

HOW IS THE EUROPEAN UNION SECURITIZING CLIMATE CHANGE IN
THE MIDDLE EAST?

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ABSTRACT

HOW IS THE EUROPEAN UNION SECURITIZING CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

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This thesis examines the complex relationship between climate change and regional instability in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), by focusing on Syria, and assesses the European Union's approach to this nexus. The European Union's reaction is examined through its policies and strategic frameworks, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), highlighting its securitization of climate issues as part of its broader security and foreign policy objectives. Through a detailed analysis of reports and policy documents, the thesis assesses how the EU has engaged in the MENA region and securitized the climate. In this context, this study focuses on the Union's efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change while promoting regional stability and cooperation. The study underlines the EU's dual approach of addressing urgent humanitarian needs and supporting long-term resilience through sustainable improvement and environmental cooperation. This comprehensive analysis provides insights into the assessment of the effectiveness of the EU's strategies and policies in managing the complex interplay between climate change and security in the Middle East.

Keywords: Climate Change, Securitization, Environmental Policies, Middle East, European Union

ÖZ

AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ ORTADOĞU'DA İKLİM DEĞİŞİKLİĞİNİ NASIL GÜVENLİKLEŞTİRİYOR?

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Yüksek Lisans, Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Bölümü

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Bu tez, Suriye'yi bir vaka çalışması olarak alarak Orta Doğu ve Kuzey Afrika'da iklim değişikliği ve bölgesel istikrarsızlık arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi incelemekte ve Avrupa Birliği'nin bu bağlantıya olan yaklaşımı değerlendirilmektedir. Avrupa Birliği'nin tepkisi, Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası ve Akdeniz İçin Birlik gibi politikaları ve stratejik çerçeveleri aracılığıyla incelenmekte ve daha geniş güvenlik ve dış politika hedeflerinin bir parçası olarak iklim sorunlarını güvenlikleştirilmesine önem verildiği belirtilmektedir. Tez, raporların ve politika dokümanlarının ayrıntılı analizi yoluyla AB'nin MENA bölgesine nasıl müdahil olduğu ve iklimi nasıl güvenlikleştirdiğini değerlendirmektedir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma AB'nin bölgesel istikrar ve iş birliğini desteklerken iklim değişikliğinin olumsuz etkilerini indirgeme çabalarına odaklanmaktadır. Çalışma, AB'nin acil insani ihtiyaçları ele alma ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma ve çevresel iş birliği yoluyla uzun vadeli dayanıklılığı destekleme şeklindeki ikili yaklaşımının altını çizmektedir. Bu kapsamlı inceleme, AB'nin Orta Doğu'da iklim değişikliği ve güvenlik arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimi yönetme konusundaki strateji ve politikalarının etkinliğine ilişkin bir görüş sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İklim Değişikliği, Güvenlikleştirme, Çevre Politikaları, Orta Doğu, Avrupa Birliği

To my grandmother, mother, Kiti, Hasan and Marsel



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa

EC: European Commission

EE-MRIO: Environmentally-Extended Multi-Regional Input-Output

EESC: European Economic and Social Committee

EMP: Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

ENP: European Neighbourhood Policy

EU: European Union

EP: European Parliament

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross

IDP: Internally Displaced Persons

IFRC: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

MENA: Middle East and North Africa

NDC: Nationally Determined Contributions

UfM: Union for the Mediterranean

UN: United Nations

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

WTO: World Trade Organization

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change, resource extraction, and the impact of those on the environment, and social and economic life have been a long-standing concern for the Middle East and North Africa region. Middle Eastern countries are generally acknowledged to be among the states vulnerable to the diverse impacts of climate change such as the increasing heat waves, decreasing precipitation, droughts, and ascending sea levels. It is costly and time-consuming for these countries to adapt to changing climate conditions. Furthermore, the climate challenges impact the pre-existing conflicts in various fields and reinforce the regional governments' instabilities (Wehrey, 2023, p. 17). Climate change cannot be the sole reason for conflict in this region and in the globe. Still, it contributes to the plethora of drivers towards conflict. Climate change plays a subsidiary role in creating a new threat or conflict on water scarcity, food security, or a clash of natural resources (Holland & Vagg, 2013, p. 2).

This thesis will seek to answer the research question; "How is the European Union securitizing climate change in the Middle East?". This question is designed to shed light on the European Union's approach to addressing environmental impacts and concerns in this region. Considering the policies and engagement of the EU, this thesis seeks to find out whether climate change is regarded as one of the threats to the internal security of the European Union, including climatic issues, and how such exterior threats are embedded into the internal policy objectives of the Union. Within this introduction, the EU policy on climate change is now presented starting from its security, partnership, migration, and decarbonization issues with further consideration of the Syria case.

Given the geopolitical importance of the Middle East, it is necessary to take into account the varied relationship between climate change and instability in the region.

The arid feature of the Middle East's climate has been merged with the changing political balances and economic bindings on limited natural resources. This situation poses serious security problems in the Middle East and North Africa, Europe, and the rest of the world. Climate change may be a catalyzer as it plays a role as a threat multiplier and intensifies existing conflicts that harm regional instability.

Europe as a region and the European Union (EU) and European public and non-governmental organizations have been producing reports and developing policies to adapt to climate change and to deal with its ramifications. The EU in this context may be defined as a network of national, local, and Europe-wide associations. These organizations maintain connections with their members at both the national and EU level. Notably, their influence extends beyond domestic concerns, as they can also participate in intergovernmental processes related to justice and home affairs, as well as external policies including social and economic issues (Smismans, 2003). Given the cross-border relevance of concerns and the roots of the EU's engagement in the Middle East in the context of climate change, the existing literature consistently discusses how recent transformations in the global economic landscape have fundamentally altered natural resource markets and trade dynamics. The surge of economic growth in developing countries like Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) has created new challenges for the EU in securing access to limited natural resources. This has also led to an increase in protectionist measures (Garrett & Piccinni, 2012).

According to the Council on Foreign Relations report, the Middle East certainly faces a multitude of challenges (Daoudy, 2023a, p. 1-2). Decades of conflict and instability have coincided with a worsening climate crisis. This has resulted in a massive displacement of people, with over sixteen million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and more than 70 million people require humanitarian support in the region. Additionally, the presence of armed groups and pre-existing conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Sudan, and elsewhere, which are used as weapons, further destabilize the region. In this context, water, already a scarce resource, has been weaponized by various actors throughout these conflicts, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis (Daoudy, 2023b, p. 2). Considering this information, according to the European Commission's declaration, it is frequently mentioned that European organizations' activities are necessary for maintaining respect for human rights and the supremacy of

law. It is also emphasized that these activities provide legitimacy to societal decisions (Leigh Doyle, 2015, p. 403).

Another report by the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) published in 2015 also argues that the structure of the EU has been established within the framework of the mission of protecting their citizens and their interests in each part of the world as well ((EUISS), 2015). In this regard, the European approach holds undeniable influence regarding the Middle East, shaping the EU's stance on climate change and its focus on civil society solutions. On the other hand, the EU's emphasis on climate change as a critical security concern is reflected in its policies, such as the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). This initiative prioritizes fostering sustainable development and environmental collaboration with partner countries in the Middle East, highlighting the link between environmental well-being and regional security. This influence is evident in the EU's approach to climate change as a pressing security threat and their projects across the Middle East, where they prioritize collaboration with local actors to address the challenges of climate change. These initiatives are justified by the EU and its branches such as the European Commission, European External Action Service (EEAS), and European Investment Bank (EIB) because of their capacity to bridge the gap between state policies and grassroots initiatives to ameliorate environmental problems, and because of concerns that the negative impacts of environmental problems on human life will also affect European citizens through migration or lack of resources (Panebianco, 2010, p. 194; Madariaga, 2008, p. 10).

In sum, the EU's general approach to events has generally focused on various fields such as human rights and its violations, peacebuilding, and international cooperation. However, in this study, I will be focusing on environmental discussions in the context of European securitization. Case studies like Syria can illuminate the devastating nexus between climate change and conflict, revealing how these intertwined forces inflict harm on civilians through food insecurity, water scarcity, and mass displacement. To further clarify and relate this issue, it can be said that the impacts of climate change can be measured and assessed according to their relationship with local political, social, and economic situations in the region (Holland & Vagg, 2013, p. 2). In European perspective, the effects of mass migration, for instance, are felt in various political, economic, and social fields. With migration, Europe is facing problems in

many interrelated areas such as resource allocation, housing, health, and education. Added to this are infrastructure problems. Another challenge is cultural integration, which exacerbates the environmental refugee problem. It feeds the heterogeneity of societies and is felt in all aspects of daily life. Moreover, economic and social difficulties encourage anti-immigration policies, disrupting Europe's unity and shaping its domestic and foreign policies (Waldinger, 2015; Efron, 2022). In this and subsequent chapters, discussions on resource competition, trade in energy or other goods, or decarbonization are addressed in this context (Taibi et al., 2020, p. 15).

1.1. European Union's Perspective on Climate Change in the Middle East

The European Union's approach towards climate change in the Middle East is composed of various concerns and perceptions of urgency due to the changing characteristics of the region. This perspective, accordingly, can be acknowledged as multifaceted and complicated. The EU with its all branches recognizes the importance of changing climate conditions due to their impact on existing water, social, or nutrition problems. Besides these, it cannot be overlooked that Europe's concerns are mostly composed of the migration flow from that part of the world (Meyer et al., 2021, p. 19). In this context, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that 3.6 billion people in the Middle East are remarkably vulnerable to climate change damage. Indeed, it is currently feared that climate-related disasters and consequent migration waves will become more frequent and serious (Roberts et al., 2022a, p. 11-12). According to the IPCC's report (2022b, p. 199-243), climate change has threatened many factors in the region, for instance, threats to resources and lands play an important role in the relationship between government policies, negotiations with other states, resource management, and instability. Furthermore, the security issue gets endangered in terms of various subfields as violence and vulnerability accelerate due to increasing economic, social, and political conflicts. According to IPCC, a 2°C increase in temperature by 2050 is inevitable even if emissions are reduced. This drastic scenario could trigger various crucial security problems in almost every part of the world. Vulnerable countries, such as those in the Middle East, might be the most affected by the irreversible effects of climate change (2022c, p. 12). That is why the European Commission and the EU branches support greater investment in environmental activities to prevent security challenges. This perspective is recognized

as the implementation of a preventive security policy (EC, Climate Change and International Security, 2008a, p. 2-3).

In addition to that, while looking at the discourses of the prominent institutions of the EU, climate challenges as a threat multiplier tend to deteriorate existing conflicts and destabilizations (EC, Climate Change and International Security, 2008b, p. 3). This situation creates a further burden for regions and states that are already inadequate in many areas. According to the European Commission, the adverse effects of climate change are not only related to human nature but also to various risks in the field of politics and security, which could directly threaten Europe's interests. Therefore, the EU must comprehensively respond to the risks of climate change in the Middle East for the sake of Europe's security. In this respect, all initiatives in the Middle East aim at sustaining European interests through involvement in several policy processes (Armstrong & Gilson, 2011; EC, Climate Change and International Security, 2008c).

