gap in the literature, guided by the research question: *To what extent has the war in Ukraine impacted the prioritisation of combatting climate change in the European Green Deal?*

After an introduction, the paper starts with a discussion of background and terminology, followed by a brief literature review. Subsequently, the paper explains its social constructivist ontology, places the research on the agenda-setting stage of the policy cycle and explains its main theories, the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) and securitisation theory. Methodologically, this paper treats the war in Ukraine as a potential window of opportunity and compares how the European Commission as a policy entrepreneur prioritises the combatting of climate change in the EGD before the war to after the beginning of the war, to see whether there has been a significant change.

The prioritisation is measured by investigating the level of securitisation of climate change, as securitisation provides a convenient method to see whether all three streams of the MSF are combined, and an issue is put on top of the agenda. Using a framing analysis, the analysis investigates the original EGD document, the Commission's strategy documents that are part of the EGD in the areas of energy and industry, and the State of the Union speeches from 2021 and 2022.

The subsequent comparison and discussion find that the war seems to have impacted the prioritisation of combatting climate change in the EGD negatively. The analysis finds that there was no significant change in the securitisation of climate change in industry policy, and in the energy policy and state of the union speeches, the securitisation of climate change was found to be linked to the securitisation of the war in Ukraine. This means that while the Commission seems to still be prioritising measures leading to decarbonisation, it seems to now be done out of a motivation to combat the effects of the war, not climate change.

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1. Introduction

With every new yearly report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it has become clearer that ambitious international action is needed to keep global warming at a level that will allow a liveable future for everyone on the planet. International climate action has grown considerably as a response, with the European Union being a forerunner and commonly seen as an international leader in the field (Dupont, Oberthür, & von Homeyer, 2020; Wurzel, Liefferink, & Connelly, 2017). However, despite these efforts, “[t]he pace and scale of what has been done so far, and current plans, are insufficient to tackle climate change” (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2023, para. 3), and that action of “unprecedented scale” is needed (para. 3).

However, climate action is just one of the many problems that vie for the attention of policymakers. With the EU being known to stumble from one crisis into the next (Hodson & Puetter, 2019), historically, climate action has tended to draw the short end of the stick whenever new, more short-term policy priorities arise (Lenschow, 2020; Burns, Eckersley, & Tobin, 2020). Only recently has this trend seemingly been stopped, with scholars finding indications that the COVID-19 pandemic has not impacted climate action negatively, and maybe even had a positive effect on the fight of climate change (Bongardt & Torres, 2020; Dupont et al., 2020).

In February 2022, the EU was confronted with another, new kind of crisis, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine bringing war onto the continent after a long period of peace and stability. Although the Union was not attacked directly, its dependence on Russian oil and gas for its energy production (Bir, 2022), the knock-on effects on the economy (O’Donnell, 2022), and the geopolitical implications of the invasion were enough to require the full attention of the EU’s legislative machine.

In addition to being another crisis for the EU to deal with that might potentially distract it from urgently needed ambitious climate action, the war requires concrete action in policy fields that the EU had designated as priority areas for combatting climate change. In the EU’s policy framework for climate action, the European Green Deal (EGD), the decarbonisation of energy, industry, and the economy as a whole were important goals (European Commission, 2019).

With the war impacting exactly these fields as well, this naturally poses the question of whether the strengthening effect on climate action by the pandemic was just an exception, and whether the war will push the EU back into its old patterns of relegating climate action onto the

side-lines in favour of dealing with the newly arisen crisis. This problem will be the focus of this paper, formulated in the following research question:

To what extent has the war in Ukraine impacted the prioritisation of combatting climate change in the European Green Deal?

Some scholars have already found indications of a positive influence (Kuzemko, Blondeel, Dupont, & Brisbois, 2022), but due to the recent and evolving nature of the war, scholarly literature is still relatively sparse and new developments keep shifting the dynamics, making it difficult to give any definite indications of the impact of the war at this point (Mišić & Nosko, 2023). This paper aims to contribute to this literature and investigate the potential impact of the war by applying a social constructivist worldview, and the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) to see whether or not the window of opportunity opened by the war was seized to push for more climate action. This will be done by operationalising the MSF through securitisation theory and using a framing analysis to compare the levels of securitisation in data from before the beginning of the war to data from after the beginning, as a way to measure potential changes in the prioritisation of climate change. Focussing on the European Commission as a policy entrepreneur, the analysis will focus not just on recent policies released as part of the EGD, but discourses as well.

The paper will start by providing some context by discussing the background and terminology of the paper, and a literature review discussing the existing literature on crises in the EU, environmental policies, and the impact of the war in Ukraine on the EU. The subsequent theory chapter will lay out social constructivism as the theoretical foundation of the paper and situate the paper's research in the agenda-setting stage of policymaking. Then it will lay out the MSF, securitisation theory, and discourse and framing analysis.

The methodology chapter will discuss the specific analytical framework of the paper, which data will be used, and how said data will be analysed, concluding with a brief discussion of this paper's limitations. Then, the analysis will utilise a framing analysis to first look at securitisation of climate change in the data from before the war, followed by a look at the data from after the beginning of the war. The analysis will conclude with a section dedicated to comparing the levels of securitisation, while the subsequent discussion chapter will debate these findings and their implications in the context of the MSF to answer the problem formulation. The paper will close with a conclusion chapter and a discussion of avenues for further research.

2. Background and Terminology

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine is an ongoing situation that only recently turned into an all-out war. It started in February 2014, when, after days of intense pro-EU protests in Ukraine, “[d]ozens of pro-Russia gunmen seize[d] government buildings in Crimea” (Walker, 2023, p. 11), starting the Russian annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula. The illegal annexation was formalised by Russia in March of the same year, after a “secession referendum [of the area was] backed by 95% of voters” (Walker, 2023, p. 13). This was followed in May by “[p]ro-Russia separatists in Ukraine’s easternmost areas, Donetsk and Luhansk, announc[ing] landslide victories in referendums on “self-rule”” (Walker, 2023, p. 15).

After this, there were no major developments of the situation until around November 2021, when Russia started moving more and more of its troops to the border of Ukraine (Walker, 2023). Three months later, the situation escalated into an all-out invasion on the 24th of February 2023, when Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his forces to “carry out “a special military operation” in Ukraine” (Walker, 2023, p. 41). As of the time of writing, the fighting between Russia and Ukraine is still ongoing, with the Ukrainian side being supported by its Western allies, including the EU (Walker, 2023).

This paper will focus on the time period after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Despite the conflict in the country involving fighting before the invasion, popular discourse has only referred to it as a war after the start of the large-scale military fighting seen since February 2022 (Askew, 2023). This paper will follow this terminology, meaning that whenever ‘the war in Ukraine’ is referenced, it is referring to the invasion and subsequent defence of Ukraine.

3. Literature Review: Crises, the EU, and Environmental Policy

Before moving on to the theory chapter, this first chapter aims to lay out and discuss the existing academic literature within the fields of climate action in the European Union and the impact of crises on the EU more generally. It will then give an overview over the literature investigating the effects of the war in Ukraine on EU environmental policy to explain the gaps in the existing literature that will be filled with this paper. The literature for the specific theories used in this paper will be reviewed as part of the corresponding sections in the theory chapter.

The impact of crises on the European Union is well-researched. It is well-known not just inside academic circles, that “it is difficult to remember a time when the EU or its predecessors were not facing a crisis of one sort or another” (Hodson & Puetter, 2019, p. 389).

As a result, a lot of scholars have dedicated their research to investigating how the EU was impacted by crises (Dinan, Nugent, Paterson, 2017; Riddervold, Trondal, & Newsome, 2021), be it the Euro Crisis (Hudson & Puetter, 2019), Brexit (Cini & Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, 2019), or most recently the COVID-19 pandemic (Su, Dai, Ullah, Andlib, 2022). One primary area of focus was the effect on European integration that different crises had (Schimmelfennig, 2017; Hodson & Puetter, 2019;). However, there is also literature that focusses more specifically on “[p]olicy-making in the European Union [...] in response to [...] systemic pressures” and crises (Pollack, Roederer-Rynning, & Young, 2020, p. 471).

Most importantly for the context of this paper, the EU’s environmental policymaking and climate ambitions have been investigated more and more by researchers in recent years. When discussing environmental policy and climate policy, some scholars make a distinction between the former, intended to deal with “negative environmental impacts of sectoral policies” (Lenschow, 2020, p. 298), and the latter, with the express purpose of “climate change mitigation” (Lenschow, 2020, p. 298). However, in most cases, the two terms are used interchangeably, with some scholars preferring to use the overarching term of environmental policy (van den Hove, 2000; Burns, et al., 2020), and some climate policy (Oberthür & Kelly, 2008), or climate politics (Samper, Schockling, & Islar, 2021).

Despite differing terminology, the EU’s policymaking surrounding the environment and climate change has been the focus of considerable scholarly attention, as it has “become [...] a truly integrated policy objective” (Lenschow, 2020, p. 298). Much of the research focusses on the ambitious nature of environmental policy in the EU, with most scholars more or less agreeing that the EU plays a leading role internationally when it comes to climate change mitigation (Oberthür & Kelly, 2008; Dupont et al., 2020; Wurzel et al., 2017). After the publication of the EGD in 2019, most scholarly literature about the EU’s climate policy has in some form or the other had this policy as its central focus (Samper, Schockling, & Islar, 2021; Fleming & Mauger, 2021; Rosamond & Dupont, 2021; Skjærseth, 2021).

Looking closer at the literature surrounding the interplay between environmental policies and crises, a varied picture emerges. Lenschow argues that the effect of the various crises of the EU have “subordinated EU environmental policy to other priorities [with o]nly climate change mitigation [stay]ing at the top of the EU’s policy agenda” (2020, p. 298). Other scholars, such as Burns, Eckersley, & Tobin, looking at environmental policy during “the global and financial economic crisis”, find “less ambitious legislation in the following years” (2020, p. 15).

In contrast, literature investigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic seems to find that it “provided a missing link between the EGD’s long-term objectives and conducive short-term policies” (Bongardt & Torres, 2022, p. 170). Despite some dissenting voices (Mišík & Nosko, 2023), the general scholarly consensus seems to be that “the Covid-19 crisis has resulted in positive effects on EU climate policy” (Dupont et al., 2020, p. 1107).

When it comes to the impact of the war in Ukraine on the EU’s environmental policy, some scholars focus on the implementation of the EGD more generally (Ciot, 2023). However, a considerable amount of research has been focused on the effect of the conflict on energy policy, with that area being “closely tied into the ongoing battle” (Kuzemko et al., 2022, p. 1). Scholars find “strong potential for an acceleration of clean energy supply across Europe” (Kuzemko et al., 2022, p. 1). Related to EU policy, Herberg (2022) agrees with this in his investigation into NATO’s securitisation of climate change but writes that more research is needed to “see if NATO will use this emerging window of opportunity due to the conflict to achieve the securitisation of energy security [or even] climate change as a whole” (p. 10).

Most tellingly, re-focussing on the EU, Matúš Mišík and Andrej Nosko argue that:

The dichotomy of existing views on whether the crisis caused by the pandemic is an opportunity or a threat to the energy transition is also present in the discussion and perception of the EU’s energy and climate policy after the Russian invasion at least temporarily shifted energy security and decarbonisation priorities. (2023, p. 1)

Similar to the pandemic, the war in Ukraine is relatively recent and an ongoing and evolving situation, which is reflected in the relative scarcity and ambiguity of scholarly literature in the field. This paper aims to add to this field of literature to provide more clarity about the impact of the war and to consider new developments through new data.

4. Theories

The next chapter will discuss social constructivism as the theoretical foundation of this paper, followed by an explanation of the policy cycle, which will situate the paper in the agenda-setting step of policymaking. This will be followed by a discussion of the Multiple Streams Framework as a theory to help explain the potential policy change in the EGD stemming from the war in Ukraine. The subsequent section will lay out securitisation theory, followed by a section explaining the theory behind the main analytical tools of this paper, discourse and framing analysis.

4.1. Social Constructivism

Social constructivism, in its general form is “a broader ‘metatheoretical’ approach to social life” (Pollack, 2020, p. 22). It has been applied, amongst other fields, in international relations (Barnett, 2017), sociology (Saurugger, 2009), and political science (Howarth & Griggs, 2016). When it comes to applying it to the European Union, its most popular use is as a theory explaining European Integration (Rosamond, 2019). However, important for the context of this paper, the theory has also been applied to policymaking and European policymaking more specifically (Pollack, 2020).

When discussing social constructivism, it is first important to lay out its broad assumptions about the world. As implied by its name, social constructivism believes while reality as such exists, “the meaning and construction of that [...] reality is dependent on ideas and interpretation” (Barnett, 2017, p. 148). This makes it a de-facto opposite to positivist theories, which argue that there is an objective reality that theories aim to extract and describe by “search[ing] for universal testable propositions” (Hill & Varone, 2017, p. 171).

