

# FRAMING EU CLIMATE POLITICS:

*A WPR AND SECURITIZATION ANALYSIS*

**Thesis**

**Master of Science (MSc) in Social Science in International  
Relations**

April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Mie Milling Jørgensen: 20203134

Supervisor: Anita Nissen

Characters: 121835



**AALBORG  
UNIVERSITET**

# Contents

List of Abbreviations.....	4
Abstracts.....	5
Introduction.....	6
<i>Research Question</i> .....	8
Literature Review.....	9
Current Literature on Climate Politics and Global Climate Governance.....	9
Existing Literature on EU Climate Policy and Leadership.....	10
Identified Gap in Literature.....	11
Theoretical Framework.....	12
WPR-Approach.....	12
Securitization.....	15
<i>Criticism of Securitization</i> .....	18
Operationalization Of Theories.....	19
Methodology.....	21
Philosophy of Science.....	21
Research Design.....	22
<i>Single Case Study</i> .....	22
<i>Case Selection – why the EU?</i> .....	23
WPR as a method.....	24
Data Collection.....	24
Validity.....	25
Limitation.....	25
<i>Assessing the selection of Data</i> .....	25

<i>Assessing the generalizability</i> .....	25
<i>Methodological limitations</i> .....	26
Analysis Strategy .....	27
Background Chapter .....	28
EU ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY .....	29
<i>Early EU environmental competencies</i> .....	29
<i>Internal and External Dimensions of EU Environmental Policy</i> .....	29
<b><i>Internal Dimensions</i></b> .....	30
<b><i>External Dimensions</i></b> .....	30
<i>The Evolution of EU Security Thinking</i> .....	30
<i>Climate Governance Tools</i> .....	31
Analysis.....	32
The Paris Agreement (2015) .....	33
<i>Context</i> .....	33
<i>Representation of Climate Crisis</i> .....	34
<i>Sub-Conclusion</i> .....	39
The European Green Deal (2019) .....	40
<i>Context</i> .....	40
<i>Representation of Climate Crisis</i> .....	41
<i>Sub-Conclusion</i> .....	45
Competiveness Compass (2025).....	47
<i>Context</i> .....	47
<i>Representation of Climate Crisis</i> .....	48
<i>Sub-Conclusion</i> .....	53

Discussion.....	54
Synthesis Results .....	54
<i>Security perceptions</i> .....	55
<i>Theoretical Consideration</i> .....	56
Conclusion .....	57
Bibliography.....	59

# List of Abbreviations

**ASEAN** – Association of Southeast Asian Countries

**CAP** – Conference of the Parties

**COP** – Conference of the Parties

**ETS** - Emission Trading System

**EU** – European Union

**INDC** – Intended Nationally Determined Contribution

**IPCC** - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

**IR** – International Relations

**MS** – Member States

**NATO** – The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

**NDC** - National Determined Contribution

**NECP** - The National Energy and Climate Plans

**OECD** - Organizations for Economic Cooperation and Developments

**SEA** - Single European Act

**SDG** - Sustainable Development Goals

**WPR** – What’s the Problem Represented to Be (approach)

**WTO** – World Trade Organization

**UN** – The United Nations

**UNFCCC** – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

**USA** – The United States

# Abstracts

The topic of climate change has become central in global politics, influencing the social, economic, political, and environmental sectors. This master's thesis examines the EU's underlying assumptions and security perceptions in its climate crisis since 2015. Using a single case study analyzing official European politicians' speeches, the study explores how the EU's security perceptions and underlying assumptions have shaped its climate crisis narrative.

To address the research question, the study has adopted an interpretive-critical approach. The theoretical framework of the thesis is grounded in the theory What's the Problem Represented to be (WPR) by Carol Bacchi and the theory of Securitization by the Copenhagen School. The two theories complement each other: WPR examines the underlying assumptions and effects of the EU's representation of climate change, while Securitization theory examines speech acts, existential threats, and performative utterances in the speeches. The thesis is conducted as a qualitative analysis, using WPR as the method, and is divided into three specific political timeframes from 2015 to 2025. The study's focus is the EU's representation of the climate crisis through its communication on international agreements and EU-specific policies. The study, therefore, analyses the Paris Agreement (2015), the EU Green Deal (2019), and the Competitiveness Compass (2025).

The results reveal that the EU's representation of climate change has undergone significant change since 2015. In 2015, the EU presented that the lack of global commitment and transparency in the NDCs was the cause of the climate crisis becoming an urgent problem. In 2019, the EU began to recognize that the climate crisis was becoming a systemic challenge, threatening its social and economic security. In 2025, the EU began to focus more on the competitiveness of its industries, which affected how it approached the climate crisis.

The findings highlight that the EU's representation of the climate crisis has been shaped by shifting political priorities, social challenges, and a lack of collective action. The change in EU representation illustrates that the EU bears its own responsibility for mitigating the climate crisis, resulting from shifting security perceptions and underlying assumptions. This means that even as the EU shifts its focus back to mitigating the climate crisis, the mere communication of the climate crisis since 2015 has altered how the EU represents it, changing perceptions of it as a security issue beyond the environment.

**Keywords:** *Climate change, Climate Crisis, security, European Union, securitization theory, WPR theory, Green Deal, Paris Agreement, Competitiveness Compass.*

# Introduction

Climate Change has become a major topic in current political debates. These debates have led countries to reassess their security, development, and sustainability priorities, with a greater emphasis on green solutions. The concept of climate change is often framed differently in political contexts, and can be essential for understanding the official definition. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report from 2024, the definition of climate change “refers to the change in the state of climate that can be identified by changes in the mean and/or variability of its properties and that persist for an extended period, typically decades or longer”(Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014,120).

The engagement in climate politics dates back to the early 1970s, when a major global crisis intensified international actors' awareness of the emerging climate crisis. In 1973, the Arab oil embargo caused a drop in oil consumption and a gasoline shortage(Watt, 2023). Then again, in 1979, an energy crisis “erupted due to geopolitical turmoil in Iran, which disrupted oil supply” (Lucas Downey, 2026). These crises became a turning point for Europe. The 1980s and 1990s were significant for the scientific understanding of climate change, as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, n.d.-a). The IPCC was important as it “provided policymakers with regular scientific assessment on climate change, its implications, and potential future risks” (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, n.d.-b). This was a significant step for policymakers, as they could now obtain scientific evidence of climate change’s effects.

During the first Conference of the Parties (COP) in 1995, parties agreed that the objectives of the Convention on Climate Change from 1992 were “inadequate for the objectives of the Convention and established commitment for developed countries”(European Parliament, 2018). Then, in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted. This Protocol was “the world's first greenhouse gas emission treaty”(European Parliament, 2018). The Protocol was significant as it operated under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and “binds developed countries to a stronger commitment under the ‘principle of common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities’” (United Nations, 1997). Despite a stronger commitment to the Protocol, the United States (USA) was sceptical of its effectiveness and productivity.

Since the 1990s, international actors such as the European Union (EU), the United States (USA), China, and South Korea have addressed climate change through policy

initiatives. More actors, such as international organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Countries (ASEAN), the EU, and multilateral organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), G7, and G20, have also been actively participating in cooperation on climate projects. Many actors have dedicated themselves to the 2030 targets to reduce emissions and the 2050 targets for net-zero emissions.

In recent years, climate change has become an integrated part of international politics, as many international actors, such as the USA, the EU, and the UN, have issued directives, regulations, and policies to address and mitigate human-induced climate change, as well as rising temperatures, biodiversity, and extreme weather events. However, according to the UN State of the Global Impact Report from 2025, human-induced climate change has reached its highest in 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

The European Union has, since the 1970s, focused on addressing climate change through key political protocols and agreements. These include “the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, the Paris Agreement in 2015, engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2017, and continued participation in the COP meetings since 1995”(European Union, 2018). These protocols, laws, regulations, and directives have made the EU a leading political entity in addressing the rising climate crisis. However, the EU and Von der Leyen have been criticized for their retreat from ambitious climate policy, driven by an increased focus on competitiveness in the industrial sector (Hobbs, 2024). This is further proved when, in 2024, multiple NGOs, such as Greenpeace, Birdlife, and Oxfam, wrote a letter expressing their criticism toward the EU, and highlighted “the relaxation of environmental conditions required for farmers to receive subsidies from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)”(European Business Review, 2024). The letter continued to criticize Ursula Von der Leyen and the European Commission for how they have “loosened pollution rules for industrial farms, dropped plans for sustainable food production, and abandoned targets to reduce pesticides, and shelved efforts to ensure resilient water supply”(European Business Review, 2024).

Existing literature on the EU as a climate leader highlights its leadership in climate politics, negotiations, and global governance. While that might indicate a shifting perspective on climate governance, many scholars fail to determine how the EU and its institutions communicate their progress in addressing the climate crisis in their speeches.

## *Research Question*

Through my master's in International Relations, I have gained an interest in the EU as an institution. I have also developed an interest in climate change, which has sparked my curiosity about how its growing impact has influenced international actors' communication on the evolving crisis. In this thesis, I intend to examine this topic by analyzing the following research question: *What are the underlying assumptions and security perceptions behind the EU's representation of the climate crisis since 2015?* To address this question, I will conduct a single case study of the EU as an institution. I will apply my theoretical framework, which combines the theory *'What's the Problem Represented to Be'* (WPR) by Carol Bacchi and the *Securitization theory* by the Copenhagen School. This framework will help uncover and understand the underlying assumptions and speech acts, and examine how security perceptions have influenced the shift in EU climate politics since 2015. First, I will outline a literature review of current debates on climate politics and global climate governance, followed by a review of scholars who examined the EU's position as a climate leader in this field.

Then, I will outline a theoretical framework focusing on two theories: Carol Bacchi's *What's the Problem Represented to Be* and the Copenhagen School's *Securitization Theory*. These theories help explore underlying assumptions and speech acts in EU speeches. The methodology section will outline the research design, case selection, data collection, analysis strategy, validity, and the project's limitations. Next, I will present an in-depth analysis of three political periods, with a focus on 2015-2025. This analysis examines the EU's institutional shift in its climate politics through key policies and speeches. It aims to show how the EU has represented the climate crisis since 2015. These key political policies are the 2015 Paris Agreement, the 2019 European Green Deal, and the 2025 Competitiveness Compass. Lastly, I will discuss the results and theoretical considerations to provide a comprehensive account of how the EU has represented the climate crisis since 2015.

# Literature Review

Climate Change has had numerous definitions. Historically, climate change was defined as a shift in temperature and as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. However, in recent years, there has been growing concern about ecosystem health, deforestation, and the impacts of human-induced drivers, such as greenhouse gas emissions (CO<sub>2</sub>), along with an increased focus on sustainability and the green transition. This has made the concept of climate multidimensional. This literature review gathers essential studies on global climate politics and leadership, and International Relations from different theoretical perspectives, such as constructivism, realism, and the lens of EU actorness.

## Current Literature on Climate Politics and Global Climate Governance

Since the 1970s, “atmospheric temperature measurements have provided documentation of climatic change”(Brönnimann, 2018), thereby impacting global climate governance. As climate change began to impact the political agenda, many international actors worked together to establish institutions, rules, and norms in climate politics. Many scholars have examined how these established rules and norms, which came to be known as climate governance, have gradually evolved into a more complex governance system. Scholars like Falkner (2019) have described how the international order has become anarchic, shaping who influences climate politics through mechanisms of diplomacy, balance of power, and even war. Falkner (2019) uses an International Relations (IR) lens on climate justice to explore how we move from anarchy to order and how global justice can be achieved, and argues that international environmental politics have been influenced by the emphasis on common interest over a justice-based conception of common rules (Falkner, 2019). Contrary to Falkner, Thakur (2021) approaches the debate from a more constructivist perspective, focusing on how the rise of activism, socio-economic shifts, and emerging scientific evidence have shaped the evolution of climate politics. From his perspective, he highlights that, despite progress from the Rio Convention in 1992 and the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, the climate system, which worked at that time, has since been ineffective in the Copenhagen negotiations because of major disagreement over differentiation(Thakur, 2021).

Falkner and Thakur's perspective on climate politics and global climate governance offers a differentiated view of the field. While Falkner's perspectives illustrate that climate governance favors common institutions, rules, and norms within the international community,

the current anarchic international order undermines the fairness of climate governance and supports privileged states, limiting the pursuit of climate justice. Thakur's constructivist lens suggests that global climate governance can evolve progressively through norms, activism, and cooperation.

## Existing Literature on EU Climate Policy and Leadership

Much of the existing literature on EU Climate Policy and Leadership focuses on how the EU has established itself as a key actor in international climate politics since the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. Scholars like Oberthür & Roche Kelly (2008) highlight how the EU, since the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, has provided both directional and normative leadership within the international climate regime. However, this narrative of EU leadership has been challenged. Das (2013) argues that international negotiations remain driven by national interests, shaping the EU's status and position in international climate talks. As a result, the EU's leadership has been challenged by internal and external factors that undermine its coherence and effectiveness. According to Wendler (2022) the introduction of the European Green Deal and the Paris Agreement transformed both the nature of EU climate politics and the broader global governance context in which it operates.

Scholars like Wendler (2022), Das (2013), and Oberthür & Roche Kelly (2008) identify a similar perspective on EU Climate Policy and Leadership, but are driven by different theoretical perspectives. While Oberthür & Roche Kelly (2008) are heavily driven by EU actorness, which is illustrated by how they portray the EU position in climate politics as both a soft power that uses persuasion and diplomacy, while also being a strategic leader with a focus on integration, public support, and the desire to shape the international order, through common rules and institutions. Das (2013) has a realist lens on EU climate policy and leadership, suggesting that the EU's position in climate talks is heavily influenced by the Member States' Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and national interests. Contrary to Das, Wendler (2022) constructivist and discursive institutionalism lenses use framing analysis to portray EU institutions as discursive agents that produce and communicate ideas to create and legitimize their policies. Furthermore, Wendler uses a framing analysis of the EU, not merely as an actor but as a shaper of climate action as an economic opportunity and a driver of societal transformation.