The literature accordingly advises that the EU's capacity can be strengthened and intensified with the following institutions: the Institute for Security Studies, the EU Satellite Centre (EUSC), the EU Joint Situation Centre (SITCEN), the EU Network of Energy Correspondents (NESCO), the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security and Joint Research Centers. The reason is that various effective early warning systems against climate change demand close attention to situations where fragile states, rising political extremism, resource competition, environmental and economic strain, vulnerable infrastructure, contested borders, human rights violations, and potential mass migrations pose significant risks. Additionally, the EU leadership in mitigation plans regarding the disadvantageous of climate change in each part of the world has been sought since particularly the early 2000s. Thus, the regional strategic plans developed by the EU and the cooperation in the most vulnerable parts of the world have been acknowledged as necessary actions to effectively address the security risks posed by climate change. Hence, the literature emphasizes that the EU and its member states must bolster their planning and response capabilities by enhancing civil protection measures and leveraging all available crisis management and disaster response instruments, both civilian and military (EC, Climate Change and International Security, 2008d, p.14).

Given the current events in the Middle Eastern regimes, the regional governments must ignore climate change as they can barely touch upon transformative change. At this point, the EU's narrative is that it has always taken necessary steps towards climate change in the Middle East to compensate for the gap between the relevant policies and the environmental challenges (Young, 2020). Strengthening regional and national economic conditions has also always been on the agenda. Even if the organizations in the region are not directly under the framework of the EU, the EU relationship and influence can be seen in each of them through the cooperation in the projects carried out. For instance, the EU handled the discussion on the return of Syrian refugees to their homeland within the scope of the United Nations High Commissioner Refugees (UNHCR) (Young, 2020).

Given the existing literature and the above-mentioned statements, the European approach cannot be analyzed through one dimension. This thesis identifies the following sub-themes: security, partnership, migration, trade, energy, and decarbonization. In the following sections, these themes will be explored, the EU's narrative, mechanisms, and policies on these themes will be laid out and the case of Syria will be tackled.

1.1.1. Security

This chapter will delve into the complex relationship between climate change and security, particularly from a European perspective. It will explore how climate change is a “threat multiplier” and how it exacerbates existing security challenges and creates new ones. The discussion will cover the impact of environmental challenges on international security, focusing on migration, resource scarcity, and the militarization of natural resources. The chapter will also analyze how these issues affect the security policies of the European Union and their impact on world governance and stability. With this examination, the chapter aims to build a broad understanding of how climate-induced security concerns shape geopolitical dynamics.

Given the comprehensive and general information about the relationship between climate change and its effects, the issue of security is critical from the perspective of Europe. Europe's concern about security concentrates on international security due to unchecked migration and planning for land usage (Holland & Vagg, 2013, p. 5).

According to an analysis of the European Parliament, the nexus between climate change and security should be further tackled within the scope of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) which is the central framework aiming at improving an effective European security and defense strategy, mitigating conflicts and consolidating the international security and defense. Data shows that Middle Eastern countries are unguarded with the negative effects of environmental challenges as they increase the possibility of social, economic or political crises due to food scarcity, regional instability, and lack of resources (European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2012, Article 23; Meyer et al., 2021a, p. 22). According to the report of the European Parliament published in 2021, these issues have been steadily emphasized within the scope of EU's concerns regarding migration and terrorism. Research indicates that half of the region has been exposed to highly threatening weather conditions for a long time (Meyer et al., 2021b, p. 2). Since the existence of livestock, accordingly, has been under threat for many years, the conditions in the rural areas are getting devastated. Besides these, inequalities in various fields in the MENA region, particularly the lack of water resources, have triggered social tensions and deteriorated the existing conflicts. The long drought resulting from climate change has been accepted as the most important reason for the Syrian civil war. During that time, people in the rural areas were forced to move into cities and it deteriorated the existing instabilities of the Assad regime. This situation partially allowed militant groups such as the Islamic State (IS) to apply violence so that they could control the water and other limited resources. At this point, the report argued that the weaponization of natural resources over water and infrastructure was adopted as a part of the insurgency (Meyer et al., 2021b, p. 12-13).

Besides these, as noted above, instability, and resource scarcity stemming from climate challenges can be strategically exploited by armed groups, organized criminal networks, and corrupt or authoritarian governments, encompassing crimes against the environment (EC, Progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, 2023, p.78). According to Marwa Daoudy (2023, p. 2), both state and non-state players tend to use the limited resources of the region, especially water, to weaponize the relationship between climate change and security. Security concerns have been accordingly accelerating due to the tension and violations at the regional and international levels.

International Institute for Sustainable Development, on the other hand, has compiled the risks that stem from climate change that interact with the tensions and potential conflicts; firstly, climate change has an important potential to increase the struggle over restricted water resources and it makes the cooperation and negotiation of peace agreements more complicated. This may deteriorate the national instability. Secondly, climate change directly impacts food insecurity and increases the hazard regarding preserving or reclaiming the occupied lands. Agricultural production in local areas decreases and food security gets further politicized. This situation is also affected by the growth of population as increasing demands lead to rising domestic pressure like in Syria. Thirdly, governments' capacity to provide social or economic services and create job opportunities can decrease and it fails economic growth and social stability. Additionally, climate change could lead to undermining forced migration and raise tensions towards the current refugee populations. The fifth risk is the militarization of natural resources. Control over the existing natural resources may lead to increasing tension and potentially make the issue of national security more complex. That is why, limited resources can be perceived as a triggering factor for militarization. Lastly, inactivity on climate change by Western countries can reinforce the perception of distrust and can jeopardize the European view of "good global citizens" (Brown & Crawford, 2009, p.2-3).

The EU's perspective on security issues arising from climate challenges is based on the rising awareness and promotion of effective actions. That is why, it supports that all initiatives must be formed within policies and political frameworks including environmental amelioration and development, humanitarian aid, and crisis and security policies. The EU's perception of climate security has been developed by the consideration of "threat multiplier" and many policy initiatives have been created so that they can combine climate-related issues with their foreign and security policies. It is believed that destabilization in any country, particularly in the most vulnerable ones, can deteriorate an existing problem or create a new one that will shape global security trends. Indeed, it is feared that global governance may be challenged by climate change because climate change increases the tension in the relationship between international peace and security. Many factors support the argument since climate change has the potential to trigger migratory movements, unsanitary conditions, social insurrection, and insecurity (EC, Progress in the Implementation of the Sustainable Development

Goals, 2023). Therefore, the EC's report on climate and international security mentions that if countries, institutions, and human communities act together against climate challenges, the destructive potential can be reversed and global governance be strengthened instead (EC, EU Contribution to the UN Secretary General's Report on Climate Change and International Security, 2008, p. 1; Youngs, 2014, p. 3).

1.1.2. Partnership

This section will cover how the EU is working to ameliorate the negative impacts of climate change and security in the Middle East. It will review the EU's partnerships and cooperative activities. This part will also discuss how the EU is cooperating with the United Nations and other international organizations to decrease the impacts of climate change, focusing on energy, food, and sustainable development. By reviewing these issues, the chapter aims to show how the EU is integrating the discussion of climate change in the Middle East.

The EU exists with its many branches, Member States, and different perspectives on the relationship between climate change and security in the Middle East. It has played an important role in evolving effective strategies towards climate challenges and tackling devastating climate impacts due to political, economic, and geographical relations with the region. That is why, the EU has taken a role in many technical projects in the MENA region concerning climate change and its effects (Lienard, 2022, p. 2). The EU accordingly approaches energy dependency with great concern. That is why, increasing energy requirements leads them to consider energy security. This concern influences factors such as climate change and security as the dynamic between them depends on geographical features (Darbouche, 2011, p. 193). For instance, the Barcelona Declaration, signed in November 1995, shows that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) wanted to sustain innovative security strategies including energy or food. According to the literature, the Barcelona Process is taken seriously because it gives priority to energy security. (Panebianco, 2010, p. 184).

Besides these, while the EU has traditionally viewed certain Middle Eastern nations, like Syria, as strategic partners within the Mediterranean region, various political, economic, and institutional impediments have hindered the development of a unified EU Mediterranean policy. Despite being presented as complementary aspects of the

Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) embody distinct approaches to the region, as evidenced by their core principles: "partnership" for the EMP and "neighborhood" for the ENP (Darbouche, 2011, p. 194-196).

On the other hand, the EU is not the only transnational actor in the battle against climate change. The UN certainly has a crucial role in determining strategies against climate change, and at the point of cooperation, the EU's attempt to support the UN has enforced the coordination between Member States, regional organizations, NGOs, and civil society. The EU emphasizes the importance of comprehensive dialogue regarding climate security as it has been related to political radicalization, conflicts over natural resources, or regional border disagreements. It can be said that the EU's interference in each field of climate challenges and climate security is based on "the system of multilateralism" (EC, EU Contribution to the UN Secretary General's Report on Climate Change and International Security, 2008, p. 5; Panebianco, 2010, p. 184).

The term "climate security" has been on the agenda of EU due to the linkage between climate change and security. It has a determinant impact on EU's foreign policy actions aiming to ameliorate the strategic, social, political, and economic effects of climate change (Youngs, 2014, p. 3). Given the perspective of the EU, according to the latest reports about the environmental challenges in the Middle East, the EU and its Member States made crucial investments worth €7 billion in the region, and 42% of these investments were related to ameliorating the destructive effects of climate change. Additionally, the EU, which represents the European perspective in the MENA region got involved in a lot of diplomatic relations to sustain and strengthen the interest in climate change and its effects. For instance, financial aid provided to reach "Green Hydrogen" is one of the most important investments toward renewable energy (Lienard, 2022, p. 2-5).

According to the Joint Communication between the European Parliament and the Council, the linkage between climate change and environmental difficulties has a direct impact on food security as it decreases the fertility of important crops such as rice or wheat in the Middle East. In addition to that, inconsistent food production leads to water scarcity. Furthermore, by 2050, projections suggest that over a billion

individuals may face inadequate access to water, soil degradation could escalate to 90%, and the need for food is expected to grow by 60% (European Parliament & European Council, 2023, p. 1). According to the 2022 IPCC report, concerns regarding security in various fields, particularly in food security, will accelerate due to the impacts of global warming, drought, and changing precipitation rates. In this context, the EC mentioned that the EU played a supportive role in the most vulnerable regions including MENA countries to establish international cooperation regarding the research and innovation studies for food security (Roberts et al., 2022, p. 214). According to the Commission's report, the EU has become a powerful actor in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) for this purpose. These attempts are accepted as the necessary steps to adapt to climate challenges, protect the existing resources, and improve effective approaches to applying landscape management or agroecology. Moreover, food prices and food insecurity have been regularly followed by the Commission to compare and coordinate with other international groups or organizations. This situation is analyzed by using the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) to compare the stock levels in the vulnerable countries. It oversees the demand for goods where global inventories are low, by sending precise market signals to boost production through sustainable methods. Additionally, it plays a crucial role in enhancing humanitarian support to nations facing food shortages and those impacted by conflicts in regions like MENA, Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa (EC, Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems, 2022, p. 4). On the other hand, not only the EU, but AECID - the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation is also interested in the vulnerable countries in the Middle East through the ACERCA Program. AECID aims at zero hunger, sanitized areas, improved health conditions, and comprehensive education in the disadvantaged areas in the Middle East by promoting agricultural innovation and economic development regarding climate change (EC, Progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, 2023, p. 91).