In this construction of the world, the actors who are responsible for the interpretations play an essential role. However, these actors, despite interpreting the world around them, are also shaped by it: “Constructivists argue that the preferences of individual agents are not exogenously given and fixed, as in rationalist models, but endogenous to their social environments” (Pollack, 2020, pp. 22-23). This shaping of preferences, according to constructivists, is often done by “institutions [which] influence individual identities, preferences, and behaviour” (Pollack, 2020, p. 23). Importantly, this also makes it the counterpart to the theoretical branch of “rational choice”, which argues that “actors operate with fixed preferences that they attempt to maximise” (Barnett, 2017, p. 146).

Shaped by the society surrounding an individual, with its “socially constructed roles and rules”, constructivism postulates that actors act according to “what sort of behaviour is appropriate in [a given] situation” (Pollack, 2020, p. 23). This is called “the logic of appropriateness” (Pollack, 2020, p. 23). Importantly, social constructivism claims that “ideas, identity, and discourse” take a substantial part in shaping the reality, and thus the behaviour, of actors (Pollack, 2020, p. 23).

4.2. The European Green Deal, the Policy Cycle, and Agenda-Setting

Before being able to utilise this social constructivist worldview through the MSF, it is first necessary to narrow down the analytical focus of this paper to properly be able to situate

the theory of the MSF within the overall aim of the paper. As this paper is attempting to investigate the impact that the war in Ukraine has had on the EGD, it is first important to establish what is meant by the EGD. At its core, “[t]he EGD is a package of policy initiatives, which aims to set the EU on the path to a green transition, with the ultimate goal of reaching climate neutrality by 2050” (General Secretariat of the Council, n.d.-a, para. 2). The original document was released back in 2019 and only laid out the general strategy (European Commission), so new policies that are set under the broad umbrella of the EGD keep being published on an ongoing basis.

Therefore, when attempting to investigate whether there has been an impact on these policy initiatives, this paper is essentially investigating whether there was a change in how these policies prioritise climate change, and thus it is necessary to work within the framework of a theory of policy change. However, policies, and the making of these policies, are complex, and there is a large variety of policy theories that look at the different aspects how policies are made (Weible & Sabatier, 2017). Thus, it is important to first establish which of these aspects is best suited to investigate the EGD to find an answer to the problem formulation.

The policy cycle is a framework aimed at “simplifying [these] complex dynamics” of policymaking by breaking up the process into smaller steps (Young & Roederer-Rynning, 2020, p. 45). It is important to note that the policy cycle does not constitute “a causal theory of policy-making” (Young & Roederer-Rynning, 2020, p. 44), nor “are [the stages of the policy cycle] clear-cut and they may not occur in the specified sequence” (p. 45).

According to Alasdair R. Young, and Christilla Roederer-Rynning, the policy cycle has five steps: “Agenda-setting [,] Policy Formulation [,] Policy Decision [,] Implementation [, and] Feedback” (2020, p. 45). They describe how a policy, through the first step, “becomes an issue of concern” (Young & Roederer-Rynning, 2020, p. 44), and then leads to the “formulat[ion of] specific proposals for action” (p. 44). After a decision on “what course of action to pursue, or not” is taken in the third step, a given policy then needs to be implemented (Young & Roederer-Rynning, 2020, p. 44). The last step of the policy cycle describes how “intended, inadequate, and unintended effects of policies often feed back into the policy process” (Young & Roederer-Rynning, 2020, p. 44), thus closing the cycle.

As the war in Ukraine is a relatively recent phenomenon, many of the policies that were potentially impacted by it have also been published quite recently. Thus, the later stages of the policy cycle are difficult to investigate at the time of writing. Additionally, due to many of the policies being in the early stages means that many are still being debated, making the first step

of the policy cycle, agenda-setting, the most applicable analytical framework to answer the problem formulation.

Agenda-setting, as laid out by its name, investigates “the issues or problems that get on the political agenda” (Hill & Varone, 2017, p. 165). This process can be investigated through many different approaches, but some of the most important aspects are the origin of the issues, how they are “politically framed” to be put on the agenda, and how they are negotiated before being moved onto the official agenda of policymakers (Hill & Varone, 2017, pp. 166-167). There exist a variety of analytical approaches to investigate these aspects, ranging from “incrementalist perspective[s]” to frameworks that “[stress] the relative absence of a consistent [...] process” (Hill & Varone, 2017, p. 164). The Multiple-Streams Framework is part of the latter group.

When focussing on agenda-setting as the first step of the policy-cycle, however, it is important to emphasise that differentiating it from the second step, policy formulation, can be a challenge (Hill & Varone, 2017, p. 194). This is, amongst others, because “deciding where to go (agenda setting) and working out how to get there [through policy] formulation” can be overlapping processes that often bleed into each other (Hill & Varone, 2017, p. 194). Nonetheless, most scholars choose to distinguish between the two to encompass “the extensive range of policy-making activities that must follow [after an issue is put on the agenda]” (Hill & Varone, 2017, p. 194).

4.3. The Multiple Streams Framework

This next section will explain the Multiple Streams Framework as a theory to investigate policy change in the agenda-setting stage, which will serve as the theoretical framework through which the *impact of the war in Ukraine on the prioritisation of combatting climate change in the EGD* will be investigated and analysed in this paper. After going through the underlying assumptions, the chapter will explore the main tools provided by the framework to analyse and explain policy change: The three streams, the window of opportunity, and policy entrepreneurs.

The MSF is a “tool with which to analyze [*sic*] the policy process” (Herweg, Zahariadis, & Zohlnhöfer, 2018, p. 17), and originated within the policy cycle as “a study of policy agenda setting” (Hill & Varone, 2017, p. 171). Thus, it can be used in this paper to understand how the war in Ukraine impacted EU policymaking and answer the problem formulation by looking at whether the war was used to push climate change off the political agenda, bring a renewed

focus on climate change in the political agenda, or impacted the political agenda only marginally.

The MSF was first postulated by John W. Kingdon in his 1995 book *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* (second edition released in 2011) and was originally intended as a way to analyse the policy process in the United States (Hill & Varone, 2017, pp. 171-173). However, since its inception, the framework has been applied extensively to the European Union policymaking as a whole (Ackrill, Kay, & Zahariadis, 2013; Herweg, 2015). It has also been used more specifically to investigate EU climate policies, such as the Just Transition Fund (Kyriazi & Miró, 2022), the interplay between the EU's and the UN's climate ambitions (Kreienkamp, Pegram, & Coen, 2022), or the possibility of the COVID-19 having an effect on EU climate policies (Dupont et al., 2020).

Before laying out the specific concepts it provides through which to look at the policy process, it is important to explore the framework's core assumptions, which are, according to Herweg, Zahariadis, and Zohlhöfer: “[A]mbiguity, time constraints, problematic preferences, unclear technology, fluid participation, and stream independence” (2017, p. 18).

The first assumption, that of ambiguity, concerns the nature of reality and how this impacts policymaking. As opposed to some other theories of the policymaking process that assume that problems are solved through a “rational approach” (Hill & Varone, 2017, pp. 167-171), the MSF argues that “because of ambiguity, a multitude of solutions to a given problem exists” (p. 18). This means that when it comes to specific problems, we can gather information about the problem, but this does not automatically mean that it is known in what type of policy area it belongs, and what type of response it requires (Herweg et al., 2018).

The second assumption adds to this, arguing that “policymakers [frequently] operate under significant time constraints [...] because many issues vie for attention” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 19). This in turn means that there is only a limited number of solutions and policy courses that a policymaker can consider for any given issue.

The MSF thirdly embraces the social constructivist belief that “policymakers do not have clear preferences with regard to specific policies”, and their opinions are shaped by factors such as “its overarching label (like health, education, politics, or morality) and on the information that has been taken into account” (Herweg et al, 2018, p. 19). According to the MSF, one of the only preferences of policymakers that can be assumed is that they “want to win elections” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 19).

The fourth assumption, unclear technology, is based on a concept from the study of organisations, where “technology refers to work processes that turn inputs into products”

(Herweg et al., 2018, p. 19). In the context of the MSF, this means that for policymakers, it is often not clear who is responsible for what, which can lead to “turn battles between different departments” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 19).

The fifth assumption, fluid participation, adds another layer of complexity to unclear responsibilities, arguing that in policymaking *who* participates in a given policy issue and *to what extent* fluctuates considerably. This is seen as a result of “[l]egislators com[ing] and go[ing]” and “the time and effort that participants are willing and able to devote to any one decision vary[ing] considerably” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 20).

The last assumption is the foundation for the central concrete concepts in the MSF. Stream independence is the assumption that “independent processes or *streams* flow through the political system” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 20, emphasis added). There are three of these streams: “problem stream, policy stream, and political stream” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 20), all of which are seen as developing independently. However, it is one of the central ideas of the MSF that “if an issue is to gain agenda prominence”, in other words, for policy change to happen, “these independent streams need to come together at some point” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 20).

This process is called “coupling” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 172), and happens “if a “policy window” (sometimes called “window of opportunity”) opens” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 20), and each of the streams is seen as “ripe” (Herweg, 2015, p. 13). The conditions for each stream to count as ripe will be explored further below. Coupling the streams and seizing a window of opportunity to push through a certain solution to a certain problem “often [has to be done] by a policy entrepreneur and presented to receptive policymakers” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 20).

Hill & Varone (2017) raise the point that while these assumptions behind the MSF “[depict] the policy process as disorganised or haphazard” (p 178), their analysis of pension policy in the UK seems to suggest that in certain cases there seems to be a more rational process. Additionally, they mention that in the MSF, all streams “are broadly treated as equal” (Hill & Varone, 2017, p. 178), which is an important consideration to keep in mind while exploring the three streams in more detail. This will be done in the next section, including an explanation of the concepts of the window of opportunity and policy entrepreneur, as those will be used to explain policy-change surrounding the war in Ukraine.

4.3.1. The Problem Stream

The problem stream is one of the three streams in the MSF that are used to conceptualise the process of an issue becoming a problem that “a policy [then] responds to” (Herweg et al.,

2018, p. 21). A problem in the MSF “are conditions that deviate from policymaker’s or citizens’ ideal states” that the government is responsible for taking care of (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 21). However, these ideal states are different for everyone since they depend on each person’s individual worldview. This means that something only becomes a problem that needs to be solved “until an actor defines them as [a] problem” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 21).

There are three mechanisms at play within this stream. Firstly, there are *indicators*, that “inform about conditions”, such as “unemployment figures, budget balances, and crime statistics” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 21). Secondly, there are certain *focusing events*, such as “natural disasters [...], severe technical accidents [...], and particularly serious forms of violent crimes” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 22), like the war in Ukraine in the example of this paper. They usually change the status quo rapidly and “spark intense media and public attention” that it is more likely to be seen as a problem by policymakers (Birkland, 2020, p. 224; Herweg et al., 2018). This can also happen through the third mechanism, “*feedback* about existing programs” that focusses attention on a suboptimal indicator (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 22, original emphasis).

Thus, according to Herweg et al. (2018), the MSF “does not see problems (and their severity) as objective facts but rather as social constructs” (p. 2), that require a problem to be framed a certain way to actually be perceived as a problem. Importantly, this framing can be done by various actors that want a certain problem to be dealt with in public policy. Such people are either called “problem brokers” who introduce a certain problem frame into the political dialogue (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 22), or “policy entrepreneurs” who do the same but also “suggests solutions to the problem” (p. 22). Based on this, the problem stream counts as ripe and ready to be coupled with the other streams, if there is “attention [on] an issue, and [...] that issue is interpreted as being problematic” (Herweg, 2015, p. 18).

4.3.2. The Policy Stream

The policy stream describes the process of how “policy alternatives are generated in policy communities” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 22). Who the policy community is made up of depends on the political system the MSF is applied to. In the European Union it “consists of members of the national, the European, and the transnational level” (Herweg, 2015, p. 21). Within this political community, according to the MSF, there is a “primeval soup” of solutions that through “the process of softening up filters out many of them until a limited number of viable policy alternatives emerges” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 23), which can happen at different speeds “from rapid to gradual” (p. 23).

Out of all these emerged policy alternatives, the one that “survives” is based on various categories of viability: “technical feasibility, value acceptability, public acquiescence, and financial viability”, as well as whether they “conform to EU law [or] constitutional regulations (Herweg et al., 2018, pp. 23-24). Lastly, the alternative’s “deviat[ion] from previous policy path[s]” also needs to be taken into consideration in a criterion called “path dependence” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 24). Once at a minimum one policy solution has emerged that survived through all the criteria, “the policy stream can be defined as ready for coupling” and thus ripe (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 24).

4.3.3. The Political Stream

The third stream on the other hand is concerned with the politics surrounding an issue or a policy, “as majorities for proposals are sought here” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 24). In the original setup of the MSF, this stream consists of three factors that impact its ripeness for coupling: “the national mood, interest groups, and government” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 24).