## Identified Gap in Literature

The literature provides a foundation for understanding global governance, climate politics, and how the EU's position as a climate leader has been shaped by political debates, national interests, and institutional roles. Scholars have debated rising environmental concerns (Peñasco & Grossman, 2026), the EU's framing of climate politics (Wendler, 2022), and how the EU links climate action to growth and competitiveness (Karman et al., 2024). However, few studies have examined the representation of climate politics in official institutional data, more so through the analysis of speeches. The literature on climate change rarely applies Bacchi's theory, *'What's the Problem Represented to be'* (WPR), which analyses the underlying assumptions and effects behind a policy. The theory of WPR would be useful to apply in a study of the representation of the climate crisis in EU speeches, as it would enable me to identify underlying assumptions and effects within the speeches and contribute to the general understanding of the EU's evolving representation of the climate crisis. This study aims to address the gap by moving beyond politics to explore the European Union's construction of speech on the climate crisis through the theories of Securitization and WPR.

# Theoretical Framework

This Chapter gives an overview of the theoretical framework of this thesis, focusing on two theories that adopt a social-constructivist approach. Carol Bacchi's 'What's the Problem Represented to Be' (WPR) approach is used to analyze both the visible problem in policy and the underlying assumptions, effects, and representations. The Securitization theory, developed by the Copenhagen School, is applied to examine speech acts, existential threats, and performance utterances in speeches. These theories were chosen for their ability to uncover underlying assumptions and speech acts in policy documents.

## WPR-Approach

The WPR-Approach, also known as *What's the Problem represented to be*, was first introduced by Carol Bacchi in her 1999 book 'Women, Policy, and Politics.' In it she argues that society gives a particular shape to social problems in the ways we speak about them (Bletsas & Beasley, 2012). The book introduced post-structuralism and social constructionism to policy studies, along with new ways of conceptualizing policy, policy processes, and policy analysis (Bletsas & Beasley, 2012, 25). This innovative approach reshaped policy analysis and how it should be understood, studied, and recast. The approach challenged the idea that policies are a reaction to pre-existing problems. Instead it, proposes that "policies and policy proposals create policy 'problems' as a specific problem within an existing area that shapes its effect on the social problem" (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, 114). The WPR-Approach thus questions the conception that policies are only created to solve problems and asks how policies construct the problems they address. Susan Goodwin argues that Carol Bacchi's WPR-Approach brought new perspectives and opened the field of policy studies. Bacchi's approach broadens the field by introducing a focus on power relations and knowledge practices, influencing disciplines once seen as a dry field of 'factfinders' and 'problem-solvers' (Bletsas & Beasley, 2012, 25).

The WPR approach provides a valuable method to analyze how social perception shapes policy representation in political debates. Unlike many IR theories, the WPR approach emphasizes interpretation and choices. This focus is especially important when examining the role of public opinion. Public assumptions help create social problems, which in turn influence how the EU represents the issue of climate change.

Bacchi defined this by giving the problem ontological status, as existing in `reality` or as a `representation` (Bletsas & Beasley, 2012,27). Bacchi's own ontological positioning of a policy problem is that it can exist in only two ways. First, it can be objective and independent of how we talk about it, meaning climate change is a fact measured by rising CO2 levels. Second, the problem can be a representation, meaning it does not exist independently and can therefore be constructed, framed, and represented, for instance, in discourse, where climate change can be seen as a security threat or an economic opportunity. In Bacchi's 1999 book `Women, Policy, and Politics`, Bacchi challenged the traditional debates about policy-making practices, being either primarily rational or primarily political, but instead shifted the focus on how policy problems were understood in different accounts of policymaking, categorizing them as either problem solutions or problem representation (Bletsas & Beasley, 2012,27). To identify the problem within the policies as a problem solution or problem representation, Bacchi (1999) developed six questions, not merely to analyze what policies are, but also what constructs, and frame them (Bletsas & Beasley, 2012, 21).

*The six questions are* (Bletsas & Beasley, 2012,21):

1. What's the `problem` represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?
2. What presumptions or assumptions underpin this representation of the `problem`?
3. How has this representation of the `problem` come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are silences? Can the `problem` be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?
6. How/Where has this representation of the `problem` been produced, disseminated, and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted, and replaced?

In previous work, Bacchi mentions that much of her work was inspired by Foucault. Foucault focuses much on power relations, discourse, and reflexivity. It is especially reflexivity that influences the six questions. Foucault referred to reflexivity as “the need to put in question our categories of analysis” (Bletsas & Beasley, 2012, 30). Foucault thought that to properly understand the policy problem, questioning the very tools and categories we use to analyze it is necessary.

Each of the six questions embodies the fundamental principles of what Bacchi's WPR is and what Foucault sought to achieve. Each question focuses on a specific angle of the problem representation. Question 1, “assist in clarifying the implicit problem representation within the specific policy or policy proposal”(Bletsas & Beasley, 2012, 22). Question 2: “reflect on the underlying premises in this representation of the problem”(Bletsas & Beasley, 2012,22). This means that Question 2 focuses on the implicit truth, the underlying assumptions hidden in the problem representation. Question 3 focuses on “the contingent practice and processes through which this understanding of the `problem` has emerged” (Bletsas & Beasley, 2012,22). This question asks how and why the problem was created, and what practices, such as speeches, and processes, such as historical events and scientific developments, have produced the problem. Question 4 looks at “careful scrutiny of possible gaps or limitations in the representation of the `problem`, accompanied by interventive imagining of potential alternatives”(Bletsas & Beasley, 2012, 22). This question examines what the representation might lack. Through this question, the researcher can also propose an alternative representation of the problem. Question 5 “considered assessment of how identified problem representations limit what can be considered relevant, shape people`s understanding of themselves, and the issue, and have a material impact on people`s lives”(Bletsas & Beasley, 2012, 22). This question examines how the current representation of the problem could limit other representations, restricting what is considered relevant or shaping how people understand the issue. Lastly, Question 6 focuses on “a sharpened awareness of the contestation surrounding representation of the problem”(Bletsas & Beasley, 2012, 22). This question examines how other actors, such as NGOs, national parties, and activists, see the problem represented and the debates over political disagreements between the two parties.

## Securitization

The theory of Securitization examines the security dynamics and characteristics of five security sectors: military, political, economic, societal, and environmental. By examining the dynamics of security sectors, the theory can help analyze speech acts to identify how the EU has framed climate change as an existential threat through wording and framing. The theory of Securitization was first developed by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, all part of the Copenhagen School (Buzan et al., 1998, viii), who sought to broaden the traditional view of security (military-political). The theory objects to the traditional view of the security sector and argues that security applies to a wide range of issues (Buzan et al., 1998, vii). The theory challenges the restriction to a single security sector and introduces a new security sector to examine new security dynamics. The theory would therefore be a good choice for this study, as it can be applied to examine how perceptions of security have changed since 2015 through the EU's representation of the climate crisis. Furthermore, by using securitization, the project will offer a more constructed perspective on security and how political actors, through speeches and debates, construct action through communication. This perspective on securitization aligns with the project's focus on how the European Union has represented the climate crisis since 2015 and enables an analysis of the EU's language and framing of the climate crisis as a security issue.

The objectives of securitization were to broaden the security agenda by introducing new security sectors, such as *societal, economic, and environmental*, while still maintaining aspects of the military-political security. These objectives were also brought out from previous books by Buzan et al. (1991) and Wæver et al. (1993), where they questioned two perspectives: *the narrow perspective*, which focuses on the state-centric security complex theory, and *the wide perspective*, which unfolded the societal component of the wider security agenda (Buzan et al., 1998, vii). With the introduction of a broader security perspective, the role of security in International Relations came into question. In International Relations today, international security is “rooted in the traditions of power politics” (Buzan et al., 1998, 21), which favors the more traditional view of security.

Speech Act is a concept that can be traced back to John Langshaw Austin, who argued that “the language is not merely descriptive, but also performative; speech not only describes the world but can also change it” (Flohr, 2025), hinting that speech acts are about how we, through talk, speeches, and conversation, can use our words to construct a threat. This is also elaborated by Flohr (2025), who understands securitization as

“the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game, and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics, or as above politics.” In the definition of Securitization, there are three important aspects: the securitizing actor, the referent object, and the performing utterance. According to Flohr (2025), a securitizing actor is “an actor who securitizes issues by declaring something, a referent object, existentially threatened.” Flohr (2025) argues that anything can become securitized if actors, here referring to individuals or groups in higher positions, and authorities, declare that something is being threatened. Flohr (2025) continues to discuss the referent object, stating that it is “things that are seen to be existentially threatened, and that have a legitimate claim to survival.” Argued by Wæver (2003), he talks about performance utterance as “the very utterance of security is more than just saying or describing something, but the performing of an action”(Strizel, 2007, 361).

The term Existential threat can be understood “in relation to the particular character of the referent object in question”(Buzan et al., 1998, 21). Threats are therefore not a particular thing that threatens human existence, but rather differ depending on the nature of the threat.

**The Military sector** focuses on state survival and territorial integrity. The survival of the state has always been the military's primary concern, but as new threats emerge, the state's integrity has become more visible. The referent objects of the sector are political entities such as the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the World Trade Organization (WTO)(Buzan et al., 1998, 22). Less relevant to climate politics, the military sector can still be valuable to the project, as it can help understand shifts in EU speeches and how military power overshadows talk of the climate crisis.

**In the Political Sector,** nonmilitary threats are as important as military threats. In this sector, principles such as sovereignty and the state's ideology are the referent objects(Buzan et al., 1998, 22). This is how countries and states operate and manage their affairs politically, economically, and socially within their borders. However, threats such as questioning recognition, legitimacy, or even the governing authority are considered direct threats to the state (Buzan et al., 1998, 22). These threats can also be addressed toward a supranational referent, such as the European Union. The political sector is significant to the project, as it helps determine how the EU represents the climate as a security issue and how it uses its language to legitimize its authority and political role in climate governance.

**In the Economic Sector**, the referent objects are firms, national economies, and specific regimes (Buzan et al., 1998,22). However, as economic well-being depends on the individual, states, and the global system, the referent object can range from personal job security to international economic security. Supranational regimes such as the WTO are under threat in the economic sector, as trade wars, financial crises, and economic sanctions undermine the rules, norms, and the very institutions that constitute them. The Economic Sector is important to the project, as it can help understand how the EU constructs its climate action as an economic necessity and an economic security issue to justify protecting economic stability and green competitiveness.

**The Environmental Sector** focuses on the environmental threat to the state, society, and human survival. Climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental migration, and pollution are among the existential threats. The existential threats have become a major concern for many countries and international organizations, such as the EU, making the referent object of this sector two distinct things. First, one of the referent objects is concrete things, referring to the survival of individual species (Buzan et al., 1998, 23). This could refer to climate change and pollution harming not only humankind but also the animals that live in the air, the sea, and on land. The second object is the maintenance of the planetary climate and biosphere (Buzan et al., 1998, 23). As climate change and pollution continue to harm the environment, maintaining the planetary climate and biosphere has become an important security measure for the planet and the people and animals living there. Keeping a healthy planetary climate and biosphere means maintaining Earth's life-support system by preserving biodiversity, keeping global temperatures within a range, and preventing species extinction. The environmental sector is therefore important to the project, as it can help frame the EU as the 'protector of the environment' through its policies, such as the Green Deal, and its participation in the Paris Agreement.

The **Societal Sector** is complex, as it deals with identities and freedom of religion. The referent object of the societal sector is "the large-scale collective identities that can function independently of the state"(Buzan et al., 1998, 22-23). This refers to the evolution of national, religious, civilizational, and ideological identity, which can be seen as a threat to the very meaning of identity security. Relevant to the project, the societal sector offers a new perspective on how to preserve EU security and how societal security, identity, and cohesion are tied to environmental protection.

## *Criticism of Securitization*

A major criticism of the theory of Securitization is the concept of *the audience* and its relationship with the securitizing actor. While Wæver recognizes that there is a need to study the audience in more detail to get a “better definition and probably differentiation”(Shipoli, 2018). Salter (2008) identifies different types of audience: elite, technocratic, and scientific, each requiring different forms of engagement(Shipoli, 2018). In contrast, Michael Williams (2011) suggests that the theory’s audience does not exist prior to securitization but can be constructed by the securitizing actor (Shipoli, 2018).

Another criticism of the theory is the limited engagement with the social context. According to Strizel (2007), he argues that the Copenhagen School adopts a static approach to the role of ‘social context’, arguing that any act can have an impact if the situation allows the actor and the act to be significant”(Adamides, 2020). Similarly, Salter (2011) emphasizes that “the act does not take place in a vacuum, but rather within existing bureaucratic, social, economic, and political structures”(Adamides, 2020).

Together, these critiques of the Securitization suggest an underestimation of the importance of the social context and the dynamics between the audience and the securitizing actor. These critiques are important to acknowledge as they both influence the construction of security threats.

## Operationalization Of Theories

To apply my theories to the analysis, it is important to examine the difference between theory and practice. Therefore, this section operates on the theoretical framework. This is done, so I can effectively apply the theories in the analysis. To apply my theory, WPR, I intend to use Bacchi's five of six questions in my analysis. Question 1, which clarifies the implicit problem representation, will be applied in the analysis to look at the Paris Agreement, the EU Green Deal, and the Competitiveness Compass, to see what the problem behind the policy is, what indirectly causes the problem, which actors are responsible for this problem, and how this problem representation can relate to the EU as a current climate leader in green transition. Question 2 focuses on the implicit truth behind the representation, which is used in this thesis to look at underlying assumptions in EU political speeches, to see how the policy, or in this case, the EU as an institution, constructs the problem.