1.1.3. Migration

Migration is a crucial component of the EU's political narrative domestically in the member states as well as towards its neighbors. That is why, this section will address

the impact of migration on EU countries and how it is addressed from an EU perspective.

The migration issue is handled by diverse actors such as The Issue-Based Coalition on Migration (IBC/M) in the Arab countries, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the League of Arab States, the EU or the Regional United Nations Network on Migration in the Arab region. The worsening of environmental conditions due to climate-related events like droughts, sea-level rise, flash flooding, and the expansion of deserts typically exacerbates factors that drive people to migrate and extend the length of their displacement. Simultaneously, the spread of urban areas, the degradation of land, and the intensifying competition for limited resources tend to escalate conflicts and tensions, which may lead to further displacement and compulsory migration. In the Arab region, the situation mirrors these trends. Between 2010 and 2019, floods accounted for 58% of the individuals who were displaced due to natural disasters. Moreover, intense storms have led people to uproot states including Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen. In 2020, Arab nations bore the brunt of a global movement, taking in nearly 15% of the world's migrants and refugees while witnessing the internal displacement of millions due to conflict and natural disasters. Within their borders, 44% of displaced people remained, highlighting the region's complex role as both a host and a source of migration flows (Youngs, 2014a, p. 10).

Looking at the aftermath of the Arab Spring, experts argue that Europe may be indirectly impacted by climate migration even if it does not directly lead to displacement into the EU (Youngs, 2014b, p. 12). They believe large-scale movements within developing countries or between them could cause instability and conflicts, ultimately affecting Western interests. Even though the EU has launched various cooperation programs addressing this issue, funding dedicated to this area remains significantly lower compared to spending on border control measures. For instance, the Stockholm program (2010-2014), outlining EU's internal security strategy, mentions climate change's security implications for migration patterns (EC, Thematic Program Cooperation With Third Countries in the Areas of Migration and Asylum, 2006, p. 27-28). Similarly, an EC project funded for migration and asylum cooperation highlights the need for work on the link between climate and migration. However,

these pronouncements have not translated into a comprehensive approach to address climate-induced migration. Although EU leaders publicly recognize climate change as a potential driver of migration, their actions do not fully reflect this concern. European ministers do not favor restrictive immigration implementations, namely the “fortress Europe” approach. On the other hand, cooperation with other countries to regulate climate migration is preferable. That is why, in the aftermath of the Arap Spring, the migration policies of the EU have been acknowledged as ambivalent and the rules regarding migration into Europe have become increasingly restrictive. At its root, the EU’s main focus is based on disaster response, not disaster preparedness (Youngs, 2014d, p. 13).

Given this information, the above-mentioned agencies reached a common consensus that the negative impacts of climate challenges in Middle Eastern countries must be taken seriously to prevent the diverse impacts of displacement. New policies should be implemented within this scope. Policies focusing on adapting labor mobility to address climate change and creating fair transition strategies should be developed with the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders. This process should involve a social dialogue that brings together voices from employer groups, worker unions, and civil society entities. The need for coordinated action in addressing the issues of migration and displacement brought on by climate change is critical, especially considering the threats they pose to peace and security. It is equally important to establish and maintain migration pathways that are secure, well-managed, and consistent, especially under circumstances of severe climate change impacts, such as the ones seen in natural disasters (The Issue-Based Coalition on Migration, 2022, p. 2; Schutte et al., 2021, p. 4).

1.1.4 Trade, Energy, and Decarbonization

This analysis will explore the intricate linkages between trade, energy, and decarbonization in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). It will examine the continuing climate challenges exacerbating poverty and resource scarcity in the region while highlighting MENA's significant global influence due to its abundant natural resources and strategic location. This chapter will tackle the economic impacts of climate change, the EU's energy strategies, and various transboundary efforts to

promote sustainable development. By examining these factors, this analysis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the interplay of trade, energy, and decarbonization shapes the social, economic, and political environment of the MENA region.

MENA region has been continuously impacted by poverty or lack of basic humanitarian needs stemming from the negative impacts of climate change. However, this region has also a very significant place in the international agenda due to its rich natural resources and potential for agriculture despite the concerns about food insecurity. Furthermore, these rich resources and geographic advantages require an interdependent focus on energy, decarbonization, and trade. According to the literature, MENA is certainly very compatible with various kinds of investments, generating development energy policies, enhancing water-related activities like food production, and establishing relationships regarding trade, especially as emphasized in the post-Arab Spring period. In this context, the potential of the MENA region, particularly North Africa, has been supported by the EU through environmental and security cooperation with UN and other partners, and determining economic integration goals within the sphere of fair trade ((EUISS), The European Union in a changing global environment A more connected, contested and complex world, 2015a, p. 33).

Environmental challenges have important impacts not only on political or social fields but also the economic securitization. It means that climate change plays a role in shaping many security areas through its impact on trade or other economic operations ((EUISS), 2015b, p. 34). On the other hand, one of the key challenges related to climate change and trade is how to reconcile the potentially destabilizing impacts of climate change with the need for economic transition, including building planning capacity for different climate policies to maintain economic security (Laderach et al., 2022, p. 17). From a trade perspective, climate change projections focus on a supply-oriented approach, and this issue stems from concerns about the use of natural resources and energy supply within the framework of the scarcity problem. As a result, the environmental repercussions of climate change experienced at the local level ripple through global economic interconnectedness, affecting various regions and industries. Since the EU is contingent upon foreign resources for managing consumption,

assessment of transfrontier effects is crucial (Kulmer et al., 2020, p. 1). In this context, various cross-border models are being considered by the EU such as environmentally-extended multiregional input-output analysis (EE-MRIO). This approach is based on traditional input-output analysis, which is included in the regular flow of goods between industries within an economy. EE-MRIO has been used in analyzing environmental data, like greenhouse gas emissions or water use, into the analysis. The EU's various environmental approaches concerning trade and consumption are frequently examined for climatic phenomena occurring inside and outside of existing member states using the EEMRIO analysis. An assessment tool like EEMRIO allows policymakers in the Middle East to evaluate the environmental consequences of economic activities, like oil production and infrastructure projects. This analysis can then be used to pinpoint areas in need of improvement and craft plans to encourage sustainable practices throughout the region (Bruckner et al., 2023, p. 588; Blair & Miller, 2009, p. 446-447).

Besides these, while tackling the challenges and risks toward the utilization of energy and water, it is more influential to reflect on social, political, technological, and environmental conditions that enable countries to reach out to water and energy. For instance, Sewers argues in one of the reports published by the Middle East Research and Information Project that government policies, economic capacity, and features of infrastructure might be included in the variables of the energy usage. Hence, these factors cannot be reduced to physical inadequacy. The wars, civil conflicts, and occupations in Syria, which suffer the most from water and energy shortages, show that the issue cannot be reduced to physical causes alone. All this leaves already weak energy and water systems vulnerable to further degradation and destruction (Sewers, 2014, p. 2).

European economic security, on the other hand, has been significantly impacted by climate change because the geoeconomic aspect of climate challenges has a decisive role in EU policies. The scarcity of resources has brought various discussions regarding food security, reachability to renewable energy materials, and free trade policies (Youngs, 2014a, p. 16). In this context, according to the Carnegie Endowment's report regarding the European Union's security approach toward the Middle East, reducing carbon emissions is the most crucial topic on the agenda,

particularly since the outbreak of the Arab Spring. The European Commission has also introduced several energy policy directives focusing on a 40% target for reducing carbon emissions in the context of climate change (Youngs, 2014b, p. 4). Since the European Commission's approach is compatible with free market policies, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been encouraged by the EU to establish a list of "green goods" within the scope of liberalized exchange. Additionally, many argue that free renewables trade is the most geo-strategically important element of the EU's climate security agenda. They argue that the WTO should take precautions against food export bans imposed by some governments due to droughts in many parts of the world in 2009 and 2010. They also discuss that free trade routes are significantly functional for safe raw material supply. Ultimately, the main goal is to keep the integrity of supply chains intact in regions affected by climate instability (Youngs, 2014c, p. 17).

An effective and coherent action of EU is required to maintain its energy security agenda. Increasing energy prices, the rising importance of and demand for fossil fuel reserves, the competition over them in mostly Middle Eastern countries, and the approach to the politicization of energy trade can be acknowledged as the motivating reasons for EU's policy. Additionally, the common thought of European experts is that the securitization of energy can be maintained by shared trade, transit, and environmental regulations within the scope of the ENP. In this context, energy cooperation has been on the agenda of the EU since the proclamation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and ENP (Darbouche, *Third Time Lucky? Euro-Mediterranean Energy Co-operation under the Union for the Mediterranean*, 2011a, p. 193-201). Since the early 2000s, the EU has been actively engaged in various forms of energy cooperation. Initiated by the Barcelona Declaration and prior Euro-Mediterranean energy conferences, the EC launched an action program to set into motion the goals of the envisioned Euro-Mediterranean energy partnership. The central mechanism for this initiative was the establishment of a regional energy forum, which involved European and Southern Mediterranean Countries (SMC) energy officials. This forum, known as the Euro-Mediterranean Energy Forum (EMEF), became a primary platform for energy collaboration in the Mediterranean, complemented by the Euro-Med energy ministerial conferences. The EMEF's primary role, as defined by the EU, has been to assist in overhauling the energy regulatory and legislative frameworks of its Mediterranean partners and their corresponding

industries. This was to foster policy uniformity and encourage investment, aiming for the eventual amalgamation of the region's energy markets. This goal was reflected in the periodic action plans regularly presented by EMEF since its inception in 1997. Over the next ten years, three action plans were implemented by the Euro-Med energy ministers, covering 1998-2002, 2003-2006, and 2008-2013 respectively. These plans were foundational, building on the standards and strategic goals set during the second EMEF meeting in Grenada in 2000. While there were slight variations in the focus of each action plan, their core objectives remained consistent: aligning energy policies between the EU and its Mediterranean partners, integrating energy markets in the region, enhancing competition within these markets, and promoting the use of renewable energy as part of sustainable development efforts. The current EMEP action plan focuses on harmonizing energy markets and legislation, supporting sustainable energy development, and initiating collaborative projects in crucial areas such as infrastructure expansion, investment funding, and research and development (Darbouche, 2011b, p.196-199).

On the other hand, given all these initiatives, the EU's Energy Roadmap 2050 asserts that decarbonization should provide a competitive advantage for the EU as a pioneering force in the global renewable energy market. This type of government-supported commercial diplomacy has become more notable in recent years as Europe has started to fall behind in green technology compared to China and other emerging powers (Youngs, 2014, p. 17). The top issue discussed in the literature in this context is that the supranational objective of the EU-backed Energy Union to integrate the energy and climate policies of member states may be missed. This is because the decarbonization priority is not matched by advancements in electricity storage and a continued aversion to natural gas. According to experts, this would greatly increase political instability and erode the consensus between the EU and MENA. The EU appears to be alone in this goal because other European member states are not sufficiently concerned about the effects of climate change. Moreover, the cost of decarbonization reduces the motivation for clean energy and a clean climate (Noreng, 2019, p. 224-225).