The first one is simultaneously the most difficult to pin down, as it “refers to the notion that a fairly large number of individuals in a given country tend to think along common lines and that the mood swings from time to time”, which then impacts policymaker’s decision-making as they respond to this mood (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 24).

Interest groups, the second element, influence the politics stream in the sense that “the more [of them] are opposed to an idea and the more powerful [they] are, the less likely it is that [an] idea will make it on the agenda” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 25). The last element describes a similar dynamic where governments and legislatures and their willingness to adopt a certain proposal impacts the stream as a whole (Herweg et al., 2018). This can encompass “elected officials and political parties [as well as] bureaucratic turf battles and important administrators” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 25).

According to Herweg et al. (2018) it is challenging to lay out when the politics stream is ripe, since the three elements do not all need to be favourable for it to be ready to couple. This could for example be the case when “a government is willing to ignore interest group campaigns and even a reluctant national mood” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 25). Additionally, as the MSF concerns itself mainly with agenda-setting, the politics stream is sometimes seen as less relevant than the other two for an issue to get onto the agenda, since “build[ing] political majorities [...] is not yet necessary” at that point (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 26).

Herweg (2015), when adopting the MSF to the European Union, argues that “the political stream counts as ripe if the Commission supports an issue [due to] its formal monopoly

on intitalizing [*sic*] legislation” (p. 19). This means that in terms of agenda-setting, within the European Union system she sees the Commission as the functional equivalent of the government, thus representing that element of the politics stream. Due to the other two elements not always being necessary for the stream to count as ripe within the traditional MSF, the Commission’s support of an issue can be seen as enough indication for the stream to be ready for coupling in the European context.

4.3.4. Windows of Opportunity

Once all three streams count as ripe and ready for coupling, this does not automatically mean that an issue will come onto the political agenda. According to Herweg et al. (2018), the MSF sees coupling and agenda change as “much more likely at specific points in time [...] called policy windows” (p. 26).

These windows “can open in two of the three streams: the problem or the political stream” (Herweg et a., 2018, p. 26). For the latter, “[the] window [...] opens if the partisan composition of government changes or new members enter legislature” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 26). Herweg et al., (2018) argue that if the policy window appears in the political stream, the focus of the coupling is on “finding a problem to a given solution” (p. 27), which they call “doctrinal [...] coupling” (p. 27).

In the context of the EU, Herweg (2015), sees this opening when a new Commission takes office, or when it “publishes working programs on an annual basis” (p. 20). Additionally, governmental changes in Member States can indirectly open policy windows through the European Council, which also “exerts agenda-setting power” (Herweg, 2015, p. 20). Lastly, even though a new composition in a national government is seen a policy-window in the MSF, Herweg (2015) argues that the transnational nature of the European Parliament tends to encourage “ad-hoc coalitions to address the issue at stake” (p. 20), rather than votes along party lines. This means that a new composition of the European Parliament after an election does not necessarily translate into a willingness to approach new policy issues and thus does not open a new policy window (Herweg, 2015, p. 20).

For an agenda window to open in the problem stream, it requires a rapid change in the status quo, such as “unemployment or the budget deficit skyrockets in a very brief period” or “natural disasters or terrorist attacks” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 26), or, in the case relevant for this paper, a war. Coupling on the basis of such a window in the problem stream is called “consequential coupling” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 27), which is the opposite of doctrinal

coupling, in that it: a) “is open [for a] shorter [period of time]”, and b) requires “a solution [...] that fits the problem that is on the agenda” (p. 27).

4.3.5. Policy Entrepreneurs

Once a policy window, such as the war in Ukraine, is opened, policy change does not happen automatically, but it requires a “policy entrepreneur [to] immediately seize the opportunity to initiate action” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 28). These policy entrepreneurs can be “any policy relevant actor – policymaker, bureaucrat, academic, journalist, representative of an interest group, or member of parliament” (Herweg et al., 2018, p. 28). They attempt to couple all problem streams and thus bring an issue on the agenda and affect policy change by “advocating new ideas or proposals, defining or reframing problems, building coalitions among policymakers and stakeholders, building on or mobilising public opinion and setting the agenda” (Dupont et al., 2020, p. 1098).

Due to its institutional position as the only EU institution that can formally propose legislation (Dupont et al., 2020, p. 1098), this makes the European Commission a natural choice as entrepreneur in the EU legislative ecosystem. This has been done by many scholars, especially in the environmental field, such as Dupont, Oberthür, & von Homeyer (2020), who, as previously mentioned, investigated COVID-19 as “a critical juncture for EU climate policy” (p. 1097), or Kreienkamp, Pegram, and Coen (2022), who investigated EU climate policy in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Lenschow, Burns, and Zito (2020) focus further on the Commissions role “as an environmental policy entrepreneur [within] the trajectory of European Union [...] environmental policy and integration” (p. 340).

4.4. Securitisation Theory

The following chapter will discuss securitisation theory, which will, in combination with the MSF, serve as the theory behind the analytical framework for this paper. It will be used to measure the prioritisation of combatting climate change in the EGD and thus help answer the problem formulation. The following chapter will first explain how an issue becomes securitised, how it becomes de-securitised, and the various nuances to this process. This will serve as the foundation of the analysis and will be operationalised in the methodology.

4.4.1. The Copenhagen School and the process of Securitisation

Securitisation theory originated from “the so-called Copenhagen School, one of the leading constructivist approaches to security studies” (Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018, p. 34), initially postulated by Buzan, Wæver, & De Wilde in their 1998 book *Security: A new Framework for Analysis*. It has since been applied extensively to the study of climate change (Von Lucke, 2020; Diez, Von Lucke, & Wellmann, 2016), and its interplay with the European Union (Sperling & Webber, 2019), as well as the Union’s climate and energy policies (Christou, 2021; Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018).

The theory is anchored the belief of social constructivism that our reality and the preferences of actors are not a given but constructed. According to Clara Eroukhmanoff (2017), “[s]ecuritisation theory shows us that national security policy is not a natural given, but carefully designated by politicians and decision-makers” (p. 104), through “security discourse” (Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018, p. 34).

Eroukhmanoff (2017) explains this process further, writing that “security issues are not simply ‘out there’ but rather must be articulated as problems by securitising actors” (p. 104). The way something is securitised is then by constructing it as threatening “[a] referent object [,] the thing that is threatened and needs to be protected” (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 105).

While originally, the state was seen as the only referent object, the scope has since been expanded to include “five sectors: the economic, the societal, the military, the political and the environmental sector“ (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 105), each of which can have their own “specific threat”, such as “identity [in] the societal sector”, or “the ecosystem and endangered species [in] the environmental sector (p. 105). Essentially, the questions that securitisation then aims to answer are “Security for whom? Security from what? And security by whom?” (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 105).

The actual construction of securitisation is theorised as happening through “the rhetorical structure of decision-makers when framing an issue” (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 105). This is called “a speech act”, which, according to Eroukhmanoff (2017), “shows that words do not merely describe reality, but constitute reality” and thus constitute a security issue (p. 106). Some scholars argue about the specific nature of a speech act, with some saying that it can be “too narrow, reducing social phenomena to certain textual makers” (Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018, p. 42). However, as Heinrich and Szulecki (2018) point out, this can be circumvented by using discourse analysis when empirically analysing securitisation, as it provides “a more comprehensive picture” (p. 43).

Once an issue has been framed as a security issue, it allows the securitising actor to call for actions within the “exceptional realm [...] legitimis[ing] them under the language of ‘urgency’ and ‘existential threats’” (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 106). What specifically constitutes such extra-ordinary actions is subject to academic debate. While the traditional definition from the Copenhagen school is that it is “measures [that break] the rules that otherwise bind” (p. 39), Heinrich and Szulecki (2018) have narrowed the definition down to the following three criteria: “(1) breaking norms (that is, explicit or implicit prescriptions about ‘how things are done’), (2) shifting competences and power (towards the executive) and (3) withholding or limiting information [which] do not have to occur together“ for a measure to count as extra-ordinary (p. 41). How these criteria can be measured empirically will be further explained in the methodology chapter.

The last important aspect in securitisation theory concerns the audience, because according to the theory, an issue can only be seen as fully securitized once the “audience collectively agrees on the nature of the threat and supports taking extraordinary measures” (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 106). Thus, “[i]f the audience rejects the securitising actor’s speech act [...] the securitisation has failed” (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 106).

As described by Eroukhmanoff (2017), there is some disagreement on this this last part of deciding once an issue is fully securitised, since some scholars do not see it as an action that can ever be finished, and rather see it “as a long process of ongoing social constructions” (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 106). To better represent this ongoing nature, securitisation theory sees issues “on a spectrum ranging from non-politicised [...] to politicised [...] to securitised” (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 106). This spectrum represents the steps of introducing an issue into societal discourse, the issue being discussed by the public to the issue finally “[being] framed as an existential threat” (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 106).

Scholars of securitisation theory have suggested some nuances to this spectrum to allow for a more encompassing view of security. Olaf Corry (2012) argues that besides threats, “[a] separate kind of speech act [should focus on] ‘risks’” (p. 235). He calls this process “‘riskification’”, which he conceptualises as “[s]econd-order [s]ecurity” (Corry, 2012, p. 235). Defined as “conditions of possibility for harm [...] to a referent object” (Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018, p. 46), looking at risks in addition to threats expands the analytical focus to “issues [...] that are not excluded from the political debate” (p. 46). This is in contrast to the elevation of an issue above politics seen in traditional securitisation.

4.4.2. De-securitisation, de-politicisation, and security jargon

Once an issue is successfully securitised (or ‘riskified’), it is important to emphasise that it can be de-securitised, which amounts to “return[ing] an issue to normal politics” (Dupont, 2019, p. 386; Wæver, 1995). While the empirical nature of how exactly this takes place is still subject for debate, Lene Hansen (2012), suggests that it happens through “four political forms” (p. 538), which will be explained briefly.

The first is “change through stabilisation” (Hansen, 2012, p. 539), signifying “a [...] slow move out of an explicit security discourse [in favor of a] more genuinely political form of engagement” (p. 539). The second, replacement, as implied by the name, “the combination of one issue moving out of security while another is simultaneously securitised” (Hansen, 2012, p. 541). The third suggests the straightforward approach of “actively offering a political solution to the threats, dangers, and grievances in question” through “rearticulation” (Hansen, 2012, p. 432). The last form achieves de-securitisation through “silencing, [...] when an issue disappears or fails to register in security discourse” (Hansen, 2012, p. 544).

Aside from de-securitisation that then leads again to politicisation, Heinrich and Szulecki (2018) add another level to securitisation that can happen after an issue has entered this stage. Called “de-politicisation [,this] means that responsibility for policy-making is shifted away [...] from the government and its institutions” (Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018, p. 47). They mention three ways in which this can be done: “‘institutional’ (creating ‘independent’ agencies), ‘rule-based’ (creating laws constraining action) and ‘preference-shaping’ (rhetorically presenting a logic of ‘no alternative’)” (Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018, p. 48).

Last but not least, Heinrich and Szulecki (2018) also mention that there is the possibility that securitisation only leads to „security jargon” (p. 47), which describes what happens when the process of securitisation does not include a call for counter measures (Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018). This allows the securitising actor to „communicate a sense of urgency in order to influence a discussion, gain media attention, avoid sceptical counterclaims, etc.” without making a full securitising move (Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018, p. 47). How these steps and issues will be operationalised to answer the problem formulation will be further explained in the methodology.

4.5. Discourse Analysis and Framing Theory

In order to investigate securitisation, it is necessary to provide a method through which the analysis of the various aspects of securitisation can be conducted. In almost all cases, this

is done through discourse and framing analysis (Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018; Balzaq, 2011). The following section will describe the theoretical background of discourse and framing analysis, while the methodology chapter will discuss its specific analytical application in this paper further.

There are countless approaches to discourse analysis (Howarth & Griggs, 2016). What all of them have in common, is the believe that “language matters” and has a real impact on social life (Ercan & Marsh, 2016, p. 317). In other words, language helps construct reality, an assumption taken from social constructivism, as explored earlier in this paper.

Language, at the most abstract level within discourse analysis, is conceptualised as “structured according to different patterns that people’s utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life’ and discourse analysis is the analysis of these patterns” (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 1, as cited in Ercan & Marsh, 2016, p. 316), which discourse analysis then aims to investigate (Ercan & Marsh, 2016, p. 316).

The most widespread form of discourse analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis. First theorised by Norman Fairclough, it has “a particular focus on discourse and on relations between discourse and other social elements [such as] power relations, ideologies, [or] institutions” (2012, p. 9). It thus furthers the idea of language having an impact on reality and creates a type of “normative critique [...] that does not simply describe existing realities, but also evaluates them” (Fairclough, 2012, p. 9).