Question 3 focuses on how the problem came about, which I will use to understand how EU actions and decisions on climate change and the climate crisis have shaped its representation, and what historical and structural developments have contributed to it.

Question 5 examines the effect of the problem's representation and will be used to examine how it shapes its political, social, and economic communication on the climate crisis and how this could influence the EU's position as a global climate leader.

Lastly, I will use question 6, which examines where the problem has been represented, disseminated, and/or defended. With this question, I can look at other actors, such as NGOs and national political parties, that might challenge the perceptions of the problem, and how this might shape the debate on the climate crisis, the EU, and the EU as a global climate leader.

Securitization from the Copenhagen School encompasses a wide range of concepts and helps identify how the rhetorical structures of decision-makers' speeches frame an issue to appeal to the audience, thereby framing the underlying issue above politics (Eroukhmanoff, 2018). In this thesis, Securitization will be applied to speeches from the EU institutions to examine the underlying security issues that the EU politicians may have addressed to appeal to EU citizens. Securitization is "defined as a speech act whereby a securitizing actor constructs an issue as an immediate and existential threat to a referent object, which must be accepted by a relevant audience to legitimate the use of emergency measures" (Flohr, 2025). Securitization is therefore important to the thesis, as it will allow me

to examine how the EU has constructed climate change as an immediate and existential threat to Europe's social, economic, political, and environmental security. Additional Speech Act “is important as it shows that words do not merely describe reality, but constitute reality, which in turn triggers certain responses”(Eroukhmanoff, 2018). Securitization will therefore be used to examine the speeches of EU institutions and how the wording and framing of climate change in these speeches have constituted a specific reality that has influenced EU representation of the climate crisis and its climate politics.

As for performative utterances, the focus is not just on saying or describing, but on acting. Focusing on performative utterances will allow me to examine data from EU politicians to identify how the framing of certain climate issues might indicate a shift in EU climate politics and how it might have affected the security perceptions in the EU.

# Methodology

In this chapter, an outline of the methodology will be provided to address the research question: *What are the underlying assumptions and security perceptions behind the EU's representation of the climate crisis since 2015?* I will apply a single case study with an Interpretive-Critical approach, aiming to interpret the EU's communication on the climate crisis and to be critical of how this communication has influenced its shift in climate politics and the securitization of the EU's sectors.

## Philosophy of Science

The Philosophy of Science of this project is constructivism. Ontology concerns how we, as people, view the world. In this study, ontology takes a constructivist approach to the research question and examines how we construct the world through historical and social factors. Epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge and its production. In this study, epistemology takes an interpretive approach to the research question, and according to Carter & Little (2007), influences the methodological aspects by shaping the researcher's conceptualization of the participants in the data collection” (1317,1321). Epistemology focuses on how participants in the data are viewed and how the data is interpreted from a specific perspective. As this thesis examines the EU's representation of the climate crisis, its underlying assumptions, and security factors, an interpretive epistemology is relevant, as it allows me to analyze the collected data to examine the framing of the climate crisis in EU speeches.

In my project, I have adopted an Interpretive-Critical approach to my research questions, interpreting the speeches and examining the construction of the climate crisis through EU representation. I draw on the theories of Securitization, and What's the Problem Represented to Be (WPR). I have used these theories to detect underlying assumptions, effects produced, and the framing of climate as an existential threat through speech acts. By using these theories in my theoretical framework, I establish a foundation grounded in an interpretive configuration of how the EU represents the climate crisis and how that representation constructs underlying assumptions about the climate, the EU, and security perception.

## Research Design

### *Single Case Study*

The research design for the thesis is a Single-Case Study. A single-case study, according to Seha & Müller-Rommel (2016), is “tied to qualitative methods of scientific inquiry, and are set apart from other research strategies by analysing cases in an in-depth fashion, it remains contested whether the objective of case studies is to contribute to empirical generalization or to uncover the uniqueness of a particular case” (419). This single-case study is an interpretive case study whose purpose is to examine the case through the lens of an established theoretical framework (Seha & Müller-Rommel, 2016, 423). Through the lens of the theoretical frameworks of Securitization and WPR, the focus will allow me to examine the underlying assumptions and security perceptions in the EU’s communication of the climate crisis and how this might affect the shift in EU climate politics.

As mentioned above, the case is an interpretive-critical single case study, using the theoretical lenses of WPR and Securitization to examine how the European Union has represented the climate crisis since 2015 and the underlying assumptions that underpin it. This analytical approach can be generalized to other cases. The mechanisms from WPR and Securitization, such as problem representation, speech act, and discursive construction of threats, can be applied to other policy sectors or international actors. This could be the trade or energy sectors, regions such as ASEAN, or political entities such as the UN. While the findings of this thesis are specific to the EU climate politics, the analytical framework can be applied to other cases where political language and other framing of crisis and security are evident.

The selection of the three periods is significant to the EU institutions, as follows:

The analysis will focus on the period from 2015 to 2025. This period is important for the analysis, as it marks a time when the EU was pressured to adapt its climate discourse, amid events such as the USA's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement in 2017 (Donald Trump, 2017) COVID-19 (2019-2020), and the introduction of the Competitiveness Compass (2025)

2015 marked a globally binding year for the EU, as it entered into an international agreement with other countries to reduce CO2 emissions, to ensure all major emitters participated, and to strengthen support for vulnerable countries (European Union, 2013).

2019 marked a year of greater unity in the EU, as the proposal for the EU Green Deal was presented to address current climate and environment-related challenges faced by humans, animals, and nature (European Union, 2019).

In 2025, the EU's economic situation came into focus amid the growing influence of the USA and China in the global market. For the EU, 2025 marked a year of a fragile economic situation (Butters, 2025,1). Therefore, the EU began to look toward growing competitiveness, which should help boost the economy and businesses(Butters, 2025, 2).

### *Case Selection – why the EU?*

Positioned as a climate leader in green transition, climate policy, and environmental diplomacy, the EU has developed an extensive set of targets, initiatives, regulations, and policies to address environmental degradation and the emerging climate crisis. Scholars like Scheipers and Sicurelli (2007) have argued that “the EU's continued focus on environmental issues, such as climate change, has developed its identity”(Kelemen, 2010). This is reflected in flagship initiatives such as the European Green Deal, its commitment to the Paris Agreement, and its alignment with the broader global agenda articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The EU serves as a pivotal example for the analysis, as it has been a forefront of the green transition, climate policy leadership, and climate diplomacy, not only for its member states but also for other countries such as the US, China, and South Korea. The EU holds significant geopolitical, historical, and environmental importance for the green transition, since the 1960s rise of environmentalism (Meyer, 2024,3) the emergence of “sustainability as an explicit social, environmental, and economic ideal in the late 1970s and 1980s” (Caradonna, 2022), and International recognition of climate change as a global challenge (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025).

By examining the EU, I will gain insight into its shift in climate politics and how the EU's communication in speeches has created underlying assumptions and security perceptions influencing the representation of the climate crisis. Furthermore, a single-case study of the EU will not only provide insight into how international actors communicate their prioritization of climate action, initiatives, and goals, but also illustrate broader discourse on EU climate communication.

## WPR as a method

As explained in the theoretical framework, Carol Bacchi's *What's the Problem Represented to be*, is presented as a methodological approach. This approach serves as "an analytical approach that considers how governmental practices, understood broadly, produce problems as a particular problem, rather than viewing the role of the government as solving the problem." (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016a). This method is based on the fact that politics not only addresses existential problems but also actively produces them through certain representations. This methodological approach will be used to identify which problem representations the EU employs in its climate-related political documents and the underlying assumptions and rationales that underpin these problems.

The methodological structure is based on the six WPR questions to identify explicit and implicit problems represented in every political document. It will help me examine assumptions and discourse logic that make the representation. Furthermore, the analysis will examine possible effects on political prioritizations and understanding of the climate crisis in the EU.

## Data Collection

To answer the research question, the thesis relies on primary data from the European Union, such as speeches from the European Commission's press corner. These data were found using search terms such as 'Climate Change', 'Climate crisis', 'Paris Agreement', 'EU Green Deal', 'Competitiveness', and 'Competitiveness Compass.' To answer the research question, the thesis draws on primary data from the official websites of EU institutions. This includes official speeches from Commissioners, all available on the EU Commission's press corner. The inclusion criteria for selecting the data are as follows: they had to be published by an official EU institution, published between 2015 and 2026, the topic of conversation had to include *climate change, the Paris Agreement, the EU Green Deal, security, and/or Competitiveness Compass*, and the text had to be written in English. Additional data included in the analysis are official documents from the EU, public opinions from NGOs, national political parties, and far-right movements that questioned the EU's position as a climate leader and its climate priorities.

Secondary data, such as policy documents and reports from other international organizations, are used to verify the authenticity of the claims found in the primary data. To ensure the relevance and credibility of the data used in the analysis, secondary data were

chosen based on the following inclusion criteria: it had to report on climate change, it had to focus on the EU as a climate leader, it had to be from official international organizations, or NGOs, published between 2015 and 2026, and be from Google Scholar or other credible sites.

## Validity

I have ensured the validity of my thesis by using **data triangulation**. According to Campbell et al. (2020, 126) data triangulation involves collecting data from multiple sources, including different people and institutions, across the selected time period. This can help alleviate any biases that might occur. Furthermore, by using official EU speeches, news media, press releases, and official EU documents focused on the European Green Deal, the Paris Agreement, and the Competitiveness Compass, the data used will be further validated.

## Limitation

Regarding the study, it's important to acknowledge the limitations that have influenced the results.

### *Assessing the selection of Data*

Regarding the study, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the chosen data. Within the broader analysis, there is a selection bias. This is because I only analyze EU speeches themselves and exclude other framings, such as media framing. Additionally, for the 2015 speeches on the Paris Agreement, it is important to acknowledge that it is an international agreement and has less data on the EU perspective, in contrast to the EU Green Deal and the Competitiveness Compass, which were internal EU policies.

### *Assessing the generalizability*

While the study's main focus is on the EU's representation of the climate crisis, it is important to acknowledge its limitations in terms of generalizability. While I do mention that the framework can be applied to other areas, the analysis specifically focuses on the EU and how it presents the climate crisis.

### *Methodological limitations*

While my thesis is qualitative, critical-interpretive, it does create limitations. As it is critical-interpretive, it could affect the outcomes of other scholars' research.

## Analysis Strategy

In this section, an analysis strategy will be presented. The analysis strategy will rely on a theory-driven approach to Bacchi's WPR and the Copenhagen School's Securitization, in which I have selected concepts and questions derived from these theories to conduct an in-depth analysis of three policies significant to the shift in EU climate politics. The analysis follows a structured approach, dividing it into specific timeframes. These timeframes are 2015 (Paris Agreement), 2019 (EU Green Deal), and 2025 (Competitiveness Compass). These three periods were selected to represent a critical discursive shift within the broader EU climate discourse from 2015 to 2026.

For the analysis, I will center my analysis on speeches from EU institutions, and relevant actors, to identify any form of speech acts, performance utterance, underlying assumptions, that might indicate how EU politicians have used rhetoric framing of climate change to present underlying climate-related issues to the EU, and how framing of climate issues have signaled a shift in EU climate politics, and affecting EU security perceptions.

For the 2015 section focused on the Paris Agreement, I will examine how the EU communicates its participation in the Paris Agreement, identifying the underlying assumptions and security perceptions that shape the EU's representation of the climate crisis and influence its impact as a global climate leader.

Secondly, I will examine the 2019 EU Green Deal to identify how the EU has represented climate change as an opportunity and how this framing might shape the EU's representation of the climate crisis, impacting its internal climate politics.

In the final part of the analysis, the focus will shift to the debate over prioritizing climate action over industrial competitiveness within the EU. In this part of the analysis, I will examine how the EU prioritized increasing competitiveness for EU businesses over existing climate promises and policies. The Competitiveness Compass is crucial because it highlights a distinct shift in EU priorities and illustrates that EU climate discourse is increasingly intersecting with geopolitical and economic security considerations.

# Background Chapter

Climate change has been a topic of international political debate since the early 1970s, with growing attention to the scientific understanding of its impacts on the social, economic, and political sectors. The European Union is one of the many international actors whose attention has grown significantly toward preventing and mitigating climate change. In the early 1980s and 1990s, the EU framed climate change as a technical-scientific issue through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's scientific assessment. (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, n.d.). According to the European Commission (2022), the IPCC is important to the EU as it is “providing policymakers with regular, comprehensive, and authoritative scientific assessments on climate science, knowledge, building on the work of thousands of scientists worldwide.” Later in the 1990s, the framing of climate change shifted from technical-scientific to EU framing, with the EU positioning itself as a global climate leader through its participation in the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. The Kyoto Protocol was important to show the EU as a climate leader, as it “set the first legally-binding emissions reduction targets, or caps, for 37 industrialized countries” (European Commission, n.d.-c). In 2014, climate was framed as a matter of energy security and economic opportunity. The EU had in 2014 a dispute with Russia, since their annexation of Crimea, which led to the EU launch of the European Energy Security Strategy in May 2014 as a result of that “Energy security affects all Member states, but it is particularly problematic for Baltic central and eastern European states, some of which are entirely dependent on Russia for gas supplies.” (European Parliament, 2015).

Then in 2015, the Paris Agreement was adopted, a legally binding global agreement to help countries lower their temperature below 2 degrees. With the agreement entering into force, it was deemed successful. The adaptation of the Paris Agreement framed climate as a shared planetary responsibility for all partners. In a Communication letter from the Commission to the Parliament, it is also highlighted that “All EU ministers in Paris showed willingness and determination to succeed. The EU acted as one” (European Commission, 2016, 2). Later in the Communication letter, the Commission also frames the Agreement as more successful than the Copenhagen Conference in 2009, which was “resulting in worldwide bottom-up mobilization of Governments, and non-State actors, such as business, investors, cities, and civil society” (European Commission, 2016,2).