The current discussions focus on the decarbonization of various sectoral activities with the help of renewable energies such as electricity or green hydrogen. This issue has

been challenged due to the requirement of high cost for transformation and storage, and the mismatch between supply and demand in the abundant regions. MENA, in this context, takes its place among the hydrogen-supplier countries due to its rich renewable resources, and many memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and projects have been discussed and implemented between the European Union Members and MENA region (Abdelshafy et al., 2024, p. 1). Europe's recent environmental and energy policies could create friction with gas suppliers outside the EU in 2023. The proposed Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) targets certain goods from energy-intensive industries in North Africa and the Middle East, even though it does not directly apply to gas imports. However, the separate gas price cap mechanism has caused the most immediate stir among African nations with significant gas exports. Europe's push for cleaner energy sources might impact future investments in African gas projects. Although there are various initiatives between Africa and the EU as North Africa is among the most important hydrocarbon producer regions, Africa's concerns regarding the EU Green Deal to generate clean energy are far from quelled. To stay competitive, African producers and international investors will likely need to prioritize technologies that capture, store, or utilize carbon emissions. Reducing wasted gas through flaring and tackling methane emissions will also be crucial. On the other hand, the focus on large-scale green hydrogen exports to Europe, relying heavily on new renewable capacity in North Africa, prioritizes external needs over Africa's access to clean energy which remains inadequate (Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, 2023, p.22-23).

1.2. European Union's Focus on Syria

The countries in the Middle East, particularly Syria, have gone through a highly destructive period for approximately more than a decade whilst the increasing levels of internal displacement and refugee numbers have created a humanitarian crisis. In Syria, in addition to various kinds of insecurities and conflicts, disasters have also played a very important role in displacement. Storms, challenging winter conditions, drought, and other climate-induced reasons have forced people into displacement and have pushed them into the middle of unsanitary living conditions and conflicts. That is why, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the significant displacement rates challenge the effectiveness of crisis prevention and

response strategies. Issues such as the absence of unified action among humanitarian, development, and disaster risk reduction efforts, the constraints of short-term and insufficient funding, and the lack of comprehensive baseline data to accurately evaluate the extent of internal displacement, are critical issues that urgently require attention (Anzellini et al., 2020, p. 15). The MENA region can be characterized as vulnerable to environmental challenges since the issue of water scarcity has always been on its agenda. As proof, water scarcity in the region has further deteriorated due to various factors such as increasing population or agricultural activities. Therefore, the mobility of people in the Middle East become a reality. According to the 2022 IDMC report, the number of people who were internally displaced in the Middle East was 233,000 in 2021. Furthermore, the World Bank claimed in 2021 that predictably 19.3 million people may internally be displaced by 2050 due to the changing climate conditions and inadequate development (Regional Office For Middle East and North Africa, 2022). The displacement of 305,000 people due to climate challenges and of 12.7 million people due to the conflict and violence can be acknowledged as proof of the World Bank's prediction (Regional Office For Middle East and North Africa, 2023). The European Union and many agencies are actively involved in various initiatives focused on crisis response, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and emergency preparedness, as well as tackling global and inter-regional challenges. Current major initiatives in crisis response are taking place in countries such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, Syria, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, and Venezuela. A further focus on approaches to climate change is needed in Syria, where population and stability changes have been most pronounced in recent years (EC, Progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, 2023, p. 159).

Syria is among the most affected countries by climate change and regional conflicts. The Arab Spring has been seen as a triggering factor of the Syrian Civil War. However, much data proved that the extended period of drought and the deterioration of the economy have also played important roles in the outbreak of conflict in 2011. Approximately 6.5 million people have internally been displaced due to the impacts of the climate and conflict-induced reasons, while around 5.6 million people have become refugees abroad (Anzellini, Benet, Hajžmanová, & Leduc, 2020). Besides these, the existence of non-state actors such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Syria has been among the most attractive issues due to the weaponization of limited

natural resources. In Syria, both the state forces and nonstate groups have intentionally targeted water facilities and crucial infrastructure as part of their military tactics. Furthermore, the 2013 seizure of the Tabqa Dam on the Euphrates, Syria's largest dam, by ISIS marked a significant strategic gain for the group (Daoudy, 2023, p. 12). On the other hand, the European perspective has perceived the interference of non-state groups and the effects of climate change as a concerning phenomenon because of its deep impact on social, economic, and political balances in European countries. Rising concerns have emerged as studies reveal the role of climate factors in the Syrian conflict, which has led to a substantial influx of refugees into Europe. The Arab Spring and the Syrian crisis demonstrate that in nations experiencing significant political upheaval, climate change-induced migration becomes increasingly probable. The clear security risks linked to climate in some of the world's most impoverished and unstable regions, such as the Middle East, present significant challenges to the EU's security. These include the onset of conflicts necessitating humanitarian aid, and military intervention, and irregular migration, which could exacerbate tensions among EU Member States regarding the management and distribution of refugees (Meyer et al., 2021, p.39).

1.3. Conclusion

Human security is mainly based on the individual's 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear,' as the influential 1994 UN Development Report outlines. The United Nations General Assembly resolution 66/290 advocated for 'responses that are people-centric, holistic, tailored to the specific context, and focused on prevention, enhancing the protection and empowerment of all individuals.' The fundamental findings regarding the literature accordingly mention that the EU's global strategy aims to promote 'human security through a cohesive approach' (Daoudy, 2023, p. 2; Meyer et al., 2021, p. 7). Besides these, the EU acknowledges the complex relationship between climate change, security threats, and humanitarian disasters unfolding in the region. They urge policymakers to develop comprehensive approaches that handle these interrelated issues while they play an important role in determining European security or economic policies. The ENP might be shown as an example of these interventions as the aim of this initiative is to sustain environmental development and collaboration

and to address the root causes of instability in the Middle East (Panebianco, 2010, p. 183; Madariaga, 2008, p. 15).

The consensus on climate change is that it is a “threat multiplier” and an actor that aggravates the existing conflict in vulnerable parts of the world (Daoudy, 2023). Many reports and analyses show that the main aim of European organizations is to protect their people and their interests almost all over the world ((EUISS), 2015, p. 34). European Union and European civil society actors acknowledge the urgency of addressing climate change, given its potential to exacerbate existing challenges related to water scarcity, social inequities, nutritional deficiencies, and exhausting natural resources (Meyer et al., 2021, p. 16). Syria offers crucial examples of how climate change intertwines with conflict, emphasizing the increasing need for comprehensive solutions that deal with the environmental, social, and political aspects of this crisis (Anzellini et al., 2020, p. 15; Daoudy, 2023, p. 22).

On the other hand, there are also many gaps in the existing literature. It is emphasized that a consistent and integrated structure is required to take more effective precautions for the mitigation of climate change-induced risks. At this point, the weak existence of the local communities is highlighted to empower their effectiveness regarding climate challenges (EC, Climate Change and International Security, 2008, p. 15). To address the complicated relationship between climate change and security threats, stronger cooperation between the EU and other European organizations, regional governments, and international organizations is essential. According to many regional or international agencies, the situation in Syria further highlights how both state and non-state actors across the Middle East attack the infrastructure and take advantage of resource scarcity due to climate change. This exacerbates climate-related vulnerabilities and contributes to greater instability in the region. That is why, while governance issues, the management of cross-border resources, and various economic weaknesses pose significant risks in light of climate change, it is necessary to see that they also offer considerable opportunities for risk mitigation, adaptation, and ultimately, enhancing human security (Daoudy, 2023, p. 2; Meyer et al., 2021, p.12). Furthermore, efforts to lessen the destructive impacts of climate change should target the underlying reasons behind societal vulnerability, such as weaknesses in

governance, economic inequalities, and social strain (Schulz, 2010, p. 174; Carothers & Barndt, 2000p. 19-24).

The conclusion aims to provide a synthesis of the main findings and arguments presented throughout the thesis. It highlights the significance of addressing human security in the context of climate change, particularly through the perspective of the European Union's policies in the Middle East. The complicated interplay between climate change and regional instability is iterated, emphasizing the need for comprehensive and collaborative strategies to alleviate these challenges.



CHAPTER 2

This chapter addresses the theoretical sphere that guides this thesis, concentrating on how the EU securitizes climate change in the MENA region, particularly in Syria. It starts with the realist perspective that is based on state power and national interests, examining the EU's strategies to protect its economic and security interests from various types of scarcity, migration, and instability. Then, the chapter tackles the critical security perspective that broadens the point of view beyond state-centric views to take into account the socio-political and environmental factors that lead to insecurity. Through these supplementary perspectives, this chapter maintains that the EU's approach to climate security is not only about urgent threats but also demonstrates the strategic and ethical concerns in its foreign policy. This theoretical foundation gives context for the subsequent analysis of the EU's actions in Syria and emphasizes the broader implications for regional and global security.

2. THEORY

Securitization of environmental values is an emerging issue when looked at the other types of security discussions. The established discourses struggle for dominance and power, and securitization initiatives of other sectors are incorporated into more concrete institutions or organizations such as states, nations, or the UN system, which Tilly also characterizes as the product of sword and capital. According to the perception of the 1990s, it was not yet clear what kind of political structures environmental concerns would create (Tilly, 1990; Buzan et al., 1998, p. 71). From multiple threats like food insecurity, environmental damage, armed conflict, lack of financial resources, and shortened lifespans, to rapidly evolving economic landscapes, and the rise of new political movements, the global landscape is facing a multitude of challenges to the established security narratives of the past (Dalby, 1991, p. 261).

According to the analysis of Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, there are two different sides to the environmental agenda: the first is the scientific agenda and the second is the political agenda. The political agenda includes processes of public decision-making and public policies to find a solution to environmental concerns. Also, these processes have been shaped through governmental and intergovernmental means. In this context, the political agenda helps us understand to what extent the issue was securitized and politicized. While media coverage and public discussions address similar issues, the underlying motivations differ. Scientific concerns serve as the foundation for security measures, while political interests focus on different key areas: Addressing these challenges requires political leadership and navigating complex international dynamics. This includes working together with other countries (cooperation), creating frameworks for coordinated action, and figuring out how to share the burden and benefits fairly. We also need to consider how countries acting individually can be effective, and how to ensure everyone participates and plays by the rules (free riders and enforcement) (Buzan et al., 1998a, p. 72).

It is important to emphasize that the political agenda does not only focus on the more sensational and emotional aspects of environmental issues but has also become part of mainstream politics. Environmental issues are becoming a regular part of decision-making for governments, businesses, and organizations, even if they do not fully embrace them. This is more about political maneuvering than security threats. When environmental concerns are new to established systems, advocates often highlight their extreme importance to gain traction. Reports bridging environmental and political agendas, like those from the Club of Rome and the Brundtland Commission, often use warnings of future disasters to raise awareness. These warnings can mobilize public concern, but when adopted by governments and businesses, they often become just another political or security issue within a larger framework, rather than a top priority (Buzan et al., 1998b, p. 73-74).