However, when it comes to policy analysis, one of the most widespread methods of discourse analysis is frame or framing analysis (Ercan & Marsh, 2016; Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018). Spearheaded by Goffman in 1974, this method aims to look at discourse and find the various frames within it. At the most abstract level, when something is framed it “select[s] some aspects of a perceived reality and makes them more salient in a communicating text” (Entman, 1995, p. 52).

In most cases, frames are put into texts on purpose by a variety of actors who might all have their own agenda, such as “political parties, government agencies, or social movements” (Ercan & Marsh, 2016, p. 317). The most common interpretation of frames sees them as “defin[ing] problems, [...] diagnos[ing] causes, [...], make moral judgements, [and] suggest remedies” (Entman, 1995, p. 52).

There are different approaches to frame analysis, with one of most famous being the ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ approach by Carol Bacchi (2012). However, for the purposes of this paper, it can be used as a methodology to analyse the specific aspects of the process of securitisation, specifically the speech acts involved in securitising an issue (Heinrich

& Szulecki, 2018), which is the approach that will be taken in this paper. Specifically how this will be applied, will be further explained in the methodology.

5. Methodology

With all the necessary theories explained, this next chapter will focus on how they will be utilised to answer the problem formulation:

To what extent has the war in Ukraine impacted the prioritisation of combatting climate change in the European Green Deal?

The first section will explain how the MSF and Securitisation theory can be used as a way to measure the prioritisation of combatting climate change and how the impact of the war on this can be measured by looking at the securitisation of climate change in the EGD before and after the beginning of the war. The second section will explain what data will be used to best fit within this theoretical and analytical framework. The third section will explain how discourse and framing analysis will be used to measure the levels of securitisation in the data. The fourth section will lay out the concrete steps that will be taken to conduct the analysis. The chapter will conclude with a section discussing the paper's limitations.

5.1. Analytical Framework: Combining the MSF and Securitisation Theory

In order to answer the problem formulation, the main aim of the analytical framework will be to measure the impact that the war has had on the prioritisation of combatting climate change. In order to do so, it is first important to establish a way through which to measure how the combatting of climate change was prioritised. Here, the MSF can serve as a useful conceptual framework, as the MSF argues that an issue gets on the top of the policy agenda, i.e. is prioritised, when all three policy streams are ripe and ready for coupling. For the problem stream, this requires that an issue is framed as a problem. For the policies stream, it requires the availability of policy solutions. The politics stream on an EU level, as discussed, requires the European Commission to be in favour of policy action regarding a certain issue (Herweg, 2015, p. 19). Once all these streams are ripe, it requires a policy entrepreneur to seize an open window of opportunity to couple the streams and bring an issue on the agenda and thus influence policymaking.

While it would be possible to measure the ripeness of each of these streams individually through different methods, securitisation theory can provide a convenient way to measure

whether all these conditions are met. As John Lindberg observed, when it comes to securitisation, “[t]hree conditions must be met in order for securitisation to be successful, [which is] in line with Kingdon’s policy stream theory” (2016, p. 2). Therefore, it stands to reason that if successful securitisation can be observed, it implies that all conditions for policy change as described in the MSF are also fulfilled.

Building on Lindberg’s (2016) overall logic, this process can be explained more thoroughly with the basis described in the theory chapter. For a policy issue to be securitised, it requires firstly, that an issue is framed as a security problem through a speech act. This process essentially describes the same process of an issue being framed as a problem within the problem stream (Lindberg, 2016; Léonard & Kaunert, 2011). Next, for successful securitisation to occur, the speech act needs to include a call for extra-ordinary measures, which correspond to policy alternatives and solutions in the policy stream (Lindberg, 2016).

What Lindberg (2016) calls “[r]ight political circumstances” could be argued to be in this case if the Commission is the securitising actor (p. 2), which means that they support the issue, therefore making the politics stream ripe for coupling, as described in the theory chapter. If the audience to the speech act accepts the securitisation of an issue, it could also be argued that the conditions of interest groups and the national mood are fulfilled, also contributing to the ripeness of the political stream. This “conceptualising [of the] politics of consent [by t]he politics stream” was also observed by Léonard & Kaunert (2011, p. 66).

The securitising actor can then simultaneously also be seen as a policy entrepreneur, as the actor’s securitisation amounts to an intentional coupling of problem streams (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011). Then lastly, the issue that the securitisation is concerned with can be seen as opening a window of opportunity (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011), essentially functioning as a focussing event as described in the theory chapter. If treated in this way, therefore, for the purposes of this project, securitisation theory provides a full method through which to see whether all the conditions of policy change as described in MSF are fulfilled, and whether an issue is prioritised. In other words, if climate change is securitised, it also means that it is prioritised.

Importantly, measuring the prioritisation of combatting climate change is only the first step to answer the problem formulation. The second step is to find a way to measure whether the war has impacted the prioritisation in the EGD. As Dupont et al. (2020) describe in their paper investigating whether the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on climate policies, to establish whether there has been an impact can only be measured “with the passing of time” (Dupont et al., 2020, p. 1097). Therefore, some sort of longitudinal comparison over time is

required. In the context of this paper, the war in Ukraine is the impacting event, meaning the comparing of data from the period from before the war to data from after the beginning of the war serves can serve as a fitting timeframe.

Secondly, it is necessary to provide an explanatory framework to explain this change within the EGD, and link this change to the impacting event, the war in Ukraine. Here the MSF is again helpful. According to the MSF, as was explained in the theory chapter, for an event to have an impact on policymaking, there are “two sets of causal mechanisms [in the MSF]: events that open a policy window and policy-entrepreneurs’ coupling activities” (Herweg, 2015, p. 16). Therefore, an effect requires the impacting event to be impactful enough to open a window of opportunity, and, on the other hand, a policy entrepreneur to seize this open window of opportunity.

The war in Ukraine can definitely be argued to fulfil the conditions to qualify as a window of opportunity (Herberg, 2022), as it had significant implications for a lot of the policy areas of the EGD, which will also be further discussed in the choice of data section. Due to this, it can be treated as a focusing event that opens a window of opportunity in the problem stream, that can potentially be used to further the prioritisation of climate change. Secondly, the European Commission is a fitting choice as a policy entrepreneur, as its support is required to ripen the politics stream, as described in the theory chapter. Therefore, if the Commission is treated as a securitising actor and it securitises an issue, it means that the three streams were coupled, as described previously in this chapter.

Based on this theoretical structure then, if the window of opportunity opened by the war is seized to lead to further policy change surrounding the combatting of climate change, it is possible to speak of the war having an impact. Therefore, measuring the level of securitisation of climate change and comparing it between the periods from before the war and after the beginning of war was chosen as the overall framework for the analysis of this paper.

In concrete terms, this means that if there has been a significant change in the securitisation of climate change, the war in Ukraine has impacted the prioritisation of climate change. However, if there is no significant change, it means that the window of opportunity opened by the war was not seized, which in turn means that the war itself has not significantly impacted how climate change is prioritised. Lastly, if there is a significantly change towards de-prioritisation of climate change, this can then be seen as the war being used to shift policies within the EGD away from climate action. Notably, this focus on looking whether the war has had a significant impact is similar to Dupont et al.’s 2020 investigation of whether the COVID-19 pandemic signified a critical juncture in climate policies.

Having laid out this analytical framework, it is now necessary firstly to elaborate on the choice of data and how it fulfils the necessary conditions to function within the framework of this paper. Secondly, it is necessary to lay out how the level of securitisation will be measured in said data. This will be done in the remaining sections of the methodology.

5.2. Choice of Data

When looking at potential data for this paper, it is firstly important to choose data that is both a part of, or representative of, the EGD, as that is the primary focus of the problem formulation. Secondly, the chosen data needs to be a part of a policy area that the war has somehow touched upon, as the focussing event needs to have negative implications for the policy that is supposed to be changed in order to qualify as a window of opportunity. Additionally, the policy area needs to have policy documents viable for analysis from both before the war and after the beginning of the war, to allow for a longitudinal comparison.

As was discussed in the theory section about the policy cycle, due to the resource limitations of this paper, it is not possible to analyse data relating to all aspects to the policy and policymaking of the EGD. Due to the recent nature of the war in Ukraine and related policy responses, agenda-setting, the first step of policymaking according to the policy cycle, will be chosen as the analytical focus of this paper.

Within the European Union, the European Commission is seen as the primary agent in agenda setting. The Commission's unique ability to initiate legislation makes it an ideal candidate to look at what is on the EU's agenda, i.e. what the EU's priorities and ambitions are (Pollack, 2020, p. 30; Herweg, 2020). It could be argued that the European Council is above the Commission in agenda-setting, since it provides the overall direction that the EU is moving towards, and thus give the Commission a certain mandate within which to act (Lewis, 2019). However, its influence and priorities are very broad and do not provide any specific policy suggestions in most cases (Lewis, 2019), which leaves a lot of leeway in terms of agenda-setting and policy formulation to the Commission. Additionally, since the Commission is the only actor in the EU allowed to official launch specific legislation and policies, it is a more fitting object of analysis when looking at policies.

In combination with the fact that from a theoretical perspective the Commission is the policy entrepreneur that can utilise the window of opportunity that the war in Ukraine opens, this makes data coming from the Commission the ideal choice for this paper. There is a lot of potential data to choose from, as the current Commission has made climate action a central

pillar of its term (Čavoški, 2020). It is also the author behind the original EGD strategy (European Commission, 2019), which means that most of its policies related to climate action are in one way or the other presented within this framework, thus making those policies a part of the EGD.

While the institution also releases more technical policies focussed on one specific area, it also releases policies that serve more as strategic blueprints for future legislation. For example, the EGD, while being “a package of policy initiatives” was first published in a document by the Commission to lay out the idea and strategy behind the package as a whole (General Secretariat of the Council, n.d.-a, para. 2; European Commission, 2019). Therefore, these policies are essentially setting the legislative agenda of the EU, thus making them an ideal representation of the Commission’s agenda-setting nature.

The next consideration when choosing data to answer the problem formulation is the timeframe within which to choose policies. As described above, the general aim is to compare policies from before the war in Ukraine to policies from after the beginning of the war in Ukraine, which started on the 24th of February 2022 (Bigg, 2023). For the former, the choice was made to look at the most recent, most influential policies in within the EGD, i.e. the policies that the Commission is basing their current and future legislative direction on.

The most important policy according to these discussed criteria is of course the original EGD (European Commission, 2019). Published in December 2019 by the von der Leyen Commission, the policy starts off by explaining that “[a]ll EU actions and policies will have to contribute to the EGD objects” (European Commission, p. 2). As a warming climate will impact almost every aspect of our society in some way, the policy touches on the fields of “Climate [...], Energy [...], Environment and oceans [...], Agriculture [...], Transport [...], Industry [...], Research and innovation [...], Finance and regional development [and] living spaces” (Directorate-General for Communication, n.d.-a).

All of these areas are impacted in one way or the other by climate change and its effects, such as the ocean warming and the seasons changing, thus impacting the natural world. They are also impacted by mitigation efforts, such as the necessity of the decarbonisation of energy production, the industry, or transport, which themselves require more innovation and funding. Due to this angle encompassing the broad nature of climate change, the EGD strategy is an ideal choice to look at the securitisation of climate change in the time before the war.

Based on these fields, the previously discussed criteria of looking into policy fields that are heavily impacted by the war in Ukraine, as those are the ones where the war opens windows of opportunity, were considered. These considerations led to the choice to focus on policies in

the fields of energy and industry. For the former, this is because one of the most pressing and urgent issues after the beginning of the war was the EU's dependence on Russian oil and gas. It led to immediate efforts to decouple the EU from this dependence so that Russia would not earn any more money by selling gas and oil which could then be used to "sustain [the] war" (European Commission, 2022, p. 1), and they would not be able to use it "as an economic and political weapon" anymore (p. 20). Together, this led to "one of the most significant energy crises in history" (Bir, 2022, para. 1), making this a fitting field to investigate the effects of the war.

The latter field, industry, was chosen as the war had major impacts on the economy, such as significant inflation (O'Donnell, 2022). Together with mounting sanctions on Russia that hit many industries (General Secretariat of the Council, n.d.-b), the war also had a significant impact on this policy field, making it a fitting second choice for analysis.

While agriculture, transport, research and innovation, and finance and regional development are also policy fields impacted by the war, they do not have major strategy policies to look at from both before and after the war at the time for writing and are thus less suited for the analytical structure of this paper. The fields of climate and environment and oceans were excluded due to their broad nature and the fact that they are not directly impacted by the war, despite the interconnectedness of all the policy fields. Further, due to resource limitations it was necessary to narrow down the number of policies investigated in the analysis.

Within the fields of energy and industry, the Commission released policies that fit the above-discussed criteria both before the war and after the start of the war. For the former, the first policy that will be looked at is *An EU Strategy for Energy System Integration* from July 2020 that lays out a broad overhaul of how energy is produced and distributed in the EU (European Commission, 2020a). The *REPowerEU Plan* released in May 2022 that was created as a direct response to the war's implications for EU energy security will be the second energy policy for the analysis.