In 2019, the European Union declared that Europe and the global community were in a climate emergency, calling on the Commission to ensure legislative and budgetary

proposals align to limit global warming to less than 1.5 °C (European Parliament, 2018). Following the EU's declaration of a climate emergency in 2019, the EU presented the Green Deal, with multiple policies aimed at improving the climate and achieving climate neutrality by 2050 (European Parliament, 2018).

## EU ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

### *Early EU environmental competencies*

The early environmental action of the European Union, as enshrined in early treaties and action plans, aimed to advance climate action. In 1972, the European Communities met at the Paris Summit Conference to discuss improving living conditions and the quality of life (European Commission, 1973). The Action Plan was significant in recognizing the importance of preserving the natural environment and understanding that life matters in all aspects. The Action Plan “recognized that the protection of the natural environment and the improvement of living conditions require actions of varying kinds involving measures to reduce pollution and nuisances, as well as ensuring that the improvement of living conditions and ecological factors become integrated in the process of devising and implementing common policies.” (European Commission, 1973). In 1987, the Single European Act (SEA) introduced a new Environment Title, “which provides the first legal basis for a common environment policy, while also strengthening the Community’s commitment to environmental protection and the role of the Parliament in its development” (European Union, 2025b)

### *Internal and External Dimensions of EU Environmental Policy*

EU environmental Policy encompasses internal and external dimensions that are interconnected through environmental governance, compliance, legal enforcement, and international meetings, conferences, and cooperation. The foundation of EU environmental policies is aimed at “protecting, preserving, and improving the environment for present and future generations, and promoting sustainable development.” (European Commission, 2026). This foundation sets the standard for EU politicians’ discussion on shaping future EU environmental policies.

### ***Internal Dimensions***

An important part of the EU Environmental Policy is the legal enforcement and compliance, which is part of the internal environmental policy, as it must be applied to member states that might reject or have difficulty implementing certain climate policies. A key point from the Climate law that all Member States (MS) must follow is that “EU Member States must take all necessary measures to meet the regulations' aims, while taking fairness, solidarity, and cost-effectiveness into account”(European Union, 2021). An important Directive within the internal dimension is the 2008 Crime Directive. This Directive is important because it ensured that MS national policies aligned with the EU. The 2008 Directive “mandated that member states treat significant violations as a criminal offense, ensuring effective, proportionate, and dissuasive penalties, aiming to create a unified approach to combating environmental crime across the EU”(European Institute of Management and Finance, 2024).

### ***External Dimensions***

The external dimensions of EU environmental policy encompass international cooperation, agreements, and conferences in which the EU participates. The European Union has been part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 1992, which is “an international treaty fighting climate change, whose objectives are to prevent dangerous man-made interference with the global climate system.”(European Commission, n.d.-b). By being part of the UNFCC, the EU represents a united front at COP, IPCC, OECD, and International Energy Agency (IEA) meetings. The COP meetings are important as they “review the implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts, and take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the Convention, including institutional and administrative arrangements.”(United Nation Climate Change, n.d.).

### ***The Evolution of EU Security Thinking***

In 2003, Europe adopted the European Security Strategy to strengthen its security against external threats. The strategy “identifies the global challenges and key threats to the security of the Union and clarifies its strategic objectives in dealing with them...”(European Union, 2003). Within the Strategy, the strategic objectives concern regional conflicts, terrorism, and state failure (European Union, 2003). To address these objectives, the security strategy focuses on policy implications on areas such as the creation of the European Defense Agency, the pursuit of coherent policies between MS, and work with multilateral partners such as the

transatlantic relationship, as well as the creation of closer relations with partners such as Japan, China, Russia, Canada, and India (European Union, 2003).

Later, in 2008, a paper by the High Representative and the European Commission on Climate Change and International Security was published. In the paper, it talks about how climate change has become a threat multiplier as it has become a threat to not only humanitarian interests, but also poses a political and security risk to European identity interests (European Union, 2008, 2). From the early days, when security threats were viewed through a military lens, the 2008 Reports focused more on economic, environmental, and political security risks. The report highlights how “business dealing with climate change impact could cost the world economy up to 20% of global GDP, ... UN predictions of millions of environmental migrants by 2020, with climate change being a major driver, and the impact of climate mitigation policies that will drive political tension nationally and internationally” (European Union, 2008, 4-5).

### *Climate Governance Tools*

An essential Climate Governance Tool, introduced in 2005 and still implemented today, is the Emission Trading System (ETS). The ETS focuses on greenhouse gas emissions that are allowed and must align with the EU climate target. The goal behind the ETS stems back to the Kyoto Protocol of emissions reduction targets, and has different phases that cover different aspects of reducing emissions (European Commission, n.d.-a). The significance of the ETS lies in carbon emissions pricing and in monitoring and reporting countries' emissions. Notably, under the ETS is the newly established Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), adopted in 2023, which aims to impose a carbon price on imports to the EU.

# Analysis

This section provides an in-depth analysis of speeches by EU politicians on the Paris Agreement (2015), the EU Green Deal (2019), and the Competitiveness Compass (2025). The aim of the analysis is to examine how the EU's representation of the climate crisis evolved from 2015 to 2025, with a broader focus on EU climate discourse, political dynamics, and the evolving notion of the EU's identity as a climate leader.

Aligned with Bacchi & Goodwin (2016,14), who argue that, even though governmental practices are broadly understood, the problem can arise by itself, referring to a problem representation. Bacchi's theory, *What's the Problem Represented to Be* (WPR), is applied using its six analytical questions to uncover underlying assumptions and effects in the speeches and official statements.

In addition, the theory of Securitization, developed by the Copenhagen School, is used to analyze speech acts, the construction of existential threat, and performance utterances. By applying securitization theory, attention is given to how climate change has been framed as an existential threat and a security issue, and to the identification of referent objects and functional actors. Using the two theories, the analysis will explore how EU institutions have framed climate change as a specific security problem: socio-political, economic, and environmental.

In the analysis of the three political periods, the Speech Act and its underlying assumptions will be examined to answer the research question: *What are the underlying assumptions and security perceptions behind the EU's representation of the climate crisis since 2015?*

The empirical data used for the analysis includes speeches and official documents from EU institutions and other international organizations, which present a specific narrative of the EU's position on the climate crisis. Furthermore, the analysis will identify the effects of the EU's representation of climate change and how it has influenced the EU's stance on the current climate crisis. The international security landscape, which has come to influence the EU's political decision-making, has shaped how the EU frames the current climate crisis and whether it influences the prioritization and urgency of certain climate-related issues.

## The Paris Agreement (2015)

### *Context*

The European Union has, for decades, been an advocate for preventing and mitigating climate change. However, following the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the EU was granted full legal personality, meaning the Union could sign international treaties and join international organizations, compatible with EU law (European Parliament, 2025). While the EU was already an active participant in COP meetings, it strengthened its legal capacity on the global stage to participate in the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015, in Paris, France, and was permitted to sign the agreement in April 2016 (*The Paris Agreement | UNFCCC*, n.d.).

Ahead of the COP21 in Paris, France, the European Commission issued a Communication Letter to the European Parliament, outlining its objectives for the upcoming 2015 negotiations. Before COP21, the European Union was an active participant in multiple international fora and meetings dealing with climate issues, including the Montreal Protocol, Clean Energy Ministerial, International Maritime, and International Civil Aviation Organization, G7, and G20 (Erbach, 2015,3). Participation in these meetings further confirmed the EU's dedication to climate action, as it sought to maintain its leadership while strengthening multilateral cooperation. In 2014, the EU continued to be a strong contributor to climate action by advancing internal climate integration. In October 2014, “the EU was the first economy to decide and announce its climate policies for the post-2020 period” (Erbach, 2015,3), portraying itself as a frontrunner in EU climate action. Then, in February 2015, the Commission issued a communication on the Paris Protocol, which proposed a “transparent and dynamic legally binding agreement, whose long-term goal should be to reduce global emissions by at least 60% below 2010 levels by 2050” (Erbach, 2015,4). These ambitions were also reflected in the official document of the Paris Agreement, Article 7: “Parties hereby establish the global goal on adaptation on enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change...” (European Union, 2016).

## *Representation of Climate Crisis*

### ***1) What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?***

The main problem represented in the Paris Agreement is the lack of sufficient global commitment to climate action. This problem originated in how previous climate talks were seen as failures to unite all participants in collective action against climate change. In a speech from an EU press corner on the outcome of COP21, Commissioner Miguel Arias Canete insists that the 2009 Copenhagen Conference failed because it pitted developed and developing countries against each other. (European Union, 2015). This was also evident when the Copenhagen Accord was intended to be a turning point for climate change. However, as rumors spread that a “Danish Text” was shown to selected countries, discussion of the lack of transparency resulted in multiple delegations learning of the Copenhagen Accord, with interest (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2008). This frames the real problem as a lack of political coordination on climate ambitions, which undermines global commitment to climate action. Commissioner Miguel also points out that “the impact of climate change affects us all” and “climate change knows no borders.”(European Union, 2015). This frames climate change as an existential threat through securitization, appealing to the idea that it is a universal threat to which all global actors are subject. Additionally, noting that climate change knows no borders underscores that it is not merely affecting the environment but can also affect global socio-economic and political security. This frames a perception that if there continues to be a lack of political coordination, climate action will automatically fail as well, influencing the European climate ambitions and identity as a climate leader.

Commissioner Canete suggests that the coordination problem can be addressed through key actions, such as the High Ambition Coalition. (European Union, 2015). The introduction of the High Ambition Coalition as a functional actor to preserve coordination among participating actors is justified by Canete, who insists that normal negotiations, such as the Copenhagen Conference, would fail; therefore, diplomatic action is needed. This action was a wish of his, as he implies in his speech when he says, “the world was not ready.” (European Union, 2015), referring to the Copenhagen Conference in 2009, the Paris Agreement was a “historic moment” (European Union, 2015) that paved the way for new global political cooperation on climate change.

In the case of the Paris Agreement, the EU Commissioner for Climate Action, Miguel Arias Canete, acts as the securitizing actor, framing climate change as an existential threat. In his speech, he states that “we simply cannot fix the climate”, and that despite “relentless

efforts” from the past, he refers to the Paris Agreement as a “global climate deal” which effectiveness of climate action is being threatened by the lack of international cooperation, despite “Europe acted as one”(European Union, 2015). Additionally, other referent objects can be the European interest and the global climate system. These could be the referent objects of the Paris Agreement, as failure to coordinate surrounding climate action can harm European interests in remaining climate leaders and the broader global climate system, as it would create an imbalance in achieving its goal. Commissioner Miguel Arias Canete also states in his speech that “Europe has been a strong voice for ambition, bringing the European experience of effective climate policy and our tradition of negotiation and rules-based international cooperation”(European Union, 2015).

A secondary problem that Miguel Arias Canete discusses is that, before the Paris Agreement, there was a lack of climate ambition due to poor Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), which could not hold the global average temperature below 2 degrees. This insufficiency of the pre-Paris INDCs threatens the effectiveness of climate action, as Commissioner Canete implies the need for “transparency and accountability rules”(European Union, 2015). However, the poor INDCs threatened this outcome, undermining global progress tracking. However, Commissioner Canete then mentions that he visited several countries, including Morocco, where he spoke with Environment Minister Hakima El Haite to establish an international forum in Rabat to “take stock of the INDC and talk about how to improve the global average temperature to stay below 2 degrees.” (European Union, 2015). This implies that despite the threat to transparency and accountability, the EU tried to create a forum to improve the INDC with other participants.

## ***2) What presumptions or assumptions underpin this representation of the `problem`?***

In question one, we identify the problem and how Commissioner Canete secures it. In this question, we identify the underlying assumptions of these problems. As mentioned in question one, Commissioner Canete uses the words “climate change knows no borders” and “the impact of climate change affects us all.” (European Union, 2015). These words assume that climate change threatens not merely a country or a continent, but everyone, and that exceptional actions are required to mitigate its worsening effects. Commissioner Canete also implies when he talks about the High Ambition Coalition, referring to it as Europe and its allies’ “masterplan.” (European Union, 2015). He then continues to imply

that the Coalition “brought together the biggest player and smaller developing countries.”(European Union, 2015), assuming that only a unified international political action can solve climate change, and that the climate action up until 2015 has not been in vain.

A presumption that underpins the representation of the problem is that the Paris Agreement is the pathway to security in Europe. Commissioner Canete, as mentioned in question one, calls the Agreement “a historic moment” and a “global climate deal”, presuming that it is the only credible tool to prevent the catastrophe. This reflects an underlying assumption that the Paris Agreement functions as an emergency measure to address an existential threat, thereby safeguarding EU interests and security. This assumption is also supported by Commissioner Canete's statement that everyone was on the same page on this deal and that it was “not about developed vs. developing... but about the willing vs. the unwilling.”(European Union, 2015)

This securitized framing is also seen in the Paris Agreement itself, where several of the reflective discursive traces reinforce this understanding(European Union, 2016,1,3):

- Recognizing that Parties may be affected not only by climate change, but also by the impact of the measures in response to it.
- **Article 4, paragraph 4;** Developed countries' Parties should continue taking the lead by undertaking economy-wide absolute emissions reduction targets. Developing countries' Parties should continue to enhance their mitigation efforts and are encouraged to move over time toward economy-wide emission-reduction or limitation targets in light of their respective national circumstances.