Besides these, Jeffrey Sosland argues that security studies mostly focus on environmental changes since the focal point has shifted from potential nuclear wars to the possibility of global and local clashes. The definition of security has been enclosed by the discussions on the insufficiency of renewable resources and its drawbacks on people in the last few years. In this context, the traditional focus of security studies on

military developments and threats has been criticized as it is not a comprehensive perspective (Soslund, 2022, p. 105-106). At this point, it needs to be thought that the MENA is worth analyzing since the region has been host for conflicts, wars, or displacements for many years. When we look at recent history, it is commonly considered that concerns about regional security consisted of the spread of Soviet impact and communist ideas. It brought a military-focused approach and a sense of external threat along with itself. The regional security discourse in the Middle East, internal and international conflicts, alliance formation, and military allocations all represented this top-down, outward-oriented, and military-focused approach, which were all seen as "main issues reflecting degrees of security or insecurity in the region." (Bilgin, 2005, p. 3-5). According to Stephen Walt, the theory of balance of threat is highly crucial at this point as geographic connection or perception of aim has an important impact on determining the level of security. Walt argued that the international state of nature or international anarchy requires searching for balance to provide security. Additionally, he showed the ability of non-military factors to shape the attitudes of regional states in the Middle East. The influence of a non-military approach towards the threat perceptions was emphasized by Walt. His approach supported that threats do not only come from an external field, but they can also be internal, and they need to be assessed within the scope of a theory of balance of threat (Walt, 1987, p. 149).

Given the above-mentioned discussions, I will be using an eclectic framework combining elements from realist and critical security approaches within the scope of the relationship between climate change and security. In doing so, the stance of the EU will be analyzed based on these theoretical approaches.

2.1. Approaches to the Relationship between the EU, MENA, and Climate Change from the Realist Perspective

2.1.1. The European Union

“Political realism does not require, nor does it condone, indifference to political ideals and moral principles, but it requires indeed a sharp distinction between the desirable and the possible between what is desirable everywhere and at all times and what is

possible under the concrete circumstances of time and place.” (Morgenthau et al., 1948).

There is a general agreement among EU member states that the organization has a unique approach to global affairs. Unlike other powerful nations, it is argued that the EU avoids forceful tactics and strives to be a positive influence using its soft power. This emphasis on a morally righteous role in the EU's foreign policy has been well-received by many academics. They have accordingly used terms like "civilian power" and "normative power" to describe the EU's growing international presence (Hyde-Price, 2008a, p. 29). The importance of “normative power” has also been supported by Mark Leonard, who believes that EU with all its features can serve as a “transformative power”. On the other hand, Ian Manners contributes to this view by saying that EU can change the international system “not by what it does, but by what it is” (Leonard, 2005, p. 5; Manners, 2002, p. 235-258).

In terms of the theoretical framework used for the relationship between security and climate change, the traditional realist approach to the emergence of European foreign policy has a crucial impact on the structure of the European perspective in terms of the securitization of foreign policies (Hyde-Price, 2008, p.30). Considering the anarchic nature of world politics, actors in the international system invariably focus on their security and survival. Major countries accordingly prioritize control over foreign affairs and security, making international cooperation challenging in an environment without a central authority. However, at this point, realist thinkers acknowledge that states do not solely focus on balancing power. This is because domestic politics influence them to pursue specific values or ideologies, such as promoting a religion, advocating for oppressed groups, or advancing a particular political system (Mearsheimer, 2001, 2005). It can be argued that states can only use their potential power in all areas to adjust their external environment, not to dominate other actors (Wolfers, 1962).

Kenneth Waltz, on the other hand, approaches this issue in the sense that some major actors, mostly developed states, face various global or regional challenges, such as environmental degradation, resource scarcity, nuclear proliferation, or terrorism. According to him, without a central authority to support cooperation, addressing

common issues becomes a challenge. Two key obstacles exist: those who benefit without contributing ("free riders") and concerns about how collaboration impacts the relative power of participants (the issue of relative gains). As mentioned by Waltz, powerful nations are more likely to influence global or regional environments. This is because they have a stronger interest in maintaining a stable system and possess the resources to handle significant responsibilities (Waltz, 1979).

Given the approaches of realist theory, the EU addresses three important objectives in the cooperation milieu in MENA region regarding environmental challenges. In essence, the EU acts as a twofold mechanism for its member states. Firstly, it functions as a united front in the global economic sphere (trade, agriculture, regulations, etc.), which was the core purpose of the European Economic Community/European Community's (EEC/EC) external policy. Secondly, the EU serves as a collective force in shaping the region's overall environment. Indeed, this role gained prominence after the Cold War's bipolarity ended, and it is evident in various instances: the attempted intervention in the Balkans during the early 1990s, the expansion of the EU itself, the (limited impact) Barcelona Process, and the ENP, and the use of stipulations tied to aid and trade agreements (Hyde-Price, 2006). Looking at these two points, it is clear that while EU shapes the overall environment for its members, its influence does not solely come from its inherent values. Instead, the EU's ability to change things relies more on its economic strength, the threat of being shut out of its markets, and the potential future benefits of membership. These are all practical tools of power, not just idealistic ones. Third and finally, over time, the EU has become a central body embodying the shared moral values of its member states. These values include the global promotion of human rights or democratic systems, as well as the protection of the environment and the fight against resource scarcity in developing countries, particularly in the MENA region. From the realist perspective, the existing literature argues that by working together to achieve these common ethical goals, the EU can be seen as a force for good in the world (Hyde-Price, 2008a, p. 31-32).

In the realm of international relations, realists believe that effective foreign policy for the EU should prioritize practical considerations over idealistic goals. They argue that the EU should focus on its interests and navigate the balance of power between nations, rather than pursuing secondary moral objectives. Realists acknowledge the inherent

complexities and competing values within the international system. Their ethical framework emphasizes individual responsibility and prioritizes practical solutions over idealistic aspirations. They recognize that ethical behavior is often limited by the realities of international power dynamics. Winston Churchill observed that leaders with difficult choices have plagued humanity throughout history (Hyde-Price, 2008b, p. 44).

2.1.2. Realist Perspective on Climate Change in the MENA Region

In terms of subject matter, the Middle East implies a somewhat narrower field of research. At this point, the realists have been particularly concerned with security and climate change, aiming to understand the issue on a global level. According to Copenhagen School's perspective, focusing on environmental challenges and their impacts on the existing conflicts in the MENA region has contributed to security discussions (Homer-Dixon, 1991, p. 77).

Looking at the overall situation, overpopulation and environmental pressures trigger mass migrations, destabilizing both receiving countries and global security. Water scarcity and pollution from upstream sources ignite international disputes (Jacobson, 1988). In this context, developing nations face internal conflicts due to declining food production. Food insecurity drives exporting countries to weaponize food supplies (Wallensteen, 1986, p. 151-155). Additionally, widespread environmental degradation might cause societal decline across developed and developing nations alike, exacerbating social and ethnic tensions, threatening democratic governments, and fueling insurgencies. Scholars believe environmental damage will heighten societal stress, increasing the likelihood of diverse conflicts and hindering cooperation (Gurr, 1985).

On the other hand, governments in developing and under-developed countries like Middle Eastern countries tend to see amelioratory attempts towards global problems such as environmental initiatives or policies as a luxury and an additional dimension to normal economic policies (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 74). However, these regions face a confluence of environmental challenges - air, land, and water - that are likely to trigger a cascade of interconnected social issues in the long run. These issues manifest themselves as reduced food production, economic hardship, mass displacement of

people, and a breakdown of established social structures. Furthermore, these social disruptions potentially escalate into various forms of intense conflict, ranging from resource disputes between nations to ethnic clashes and internal rebellions. Such conflicts have significant ramifications for the security of developed countries (Homer-Dixon, 1991, p. 78).

Considering the foregoing, for many, the concept of 'realist international politics' has been seen as an accurate description of the Middle East. While the September 11 attacks prompted some discussions about new security approaches in the region, it is still common to hear arguments that critical security theories might be applicable in Western Europe, but traditional views remain dominant in areas like the Middle East (Bilgin, 2004, p.25; Booth, 1991, p. 318). Realist scholars, exemplified by Hans Morgenthau, argue that nations act rationally within a chaotic global arena, motivated primarily by self-preservation and the pursuit of influence. Despite its supranational organization, the European Union can be perceived as a unified force within this framework, leveraging its substantial economic and technological assets to wield considerable influence. However, its fragmented military capabilities limit its capacity for assertive action. According to realist reasoning, climate change poses a diverse array of security challenges for both the EU and the Middle East (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 384). According to John Mearsheimer, nations prioritize ensuring access to crucial resources (Mearsheimer, 2001a, p. 78). In this context, the increasing scarcity of water in the Middle East, caused by rising temperatures, may result in regional instability and significant migration towards Europe. This influx could unsettle European borders and economies. Such a scenario underscores the interconnected nature of security concerns. Additionally, the European Union, heavily reliant on oil and gas from the Middle East, faces vulnerability due to climate change (Mearsheimer, 2001b, p. 145). Additionally, Kenneth Waltz stresses the significance of a secure energy supply for a nation's prosperity. Disruptions from climate change might compel the EU to broaden its energy sources, potentially decreasing its dependence on the Middle East. Nonetheless, this adjustment could introduce new power dynamics with other resource-abundant regions (Waltz, 1979, p. 179-180).

In essence, climate change in the Middle East acts as a threat multiplier for increased tensions between states (Waha et al., 2015, p. 1632). Driven by a focus on self-

preservation, countries worry about dwindling resources and potential mass migration (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 170). While this situation could lead to regional collaboration, competition for scarce water and the strategic value of fossil fuels might worsen existing rivalries. The Middle East, therefore, becomes a volatile region where climate change-induced security concerns force states to navigate a complex landscape of cooperation and competition for survival (Waltz, 1979, p. 70).

2.2. Approaches to the Relationship Between the European Union, MENA, and Climate Change from the Critical Security Perspective

In addition to all that has been discussed, Thomas F. Homer-Dixon stated that the realist approach might be insufficient to build a linkage between climate change and security. The reason is that the states and their behaviors are the main concerns of the realist approach and they direct scholars' attention to separated domains instead of wider environmental systems (Homer-Dixon, 1991, p. 84).

In this context, Pınar Bilgin argues that Critical Security Studies must be taken into account to assess the Middle East in “the Next Stage” of the traditional realist comprehension of security and to challenge the state-centered orthodoxy of traditional international security, which focuses on the military perspective against “external threats” (Bilgin, 2005, p. 43; Newman, 2010, p. 77). Focusing on this perspective does not come to mean the embracement of an “optimistic” perspective about security studies. The relationship between climate change and security can be comprehensively tackled by focusing on a critical perspective on security as it discusses long-standing inequities and uneven capabilities. Furthermore, in critical security studies, climate factors are filtered through and constructed by political structures and the subject's interaction with socio-economic vulnerabilities, particularly water and food insecurity. (Daoudy, et al., 2022, p. 616).