For the field of industry, the Commission's *A New Industrial Strategy for Europe* published in March 2020 will be the policy from before the war (European Commission, 2020b), while *A Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age* from February 2023 will be the policy from after the beginning of the war (European Commission, 2023). Both policies lay out a plan on how to transition Europe's economy into a fully sustainable model.

In addition to these legislative documents, the European Commission president's annual State of the Union speeches will be analysed. This follows Heinrich and Szulecki's (2018) emphasis that for a full understanding of a securitisation process, it is helpful to look at

multiple types of data. Taking the same timeframes as the other document, the first speech will be the one from September 2021 (von der Leyen, 2021), the year before the war, and the second from September 2022 (von der Leyen, 2022), the speech in the year where the war began. The speeches are held in three languages, with von der Leyen switching between English, German, and French through the speech. To allow for easier analysis, the Commission's official full English transcript will be used for the purposes of this paper.

The president's annual speech is intended to "[take] stock of the achievements of the past year and [lay out] the priorities for the year ahead" (Directorate-General for Communication, n.d.-c, para. 1). Thus, it can be seen to serve as the first step in the public agenda-setting of the Commission, and thus also the agenda-setting for future initiatives of the EGD, making it adhere to the criteria of representativeness. Furthermore, due to the speeches being held every year at the same time (Directorate-General for Communication, n.d.-c), they serve as a good opportunity for direct comparison, making it the ideal data to measure the impact of the war in Ukraine.

5.3. Operationalising Securitisation

After having specified which data will be analysed, this next section will attempt to lay out the specific steps that will be taken in the analysis chapter to analyse the securitisation of climate change in the data. The method of investigation to see how much the Commission securitises climate change that will be used is inspired by Heinrich and Szulecki's (2018) methodology in *Applying the Copenhagen School's Framework to Energy*, in combination with Thierry Balzacq's (2011) *Enquiries into methods: A new framework for securitisation analysis*.

As described previously in the methodology, the focus of this paper is to look into the prioritisation of combatting climate change, represented by the Commission's securitisation of climate change. Thus, in terms of securitisation and its various aspects, the focus is not on looking at multiple securitising actors. Neither is it on looking into audience acceptance of a securitising move as described by securitisation theory, since the focus is on the prioritisation within the EGD, and not securitisation of climate change on a broader level. Additionally, discussing the reaction of the audience would require an analysis of a dataset representing the public outside of the EU, which is outside the scope of this paper.

Instead, the focus will lie on *how* the Commission achieves securitisation by looking at its speech acts. As discussed in the theory chapter, securitisation is a process on a spectrum, where each step requires the securitising actor to utilise different aspects of the theoretical

framework. Placing the securitisation of climate change on this spectrum correlates to how much climate change is prioritised, and thus will be the main aim of the analysis.

The process and spectrum are visualised in Table 1 below, taken from Heinrich and Szulecki (2018). It starts with de-politicisation where an issue is perceived as “[g]overnable” (Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018, p. 53), but it is not seen as the concern of the securitising actor. The next step is when an issue becomes politicised, which means it is moved into the realm of “normal politics” without a specific focus on “security” (Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018, p. 53). Moving closer to full securitisation, the step of security jargon sees the securitising actor constructing an issue as an “existential threat” to a referent object (Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018, p. 53), but failing to propose a solution in the form of extra-ordinary actions.

To see whether an action counts as extra-ordinary, Heinrich & Szulecki’s (2018) three criteria will be used, which are “(1) Breaking norms [...] (2) shifting competences and power [...] towards the executive [...] and (3) withholding or limiting information” (p. 41). Following the selection of the Commission as the primary object of investigation, it will be seen as the ‘executive’ for the second criteria for the purposes of the analysis. If an extra-ordinary action proposal can be found, then it can be seen as full securitisation. The last option on the spectrum is an alternative to securitisation and requires the construction of “risk [towards a] referent object” (Heinrich & Szulecki, 2018, p. 53), which does not elevate an issue into the extra-ordinary realm, but instead focusses on the possibility of a threat to the referent object.

Put succinctly, successful full securitisation essentially requires the construction of an issue as a problem for a specific object, and then the proposal of solutions. Conceptually, this is interesting as it aligns with most of the criteria through which to find frames in framing analysis (Ercan & Marsh, 2016, p. 52), making it possible to think of the different levels of securitisation as frames, and the various empirical indicators as the components making up the frames. While this is not strictly necessary to better understand securitisation, it is useful from a methodological perspective, as it makes the distinct analysis of the levels more structured.

Table 1. Grammars of Security. Reprinted from *Energy Securitisation: Applying the Copenhagen school's framework to energy* (p. 53) by A. Heinrich & K. Szulecki. In K. Szulecki (Ed.), *Energy Security in Europe: Divergent perceptions and policy challenges* (pp. 33-59), 2018, Palgrave Macmillan. Copyright 2018 by Andreas Heinrich and Kacper Szulecki.

Language game	De-politicisation (not security based)	Politicisation (normal politics)	'Security jargon'	Riskification (risk politics)	Securitisation (security politics)
Empirical indicators	Governable object, shift of responsibility, governance measures (a plan to govern) No appeal to 'security'	Governable object, ordinary measures (plan to optimise) No appeal to 'security'	Existential threat (sometimes diffuse), but no precautionary or extra-ordinary measures (no plan of action) Appeals to 'security' as empty rhetoric	Risk, referent object, precautionary measures (plan to govern) Appeals to 'security' based on risk	Existential threat, referent object, extra-ordinary measures (plan to defend) Appeals to 'security' based on threat

5.3.1. Discourse and Framing Analysis

Placing the level of securitisation of climate change on this spectrum still requires a way of looking into how the various aspects are concretely constructed within the text and isolate specific speech acts through which the Commission hopes to achieve securitisation. As described by Balzacq (2011), while there are quite a few methods through which to analyse the securitisation of an issue, “discourse analysis [is] probably the most popular approach” (p. 31) and will thus also be used for this paper.

A qualitative discourse analysis is the best approach for the aims of the research question, as the goal is to investigate the speech acts of one actor more in-depth, and not to investigate various securitising actors, or audience reactions to a securitising move, which might require other types of analysis. It also follows the academic tendency to investigate policies through “qualitative methods” (Hill & Varone, 2017, p. 10).

Concretely, the discourse analysis will look at the levels of *Acts* and *Context* within the data that Balzacq (2011) describes. The empirical components of the first level that will be looked at are “(i) [...] the grammatical and syntactical rules of the language [...] (ii) [...] which heuristic artifacts [are used] – analogies, metaphors, metonymies, emotions, or stereotypes [...] (iii) [the] constellation of practices and tools [and] (iv) [t]he policies generated by securitization” (Balzacq, 2011, p. 36).

The second level follows the logic of critical discourse analysis to situate the analysed discourse within its context, based on “setting” and “social class, the ethnic composition of the participants, the institutions or sites where discourse occurs, ecological, regional, and cultural environments” (Balzacq, 2011, p. 37). As Balzacq (2011) also points out, these two levels, especially the first one, are essentially attempting to figure out “which frames are [...]

constructed” (p. 36), making this a framing analysis, supplying the previously discussed frames of securitisation with more empirical indicators through which to conduct the analysis.

5.4. Conducting the analysis

With these tools, the analysis will be able to look at the extent of securitisation of climate change in the data from before the war and after the beginning of the war. Comparing these various levels of securitisation will then enable an assessment as to what extent the window of opportunity opened by the war in Ukraine was used, which will provide an answer to the problem formulation.

The analysis of the seven documents will be done qualitatively by looking at the discussed empirical components of the frames of securitisation: *Governable Objects (shift of responsibility)*, *Governable Object (Plan to optimise)*, *Existential Threat*, *Appeals to security as empty rhetoric*, *Risk*, *Referent Object*, *Precautionary Measures*, *Appeals to security based on risk*, *Extra-ordinary measures*, *Appeals to security based on Threat*. To make the analysis easier, the instances where these components can be found in the text will be collected in a matrix in a sheet in Microsoft Excel, with the components in the rows and the data in the columns. The matrix also includes some adjustments such as additional explanations and changes to the colouring for ease of use and readability, as illustrated in Table 2. The empirical indicators found in the text will be collected in the corresponding spot in the matrix in the form of quotes with a reference to the page they were found at. The matrix can be found in Appendix B. The analysed documents themselves can be found in Appendix A, sorted chronologically by the time of their release.

Table 2. Layout of the matrix used for the analysis.

		Green Deal	Energy		
		Before the war	Before the war	After the beginning of the war	Before the war
Frame/Level of Securitisation	Empirical Indicators	2019 European Green Deal	2020 Powering a climate-neutral economy: An EU Strategy for Energy System Integration	2022 REPowerEU Plan	2020 A New Industrial Strategy
De-Politicisation	Governable Object (shift of responsibility)				
Politicisation	Governable Object (Plan to optimise)				
'Security Jargon'	Existential Threat				
Riskification	Appeals to security as empty rhetoric				
	Risk				
	Referent Object (The thing that is being threatened)				
Securitisation	Precautionary Measures (Plan to govern)				
	Appeals to security based on risk				
	Extra-ordinary Measures (Plan to defend)				
	Appeals to security based on threat				

Importantly, not every instance where these aspects can be found within the text will be collected in the matrix, as this is outside of the resource capabilities for this paper. Instead, the focus was on finding a balance between collecting as many quotes within the text as possible, and as many as are necessary to be able to portray an accurate picture of securitisation

within the text. These quotes will then be used as the basis for the written analysis, which will discuss which aspects of securitisation have been found and discuss the various discursive and contextual aspects to establish the levels of securitisation found in each document. For the sake of readability, whenever the documents are quoted, only the year and page number will be used as reference, which will look like this: “Quote” (2019, p. 3).

While the quotes will be the basis for the analysis, only the most representative quotes will be chosen for the textual analysis, and some mentions of parts of the texts might not be fully present in the matrix so as to avoid having too many large quotes within it, which might impact its readability. This might also include mentions of instances of securitisation of other issues if this is deemed necessary to understand the securitisation of climate change. In those instances, however, as the focus of the analysis still lies on climate change, the necessary quotes are taken directly from the text, and are not added to the collection of quotes in the matrix. Additionally, some quotes might be collected in one category, but will in the text be interpreted to be in another category, as the division between the categories is not always clear cut, requiring interpretation before a final conclusion can be drawn. Therefore, the textual analysis should be seen as the primary analysis, while the matrix should mainly be seen as a supporting tool.

This analysis of the levels of securitisation will be conducted in the analysis chapter, where the first section will investigate the data from before the war, and second section the data from after the beginning of the war. While the comparison will take place organically in parts of the analysis to some extent, there will be a section at the end of the analysis chapter dedicated exclusively to comparing the levels of securitisation. This comparison will be done within each separate policy area - energy, industry, and state of the union - where the early version of each policy will be compared to the version from after the war. Doing it this way allows for the nuances of each policy area to be taken into consideration, while still enabling to draw conclusions about the EGD. The EGD document itself will not be explicitly compared, but its analysis is still necessary to provide context and understand nuances in the other documents, as they are all in some form part of the strategy formulated in this original document.

This will be followed by the discussion chapter, which will discuss these findings in the broader context of the MSF to establish to what extent the window of opportunity opened by the war was used, thus answering the problem formulation. The discussion will also discuss the implications of these findings, amongst others in the context of the European Commission

as a policy entrepreneur for climate action. The paper will finish with a conclusion chapter that will also discuss how future research can contribute to and build on the work of this paper.

5.5. Limitations

Before moving on to the analysis, this next section will briefly discuss the limitations that follow from the above-described methodology. Firstly, the paper looks at a select amount of data, excluding data from other stages of the policy cycle, and notably excluding other actors from the EU ecosystem, such as the European Parliament or the Council of Europe. However, this choice was made due to the research limitations of this paper to maximise the data's usefulness within this specific theoretical framework, to find the most representative answer to the problem formulation.

Secondly, it is also important to keep in mind that the theoretical structure of this paper, the MSF in combination with securitisation, is not the only way to approach the research question. It would, for example, also be possible to utilise a different type of qualitative analysis, such as narrative policy analysis or the advocacy coalition framework (Weible & Sabatier, 2017), or take a more quantitative approach. While these other approaches could have added other angles to the analysis, for this paper, the qualitative analysis of levels of securitisation within the context of the war's window of opportunity was found to be the most precise method of measuring the war's impact.

Along the same lines, it is important to note that this paper works within a purely social constructivist ontology. Focussing on ideas, norms, and discourses was primarily done due to focus the analysis, as adding a more positivist angle would have required a separate methodology in addition to the current one, which would have been outside the resource capabilities available for this paper.

6. Analysis

After having laid out all the necessary theoretical and methodological considerations, the next chapter will follow the steps laid out in the methodology to conduct the analysis. The chapter is divided into three sections, with the first concerning itself with analysing securitisation in the data from before the war, and the second doing the same in the data from after the beginning of the war. The third section will compare the findings of the two analyses.