These paragraphs from the Paris Agreement imply that even a solution such as the Agreement can harm the Parties involved, as climate change poses a severe threat. This frames climate change as a cross-border security threat, as, despite measures taken under the Paris Agreement, the climate crisis remains severe and can destabilize states directly and indirectly. Paragraph 4 assumes that recognizing coordinated, unequal action is necessary to address climate change, which is an urgent threat to both. It is a matter of recognizing the hierarchy of responsibility and the security necessity to improve climate action responsibilities that are on everyone.

### ***3) How has this representation of the `problem` come about?***

The problem dates back to when the EU began to acknowledge climate as a legitimate threat to environmental security and established a desire to reduce the global average temperature below 2 degrees. The origin of the 2°C targets was first mentioned in the paper by Manabe and Wetherald (1967), who “estimated a temperature response doubling carbon dioxide concentrations by approximately 2°C. (Morseletto et al., 2017, 658). Later on in 1992, in Article 2 of the Climate Convention, this objective was “stipulated as the `ultimate objective`, the stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations, in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”(Morseletto et al., 2017,659). In March 2016, a month before the EU signed the Paris Agreement, EU Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias Canete spoke at a public session of the Environment Council where he stated that the long-term goal for the EU was “to put the world on track to limit global warming well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C”(European Commission, 2016). The representation of the problem in the Paris Agreement, therefore, stems from countries' desire to prevent a future in which global temperature might affect other areas. This statement is also supported by Commissioner Miguel Arias Canete, when he spoke to the Ministers present, where he used words such as “low-carbon economy”, “clear opportunity for our economy”, and “needed investment” when talking about low-carbon transition, and words such as “major strategic foreign policy challenge in a range of areas with implications in development, aid and cooperation, trade, and security” when talking about Climate Diplomacy(European Commission, 2016). This suggests that the representation of the problem originates in the 2°C targets, developing into a broader representation that includes development, trade, and security issues.

### ***5) What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?***

The impact of how the problem is represented is found in the subjectification effect it generates. Subjectification effect is “the way in which subjects and subjectification are constituted”(Riemann, 2023). In his speech, Commissioner Miguel Arias Canete states that “the High Ambition Coalition is the masterplan of Europe and its allies conceived over the year” (European Union, 2015) positioning the EU as a leader in climate negotiations. This underscores the expectation that the EU will guide, drive ambition, and establish standards for others to follow in climate discussions. Furthermore, Commissioner Canete highlights that the Coalition “brought together the biggest players and smaller developing countries.”(European

Union, 2015), reinforcing the perception of the EU as both responsible and morally obliged to lead international climate efforts. Simultaneously, less developed countries are framed as either cooperative participants or resistant actors in future negotiations. By framing climate change as an existential threat, the EU creates a sense of urgency, thereby inviting other international actors to act decisively and adopt initiatives such as the High Ambition Coalition as the preferred framework. Finally, statements such as “not about developed vs. developing ... but about the willing vs. the unwilling”(European Union, 2015) further emphasize the subjectification effect. Willing actors are portrayed as morally compelled to act, while unwilling actors are positioned as irresponsible or obstructive to accomplishing their goals.

The effect of the climate-related problem also puts into question its impact on the security framing of Climate Change. While the Agreement never explicitly states anything about the security, European Commission President in 2015, Jean-Claude Juncker, stated that “ Today the world gets a lifeline, a last chance to hand over to future generations a world that is stable, a healthier planet, fairer societies, and more prosperous economies”(European Commission, 2015). This suggests that the EU saw the Paris Agreement as a tool to boost the economic, social, and environmental security of the EU and the world, while also promoting itself as a climate leader, through its support and engagement with the Agreement.

***6) How/Where has this representation of the `problem` been produced, disseminated, and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted, and replaced?***

The problem has been represented in official EU speeches, including those of EU Commissioner Miguel Arias Canete. In his speech, the problem has been presented as stemming from multiple factors, including weak INDCs, limited political cooperation, and a lack of understanding that Climate Change can affect other areas, such as the socio-economic security of the European Union. He clearly states that the Copenhagen Conference failed, stating that “the world was not ready... many countries were not willing to commit... [and] many of the countries not willing to commit managed to sharply divide the developed and developing worlds and create two opposite blocks” (European Commission, 2016).

Oxfam spoke out in 2016 about the EU's commitment to the Paris Agreement, criticizing it for ignoring other pressing matters relating to climate change, stating that “Before the Paris climate talks, EU leaders had committed to cut the Union’s carbon emissions by 40 percent by 2030.”(Oxfam, 2016). Oxfam continues criticizing the financial aspect of EU laws and stated that “Today’s proposal continues to rely on already-stretched aid budgets rather than

looking at new sources of finance, for instance, the EU emission trading scheme”(Oxfam, 2016). This critique of the EU's commitment to the Paris Agreement challenges the EU's representation of the problem as insufficient and a lack of commitment and cooperation. Oxfam reframes the problem as a lack of financial responsibility and structural inequality, highlighting the devastating impact of the 2016 El Niño storm on the worst-affected regions and stating that “The EU needs to make a clear and strong revision to its 2030 targets” (Oxfam, 2016).

### *Sub-Conclusion*

The European Union has, through the underlying assumptions, presented climate change as an urgent global problem that affects us all. The EU also frames the Paris Agreement as the only credible global climate agreement, representing the climate crisis as an urgent, universal problem. These assumptions have created the presumption that the climate crisis is an existential threat and poses governance challenges that require collective action. The EU, furthermore, blames the inaction by other parties on a lack of commitment to addressing the climate crisis, which prevented a global commitment. This affected the political security of the EU, as it harmed the EU's position as a global climate leader, while also harming the global progress of mitigating the climate crisis.

## The European Green Deal (2019)

### *Context*

2019 marked a turning point for the EU, as the rise of public concern for the climate crisis increased, the EU Commission decided to adopt a growth strategy, later known as the EU Green Deal, to set Europe on climate neutrality by 2050 (European Union, n.d.). Introduced by President von der Leyen, the Deal was a growth strategy for the EU, as it consisted of a package of policy initiatives, which were to set the EU on the path of green transition, and ultimately become climate neutral by 2050 (European Commission, 2019a). Additionally, the goal was also written into law, through the European Climate Law, which “writes into law the goal set out in the European Green Deal, for Europe’s economy and society to become climate-neutral by 2050.” (European Commission, n.d.-d).

In a Communication letter from the Commission dated November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019, it stated that this Deal “aims to protect, conserve, and enhance the EU natural capital, and protect the health, and well-being of citizens from environmental-related risks and impact” (European Commission, 2019,2).

Furthermore, as the European Green Deal is a policy package, it also aims to transform the EU economy more sustainably. In the Communication letter from the Commission, it states that the Deal will focus on “designing transformative policies, increasing the EU climate ambition for 2030 and 2050, supplying clean, affordable, secure energy, and mobilizing industry for a clean and circular economy, and preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity” (European Commission, 2019, 4,6,7). This clearly illustrates that, unlike the Paris Agreement, the Green Deal is not merely an environmental strategy, but a comprehensive transformation policy package aimed at restructuring the EU's economic model. This Communication from the Commission also frames sustainability as a cross-sectoral priority, rather than a standalone environmental objective. The words ‘transformative policies’ also frame a new systematic change for the EU, with 2019 being a pivotal year in which climate policy became a central priority for the EU's overall political and economic strategy.

At the end of the Communication letter, it highlights the importance of “the involvement and commitment of the public and of all stakeholders is crucial to the success of the European Green Deal” (European Commission, 2019,22), highlighting that for the Green Deal to become successful, public and stakeholder opinions are important for the success of the Deal. The Communication also continues highlighting that it will launch a Climate Pact in

March 2020 that will “encourage information sharing, inspiration, and foster public understanding of the threat and the challenge of climate change and environmental degradation and how to counter it” (European Commission, 2019, 22), fostering a greater cooperation between the EU and its citizen on how to prevent and conserve the environment, while becoming more sustainable in the sectors of energy, economy, and transportation.

### *Representation of Climate Crisis*

#### **1) *What's the `problem` represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?***

On the surface, there seems to be no problem with the policy. It promotes sustainability, increases its ambition to the 2030 and 2050 goals, and mobilizes industries for a clean and circular economy. However, beneath the surface lies a problem with the policy. According to Frans Timmermans, “despite the effect of the financial crisis having faded into the past, the problem was with an untenable economic model, relying on the ever-increasing use of a dwindling set of resources”(Timmermans, 2020). The climate-related problem is the fear that economic security is being threatened by climate change. Furthermore, Frans Timmermans also highlights “social injustice, created by the previous crisis”(Timmermans, 2020), implying that a socio-economic crisis may have arisen due to climate change. This framing of climate change as an existential threat to the EU's socio-economic security justifies stronger intervention through the Green Deal, as it covers sectors implicated in Timmermans' statement. Furthermore, as 2019 was a year of green transition for the EU, any threats to their 2030 – and 2050 targets set in previous years are merely a legitimization of an economic restructuring that points toward a more circular and green economy.

In his Speech, Timmerman also refers to existential challenges threatened by climate change, as he states, “And existential challenges posed by climate change,”(Timmermans, 2020) referring to “insecurities about technological change, and failure to distribute benefits of our growth fairly”(Timmermans, 2020). Additionally, in his September speech, he clearly indicates the emergent problem of climate change if it is not properly prioritized. Timmerman uses words such as “untenable economic model”, “toxic cocktail”, “undertow of fear, loss, disruption”, and “tidal wave, ready to swallow all” (Timmermans, 2020) in his speech when talking about the possible consequences if climate change is not dealt with. Referring to climate change as an existential challenge to economic and social stability and security silences other important debates and narrows the political debate, as the urgency of

implementing the Green Deal might slow other reforms on climate justice and global inequality.

**2) *What presumptions or assumptions underpin this representation of the `problem`?***

A clear assumption underpinning the problem is that climate change is an external threat to the EU as an institution. As mentioned above, Timmerman states that it affects economic and social stability, and there is also the assumption that economic growth can continue if it becomes sustainable. This assumption is supported by the EU commitment to the SDGs in 2015, and as Timmermans state the revision of their “legal framework for climate and energy, our enhanced ambitions, covering everything from the Emissions Trading System to new CO2 emissions standards for cars and vans ... and we will proceed with the carbon border adjustment mechanism so we can uphold the promise in Paris without having to pay undue economic costs if international partners do not show enough ambition” (Timmermans, 2020). This assumes that the EU uses the Green Deal as a political tool to mobilize action toward the climate crisis, in the name of sustainability and climate action.

Another assumption that threatens the EU is the emergence of a global health crisis, such as COVID-19. In his speech, Timmerman states that “While we fight the health and economic crisis that has taken over our daily lives, we cannot forget that the climate crisis already has one foot in the door”(Timmermans, 2020). This assumes that, despite a growing health crisis, the climate crisis is unavoidable, thereby underpinning the representation of climate change as a long-term structural threat rather than a temporary issue. This is also represented in Timmermans' speech when he states, “to overcome the Covid-crisis, we need expansionary macroeconomic policies”(Timmermans, 2020), referring to the Green Deal as the solution.

**3) *How has this representation of the `problem` come about?***

The representation of climate change became a central problem across the political, social, and economic spheres through the EU Commission's political framing. It was through speeches such as Frans Timmermans ' and President Von der Leyen's introduction of the Green Deal that the top priority in the agenda-setting role for the EU in 2019-2020 was. When the Green Deal was introduced in 2019, climate neutrality by 2050 was presented, not merely as an environmental solution, but as an economic and societal

necessity. The policy created a political narrative that merged climate, economy, energy, industry, and health into a single political climate agenda for the EU's future.

Through speeches and policy documents, climate change was portrayed as a cross-sectoral threat to the socio-economic welfare of European people, affecting both health and the economy. This is also confirmed when Timmerman states that “the overriding priority of this Commission has been to help navigate our continent and everyone living on it through these tumultuous times”(Timmermans, 2020).

This representation was further underscored by the internal and global crises affecting the EU – including Brexit, Migration, COVID-19, and geopolitical tensions with Russia. These crises frame a narrative of structural vulnerability within the EU and climate change as an additional crisis that requires an immediate response. This was indicated when Timmermans states, “While we fight the health and economic crises that have taken over our daily lives, we cannot forget the climate crisis already has one foot in the door”(Timmermans, 2020).

These origins of the problem suggest a worrisome security issue within the EU, as they highlight that, before the Green Deal, the EU faced economic, societal, and political security challenges that it hoped the Green Deal would help address. However, it is mostly the economic security aspect of the Green Deal that Timmermans identifies, as he continues to state, such as, “Spending it [money] on their future, instead of our past, is a moral imperative and a matter of economic good sense” (Timmermans, 2020), and “we cannot win our fight for greater fairness, for a just transition, if we defend an economic model that delivered growing inequality on the back of a dwindling set of resources”(Timmermans, 2020).

##### ***5) What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?***

Since 2015, the EU has been subject to multiple crises, each time testing its resilience in crisis management. In 2019, with the introduction of the EU Green Deal, the EU demonstrated to its people that it can protect them by focusing on the growing socio-economic security threat posed by climate change.

The impact of how the problem is represented is found in the subjectification effect it generates. Subjectification effect is “the way in which subjects and subjectification are constituted”(Riemann, 2023). In his speech, Frans Timmermans states that the EU will “raise our ambitions and will support it with the necessary policy actions and legal

changes”(Timmermans, 2020), positioning the EU as a serious entity with a primary focus on preventing further damage from climate change. Furthermore, Timmermans highlights the Commission's purpose in this fight, stating that “We set a course to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent, but the virus has thrown the world as we knew it off course” (Timmermans, 2020). This reinforcement of the EU's commitment to climate action, not merely as a way out of the crisis, but as a leader and protector to improve social, economic, and environmental standards in Europe, while maintaining its commitment to international climate efforts. Concurrently, EU citizens are being framed as economically vulnerable and socially exposed to instability due to multiple crises, including migration, Brexit, and COVID-19. Timmerman frames them as vulnerable to external problems that affect their livelihood. He mentions that “ just below the surface, an undertow of fear, loss, disruption, and even outright decline has been swelling”(Timmermans, 2020), further emphasizing the subjectification effect. By framing citizens as vulnerable and dependent on the EU for protection, the EU is willing to accept any measure to protect them.