Given the importance of critical security studies, the security issue can be tackled by a deeper perspective within the scope of the relationship between the EU, climate change, and the Middle East. In this regard, Bilgin analytically divides this approach into some subcategories. Firstly, “broadening security” requires suspecting the military-focused security and rebuilding the agenda to contain various non-military menaces (Bilgin, 2005a, p. 44). John Galtung discusses that there are positive and

negative types of peace within the scope of security politics. The negative type means the non-existence of an armed conflict, whereas the positive peace focuses on indirect “structural violence” such as the suppression of socio-economic conditions that constrain people in various fields of life. The main focus is not only the armed violence. The exploitation of human rights, environmental challenges, or water scarcity can be included in these kinds of constraints. It is important here that focusing on militarization can weaken the capacity of the region as it is in the Middle East to ensure welfare to people as it remains insufficient and underdeveloped towards threats coming from non-military actors (Bilgin, 2005b, p. 45; Galtung, 1969). “Deepening security” is the second subcategory, which relates to two main perspectives; “theory is always for someone and some purpose” and “the personal is political”. This category tries to clarify the relationship between theorist and theory and to consider and act for security. Security measures are analyzed and determined under the sphere of these perspectives in the Middle East. In addition to that, these approaches are broadened under the key sentence “what they would freely choose to do” to emphasize the importance of choice (Bilgin, 2005c, p. 47). In this context, we can look at Mary Kaldor's point of view before dealing with the third category. She criticizes the traditional realist approach and emphasizes the objective or non-aligned roles of strategic theories as they cannot be explained by military capabilities. Determination of movements or political strategies against climate change in the Middle East are built within this scope to clarify the relationship between theories and practices (Kaldor, 1990). This approach was carried out as “constitutive theory” in Bilgin's book. This approach was shaped under the representational characteristics of security studies (Bilgin, 2005d, p. 48).

Indeed, this perspective is associated with Ken Booth's emancipation approach. According to him, the meaning of “security” can be considered equal to the non-existence of threat, and people's freedom of choice without any constraints coming from military or non-military reasons can be called “emancipation”. Real security can theoretically be provided and ensured by emancipation, theoretically (Booth, 1991a, p. 319). According to the literature, where this intersects with the climate problems in MENA and EU's securitization is the need to move and revise the understanding to the next stage, as Booth and Bilgin point out in the problems in traditional realism. Traditionally, security concerns have been heavily focused on military matters.

However, this approach is increasingly seen as inadequate. Several factors contribute to this shift. First, there's a growing recognition that focusing solely on military strength can create a situation where both sides feel threatened (security dilemma). Second, nations realize that they depend on each other for security (security interdependence). Third, the arms race has resulted in more destructive weapons without making countries any safer. Finally, excessive military spending strains economies. Internal struggles and competition for resources resulting from the economic collapse brought about by climate change can create an unstable domestic environment. This can fuel existing conflicts, by leading to violence, displacement of people, and even conflict between nations. (Booth, 1991b, p. 318).

Critical security studies, on the other hand, examine the threat and the appropriate structured responses to the threat, exemplified by the EU presence in the Middle East and its sanctions on challengers. Emanuel Adler, for example, has shown that after the Cuban Missile Crisis, an 'epistemic community' emerged in the US, including inadequate debates, and created cooperative security policies between superpowers. From this point of view, it can be argued to what extent the existence of European communities had a security impact on the policies they formulated (Krause, 1991, p. 308; Adler, 1992).

2.3. Conclusion

While it is not generally argued in theory that the environment should be securitized, it is only observed that at least some actors are trying to do so because circumstances and global interaction require it (Buzan et al., 1998a, p. 71). As the international landscape grows increasingly intricate, with many issues transcending national borders, policymakers are more eager than ever to find ways to measure the success of their initiatives. This has led to a rise in the influence of expert groups, especially those operating internationally. These transnational communities have a unique ability to gather knowledge that individual governments often struggle to access (Buzan et al., 1998b, p. 73).

On the other hand, efforts to frame security threats on a global scale have become highly politicized, hindering successful implementation. Notably, successful securitization appears more prevalent at the local level, where environmental disasters

directly occur and push sustainability beyond its limits. However, it is important to recognize that the environment itself is not always the focus of securitization efforts. Environmental conflicts often dissemble as political instability or ethnic clashes (Buzan et al., 1998c, p. 91). Additionally, the existing literature finds the politicization and securitization of the environmental debate more in line with the “epistemic communities’ approach,” which argues that state actors are not followers of power but also “uncertainty reducers.” Epistemic communities, social movements, governmental departments, and international organizations are the products of environmental discussions. However, it is difficult to say whether these groups represent only the beginning or the peak of this development - especially given the variables in environmental threat discourses (Haas, 1992).

If we recap the issue within the framework of EU, MENA, and climate, a conventional realist view of the relationship between the EU and the Middle East depicts self-serving players maneuvering through a complex security environment. Both regions must confront challenges such as climate change and local conflicts, albeit with differing priorities. Despite the EU's economic sway and efforts in soft power, its realist constraints compel it to interact with Middle Eastern nations based on power dynamics, which could impede collaborative efforts on enduring issues like climate change. That is why, according to the literature, in the MENA, the EU has the most influential role by monopolizing the financial power and institutional structure in almost every field. This approach is defined as “soft imperialism” by the literature in addition to the bilateralism in realist character. The EU seeks to address shared challenges with neighboring countries through collaborative efforts. These efforts focus on curbing irregular migration while facilitating legal pathways, bolstering regional energy security, and protecting EU citizens from acts of terrorism. While looking at the long-term purposes of the EU, it certainly focuses on the security of its borders and the promotion of stability in related regions like MENA through bilateral relations with those countries. The EU’s initiatives prove that European Foreign Policy gives precedence to interests instead of values (Panebianco, 2010, p.186-194).

This theoretical debate provided us with conceptual tools such as securitization theory, the balance of threat, and critical security approaches to examine the relationship between the EU's normative features, its securitization of climate change, and the

Middle East. These concepts will be instrumental in analyzing how the EU navigates its foreign policy and security strategies in the complex context of the MENA region. In the following chapters, these frameworks will help us understand the EU's role in tackling multifaceted challenges such as climate change, famine, and instability. Subsequent chapters will examine particular case studies and policy implications, applying these theoretical discussions to explore the effectiveness and results of the EU's securitization methods in the Middle East.

According to the political theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, the realm of politics will forever be a battleground between morality and power. Here, ideals clash with reality, forcing compromises that are both fragile and necessary (Hyde-Price, 2008, p. 44).



CHAPTER 3

3. METHODOLOGY

In the thesis, to carry out the study, the following methodological tools have been deployed; qualitative methods such as secondary data collection, case study, literature analysis, and content analysis by using MAXQDA. These methods have been embraced to provide a better understanding of the EU's security perspective. The qualitative perspective of this thesis is based on secondary data, focusing on analysis, reports, and documents of the European Union and its bodies. Syria was selected as the most appropriate case country due to its perspective of securitization within the scope of climate change. This is because, climate change has triggered the conflicts in Syria such as mass migration and internal instabilities (Holland & Vagg, 2013, p. 2). I also used MAXQDA, which helped me deeply analyze themes and qualitative data to conduct the content analysis. The code analysis was adopted to clarify the perspective and patterns of the EU and its institutions. Main and crucial themes in the MENA region related to climate change such as weaponization of natural resources, water scarcity, or migration have been identified with the help of this method. To summarize the resources, the documents coded in the thesis are gathered in the table below regarding their functions.

The above-mentioned methods utilized in this thesis is particularly appropriate to address the research question, "How is the European Union securitizing climate change in the Middle East?", due to its broad and multifaceted content analysis and perspective. The employment of qualitative research, through analysis of the EU's approaches, reports, and strategies, provides a comprehensive insight into how climate change is enclosed as a security concern within the European discourse. By focusing on Syria, the methodology not only allows the examination of particular cases where climate challenges have increased regional instability but also emphasizes how the EU's securitization strategies are realized in the global area. The implementation of

thematic analysis further develops the research by pinpointing patterns in how environmental change is intertwined with various security issues, migration, and foreign policy strategies. This method enables a scrutinized analysis of the EU's approaches and their implications for the Middle East, rendering the chosen methodology suitable for revealing the complicated nexus between climate change and security.

Name of the Document	Year	EU Institution	Role of Institution	Relevance to the Syrian Crisis
Annual Report 2013 on the European Union's Development and external assistance policies and their implementation in 2012	2013	European Commission	The main concentration is the EU's security policies on foreign relations	Financial assistance and development programs in unstable regions.
Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Building a coalition of civil society and subnational authorities to deliver commitments of the Paris Agreement'	2016	European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)	Importance of civil society in addressing conflicts related to climate change	Civil society engagement in Syria's environmental deterioration
The Road from Paris: assessing the Implications of the Paris Agreement and Accompanying the proposal for a Council decision	2016	European Commission	Security perspective towards climate change in the context of the Paris Agreement	The influence of the Paris Agreement on the security patterns in Syria in terms of climate change

Addressing refugee and migrant movements: the role of EU external action	2018	European Parliament	EU's stance on migration and refugees	Humanitarian crisis in Syria
Recommendation to the Council on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly	2018	European Parliament	United Nations' perspective on EU's foreign policy	Focus on conflict areas such as Syria within the scope of the UN perspective
European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly	2018	European Parliament	Focus on international collaboration and global governance	Climate-related challenges in Syria and concerns about global governance
Post-Arab Spring: way forward for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region	2019	European Parliament	Discussions on human rights and democracy	Impacts of the Arab Spring, the focus country is Syria
Promoting regional stability and security in the broader Middle East region European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2022 on	2022	European Parliament	Relationship between stability and human rights in the MENA region	EU's impact on the promotion of peace in Syria in the context of migration and human rights

promoting regional stability and security in the broader Middle East region				
A new outlook on the climate and security nexus: Addressing the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defence	2023	European Commission	The effects of climate challenges on regional conflicts	Focus on the climate-induced sides of the Syrian Civil War
Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘Water politics – Between desertification and securitization – Time for a Blue Diplomacy’	2023	European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)	Securitization of water in vulnerable regions	Control of water resources in Syria

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of EU Reports on Climate Securitization in the Middle East

CHAPTER 4

This chapter will situate climate change and securitization in the context of the post-Arab Spring Middle East region. The intersection between the Arab Spring and climate change will be examined. The strategic significance and geopolitical features of the region will be tackled in addition to the EU's approach to the impacts of climate challenges. Furthermore, this chapter will examine the EU's inclusion in the region in the context of climate security, and assess various key reports of European branches. This chapter is designed to provide a broader understanding of the intricate relationship between the impacts of climate change, security, and various types of stability in the region.

Additionally, the realist point of view is utilized to analyze how environmental problems are related to existing security discussions in this chapter. How the EU addresses these issues, especially those related to migration and terrorism, is explored in the context of stabilization and control of resources. However, this chapter also seeks to explore a critical security perspective, recognizing the broader social and political implications of climate change. Through examining the effect on local communities and how environmental degradation can lead to social upheaval and conflict, the discussion moves beyond nationally focused views to analyze the intricate nature of climate-induced security challenges.