6.1. Before the war

In the following, the data from before the war will be analysed, with the first document being the overarching strategy document, *The European Green Deal* (European Commission, 2019), the second being *Powering a climate-neutral economy: An EU Strategy for Energy System Integration* (European Commission, 2020a) as a representation of Energy policy, followed thirdly by the *A New Industrial Strategy for Europe* as representation for Industry policy (European Commission, 2020b), followed by the *2021 State of the Union Address* (von der Leyen, 2021).

The focus of these analyses, as discussed in the theory and methodology chapters above will be on identifying the level of securitisation of climate change in these documents, to establish where the EU's climate ambitions laid before the war started, and thus how much they prioritised the combatting of climate change. This will set the status quo, which will then be compared to how much the war is prioritised in the documents from after the beginning of the war.

6.1.1. The European Green Deal

This original document laying out the EGD was published in 2019, shortly after the von der Leyen Commission started its mandate (Directorate-General for Communication, n.d.-b). Being part of the Commission's grand vision of a "a healthy, green and prosperous future" (Directorate-General for Communication, n.d.-b, para. 1), this document is written as an overarching strategy. The analysis has found this ambition reflected through considerable securitisation of climate change in the document. The paper includes all necessary components for a securitising move through the construction of climate change as an existential threat, referent objects, appeals to security based on climate change as a threat, as well as the proposal of considerable extra-ordinary measures.

Climate change is constructed as an existential threat throughout the entire paper. While it is never explicitly called an existential threat, the document utilises phrases such as "this generation's defining task" (2019, p. 2), as well as "global climate and environmental challenges" (2019, p. 2) to emphasise the grand scope of the threat. This is also achieved through the frequent use of adjectives such as "significant" (2019, pp. 5, 7-10, 12, 15-16, 18, 21) or "essential" (2019, pp. 4-7, 9-10, 13-15, 21, 23) in relation to issues and solutions regarding climate action.

Importantly, while climate change is the overarching threat throughout the whole document, the various threats caused by it directly or indirectly, are also explicitly mentioned, especially in regard to their specific policy fields. The document here for example mentions “biodiversity loss” (2019, p. 2), “air, water and soil pollution” (2019, p. 11), “obesity and diseases such as cancer” (2019, p. 11), or “natural disasters, pests and diseases” (2019, p. 13). The sheer diversity of these threats stemming from climate change contribute to the construction of climate change as a major threat, as it touches on so many parts of human life.

In combination with this diversity of threats, the document mentions a variety of referent objects that are threatened by them and need to be protected, ranging from the environment in the form of “[o]ne million of the eight million species on the planet” (2019, p. 2) or “the EU’s natural capital” (2019, p. 2) to society in the form of “the health and well-being of citizens” (2019, p. 2), “local populations” (2019, p. 21), or simply “[t]he most vulnerable” (2019, p. 16).

It is important to mention that while the focus here is most often on the idea of the threat of climate change, the document also often focusses on risk stemming from climate change. However, while this speaks of riskification, the majority of mentions of risks are in fact risks that stem from policy solutions more than climate change itself, such as “a risk of carbon leakage” (2019, p. 5), or “the risk of ‘green washing’” (2019, p. 8). While there are mentions of risks stemming from climate change such as “[t]he risk of energy poverty” (2019, p. 6), it can still be argued that the majority of the paper focusses on protection from threat, and thus constructs climate change as a security issue.

This logic carries over into the discussion of extra-ordinary measures. The entire document is essentially a proposal of policy solutions on how to tackle climate change. Due to this sheer volume of proposals, some of them are bound to stay within the realm of normal politics that treat the issue as governable. Most frequently, this plan to govern comes in form of precautionary measures that aim to “reduce risk” (2019, p. 5) or speak of simple “adaptation to climate change” (2019, p. 5), as opposed to more radical suggestions.

Nonetheless, when comparing the measures proposed in the document against Heinrich & Szulecki’s (2018) three criteria of extra-ordinary measures, a picture emerges that clearly speaks of securitisation. For one, the entire document can be seen as breaking implicit norms, with the whole paper essentially signifying a break from politics as usual. This is seen, for one on the all-encompassing nature of the proposals, ranging from industry policy to energy policy, to agricultural policy (2019). For another, the document explicitly mentions that “[c]onventional approaches will not be sufficient” (2019, p. 18).

The document cannot really be said to adhere to the criteria of withholding information, as it often focusses on statistics of what has been done before (see for example 2019, p. 4) and is quite thorough in all the measures it describes. However, it can be argued that the document leans heavily into the third criteria of shifting power towards the executive.

This is perhaps best shown by the fact that the word “Commission” is mentioned 118 times throughout the 24-page document (2019, pp. 1, 3-24), while other actors such as “Member States” are mentioned only 38 times (pp. 4-6, 10, 12-20, 22-23). It could be argued that this is just due to the nature of the document, with it being an action plan for the Commission. However, with centralisation and the move towards the supranational being such a contentious issue in EU policymaking (Pollack, 2020), this focus can still be seen as quite significant.

Additionally, the document mentions how “[t]he Commission has also been stepping up efforts” (2019, p. 21) and proposes the Commission as having a role in essentially all policy areas that the EU somehow touches upon. Most tellingly, the document sees the Commission encouraging “[w]ell-designed tax reforms” (2019, p. 17), going into monetary policy, an area that has notoriously been a controversial issue of European integration of (Verdun, 2019).

Taken all together, this shows that the level of securitisation of climate change in this document is significant and has almost all moves necessary to speak of full securitisation. Despite some instances of riskification, the conclusion can be drawn that this document securitises climate change to a large extent, and thus shows the Commission pushing climate action as a top priority at this point in time.

6.1.2. Energy Policy: Powering a climate-neutral economy, An EU Strategy for Energy System Integration

Before fully starting with the analysis of this policy paper, it is again important to understand the context within which it was published. This strategy describing how to integrate the EU’s energy system in all its aspects serves as one of the first policies within the policy package of the EGD, and thus is concerned less with the big-picture goal setting of that document, and more focussed on proposing solutions and pathways on how to reach its aims (2020a).

This impacts how the securitisation of climate change is constructed in the paper. The paper essentially takes its starting point in the fact that its goal is to avert climate change, but rarely mentions this explicitly. Climate change is instead constructed as an existential threat by the paper’s word choice that constructs urgency, illustrated by the quote “[t]urning this vision

into a reality requires *resolute action, now*” (2020a, p. 2, emphasis added), or “[r]apid action is necessary” (2020a, p. 11).

In addition to this urgency, the paper’s proposed aim of achieving “deep decarbonisation” (2020a, p. 1) is never up for debate, it is always seen as having “crucial importance for Europe” (2020a, p. 20). This all speaks of the fact that while this policy paper does not often explicitly appeal to security based on threat, the implicit threat of climate change is nonetheless being constructed throughout the entire document.

This implicit nature of the threat of climate change leads to an interesting dynamic when it comes to who the referent objects are in the document. While it carries over the objects threatened by climate change from the Green Deal, such as “biodiversity” (2020a, p. 1) or the “environment” (2020a, p. 1), most referent objects are rarely constructed as threatened by climate change directly. Instead, these referent objects are seen as threatened by the current systems of energy production, such as for example how “health” will be protected by the proposed transitions in the document (2020a, p. 4).

In fact, one of the biggest threats, or at least risks, to referent objects in the document, be it “[t]erritories, regions, and Member States” (2020a, p. 4), “vulnerable households” (2020a, p. 20), or even “energy security” (2020a, p. 2), is the proposed energy transition itself. However, this can be argued to return back to the threat of climate change, as the goal of decarbonisation to stop climate change is seen as so important that it is even seen as being worth taking on all the risks that come with the transition. Essentially, when it comes to the threat of climate change by keeping the current status quo against the risks of the transition, the latter are seen as the lesser evil in the document.

When it comes to extra-ordinary measures, another step required for full securitisation, the document is a lot more explicit. Regarding the first criteria, the proposed solutions are even described as being norm-breaking, be it when it describes the necessary energy transition as “profound” (2020a, p. 1), or as requiring “fundamental and far-reaching action” (2020a, p. 20). Additionally, the choice to describe the necessary decarbonisation as “deep” (2020a, p. 1) also shows that the document is aware that it is proposing solutions that are not simply optimising current policies but proposing completely new policy directions.

Similar to what was seen in the EGD, many of the policy solutions shift power towards the Commission, perhaps best illustrated by the aim of the whole document itself, which imagines “to the planning and operation of the energy system “as a whole”” (2020a, p. 2), based on the plans of the Commission. While the document again mentions other agents such as “Member States” (2020a, pp. 2, 4-6, 8-9, 14,16-17, 20), and of course “energy carriers and

sectors” (2020a, p. 15), the fact that the Commission sees itself as a central planner of the energy transition can be argued to shift considerable power towards the institution, thus fulfilling the requirement of proposing extra-ordinary actions.

The last criteria of withholding information can once again not be said to be fulfilled, as the document is very thorough in its descriptions, using statistics throughout the paper, and covering many different aspects of energy transition, and even being transparent about the fields where more research is required or where they are proposing “first-of-a-kind production” of new technology (2020a, p. 14). Nonetheless, in summary, despite the implicit nature of some indicators carried over from the EGD, all of these indicators of securitisation can confidently be argued to show full securitisation of climate change in this document and prioritise the combatting of climate change above anything else.

6.1.3. Industry Policy: A New Industrial Strategy for Europe

Although this next document, the *New Industrial Strategy for Europe* from 2020 is also a part of the EGD (European Commission), similarly to the Energy Strategy that was analysed in the last section, it exhibits some new dynamics when it comes to the securitisation of, and thus the prioritisation of, combatting climate change.

Starting with the parts that do not diverge substantially from the EGD, the analysis has found that climate change is still constructed as an existential threat in this document. In one of the most explicit references to climate change, the document calls it “the greatest challenge and opportunity of our times” (2020b, p. 3), emphasising the grand scale of the threat.

Implicitly, the document also treats the threat of climate change as a given, using phrases such as “[a]s Europe transitions to climate-neutrality” (2020b, p. 7), which is written as a prediction, rather than a development that is still uncertain. Most of the proposed policy solutions are also seen as necessary steps proposed with a sense of urgency, showcased through the frequent use of the words “must” (2020b, pp. 1, 3-5, 7-10, 13-14) and “need” (2020b, pp. 1-6, 8-9, 12-13). Finally, the document also appeals to the audience’s sense of responsibility by constructing climate action as an “environmental and moral imperative” (2020b, p. 9), showing the heavy focus it puts on the necessity of action to stop climate change.

Being another in-depth policy paper stemming from the EGD, the document is mainly made up of policy solutions on how to achieve industrial transition into sustainability, some of which fulfil at least the criteria of breaking norms to count as extra-ordinary measures. Emphasising that “the extent of [the] transformation Europe will undergo [...] takes generations” (2020b, p. 4), the document explicitly “move[s] away from the age-old model

from taking from the ground to make products” (2020b, p. 9) and thus breaks with most established norms within the industry sector.

However, when it comes to the other two criteria for extra-ordinary measures, most of the document does not show a substantial shift of power towards the executive to the extent seen in the previous documents from this period. Instead, the document frequently mentions in one form or the other that “[o]nly a shared commitment from the EU, its Member States and regions, industry, SMEs and all other relevant stakeholders in a renewed partnership will allow Europe to make the most of the industrial transformation” (2020b, p. 16). Neither can this document be argued to withhold any significant form of information, the whole document being a thorough explanation of the various areas required for the industrial transformation, including their potential consequences (2020b).

While so far, some form of securitisation of climate change can be observed in the document, it can already be argued to be a less strong form of securitisation than has been observed previously. This trend continues when looking at the remaining component necessary for full securitisation, namely the referent objects in the document. At first glance, the document carries over the objects from the EGD, mentioning “environmental impacts” (2020b, p. 9) and the “supply of clean and affordable energy” (2020b, p. 9).

When analysing the document as a whole, however, it becomes clear that while the environment is mentioned as a threatened referent object, the biggest focus lies on more industrial objects, such as “Europe’s sovereignty” (2020b, p. 1), “our diversity and talent, our values, and way of life, our innovators and creators” (2020b, p. 1), and, most importantly “our [Europe’s] competitiveness” (2020b, p. 1).

All of these referent objects cannot be said to be seen as directly threatened by climate change, but rather “an ever-changing and ever more unpredictable world” (2020b, p. 1). While unpredictability is seen as being partially caused by climate change, the document focusses more of its attention on other causes such as “ever-changing geopolitical realities [such as g]lobal competition, protectionism, market distortions, trade tensions and challenges to the rules-based system” (2020b, p. 3).