Finally, statements such as “we have it in us to succeed. We have the money, the brainpower, and we have the commitment.”(Timmermans, 2020), and “with the European Green Deal to guide our way, we shall get there”(Timmermans, 2020) simply creates a reassuring impact that, if we all stand together, even in turbulent times, the hope is not only for the EU but also for Europe to shape a future of environmental and economic awareness of the consequences of climate change and problems such as socio-economic instability.

**6) *How/Where has this representation of the `problem` been produced, disseminated, and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted, and replaced?***

The problem has been represented in speeches, news media, and statements by the European Union. It was first introduced by President von der Leyen with the EU Green Deal, a statement aimed at addressing the problems caused by climate change. Furthermore, it has been disseminated by multiple Commissioners and politicians, including Frans Timmermans, who are committed to implementing the Green Deal. In his speech, the problem's representation framed climate change as an existential socio-economic threat. Timmerman states, “First, we do not have time to waste” (Timmermans, 2020) and “Reaching climate neutrality by 2050 will require EU action in ALL sectors”(Timmermans, 2020), producing an urgency of necessity to act now, or it would be too late.

Multiple critics, including Greenpeace, are questioning these problems. In 2020, the EU Commission's Just Transition Mechanism, a funding package running from 2021 to 2027, “which provides support to those countries most financially and practically affected by the transition away from fossil fuels”(Kentish, 2020), which Greenpeace criticized. Greenpeace criticized it for wrongful allocation, as Greenpeace mentions that “these funds should not be given to countries not committed to phasing out fossil fuel”(Kentish, 2020), giving Poland as an example that wanted more funds, despite not fully committing to EU climate action. Sebastian Mang, Climate and Energy adviser at Greenpeace, also highlights that “if funding is really meant to promote a green transition, it must only be available to governments that are committed to that transition and have a clear plan to ditch coal”(Kentish, 2020).

In 2023, before the 2024 European elections, opinion polls indicated that there were substantial gains for hard-right parties in countries like Germany and Italy(Berthelsen, 2023). Many of the voters had growing dissatisfaction with the EU's climate transition policies. This was also visible when European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, “voiced her concern, emphasizing how the expanding list of climate and industrial regulations coming from Brussels is pushing voters toward populist, and anti-EU parties ahead of next year’s election”(Berthelsen, 2023). These critics are questioning the immediate impact of the Green Deal proposal and its implementation, thereby threatening the very representation of the EU's socio-economic security problem. The criticism of the Green Deal is unlikely to subside anytime soon, as Berthelsen, (2023)“Fueled by perception of overregulation, this growing discontent is amplifying the discord between the bloc’s climate aspirations and the practical realities faced by member countries.” This raises the question of whether the Green Deal is merely a political tool aimed at mitigating socio-economic insecurities, or if it risks creating another issue: political discomfort within the EU. The debate centers on whether the Green Deal’s implementation will genuinely make the EU greener or instead divide it into two groups: dreamers versus realists.

### *Sub-Conclusion*

2019 marked a year for the European Union, during which it began to look inward to improve its own policies and strengthen its security sectors to mitigate the impact of the climate crisis. The EU began to view the climate crisis as a systemic and urgent challenge, evolving into a multidimensional threat to the EU's society, economy, and security. The EU began to establish a political narrative around climate change to justify a large-scale transformation through the EU Green Deal. The analysis's underlying assumption is that the EU presented

the climate crisis as an unavoidable threat that required special attention, regardless of other crises that might emerge; otherwise, it would become a long-term threat.

## Competitiveness Compass (2025)

### *Context*

In today's globalized world, economies such as the USA and China have grown faster, prompting the EU to follow suit. Despite the EU having the potential to contribute to “sustainable growth, a talented and educated workforce, capital, savings, the Single Market, and a unique social model” (European Commission, n.d.-b) the EU still needs to raise its competitiveness. Therefore, in January 2025, the EU Commission presented the Competitiveness Compass as a “new roadmap to restore Europe’s dynamism and boost economic growth”(European Commission, n.d.-b). The Compass was important to the EU as an institution because it was tasked with addressing barriers to achieving its goal of increasing competitiveness with other countries. The Compass identified three necessities for the EU to grow its competitiveness; *Closing the innovation gap, decarbonizing our economy, and reducing dependencies*(European Commission, n.d.-b). These are necessary for the EU to tackle, as China and the US have grown in innovation over the year, becoming major global economic powers. Additionally, the EU has been dependent on Russia for energy for decades, and to reduce its reliance, it needs to find alternative energy sources.

The origin of the Competitiveness Compass stems back to February 2024, when European businesses and trade unions “endorsed the Antwerp Declaration calling for an Industrial Deal”(European Commission, 2025). The Antwerp Declaration was presented to the Belgian Prime Minister, Alexander De Croo, and the Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, by 73 industry leaders from almost 20 industrial sectors, and was a declaration that “underlines the commitment of industry to Europe and its transformation, and outlines urgent industry needs to make Europe competitive, resilient, and sustainable in the face of dire economic conditions” (CEFIC, 2024). After the declaration was presented to the Commission, the Commission requested Mario Draghi, a former European Central Bank President and one of Europe’s great economic minds, to provide an analysis of Europe’s current predicament, which later came to be known as the Draghi Report, upon which the Compass builds its analysis (European Commission, n.d.-b, n.d.-e, 2025, 2).

The Draghi Report was a good use of the Compass, as it “nurtured Europe’s innate strengths, harnessed its resources, and removed the barrier at the European and national level.” (European Commission, 2025,2), while the Draghi report demonstrated to the EU that “innovation must be at the heart of the European renewal, while holding other constraints from Europe’s economic growth.”(European Commission, 2025, 2).

## *Representation of Climate Crisis*

### *1) What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?*

While the Competitiveness Compass does not directly address climate change as an environmental threat, the EU has, through its speeches, connected the need for increased competitiveness in the EU to climate action. In her speech at the Antwerp European Industry Summit, President Von der Leyen mentions that “China now exports almost twice as much clean tech as we do”(Von der Leyen, 2025). This frames the EU representation of the problem as an economic and geopolitical competition, especially with a global power like China. Additionally, when she states that “competition is intensifying and it sometimes is unfair competition”(Von der Leyen, 2025) she highlights how the economic security situation has become vital, potentially de-securitizing climate action. This is especially evident when Von der Leyen highlights how “we must go faster, because I know that the global pressure on you is growing even more”(Von der Leyen, 2025) indirectly connecting the lack of competitiveness and economic instability to hindering climate action. In her speech, Von der Leyen uses words such as “unfair competition,” “massive subsidies,” and “state-backed overcapacity,” indicating that EU industries are under threat from governments that intervene to support their own industries, harming EU industries, and threatening EU industrial competitiveness.

In another speech, Commissioner Dombrovskis states that “today, the world is witnessing a brutal return of power politics”(European Union, 2025a). This statement from Dombrovskis is somewhat alarming, as it suggests that countries might use their military strength and geopolitical position to influence outcomes in their favour and disregard the environmental issues currently unfolding. Another problem is the EU's dependence on other countries for resources. Commissioner Dombrovskis discusses how EU productivity growth has been lagging behind that of the US and China for decades, attributing it to high energy prices as a “clear signal of Europe's past overdependencies” (European Union, 2025a). The problem of dependence on other countries has been a concern for the EU for decades, and energy dependence is particularly linked to climate change, as Europe has been at the forefront of the green transition.

## ***2) What presumptions or assumptions underpin this representation of the `problem`?***

As the Competitiveness Compass focuses on enhancing competitiveness in Europe, it is reasonable to assume that one of the assumptions in the EU speeches by EU Commissioner Dombrovskis and President Von der Leyen is that economic competitiveness in Europe is under threat from external competitors. Competitiveness is not merely a policy issue, but a security issue for the EU economy. In his speech, Commissioner Dombrovskis mentions that we “simply cannot expect European businesses to compete effectively when we face self-imposed bureaucratic burdens and limitations that our international competitors do not”(European Union, 2025a). This presents an internal problem that undermines EU competitiveness and the economic security of EU businesses. President Von der Leyen presents this problem as a future threat to EU security, arguing that external competitors pose a threat to European businesses. She states that “too often, we see that our public buyers have to take subsidized foreign products, instead of high-quality European alternatives”(Von der Leyen, 2025). This implies that there are internal issues in Europe that prevent outside buyers from purchasing from European businesses, framing the issue as an EU internal matter that impacts EU competitiveness. This is also confirmed by Von der Leyen herself, when she mentions that “Barriers inside Europe hurt us more than tariffs from outside”(Von der Leyen, 2025).

A second assumption is that the current global economic scene is challenging and competitive, which is why there is an urgency from the EU side. As mentioned above, the problem behind the Compass stems from the rise in global competitiveness from major economies such as China and the USA, which are challenging the economic landscape. However, it is important to acknowledge that China and the USA are portrayed not merely as economic competitors but also as threats to the EU's long-term prosperity and security. This is evident in the speeches, as this assumption is being securitized, when Dombrovskis mentions “we need to make most of our underlying strengths to maximize innovation, productivity, and growth”(European Union, 2025a). This is also evident when President Von der Leyen commented on how “we need everyone in our Union to help move forward”(Von der Leyen, 2025). This presumes that to match competitiveness at the current global economic scene, everyone at all levels, local, national, and international levels, must work together in the Union, to advantage Europe’s long-term prosperity and security.

### ***3) How has this representation of the `problem` come about?***

The world today is increasingly globalized, with a focus on sustainability, innovation, and technological advancements. The representation of the problem has emerged from this perspective: a global economic shift challenging Europe's position, as new global economic players such as China and the USA have emerged. As China and the USA have become rising global competitors, this has led to the perception that Europe is economically under threat. In a Briefing from 2023 from the European Parliament, it mentions that "China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) seeks to expand the country's economic influence by investing in infrastructure projects across many regions, challenging economic interests of the US and the EU"(Stephane, 2023). The representation of the problem stems from the EU institutions' perception that global market dynamics have changed, and they treat it as a high-level security threat to the EU's status as a major economic power.

In her speech, Von der Leyen also mentions China's growing influence in the global market, stating that "China now exports twice as much clean tech as we do"(Von der Leyen, 2025). Von der Leyen addressed the concern that China is exporting more clean technologies than the EU, raising questions about the EU's status as a global climate leader. The problem underlying the policy originates in the environmental sector, highlighting the connection between the economic and environmental domains. Additionally, Von der Leyen talks about the ETS, linking the economy to emissions, when she mentions that " Since it was introduced in 2005, emissions dropped by 39%, while the economy in sectors covered by ETS has grown by 71%"(Von der Leyen, 2025). This frames the EU's urgency to position itself in the green sector while focusing on improving competitiveness.

It is therefore significant to acknowledge that the representation of the problem emerged from concern about a change in the global market, which has led the EU to frame the situation as a threat to Europe's economic position, while preserving its position as a global climate leader.

### *5) What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?*

The EU has in recent years become more aware of the global market, its competitors, and how this has affected its position, not only as an economic strategic partner but also as a trusted leader in climate innovation, technology, and green transition. The impact of the representation can be generated from the subjectification effects it generates.

Subjectification effect is “the way in which subjects and subjectification are constituted”(Riemann, 2023). In her speech, President von der Leyen says that to increase Europe’s global competitiveness, the EU needs to stand together. She states that “we must secure your future in our continent” (Von der Leyen, 2025). This positions the EU as a strategic protector of Europe. It frames the EU as having its own control over how to achieve competitiveness, while maintaining its position in the green transition.

Concurrently, the EU industries are being framed as responsible for their own economic position in the global market. Von der Leyen frames EU businesses and industries as essential to Europe’s survival against the global superpowers, the USA and China. The repeated use of the pronoun ‘you’ in her speech frames a legitimation of EU action, as using ‘you’ repeatedly shows the EU’s empathy toward businesses by signaling that the EU understands them, sees their struggles, and is politically aligned with their frustrations. Furthermore, in her speech, Von Der Leyen positions the industries as being under external pressure, as she mentions that “the global pressure on you is growing even more”(Von der Leyen, 2025), highlighting that it is not only the EU, but the industries themselves that are being targeted by competition from the USA and China.

Concurrently, Dombrovskis also uses the pronoun “we” to frame the EU’s current position, not as Von der Leyen, who speaks directly to EU businesses, but as “we” and “our” to present the EU as a unified body of collaboration among different actors. In his speech, he mentions that “we must have a strong economy”(European Union, 2025a), linking economic power to security responsibilities. Using the words ‘we must’ frames an urgency and necessity for collective action to improve the economy. In his speech, Dombrovskis also frames the European citizens as being more than just citizens, but as an innovative, educated, and capable community. When he mentions that “we have a commitment” and “our people have never been short of creativity and integrity”(European Union, 2025a) heightening the Europeans as embedded in moral and institutional identity, while framing them as the EU’s future solution to boosting competitiveness.

***6) How/Where has this representation of the `problem` been produced, disseminated, and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted, and replaced?***

The representation of the problem has been produced through high-level communication from EU institutions, such as official speeches by President von der Leyen and Commissioner Dombrovskis. The idea of a Competitiveness Compass first emerged in February 2024, when European businesses and trade unions urged the EU Commission to support European industries and make Europe more competitive and resilient to external competition. When the EU began to raise its interest in a competitive EU industry, it was disseminated by the official EU online forum, EU Commissioners, and even the EU Commission President herself. In her speech, President von der Leyen urged businesses to “uptake clean products in Europe”(Von der Leyen, 2025), producing a link between competitiveness and climate action.