4. ARAB SPRING AND CLIMATE CHANGE

MENA region has always been strategically and politically important for the EU. The geopolitical importance and energy potential of the region have brought EU member states to attach importance to the region. The EU cannot ignore the importance of

stability in the Middle East in order to ensure its security. Migration, terrorism, transnational non-state actors, resource scarcity, and escalation of existing conflicts were considered to be important for the stability and security of the EU. Regarding economic interests, the region's significant market and trade volume have led EU member states to show interest in the region in terms of energy routes and ensuring the security of energy flows (Kocamaz, 2021, p. 101).

In late 2010, a surge of popular uprisings demanding change erupted across the Middle East and North Africa. People were fed up with autocratic leaders, economic struggles, and limited political voice. They called for democratic systems and fairer societies (Fernandez-Molina, 2017). The emergence of the Arab Spring, the accompanying protests, and anti-government demonstrations have deeply impacted the dynamics in the Middle East and North Africa. Values, norms, and ideological elements differentiate states from each other and serve to exacerbate the power competition between them in the Middle East. Developments after the Arab Spring seem to support this situation (Oğuzlu, 2021, p. 23). On the other hand, climate change is already present in this scenario as a threat multiplier that will affect instability, migration patterns, and the EU's approach to mitigation actions. In this context, EU's efforts to strengthen relations with key partners, support developing countries, and reduce security risks in the context of climate diplomacy are noteworthy. Given the reports written in the post-Arab Spring period, the relationship between climate change and migration has been the most frequently raised issue (European Commission, 2013, p. 6-7).

As climate change alters weather patterns, dwindling water supplies become a major concern for regions like the Middle East. This scarcity forces people to adapt, sometimes through migration. Climate's impact on water, including droughts, floods, and increased stress, threatens basic needs and security in these areas. Not only does water scarcity limit access to a vital resource, but it can also worsen social tensions and conflicts. This creates a complex web of environmental change, migration patterns, and security concerns. Additionally, water scarcity is also a major concern for food security and health issues and exacerbates existing conflicts (European Commission, 2023, p. 226). To build resilience and create sustainable solutions, we need to address water scarcity through a unified approach that considers

environmental, social, and economic factors working together (European Commission, 2013, p. 11).

In addition to these, the world, especially the EU countries has embarked on a significant effort to mitigate the emissions of greenhouse gases. Pollution from various sources impacts the entire planet. To address this challenge, it is needed to manage the environment as a shared resource, requiring cooperation between countries on a global scale. In this context, effective solutions to reduce pollution come from actions implemented at the local, national, and international levels (IPCC, 2014, p. 113). Human activities that contribute to climate change, especially greenhouse gas emissions, and pollutants like black carbon, are being targeted by efforts to reduce their overall impact. These efforts, known as mitigation, are part of a larger plan that also includes adapting to the effects of climate change. Mitigation helps lessen the severity of expected climate change and the risk of extreme weather events. Since most greenhouse gases stay in the atmosphere for a long time and spread globally, international cooperation on mitigation policies is crucial. Additionally, because countries are now more connected through trade and economic competition, the effects of mitigation policies on economic growth, innovation, and social goals are becoming a global concern (IPCC, 2014, p. 114).

From a deeper and different perspective, although there are various discussions on the political and social perspectives of the Arab Spring, its relationship with climate change has not been much on the agenda. I will be arguing and trying to shed light on how the European Union has positioned climate change as a security concern within the context of the Arab Spring. This chapter and the following chapters examine the extent to which the EU's policies and approaches frame climate issues as a threat. In each chapter, the White Papers of the European Union are consulted and code analyzed with MAXQDA.

While carrying out the analysis, two documents were coded; the European Commission's "Annual Report 2013 on the European Union's Development and external assistance policies and their implementation in 2012" and the European Parliament's resolution "Post-Arab Spring: way forward for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region".

4.1. Climate Change in the Middle East

Dwindling water resources, worsening weather conditions, and arid characteristics of the Middle East and North Africa cause the region to be one of the most vulnerable regions for climate change (Waha et al., 2015, p. 1623). Although Middle East contributes less to the drivers of climate change than global greenhouse gas emissions produced by industrialized countries do, the region is disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change. Water scarcity is already worsening in the region, where drought and desertification have led to reduced agricultural production and falling river levels. These environmental challenges threaten agricultural developments and increase the strain on vital resources (Youness, 2015).

The Middle East and North Africa region is warming at a much faster rate compared to Europe. Countries like Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Türkiye, and parts of the Arabian Peninsula are experiencing a significant rise in temperatures. This trend has resulted in extreme heat waves in recent years, with some areas in the Levant and the Persian Gulf exceeding 50°C (over 120°F) during summers in 2020 and 2021 (Daoudy, 2023a, p. 5). Furthermore, an IPCC report released in 2023 warns about severe threats to critical biodiversity zones in the Middle East as temperatures climb. Additionally, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has linked temperature and rainfall patterns changes to declining incomes, especially due to impacts on agriculture. Climate models predict a worsening situation with falling crop yields, rising sea levels, more frequent sandstorms, expanding deserts, shrinking snow cover, and increased displacement from coastal regions. Additionally, due to the high temperatures, public health is also deteriorating to the same degree. These models emphasize the urgency of significant efforts to reduce emissions and promote sustainable practices to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. The potential disruption to the region's social, political, and economic stability is immense (Daoudy, 2023b, p. 6; Waha et al., 2015, p. 12).

Given the impacts of climate change, according to the existing literature, the most conspicuous result of these challenges is migration. Many people have been forced to move due to climate-induced reasons. It leads to various social problems, for instance, overpopulation causes rising unemployment in urban areas or extensive workloads for

people left behind in rural zones. On the other hand, existing vulnerabilities and conflicts within and between the MENA region have been exacerbated by environmental degradation, the effects of which greatly hamper people's ability to meet their basic needs and allow terrorist actors or armed groups to increase their influence in many areas of the region (Waha et al., 2015, p. 12).

4.2. The European Union's Involvement in the MENA Region

The European Union has been involved in almost every field of the MENA region, particularly following the Arab Spring. According to the various reports published by the EU, from the very beginning of the Arab Spring, the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission have frequently visited Middle Eastern countries, making clear the importance they attach to political stability and democratic approaches, and the trend towards climate change and the search for solutions has also taken place on this basis. They have also tried to strengthen their existence and efficacy by supporting the region's civil society structure. The importance of this structure is emphasized as it prepares the ground for the efficient implementation of many policies, including environmental policies (European Union, EU's response to the "Arab Spring": The State-of-Play after Two Years, 2013, p. 2).

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the European Union, according to the aforementioned documents of the European Parliament and the European Commission, has used its external resources and undertaken numerous initiatives to promote positive change in transformed nations. While the term **Cooperation** is more prominent, other terms like **Financial Assistance** or the **EU's strategic interests in both climate-related and non-related fields** need to be considered to understand the EU's security policies and objectives, the extent to which climate-vulnerable countries are exposed to these practices, and the effectiveness of these practices. In this context, the EMP, forged in the 1995 Barcelona Declaration-gained new momentum in 2008 through the UfM, the ENP, launched in 2004, and the Union for the Mediterranean UfM, 2008 in the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, which existed before the Arab Spring and then expanded in scope with the addition of the environmental dimension, frame the policies and investments made in MENA countries. Moreover, numerous agreements or organizations have been developed within the scope of these

partnerships or cooperation initiatives such as the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), the so-called Barcelona Convention, the related Protocols, and the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (Costa, 2010, p. 149-150).

On the other hand, notwithstanding some approaches of the EU seem not directly related to climate change or environmental concerns, the two above-mentioned reports demonstrate that the way to integrate climate-related issues is through established cooperation, democratic discourses, or references to social and economic stability. The EU's approach to climate change in the Middle East is complicated and interconnected. The region's evolving environmental challenges, including water scarcity, social unrest, and food insecurity, all influence the EU's multifaceted strategy. For instance, potential migration flows stemming from these issues are a significant concern for Europe (Meyer et al., 2021, p. 19).

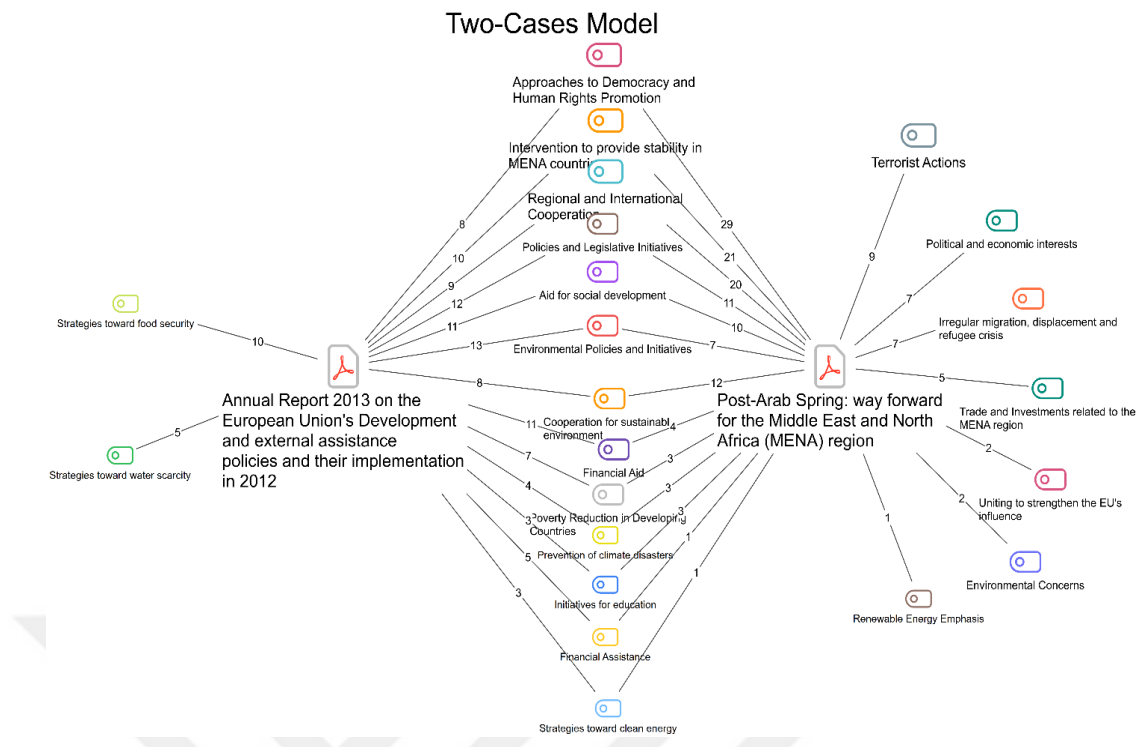


Figure 1: “Annual Report 2013 on the European Union's Development and external assistance policies and their implementation in 2012” and “Post-Arab Spring: way forward for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region” were analyzed in MAXQDA

The European Union has played an active role during crises, working to restore stability and promote the emphasis of democracy to prepare and sustain the appropriate environment for regional cooperation. The European Commission’s “Annual Report 2013 on the European Union's Development and external assistance policies and their implementation in 2012” argues that the European Union has reevaluated its partnerships with nations disregarding human rights. It has adopted a robust approach to address such situations, limiting oppressive governments significantly. This includes prioritizing support for local communities and NGOs. For instance, the deteriorating humanitarian situation and widespread human rights abuses in Syria prompted the EU to halt direct financial aid to the government and enact a robust sanctions regime. Consequently, it redirected resources to directly assist the Syrian people (European Commission, 2013, p. 6). As can be seen in the graph above, this trend, which the EU intends to continue, has been expressed more and more over the years and has been presented as a basis for all initiatives and policies made so far.