Based on this, it is more difficult to speak of a full securitisation of climate change in this document. It could be argued that the ever-present implicit securitisation carried over from the EGD is enough to speak of full securitisation, especially since all necessary components can still be found. Nonetheless, it should be considered that a large part of this policy treats climate change as a secondary security issue, focussing more on other threats. Thus, in

conclusion it can be said that while climate change is still a priority in this document, it is less so than seen in other documents from this time period.

6.1.4. The 2021 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen

To analyse the level of securitisation of climate change in this document and thus the prioritisation of combatting it, it is once again important to first place it in the context of when it was held. Commission President von der Leyen presented this speech to the European Parliament in September 2021, which was the year after the COVID-19 pandemic took hold on the European continent. Additionally, since it summarizes the last year of policymaking and its important events, the focus of the speech is not on one single topic but covers multiple areas by design.

This is reflected in the way the speech is built up, which, after a brief intro, is divided into thematic sections, which each have headings introducing them in the transcripts. In order, the speech concerns itself first with the pandemic and its implications and consequences (2021, pp. 2-5), the EU's global "responsibility" (2021, p. 5), which includes climate action, global conflicts, and cooperation within the EU and with allies (2021, pp. 5-9), and finally civil rights and the EU's values (2021, pp. 9-12), finished with a brief conclusion (2021, p. 12). Looking only at this distribution and build-up already shows that climate change is given less priority and focus, not even making up one whole section, but rather being a sub-section to the larger topic of global dynamics, making up only roughly one page of the 12-page speech.

Moving on to the investigation of the components of securitisation however, we see a similar level of construction of climate change as an existential threat as in the other data from before the war. When briefly introducing the topic in the introduction, climate change is called "the gravest planetary crisis of all time" (2021, p. 1), later building on this construction by mentioning its already devastating effects on Europe through "floods in Belgium and Germany [a]nd wildfires burning from the Greek islands to the hills in France" (2021, p. 5). Thus, this step of successful securitisation can be seen as fulfilled.

These mentioned quotes simultaneously single out the explicit referent objects threatened by climate change, with the planet as a whole being mentioned, as well as European countries. With "our youth" (2021, p. 1) being one of the only other explicitly mentioned referent objects that are threatened, this speech does not include as many of them as seen in the other documents. However, the quantity is not necessarily important for full securitisation, and rather the existence for referent objects at all is enough that it can be seen as another step towards full securitisation.

Nonetheless, full securitisation becomes difficult to argue for when looking at the lack of extra-ordinary measures to combat climate change in the speech. It is fairly straightforward to say that no notable instances of withholding information or shifting power towards the executive can be found. It becomes a bit more difficult to determine whether the policy solutions proposed in this speech can be seen as breaking norms, because most of the speech covering climate change concerns itself with policy solutions.

Some of them could be seen as being norm-breaking, such as the EU “being the first major economy to present comprehensive legislation” to achieve substantial emission reductions (2021, p. 6). In contrast, in the quotes “[w]e will have smarter cars and cleaner airplanes” (2021, p. 6), “the EU will double its external funding for biodiversity” (2021, p. 6), and “strengthen global supply chains and develop new investment projects on green and digital technologies” (2021, p. 9), it can be argued to focus primarily on plans on how to optimise already existing structures and initiatives, rather than proposing any pioneering policies.

Neither can real instances of centralisation of power towards the Commission be found, as there is an explicit appeal to “both Parliament and Member States to keep the package and to keep the ambition together” (2021, p. 6), as well as an emphasis that “Europe cannot do it alone” (2021, p. 6). Based on this, it can be seen as more accurate to speak of politicisation of climate change.

This analysis has shown that in this document from before the war in Ukraine that climate change is not fully securitised. Despite most of the steps of securitisation being present, extra-ordinary measures could not be found in the analysis. This arguably constructs climate change as security jargon; however, it is important to mention that there is a proposition of policy solutions, they just do not qualify as extra-ordinary. Either way, no full securitisation of climate change could be found in this document, and the proposed policy solutions show that climate change was not fully lifted out of the realm of regular politics in this document, showcasing a lower priority on combatting climate change.

6.2. After the beginning of the war

Continuing the analysis of the level of securitisation of climate change, this next part of the analysis will turn its attention to data that was released after the beginning of the war. As discussed in the methodology, these documents signify updates in the same policy areas within the EGD as the data looked at in the previous section. The following three sections will first analyse the EU’s new energy policy *REPower EU Plan* (European Commission, 2022)

and secondly the EU's 2023 updated industrial policy document *A Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age* (European Commission). The section will conclude with an analysis of the 2022 *State of the Union Address by Ursula von der Leyen*.

After concluding this analysis, the next section will take these findings and compare them to the findings from the first part of the analysis and compare the levels of securitisation and thus prioritisation of climate change. This will then be used to return to the theoretical framework of the MSF to discuss whether the European Commission has used the war in Ukraine as a window of opportunity, which answers the problem formulation.

6.2.1. Energy Policy: REPower EU

It is nearly impossible to discuss securitisation of climate change in this document of the analysis without once again discussing its context first. As becomes clear in the introduction of the document quite fast, the document is primarily intended to “rapidly reduc[e] our dependence on Russian fossil fuels by fast forwarding the clean transition” (2022, p. 1). Thus, the vast majority of the policy concerns itself with energy dependence on Russia.

Most of the language of urgency in the document therefore centres around the threat of the war on energy, such as when policy options are required to be “targeted and swift” (2022, p. 17), and aiming for a “rapid reduction” (2022, p. 17). The document also utilises the word “urgent” (2022, pp. 3, 16-18) and “urgency” (2022, pp. 1, 11, 18, 20), and “energy crisis” (2022, p. 3), and it constructs the war as “massively disrupt[ing]” (2022, p. 1) to show the severity of the threat.

Importantly, the document does not completely disregard the threat posed by climate change. This is most visible in the conclusion, where it emphasises the existence of a “double urgency [because of] the climate crisis, severely compounded by Russia's aggression against Ukraine” (2022, p. 20). Thus, despite the overwhelming focus of the document on the threat posed by the war in Ukraine, the document does not entirely remove the first step of securitisation, and still constructs climate change as an existential threat.

It is challenging to discuss the further aspects of securitisation of climate change in this document. As represented by the quote mentioned in the beginning of this analysis, “the clean transition” (2022, p. 1), which originally was intended to combat climate change, is now seen as a means to the end of “reducing [...] dependence on Russian fossil fuels” (2022, p. 1). In other words, the war in Ukraine is seen as the primary threat to deal with, which means that almost all the policy proposals in the document are related to this goal.

While this contributes to the securitisation of the war in Ukraine, it can be argued to replace the securitisation of climate change, thus almost de-securitizing climate change in the document. Most of the referent objects found in the document concern large parts of society, such as “vulnerable households and small businesses” (2022, p. 12), “the EU economy” (2022, p. 3), or even entire countries such as “Bulgaria and Poland” (2022, p. 1). While these in most cases are seen as threatened by high energy prices or a lack of security of supply and not the war directly, due to the fact that these aspects are constructed as direct consequences of the war, it still rather contributes to a potential securitisation of the war, and not securitisation of climate change.

Moving on to the policy solutions present in the document, this dynamic simply carries over. The document’s policies are almost all optimisations of existing policies related to the EGD and the existing “climate target” (2022, p. 2), with the document proposing plans to optimise them for the sake of independence from Russia. This is shown by a focus on “building on the [already existing] Fit for 55 package” (2022, p. 1), and “accelerating” in various forms, which can be found throughout the document (2022, pp. 1-3, 6-7, 9-11, 13-14, 19-20).

This could be argued to impact the securitisation of climate change in two ways. The first option is that due to the focus on the war in Russia as the primary threat and all policy solutions focussing on defeating this threat, the sporadic construction of climate change as a threat are nothing more than empty security jargon. The second option, on the other hand, considers the fact that the policy solutions that are being optimised and accelerated are originally intended to deal with the climate crisis. The document is aware of this, mentioning that the solutions will help “[support] decarbonisation” (2022, p. 7), despite including some proposed solutions that do not further decarbonisation, such as “[d]iversifying energy imports” (2022, p. 4).

This implies that it was a conscious choice to focus most policy solutions on decarbonisation, which in turn implies that the document still acknowledges climate change as an existential threat as constructed in the EGD, where most policy solutions originally come from. Taken together with the explicit construction of climate change as an existential threat, it can therefore be argued that the policy solutions intended to decouple the EU from Russia’s war in Ukraine are also intended to deal with the threat of climate change.

However, this only contributes to the securitisation of climate change if the proposed measures are extra-ordinary. Firstly, the document does not really shift power towards the Commission. While the Commission is still seen as a central coordinator throughout the document, most of the policy proposals are dependent on other actors such as “[r]egions and

cities” (2022, p. 4), or simply “leaders, Member States, regional and local authorities, and indeed every citizen and business” (2022, p. 20). This can be argued to be the regular power distribution when it comes to EU policies and leaves the power in the hands of all parts of society, rather than suggesting that the Commission should have more power in particular aspects.

A clearer image of securitisation arises in regard to breaking norms, specifically in the suggestion by the Commission that individuals should start “changing [their] behaviour” (2022, 3). It is quite rare to see that a policy aims to directly influence individuals in this way, which has made this suggestion quite controversial (Jack & Zimmermann, 2022). However, as discussed, most other policy solutions in this document can be seen as simply being optimisations, and thus more contributing to politicisation rather than securitisation.

Nonetheless, it could be argued that certain proposals, such as the proposed modification of the Emission Trading System, break norms to the extend where even the document includes a justification for it based on “the urgent timeline” (2022, p. 17). The simple call for acceleration of norm-breaking solutions from the EGD can also be seen as norm-breaking and thus contributing to securitisation.

Therefore, the analysis has found that this document does indeed securitize climate change. Interestingly, this document could also be argued to be a good example of using the war in Ukraine as a window of opportunity to push for further climate action. The linking of the securitisation of the war in Ukraine with the securitisation of climate change as shown in this analysis implies that combatting climate change was still a priority, despite the focus being on the war in Ukraine.

6.2.2. Industry Policy: A Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age

The *Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age* is the most recent document that will be analysed, having been released in February 2023 (European Commission). As opposed to the previous document, it was not written as a direct response to the war in Ukraine, but rather to “form part of the European Green Deal” and is written with the aim to promote industry competitiveness as its primary goal (2023, p. 3). The war itself is only explicitly referred to two times throughout the document (2023, pp. 1, 8), with most allusions to it through implicit references such as “rising geopolitical tensions” that in turn are seen as having implications for competitiveness (2023, p. 19). This means that similarly to the industrial document from before the war, the document’s securitisation of climate change is to a large part implicitly taken over from the EGD.

Language such as “the stakes are high” (2023, p. 1), “timely delivery on the objectives of the Green Deal Industrial Plan” (2023, p. 12), and “working [...] for the greater good” (2023, p. 2) supports the construction of climate change as an existential threat that is still urgent and necessary to combat. However, this construction takes up a comparatively small part of the document, with most of it being reinforced through phrases such as the goal of a “net-zero industrial age” (2023, p. 3), which only implicitly furthers the decarbonisation aims of the EGD, while not discussing climate change explicitly.

This dynamic is reinforced when looking at the referent objects threatened by climate change in the document. “[O]ur environment” and “the planet” are mentioned as threatened (2023, pp. 3, 2), but they are mentioned only sporadically throughout the document. Most of the other referent objects, primarily “competitiveness” (2023, p. 1), “the Single Market” (2023, p. 10), or “our rights” (2023, pp. 17-18), are constructed as being threatened mainly by economic forces.

Taking over again the dynamic from the previous industrial policy, however, these economic forces are partially seen as a result of the green transition and the required technological change. As these stem from the threat of climate change, they can be argued to contribute to its securitisation, at least implicitly. However, some of the other referent objects in the document are either completely unrelated to climate change, such as “fragmentation” (2023, p. 10), or “unfair and coercive practices” (2023, pp. 17), or they are seen as threatened by other forces. “[S]ecurity of supply” (2023, p. 6) or simply “energy prices” (2023, p. 20), for example, are seen as threatened by the war in Ukraine more than by climate change. Therefore, while there are referent objects that indubitably contribute to the securitisation of climate change, for the majority of the document this step of securitisation happens not directly, but rather implicitly.

When looking at extra-ordinary measures, similarly, a large amount of the policy solutions adheres to the criteria of extra-ordinary measures. Most notably, there is a strong focus on shifting power towards the Commission through advertisement of “a comprehensive European approach” which is seen as “essential” (2023, p. 13). Norm-breaking can be found in the formulation that the EU has “accelerated a new industrial revolution” (2023, p. 1), which implies a seismic shift in the way things have been done.

However, most of the policy solutions in the document can be seen as accelerating existing solutions, which rather speaks of an optimisation, and thus politicisation. Additionally, these solutions once again mainly concern competitiveness and economic concerns, and therefore do not particularly contribute to the securitisation of climate change. While such a

lack of solutions could be seen as empty security jargon, in some instances they nonetheless contribute to “climate action” explicitly in some form or the other (2023, p. 13), and thus it can still be said that it contributes to securitisation of climate change.