As the green transition and climate crisis have become an integral part of international politics, the new policy initiative that prioritizes economic growth over the prevention and mitigation of the climate crisis was met with criticism from experts, NGOs, and civil society. In January 2025, a leaked document from the EU Commission pointed toward a deregulation targeting the European Green Deal (Weise, 2025). This sparked significant criticism not toward the Compass initiative in particular, but toward the EU and its de-prioritization of implementing EU climate policies in the economic sector. Tsvetelina Kuzmanova, a EU Sustainable Finance lead at Cambridge Institute for Sustainable Leadership, talked about prioritization of the EU, questioning whether the EU decision-making is drifting away from the intended purpose of the Compass, stating, “by prioritizing immediate political gains over a clear vision of competitiveness, we risk undermining the very businesses that drive innovation and sustainability”(Nuttall, 2025). Kuzmanova indirectly criticizes the EU for failing to follow its own Compass, as she sees EU politicians favoring short-term politics over the long-term solutions the Compass is supposed to prioritize. Environmental NGOs have also come forward, warning that implementing the Compass might “risk leading Europe astray” (Budiman, 2025). They then continue to question whether the Compass promotes policy cohesion while not directly addressing which sectors risk weakening the EU's environmental and social security. Over 270 Civil society organizations, including trade unions, consumer groups, and environmental advocates, wrote an open letter to the EU Commission’s President Ursula Von der Leyen, expressing how the Commission needs to “abandon deregulation, and provide guarantees that simplification does not lower standards,

or obstruct vital socio-ecological transition”(Corporate Europe Observatory, 2025). Despite 270 parties participating in the letter, Von der Leyen did not respond, prompting a new letter from 160 NGOs and trade unions warning “against a weakening of corporate accountability laws in the upcoming Omnibus simplification package” (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2025).

### *Sub-Conclusion*

The European Union has framed the climate crisis as economically embedded in Europe’s industrial competitiveness and in the resilience of EU industries against outside competitors. In 2025, the EU was more focused on increasing industrial competitiveness, as reflected in the underlying assumption. The EU saw competitiveness as a security issue, framing weak competitiveness as a threat to Europe's internal stability. These underlying assumptions indicate that there is security issues linked to EU competitiveness that hinder the EU from continuing to be a global climate leader while balancing the global economic scene, which is currently threatened by external competitors, creating an urgency within the EU.

# Discussion

In recent years, the topic of climate change in political debates has emerged as an urgent, multi-dimensional problem, affecting societies, economies, environments, and politics. The European Union, which has been a climate leader for decades, has, through its communication, shown a shifting prioritization of mitigating climate change, as emerging socio-economic challenges, security, and political problems have led to a shift in priorities. This discussion will examine, in more specific terms, the underlying assumptions and security perceptions behind the EU's representation of the climate crisis since 2015, and how climate change has become embedded in the EU's economic discourse. Lastly, the discussion will furthermore discuss how the theoretical framework of this study has provided a fundamental understanding of the EU's representation of the climate crisis.

## Synthesis Results

The study demonstrates a parallel between the EU's approach to climate change and perceptions of security since 2015. The results suggest that the representation of the climate crisis has framed it as an urgent, universal problem since 2015, moving toward economic embedding in Europe's industrial competitiveness. This is supported by the theory of WPR, which examines how policies construct the problems they address. In line with the theory, the results suggest that the EU has constructed its own representation of climate change, as EU politicians spoke to an audience that made assumptions aligned with that representation. These assumptions include that climate change knows no borders, that it affects us all, that it is unavoidable, and that internal problems within the EU have impacted EU industrial competitiveness, thereby affecting the EU's ability to mitigate the climate crisis.

Since 2015, patterns across the speeches from Miguel Arias Canete, Frans Timmermans, Von der Leyen, and Dombrovskis suggest that the EU has consistently recognized the climate crisis as an existential threat. However, one notable difference, a surprising result, was that the climate crisis has become less of a priority for the EU. This is supported by the theory of Securitization, which views language as both descriptive and performative. What securitization can tell us about these patterns is that the speeches since 2015 have been influenced by the social setting, and that, as a result, the representation of the climate crisis has changed with it. As 2015 was a year of international commitments and collective action against the climate crisis, there was greater focus on mitigating the crisis globally. However, as the social setting changed, so did the speeches that addressed climate

change. As the results indicate from 2019 onwards, the EU began promoting the EU Green Deal to strengthen its security sectors and mitigate the impact of the climate crisis. This resulted in heightened focus on implementing the Green Deal, seen as more than just a policy proposal but as an act that frames climate change as an urgent problem with multidimensional impacts on security. However, 2025 indicates that the framing of the climate crisis has shifted yet again, toward emphasizing industrial competitiveness and global pressure, particularly from China and the United States, over climate change prevention and mitigation. These results highlight the importance of framing within representation, suggesting that the EU has somewhat shifted its role of climate leader toward being more economically aware of the competitive nature of the global economic scene.

### *Security perceptions*

The analysis suggests that several security perceptions underpin the EU's representation of the climate crisis. The result indicates that the global clean technology sector is increasingly being shaped by competition from China and the USA. This development suggests a possible link between economic security and the European Union's position in the global value chain. From an economic perspective, this may reflect a broader challenge of competitiveness in innovation and capacity building in the clean tech sector. However, this aligns with the idea that, from a security perspective, this development is a concern, as external actors threaten the EU's position in clean technology and thereby increase its vulnerability. These framings align with Carol Bacchi's WPR theory, as they contribute to a better understanding of how the EU has constructed its concerns about its economic standing in clean tech and security, implying that China and the USA are external actors that threaten the safety of EU businesses.

A consistent result of the analysis is that the climate crisis has become a systemic challenge, posing a threat to societies, economies, and politics. These findings provide new insight into how the climate crisis is being presented as unavoidable and long-term, contributing to a clearer understanding of the EU policy development in climate politics. These results are consistent with the theory of securitization, which states that security is more than just stating the problem; it involves actually performing an action. Securitization focuses on performative utterances that, from the analysis, suggest that the EU has, through its representation, framed the climate crisis as an extraordinary threat to societies, economies, and politics, providing a new insight into the relationship between the construction of action through speech.

## *Theoretical Consideration*

From a theoretical perspective, it is important to consider how Carol Bacchi's WPR theory and the Copenhagen School's securitization theory have contributed to the analysis. Without the WPR theory by Carol Bacchi, I would not have been able to identify the underlying assumptions and how the EU has constructed the climate crisis since 2015. What the WPR revealed was an underlying perception that the climate crisis has been an existential threat, but its impact has since grown multidimensional, affecting societies, economies, and politics. Furthermore, WPR has indicated a stronger awareness of how the EU has, through its speeches, constructed the climate crisis as an existential threat.

Securitization theory by the Copenhagen School adds a more in-depth focus on the discursive construction of language. By examining speech acts, existential threats, and performative utterances, the theory contributes to a clearer understanding of how language in the speeches is used to construct climate change as a threat and a means of interference. Furthermore, securitization examines how language is used to create climate change as a security issue, deepening the justification for interference.

While Carol Bacchi's WPR theory and the Copenhagen School's Securitization theory offer analytical strengths, both also have limitations. While Securitization helps us understand how language can change the world and take an issue beyond politics, one of its main limitations is its approach to speech acts. According to McDonald, the theory "over-emphasizes speech act, while neglecting other processes or means of communication, such as images or other visual representations like video" (Baysal, 2020,7). This takes a critical perspective on how, while it limits its means of communication, it also relies heavily on what political actors say, even when that contradicts what is actually happening. Carol Bacchi's WPR approach presents a limitation regarding its ability to understand what happens in Practice. According to Clarke (2019) WPR "is less effective for addressing how the contingency unfolds at the level of practice in a particular governance context." The two theories, therefore, complement each other: while WPR helps examine how speeches construct the problems they address, Securitization theory examines the language to see how it changes the world through action.

# Conclusion

This research aimed to answer the research question: *What are the underlying assumptions and security perceptions behind the EU's representation of the climate crisis since 2015?*

Using the theories of Bacchi's 'What's the problem represented to be' and the Copenhagen School of Securitization, I identified underlying assumptions, speech acts, security factors, and how the EU has represented the climate crisis as an existential threat since 2015. The WPR theory enabled me to examine the policy's underlying assumptions and effects, and how these assumptions and effects influenced the EU's representation of the climate crisis. In contrast, securitization theory helped me identify what the EU considers an existential threat to climate change and which referent objects are affected by it.

These theories provided a holistic understanding of the EU representation of representation since 2015 and how security priorities changed with the progressive impact of climate change on the societal, political, economic, and environmental sectors. The analysis was built on data collected from EU official websites and official communications from the European Union describing the Paris Agreement, the EU Green Deal, and the Competitiveness Compass. The methodological design allowed me to examine the case of the European Union, focusing on how its representation of the climate crisis has changed since 2015, the underlying assumptions, and the security factors.

The analysis revealed that, from 2015 to 2019, the EU presented the climate crisis as an urgent, universal, and systematic problem. In 2015, the EU recognized climate change as a global existential threat, requiring collective global action to mitigate its impact. However, as 2019 approached, the climate crisis became multifaceted, and a political narrative emerged pointing to broader economic, social, and political impacts of climate change. The EU presented this as an unavoidable crisis that required long-term solutions. As 2025 approached, it revealed a significant policy shift within the EU, as the EU began to represent the climate crisis as embedded in Europe's industrial competitiveness, rather than as a problem in itself.

These representations revealed a central finding of the analysis: the EU's commitment to mitigating climate change has changed over time as its representation of climate change has evolved. In earlier years, it was revealed that the EU saw itself as a securitizing actor, protecting the world from the climate crisis as a protector and climate leader. However, over time, the EU's representation of the climate crisis changed, with a marked contrast in its communication from 2015 to 2025.

By analysing underlying assumptions and security perceptions, this thesis provides insight into how international actors represent the climate crisis within the evolving security sector. It reveals how international actors' representation of the climate is shaped by foreign competition and unfamiliar crises, which in turn affect EU prioritization and, therefore, the representation of the climate crisis. The EU's framing of the climate crisis since 2015 has clearly aligned with securitization theory, highlighting an increased security assessment in which the existential threat has shifted from climate change itself to a geopolitical security issue. Therefore, a reasonable conclusion would be that the political, economic, and social pressure from NGOs, politicians, and Member States has shaped the discourse on climate, from the EU's full commitment to climate action to geopolitical pressure and foreign crises that have affected the EU's prioritization of climate policy.

Building on this analysis, future research could provide new perspectives on how the EU represents the climate crisis. An analysis of the role of digital media in shaping the EU climate narrative would offer a new perspective on how the EU is influenced by media outlets and social media in its portrayal of the climate crisis. Other research, which would resemble the current thesis, is a comparison of EU communication with other international actors, such as the USA or China, to identify similarities and differences in their representation.

In conclusion, EU representation of the climate crisis has since the early 2015 evolved from an urgent environmental concern for the EU, with the EU as a climate leader and protector, to a multi-dimensional challenge that has come to impact not only EU standing as a climate leader but also as a reminder that the climate crisis has become a systematic urgent problem, which is unavoidable.

# Bibliography

- Adamides, C. (2020). Securitization. In C. Adamides (Ed.), *Securitization and Desecuritization Processes in Protracted Conflicts: The Case of Cyprus* (pp. 1–14). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33200-6\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33200-6_1)
- Bacchi, C., & Eveline, J. (2010). *Mainstreaming Politics: Gendering practices and feminist theory*. 390.
- Bacchi, C., & Goodwin, S. (2016a). Making Politics Visible: The WPR Approach. In C. Bacchi & S. Goodwin (Eds.), *Poststructural Policy Analysis: A Guide to Practice* (pp. 13–26). Palgrave Macmillan US. [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52546-8\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52546-8_2)
- Bacchi, C., & Goodwin, S. (2016b). Making Politics Visible: The WPR Approach. In C. Bacchi & S. Goodwin (Eds.), *Poststructural Policy Analysis: A Guide to Practice* (pp. 13–26). Palgrave Macmillan US. [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52546-8\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52546-8_2)
- Baysal, B. (2020). Güvenikleřtirmenin 20 Yılı: Gücü, Sınırları ve Yeni Bir İkili Analiz Çerçevesi. *Uluslararası İliřkiler Dergisi*.  
<https://doi.org/10.33458/uidergisi.777338>
- Berthelsen, R. G. (2023, September 26). *Mounting discontent augurs badly for EU Green Deal*. POLITICO. <https://www.politico.eu/article/discontent-eu-green-deal-climate-change-backlash/>

- Bletsas, A., & Beasley, C. (Eds.). (2012). *Engaging with Carol Bacchi Strategic Interventions and Exchanges*. University of Adelaide Press.  
<https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/33181/560097.pdf;sequence=1#page=34>
- Brönnimann, S. (2018). Global Warming (1970–Present). In S. White, C. Pfister, & F. Mauelshagen (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History* (pp. 321–328). Palgrave Macmillan UK. [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-43020-5\\_26](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-43020-5_26)
- Budiman, A. (2025, January 29). EU compass must point towards the common good, not corporate profits. *EEB - The European Environmental Bureau*.  
<https://eeb.org/en/competitiveness-compass/>
- Butters, B. (2025). *State of the European Union 2025: Europe must control the controllables to revive competitiveness*.
- Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & Wilde, J. de. (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Campbell, R., Rachael Goodman-Williams, Hannah Feeney, & Giannina Fehler-Cabral. (2020). *Assessing Triangulation Across Methodologies, Methods, and Stakeholder Groups: The Joys, Woes, and Politics of Interpreting Convergent and Divergent Data*.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1098214018804195>

Caradonna, J. L. (2022). Introduction. In J. L. Caradonna (Ed.), *Sustainability: A History, Revised and Updated Edition* (p. 0). Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197625026.003.0001>

Carter, S. M., & Little, M. (2007). *Justifying Knowledge, Justifying Method, Taking Action: Epistemologies, Methodologies, and Methods in Qualitative Research*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732307306927>

CEFIC. (2024, February 21). Antwerp Declaration for a European Industrial Deal:

Industry leaders call for 10 urgent actions to restore competitiveness and keep good jobs in Europe. *Cefic*. <https://cefic.org/news/antwerp-declaration-for-a-european-industrial-deal/>

Clarke, A. (2019). Analyzing problematization as a situated practice in critical policy studies: A case study of ‘customer focus’ policy in urban compliance services. *Critical Policy Studies*, 13(2), 190–210.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2017.1414619>

Corporate Europe Observatory. (2025). *Von der Leyen’s ‘Competitiveness Compass’: Deregulation threatens social and environmental protection*.