In summary, the analysis has thus shown that it can be said that all steps necessary for securitisation exist implicitly and in the few instances where climate change is explicitly mentioned, and thus the Commission seems to still have prioritised the combatting of climate change to a certain extent. Overall, however, considering the relatively small part of the document that makes up the securitisation of climate change, this lack of focus can be argued to decrease the prioritisation of climate change.

6.2.3. The 2022 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen

In contrast to the policy documents analysed above, this speech covers a broader range of topics and touches upon a larger range of policies. Held in the same year as the war in Ukraine started, the conflict takes up most of the space of the speech. While in the previous two documents, issues unrelated to climate change did not necessarily impact its securitisation to a great extent, here the focus on the war seems to negatively impact the securitisation of climate change.

Aside from a few mentions in combination with other threats throughout the text (2022, p. 3, 4, 10), the 13-page document only uses about half a page to discuss climate change itself (2022, pp. 5-6), while, for example, the war in Ukraine is the central focus of the first three pages. However, it utilises the limited space to carry over the construction of climate change as “climate crisis” (2022, p. 4) and thus an existential threat seen in previous documents. It also adds new ways of doing so, by mentioning “[h]eat waves [and d]roughts” (2022, p. 4), and by focussing on the urgency of the threat, saying that “Europe’s glaciers [are] melting faster than ever” and that “disasters [will] become more frequent and more intense” (2022, p. 6).

This dynamic is reflected in the mention of referent objects. Climate change is seen as threatening a variety of entities, such as Europe’s “nature” (2022, p. 6), “gas prices” (2022, p. 4), or the primary focus of the previously analysed industry policies, Europe’s “future competitiveness” (2022, p. 6). Thus, so far, the document includes the necessary steps towards securitisation.

When looking at the proposed measures, however, it becomes less clear. There are policy solutions that could be seen as breaking norms, specifically the call for new “fiscal rules” (2022, p. 7), which verge into the controversial area of the EU’s public debt discussion (Von der Buechard, 2023). Another notable instance of breaking norms is the way the text explicitly

changes the entrenched capitalist norm that “profits are good” to “in these times it is wrong to receive extraordinary record profits” (2022, p. 4). Importantly, this is not entirely seen as a result of the threat of climate change, but as a combination of it with the threat of “Russia[.s] manipulati[ion of] our energy market“ (2022, p. 3).

Most other solutions with the sole purpose to deal with the direct effects of climate change, such as the purchase of “another 10 light amphibious aircrafts and three helicopter” to improve the Union’s firefighting capabilities (2022, p.5), or the mention of the “European Green Deal” seem to be politicised policy solutions, as they optimise existing policy structures (2022, p. 5-6, 8).

Therefore, it seems that most policy solutions that are seen as extra-ordinary equally prioritise the threat of the war in Ukraine and the threat posed by climate change, reminiscent of the implicit linking of securitisation of climate with the war in Ukraine that was seen in previous documents. In contrast to these documents, however, the war in Ukraine as shown is securitised considerably more in comparison to climate change, thus weakening the prioritisation of climate change. Therefore, while the mention of these policy solutions keeps the securitisation of climate change staying off the level of empty security jargon, it is still arguable whether all the necessary steps for full securitisation and thus full prioritisation can be found in this document.

6.3. Comparison

This last section of the analysis will compare the findings from the analysis, discussing the varying levels of securitisation of climate change. This will give an indication as to how the prioritisation of climate change has changed from before to after the beginning of the war, that will be further discussed in the next chapter to answer the problem formulation. In this chapter, the findings from the data from before the war, and then the findings from the data from after the beginning of the war will be summarised first. Then, the findings from the two time periods will be compared. The comparison will be conducted within the data from the energy and industry policy areas, respectively, followed by a comparison of the state of the Union speeches. A summary of these findings and their comparison is visualised in table 3 at the end of this chapter to provide a concise overview.

Unsurprisingly, the analysis of the data from before the war has found that the combatting of climate change was the top priority of the original EGD. All the necessary steps to securitisation were found throughout the entire document, combined with some instances of

riskification. This priority was taken over almost without changes into the energy policy document. Despite an explicit focus on extra-ordinary measures, the document was found to carry over other steps of securitisation both explicitly and implicitly from the original EGD. This follows the logic of the document being a further exploration of policy solutions introduced in the original EGD strategy.

Notably, however, the implicit construction took overhand in the industry document, which found the combatting of climate change still present, but being challenged by a focus on other, more economy-related threats. This trend was also found in the State of the Union speech form 2021, the data closest to the beginning of the war, which found the lowest levels of securitisation in this timeframe. Combatting of climate change here seems to be less prioritised, with even some indications towards politicisation.

Now, after having laid out the ‘status quo’ that would be impacted by the war in Ukraine, looking at the findings from the second part of the analysis can give an indication as to the change of the prioritisation of climate change. In the policy document within the policy area of energy, the analysis found an interesting dynamic, where the clear priority of the document was to deal with the consequences of the war in Ukraine, while still keeping climate change securitised. Through its focus on using policy measures that help deal with both crises, the analysis has found that the combatting of climate change was clearly still a priority. Thus, within the area of energy policy, similar levels of securitisation can be found before and after the beginning of the war.

In contrast, the industry policy document from after the beginning of the war saw the prioritisation of climate change at its lowest. Despite it still being fully securitised, climate change was almost crowded out by a focus on dealing with the new economic and geopolitical realities that Europe was faced with after the beginning of the war. Additionally, some steps of the securitisation, notably the construction of climate change as a threat, were done more or less implicitly. This dynamic is almost the same to the broader focus on economic threats in the industry document before the war, and thus shows that there was arguably no notable change in securitisation between the two documents.

The 2022 State of the Union speech had a similar dynamic, where climate change took a clear backseat in relation to the war in Ukraine. Similarly to what was seen in the energy policy document, most extra-ordinary measures contributed to both combatting the war in Ukraine and combatting climate change, keeping combatting climate change out of the realm of empty security jargon. However, this dynamic again reflects what was found in the corresponding document from before the war. Additionally, in both cases, climate change took

up a comparatively small part of the speech. In summary, then, there was again quite a small change in the prioritisation of climate change between the two time periods.

Table 3. Summary of findings of the analysis

Policy area	Findings	
	Before the war	After the beginning of the war
European Green Deal	Full securitisation, some instances of riskification	
Energy Policy	Full securitisation	Full securitisation; Securitisation of climate change achieved through linking it to securitisation of war in Ukraine through policy measures
Industry Policy	Full securitisation; referent objects focus mostly on threats other than climate change	Full securitisation mostly implicitly; takes up only small part of document; most referent objects and policy measures concern other threats
State of the Union	Security jargon, lack of extra-ordinary measures; includes regular policy solutions	Full securitisation achieved through linking it to securitisation of war in Ukraine; climate change still takes up considerably smaller part

7. Discussion

The next chapter concerns itself with answering the problem formulation:

To what extent has the war in Ukraine impacted the prioritisation of combatting climate change in the European Green Deal?

This will be done primarily by discussing the findings of the comparison above in the context of the MSF. It will also discuss the implications of these findings for the EU's climate ambitions more broadly.

Taking the starting point in the problem formulation, in industry policy the war did not have a significant impact, either positive or negative. Both before the war, and after the beginning of the war, industry policy did not prioritise climate change, so there is no indication that the Commission used the window of opportunity opened by the war to change that. It seems that in the field of industry, economic concerns always loomed larger than the threat of climate change, and the war simply added another such concern.

However, in the field of energy policy, a different picture emerges, despite the comparison showing similar levels of securitisation. Here, the window of opportunity by the war is arguably on full display because the only reason that similar levels of securitisation could be found is due to the securitisation of the war being linked with it. In other words, within energy policy, the window of opportunity opened by the war was used to keep climate change on a similar priority as the war itself. Compared to the full prioritisation of climate change in the energy policy before the war that did not need to share the spotlight with other threats, this shows that the overall impact of the war here seems to be that climate change is less prioritised.

In the State of the Union documents, this dynamic can be observed to an even greater extent. In the document before the war, climate change was essentially brought up as a matter of routine, not really being seen as a threat that necessitates extra-ordinary policy solutions to deal with it. In the document after the beginning of the war, however, the window of opportunity of the war in Ukraine was used to also push for the combatting of climate change. In a way, then, here the war has actually impacted the combatting of climate change in a positive way compared to before the war. However, the prioritisation of climate change suffers due to this in a similar way as seen in the energy policy, because the war is clearly the number one priority to combat, and it simply provides a convenient way to also push for climate action.

This can be best explained by discussing the role of the European Commission as a policy entrepreneur. Before the war, in these two policy areas, the clear motivation was the one laid out in the original EGD: To combat climate change. This motivation was laid out with certain policy measures and goals, such as decarbonisation. After the war, on the other hand, the Commission seems to have only kept the measures in mind and shifted the overall motivation. Now, the main motivation is to deal with the war in Ukraine and its fallout, and this was conveniently done through similar policy measures as the ones laid out before the war that also combat climate change.

Importantly, the motivation shifted nonetheless, and this has important implications for the future of climate action, as it seems that combatting climate change is not the inarguable priority anymore that it was in the original EGD document. This can be demonstrated on the example of oil and natural gas. Before the war, oil and gas were seen as a problem, as they prevented the decarbonisation of the energy sector, and thus it was necessary to phase them out. After the beginning of the war, oil and natural gas were primarily seen as a problem, because Russia is one of the EU's central providers of these two energy sources. Not wanting to pay for these imports and potentially provide funds for the war effort for Russia, the phaseout received renewed priority.

The measures themselves did not change, and even accelerated, but the motivation behind them shifted. This carries with it the problem that if the primary issue now is only to decouple from Russian oil and natural gas, simply shifting to a different exporter would solve the issue. This dynamic could already be observed to a certain extent in the REPowerEU document from after the war (European Commission, 2022), and shows that if climate change is not the top priority, it becomes easy for new policies to only take over the means, but not the end itself.

Nonetheless, overall, the findings of this paper do not all paint a completely negative future for climate action. For one, on a broad level, the securitisation of climate action did not receive a major negative impact due to the crisis of the war. This shows to an extent that climate change seems to have entered a level of acceptance, where a crisis does not lead to climate policies taking a backseat. Seen from this angle, the trend of crises impacting environmental action negatively broken by the COVID-19 pandemic, seems to continue through this next crisis.

Nonetheless, the prioritisation of climate change itself overall seems to have suffered because of the war. The Commission carried over the measures of climate action from before the war, such as seeing decarbonisation as important, but there was a shift in the goal of this decarbonisation. This opens up an opportunity for actors that have priorities that do not necessarily align with the end of combatting climate change, such as business interests, to push for their own goals, a trend that was already strongly indicated in the industry documents, which both had low levels of prioritisation of climate change.

8. Conclusion and Avenues for Further Research

This paper has attempted to answer the question *To what extent has the war in Ukraine impacted the prioritisation of combatting climate change in the European Green Deal?*. It has

done so by using a framing analysis to analyse the levels of securitisation of climate change in discourses and policies within the EGD framework from before the war in Ukraine to data from after the beginning of the war. This was conceptually done within a social constructivist worldview, using the MSF to conceptualise the war in Ukraine as a window of opportunity and the European Union as a potential policy entrepreneur pushing for climate action.

The analysis of the paper has found that in the area of industrial policy, the war had little impact on how climate change was prioritised, with it being a low priority in the documents from both before and after the beginning of the war. In the fields of energy, and in the Commission's yearly State of the Union speech, the war has been found to have had a slightly negative impact on the prioritisation of climate change. Overall, this implies that climate action has received a level of awareness where short-term crises do not necessitate a significant change in climate policies. On the other hand, it still shows that crises nonetheless open up the possibilities to use the focus on the new policy goals to distract from the looming crisis of climate change.

In order to properly mitigate climate change and retain a sense of normality in the years to come, a constant high level of ambition is required, and these findings indicate that this ambition might be wavering. However, the war in Ukraine is still an ongoing and evolving situation as of the time of writing, and it would be interesting to repeat a similar analysis in a few months or years to see whether there will be a more notable impact on the EGD in the future and see whether this overall de-prioritisation continues. It might also be useful to complement the analysis of this paper by looking into policies within the other areas of the EGD that were not investigated, such as finance, innovation, or transport.

Future research could also move away from this paper's primary focus on discourse in the agenda-setting stage utilising the interpretivist foundation of social constructivism. Research with a more positivist angle could be conducted by taking inspiration from previous research investigating the implementation of the EGD (Siddi, 2020). This could for example be done by looking at how the analysed policies were and are being implemented and see whether the implementation of EGD policies after the beginning of the war in Ukraine follows a similar trend as the discourses.

9. References

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