<https://corporateeurope.org/en/2025/01/von-der-leyens-competitiveness-compass-deregulation-threatens-social-and-environmental>

Council on Foreign Relations. (2025, February 13). *History of Climate Action Timeline*. CFR Education from the Council on Foreign Relations.

<https://education.cfr.org/learn/timeline/history-climate-action>

Das, S. (2013). Negotiating an Intractable Climate Deal: The Kyoto Process and Beyond.

*Jadavpur Journal of International Relations*, 17(2), 205–228.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0973598414535061>

Donald Trump. (2017). *Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord – The*

*White House*. The White House. [https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-](https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord/)

[statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord/](https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord/)

Erbach, G. (2015). EU position for COP 21 climate change conference. *Briefing*.

Eroukhmanoff, C. (2018, January 14). Securitisation Theory: An Introduction. *E-*

*International Relations*. [https://www.e-ir.info/2018/01/14/securitisation-theory-](https://www.e-ir.info/2018/01/14/securitisation-theory-an-introduction/)

[an-introduction/](https://www.e-ir.info/2018/01/14/securitisation-theory-an-introduction/)

European Commission. (2016). *Communication-from-the-commission-to-the-*

*european-parliament-and-the-council* [Communication letter].

[https://doi.org/10.1163/2210-7975\\_HRD-4679-0058](https://doi.org/10.1163/2210-7975_HRD-4679-0058)

European Business Review. (2024). *NGOs unite against EU's rollback of green policies*

*for the agrifood sector*. Europeanbusiness.Gr.

<https://www.europeanbusinessreview.eu/page.asp?pid=7206>

European Commission. (n.d.). *Global climate action—Climate Action—European*

*Commission*. Retrieved January 20, 2026, from [https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/international-action-climate-change/global-climate-action_en)

[action/international-action-climate-change/global-climate-action\\_en](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/international-action-climate-change/global-climate-action_en)

European Commission. (n.d.-a). *About the EU ETS - Climate Action—European Commission*. Retrieved January 21, 2026, from [https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/carbon-markets/about-eu-ets\\_en](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/carbon-markets/about-eu-ets_en)

European Commission. (n.d.-b). *Competitiveness compass—European Commission*. Retrieved March 3, 2026, from [https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/competitiveness-compass\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/competitiveness-compass_en)

European Commission. (n.d.-c). *Development of EU ETS (2005-2020)—Climate Action—European Commission*. Retrieved February 20, 2026, from [https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/carbon-markets/eu-emissions-trading-system-eu-ets/development-eu-ets-2005-2020\\_en](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/carbon-markets/eu-emissions-trading-system-eu-ets/development-eu-ets-2005-2020_en)

European Commission. (n.d.-d). *European Climate Law—Climate Action—European Commission*. Retrieved February 18, 2026, from [https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/european-climate-law\\_en](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/european-climate-law_en)

European Commission. (n.d.-e). *The Draghi report on EU competitiveness*. Retrieved March 3, 2026, from [https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/draghi-report\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/draghi-report_en)

European Commission. (1973). *Programme of action (ECSC, Euratom, EEC) on the environment, 1973-1976 | Programme | ENV*. CORDIS | European Commission. <https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/id/ENV-ENVAP-1C>

European Commission. (2015). *Historic climate deal in Paris: EU leads global efforts* [Text]. European Commission - European Commission.

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_15\\_6308](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_15_6308)

European Commission. (2016). *EU Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete follow-up to COP21* [Text]. European Commission - European Commission.

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech\\_16\\_586](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_16_586)

European Commission. (2019a). *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS The European Green Deal*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52019DC0640>

European Commission. (2019b). *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS The European Green Deal*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52019DC0640>

European Commission. (2022, December 14). *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)—Research and innovation*. [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/environment/climate-change-science/intergovernmental-panel-climate-change-ipcc\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/environment/climate-change-science/intergovernmental-panel-climate-change-ipcc_en)

European Commission. (2025). *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS*. European Commission. [https://european-research-area.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2025-01/COM%202025%2030%20-%20A%20Competitiveness%20Compass%20for%20the%20EU%20\\_%202029-1-2025.pdf](https://european-research-area.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2025-01/COM%202025%2030%20-%20A%20Competitiveness%20Compass%20for%20the%20EU%20_%202029-1-2025.pdf)

European Commission. (2026, January 19). *Environment—European Commission*. [https://commission.europa.eu/topics/environment\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/environment_en)

European Institute of Management and Finance. (2024, August 2). Environmental Crime – The Law – The Actions – The Penalties. *European Institute of Management and Finance*. <https://eimf.eu/environmental-crime-the-law-the-actions-the-penalties/>

European Parliament. (2015). *European Energy Security Strategy*. European Parliament. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/EPRS-AaG-559474-European-Energy-Security-Strategy-FINAL.pdf>

European Parliament. (2018, December 4). *Timeline of climate change negotiations*. Topics | European Parliament. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20180404STO00910/timeline-of-climate-change-negotiations>

European Parliament. (2025, October 31). *The Treaty of Lisbon | Fact Sheets on the European Union*. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/5/the-treaty-of-lisbon>

European Union. (n.d.). *History of the European Union – 2010-19 | European Union*. Retrieved April 8, 2026, from [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/2010-19\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/2010-19_en)

European Union. (2003). *European security strategy | EUR-Lex*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/european-security-strategy.html>

European Union. (2008). *Climate Change and International Security*. 11.

European Union. (2013). *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS The 2015 International Climate Change Agreement: Shaping international climate policy beyond 2020 Consultative Communication*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52013DC0167>

European Union. (2015). *Speech by Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete at the press conference on the results of COP21 climate conference in Paris [Text]*. European Commission - European Commission. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech\\_15\\_6320](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_15_6320)

European Union. (2016). *Paris Agreement [Bill]*. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22016A1019\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22016A1019(01))

European Union. (2018, December 4). *Timeline of climate change negotiations*. Topics | European Parliament.

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20180404STO00910/timeline-of-climate-change-negotiations>

European Union. (2019). *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS The European Green Deal*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52019DC0640>

European Union. (2021). *European Climate Law* | EUR-Lex. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/european-climate-law.html>

European Union. (2025a). Dombrovskis at the Cernobbio Forum. In *European Commission—European Commission* [Text]. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech\\_25\\_2035](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_25_2035)

European Union. (2025b, September 30). *Environment policy: General principles and basic framework* | *Fact Sheets on the European Union* | European Parliament. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/71/environment-policy-general-principles-and-basic-framework>

Falkner, R. (2019). *The unavailability of justice – and order – in international climate politics: From Kyoto to Paris and beyond—Robert Falkner, 2019*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1369148118819069?icid=int.sj-full-text.similar-articles.9>

Flohr, M. (2025, March 31). Key Concept: Securitization (Copenhagen School). *Critical Legal Thinking*. <https://criticallegalthinking.com/2025/03/31/key-concept-securitization-copenhagen-school/>

Hobbs, S. D., Mats Engström, Carla. (2024, May 23). Winds of change: The EU's green agenda after the European Parliament election – European Council on Foreign Relations. *ECFR*. <https://ecfr.eu/publication/winds-of-change-the-eus-green-agenda-after-the-european-parliament-election/>

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. (n.d.). *IPCC — Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Retrieved April 9, 2026, from <https://www.ipcc.ch/>

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change. (2014). *AR5 SYR Glossary – English—IPCC*. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/syr/ar5-syr-glossary-english/>

International Institute for Sustainable Development. (2008). A Brief Analysis of the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference. In *Encyclopedia of Global Warming and Climate Change*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963893.n343>

Karman, A., Bronisz, U., Banaś, J., & Miszczuk, A. (2024). Climate Change Competitiveness. In A. Karman, U. Bronisz, J. Banaś, & A. Miszczuk (Eds.), *Regional Competitiveness Towards Climate Change: A Model-Based Approach* (pp. 7–47). Springer Nature Switzerland. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-68767-9\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-68767-9_2)

Kelemen, R. D. (2010). Globalizing European Union environmental policy. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17(3), 335–349.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13501761003662065>

Kentish, P. (2020, January 15). First part of EU Green Deal facing criticism from environmental groups. *Emerging Europe*. <https://emerging-europe.com/first-part-of-eu-green-deal-facing-criticism-from-environmental-groups/>

Lucas Downey. (2026). *The 1979 Energy Crisis: Causes, Consequences, and Lessons*. Investopedia. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/1/1979-energy-crisis.asp>

Meyer, J.-H. (2024). *The European Parliament and the origins of environmental policy*.

Morseletto, P., Biermann, F., & Pattberg, P. (2017). Governing by targets: Reductio ad unum and evolution of the two-degree climate target. *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, 17(5), 655–676.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-016-9336-7>

Nuttall, P. (2025). *EU ‘competitiveness compass’ under fire for focus on deregulation*. <https://www.sustainableviews.com/eu-competitiveness-compass-under-fire-for-focus-on-deregulation-98958371/>

Oberthür, S., & Roche Kelly, C. (2008). EU Leadership in International Climate Policy: Achievements and Challenges. *The International Spectator*, 43(3), 35–50.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03932720802280594>

Oxfam. (2016, March 2). *EU Commission fails to put Paris climate agreement into action*. Oxfam International. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/eu-commission-fails-put-paris-climate-agreement-action>

Peñasco, C., & Grossman, E. (2026). The paradox of environmental consciousness: Dissecting the gap between climate change awareness, environmental concern and policy support. *Climate Policy*, 26(1), 14–31.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2025.2479814>

Riemann, M. (2023). Studying Problematizations: The Value of Carol Bacchi’s ‘What’s the Problem Represented to be?’ (WPR) Methodology for IR. *Alternatives*, 48(2), 151–169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03043754231155763>

Seha, E., & Müller-Rommel, F. (2016). Case Study Analysis. In *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Shipoli, E. A. (2018). The Securitization Theory. In E. A. Shipoli (Ed.), *Islam, Securitization, and US Foreign Policy* (pp. 71–100). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71111-9\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71111-9_3)

Stephane, R. (2023). *China-US global rivalry and the EU*. 6.

Stritzel, H. (2007). *Towards a Theory of Securitization: Copenhagen and Beyond—Holger Stritzel, 2007*.  
[https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1354066107080128?casa\\_token=0gDh\\_kyka5kAAAAA:KcH5kXP2xeBonR6wnVw5Qd0\\_tgIPG2VqAl2pymuTHAtzHBltzPRlBv7mvzFFhOH4TGG0YzsRb7Q3Q](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1354066107080128?casa_token=0gDh_kyka5kAAAAA:KcH5kXP2xeBonR6wnVw5Qd0_tgIPG2VqAl2pymuTHAtzHBltzPRlBv7mvzFFhOH4TGG0YzsRb7Q3Q)

Thakur, S. (2021). From Kyoto to Paris and Beyond: The Emerging Politics of Climate Change. *India Quarterly*, 77(3), 366–383.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/09749284211027252>

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. (n.d.-a). *IPCC — Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Retrieved April 6, 2026, from <https://www.ipcc.ch/>

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. (n.d.-b). *IPCC — Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Retrieved January 20, 2026, from

<https://www.ipcc.ch/>

*The Paris Agreement* | UNFCCC. (n.d.). Retrieved February 9, 2026, from

<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>

Timmermans, F. (2020). *Frans Timmermans on the European Green Deal at Bruegel event*. European Commission.

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech\\_20\\_1551](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_20_1551)

United Nation. (1997). *The Kyoto Protocol* | UNFCCC. <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-kyoto-protocol>

United Nation Climate Change. (n.d.). *Conference of the Parties (COP)* | UNFCCC.

Retrieved January 20, 2026, from <https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/supreme-bodies/conference-of-the-parties-cop>

United Nations. (2025, March 19). State of the Global Climate report: New records and almost irreversible consequences. *United Nations Western Europe*.

<https://unric.org/en/wmo-state-of-climate-report-climate-new-records-and-almost-irreversible-consequences/>

Von der Leyen. (2025). Opening keynote speech by the President at the Antwerp European Industry Summit. In *European Commission—European Commission* [Text]. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech\\_26\\_382](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_26_382)

Watt, D. A. (2023). *Arab oil embargo of 1973 | History | Research Starters | EBSCO Research*. EBSCO. <https://www.ebsco.com>

Weise, Z. (2025, January 24). *EU's new economic vision is speaking to Green Deal critics*. POLITICO. <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-new-economic-vision-is-speaking-to-green-deal-critics-competitiveness-compass/>

Wendler, F. (2022). Climate Change Policy in the EU: From the Paris Agreement to the European Green Deal. In F. Wendler (Ed.), *Framing Climate Change in the EU and US After the Paris Agreement* (pp. 65–117). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-04059-7\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-04059-7_3)