The EU’s role in the regional stage became more important in the aftermath of the Arab Spring as it can broaden the focus of agreements with differing perspectives and

support sustainability in the MENA region. For instance, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the ENP, prioritizes collaboration built on shared values, particularly strong democratic institutions, respect for human rights, and the rule of law. In this context, “deeper democracy” has been fostered and developed within neighboring countries (European Commission, 2013, p. 7). Following the review of this partnership in 2015, three more focal areas have been added to the Mediterranean Agenda; economic development for stabilization, security, migration, and mobility. In this context, climate change was center stage at the 2021 Southern Neighbourhood Ministerial Meeting (Barcelona, November 29th). Discussions focused on accelerating the region's green transition with a more sustainable economic model. This focus was enhanced in further discussions on the peace, security, and defense policies of this partnership, as the EU perceives climate change as a threat to security (Regional Policy-European Neighbourhood Policy, 2021).

Besides these, the EU has bolstered its support through programs like Support for Partnership Reform and Inclusive Growth (SPRING) and Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation (EaPIC), offering additional resources for Southern and Eastern neighbors. In response to the pro-democracy movements in the EU's Southern Neighbourhood countries during 2012, the EU implemented all initiatives by referring to the principle of “more for more” which is a bolstering approach for the partner countries in the MENA region to establish “deep democracy” (European Commission, 2013c, p. 7). This is based on the principle that countries in the region that complete reforms faster will receive more funding and the EU's system with these neighboring countries is based on the 3M function; mobility-money-market (Kocamaz, 2021, p. 116). In addition, as the Commission’s report mentioned, in cases such as Syria, which is not only vulnerable to climate change but also vulnerable to many negative factors such as regional conflicts, and economic challenges, cooperation can be seen between two different entities. For instance, regarding the EU’s aid for social development, the issue of education has been supported by a €10 million EU initiative, delivered by UNICEF under the SPRING program to offer formal education for the 5,500 targeted children in Syria and Jordan (European Commission, 2013c, p. 7-8). Although it is not directly related to climate change, it takes place at the center of the EU’s policies that support the cooperative environment to ameliorate the vulnerabilities of the region. This initiative is based on the overall goal of ensuring a ‘Decent Life for All’ by 2030,

to mitigate poverty in all its dimensions (economic, social, environmental), and to provide the world with a sustainable future (European Commission, 2013d, p. 9, Parliament, 2019).

Besides these, given the emphasis on the EU's financial assistance in the reports of the EC and EP from 2013 and 2019, it is remarkable that this stance has been generally developed under the terms of **cooperation** and **partnership**. That is why, the EU allocates serious financial support in order to play a role in the climate resistance initiatives in the Middle East. As noted in the 2013 report, the EU's endeavor to contribute to the development goals, the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) which were started by the United Nations in the early 2000s, has led to a focus on MENA, has also been a perspective for the EU's regional contribution. In this context, in 2012, the EU launched a €1 billion program targeting progress acceleration in North Africa. This initiative offers a two-step approach: funding for areas needing the most improvement and performance-based rewards for successful implementation (European Commission, 2013, p. 5). These initiatives and financial support, which are evaluated under the codes of environmental policies, financial aid, and assistance, are also stated as a call in the 2019 report as follows;

12. Calls for the EU to address the root causes of migration such as conflicts, environmental issues, extreme poverty and social exclusion and to re-orient political cooperation towards a more balanced and equal partnership with the MENA region, putting youth policies and investments towards local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) at its heart; (Parliament, 2019, p. 96).

This synchronization between the two reports is observed in the code analysis in 2013 with a higher number of policy and financial assistance discourses but with slightly less emphasis on initiatives that do not fully meet the necessity and conditions to act together.

From the cooperation perspective, the two EU documents discussed in this chapter reflect to a certain extent the changing approaches over time. The report published by the European Parliament, entitled, "Post-Arab Spring: way forward for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region" says that there are two main purposes of the EU's

integration policies towards the MENA region. Firstly, the initiatives were constituted to promote political and economic modernization, recognizing the unique characteristics of each region. Secondly, strengthening regional cooperation among MENA countries and with the European Union is also aimed at preventing possible disasters that could jeopardize human safety. Based on these objectives, as stated in the report, from the perspective of addressing the climate challenges, the European Parliament emphasizes that the mediation and crisis prevention roles attributed to the EU are necessary to ensure cooperation in the region and thus mutual objectives (European Parliament, 2019a, p. 92-93). This view is reinforced by the following article in the context of climate challenges, renewable energy, and energy security;

“36. Points to the challenges of climate change, desertification and water shortages that are deeply affecting the region; strongly encourages policymakers as well as all actors in both the EU and the MENA region to step up their cooperation with partner countries, including local authorities and CSOs, on energy security, promoting renewable and sustainable energy and energy efficiency targets, in order to contribute to the implementation of the Paris Agreement; highlights the opportunity for the region to move forward in its energy transition through increased exploitation of renewable energy sources that hold great economic potential for many of the MENA countries; points to the opportunities for sustainable growth and job creation this would bring about, as well as to the opportunities for regional cooperation on energy and climate change; stresses, in this context, the opportunity that recent discoveries of natural gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean can constitute for all the countries involved;” (European Parliament, 2019b, p. 99).

In conclusion, to achieve a long-lasting and adaptable future for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), stronger collaboration, synchronization in policies and funding initiatives, creative energy sources, and a firm dedication to safeguarding the environment are crucial. The European Union's engagement and backing are essential in this endeavor, guaranteeing the region can conquer the complex issues of climate change and establish a flourishing, sustainable future for all its citizens.

4.3. The European Union's Securitization of Climate Change

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, any subject that falls within the field of research can be seen as a potential threat or may be related to some form of security. Given the exacerbating social, economic, and political conditions in the MENA region, the fact that climate change is seen as a threat multiplier is both a natural consequence of the circumstances and an example of the realist theory and critical security perspective on which this study is based. As emphasized by traditional realists, the protection of necessary resources and sustainable stability must be prioritized for the security of the states (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 78-145). However, critical security studies underscore the socioeconomic weaknesses and inequalities in societies and emphasize the interrelation of environmental challenges, conflicts, or social disorders, without focusing on the military angle of securitization (Bilgin, 2005, p. 44). The European Union's attitude toward the securitization of climate change seems a merged interaction between traditional security concerns and broader security perspectives in order to maintain stability for all parties. In this chapter, the aforementioned reports of the European Commission and Parliament will be analyzed under three headings coded as water, food, and energy security. Then, issues of security concerns such as terrorism, migration, trade, and investment will be discussed.

4.3.1. Water Security

The threats which EU is concerned about in the Middle East consist of a wide range of security problems. While comparing the two documents mentioned above from 2013 and 2019, it is seen that some concerns can be classified as **Strategies toward water scarcity, food security, and clean energy**. Firstly, the water scarcity had devastated the Middle East, particularly Syria, before the Arab Spring. However, due to the challenges with access to water resources, clean water, or precipitation rate, water scarcity is the most prominent EU concern about the region. The reports therefore argue that the EU has provided swift and decisive support in every drought crisis, conflict, and fragility situation in the MENA region, particularly in Syria (European Commission, 2013a, p. 2). According to the Commission's report, taking joint action with other organizations like the United Nations shows to what extent the EU adopted supportive attitudes. For instance, as a pathway towards greener

conditions to fight climate challenges, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was held in June 2012 and a declaration entitled “The Future We Want” was adopted by a community including the EU by committing to provide securitized water, land, food, social conditions, and energy (European Commission, 2013b, p. 4). Looking at the report of the European Parliament (2019), desertification, water scarcity, and climate challenges were emphasized within the scope of the Paris Agreement (2015) aiming mitigation of climate challenges and more adaptation to climate change. Additionally, the report underscores a chance for the region to progress in its shift to cleaner water and energy by making effective use of renewable resources. These resources create significant economic advantages for many MENA countries, with the potential to create sustainable development and new job opportunities. The report also emphasizes the opportunity for regional collaboration on energy and climate change issues (European Parliament, 2019, p. 99).

4.3.2. Food Security

Given the concerns about water security, food security arises in the context of scarce rainfall, lack of clean water, and controversial land security. Under the code **Strategies toward food security**, the Commission’s report mentions that 870 million people in the MENA region have gone through challenging conditions to reach sufficient food since the outbreak of the Arab Spring. In this regard, the report highlights that sustainable access to food resources and nutrition has been the key developmental factor for the EU’s resilience policies. Given the code **Financial Assistance**, the development of the EU Thematic Programme on Food Security and the contribution of 5 million Euros for the reduction of food problems seems to support the EU’s approach to food security. Additionally, a €1 billion investment in food facilities has significantly improved the lives of over 59 million people in 49 countries. This initiative has also had a positive indirect impact on an estimated 93 million people (European Commission, 2013a, p. 3). On the other hand, potential resource limitations, and the requirement for food sustainability also put the European economy in a difficult situation. This leads the EU to invest more in these resources and to be more active in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), codified as **Environmental Policies and Initiatives**, where it is involved in collective efforts (Youngs, 2014, p. 15; European Commission, 2013b, p. 4). However, given the

fluctuation of the financial assistance both to protect Europe's commercial resources and to mitigate security concerns stemming from climate change and regional vulnerabilities, as a more recent report, the European Parliament underlined that efforts should be made to optimize the impact of the EU's external action through coherence and complementarity between the Union's external action financing instruments and to make the most efficient use of available resources in order to mitigate growing security concerns (European Parliament, 2019, p. 95).

4.3.3. Energy Security

While early European integration efforts dealt with energy resources to some extent, as evidenced by the founding treaties of the European Communities on Coal and Steel, and on Atomic Energy, concerns about securing a stable energy supply became a more prominent focus in EU policymaking at a later stage. In this context, the Middle East and North Africa region is an important supplier of energy, in terms of oil and natural gas, to the European Union. Preserving energy security in the MENA region enables the Union to maintain consistent and decent sustainability in the existence of these resources. Given the importance of energy security in the region, the EU seeks to reduce potential disruptions that could impact their energy sector and economic interests (Hoogeveen & Perlot, 2007, p. 499-506). Many official European Union documents argue that the essential reasons for instability and security threats originate beyond the EU's borders. Vulnerable regions facing underdevelopment or ongoing conflicts, primarily located in the Middle East and North Africa can be included in these external threats. Regarding the broader security approach, climate change in the Middle East region is worth analyzing in terms of energy security and sustainability of renewable resources (Barnhoorn & Remgling, 2021, p. 8).

While looking at the 2013 Annual Report of the European Commission, it is seen that there is an emphasis on the EU's attempts to support sustainable energy resolutions within the scope of its development agenda since the social, economic, and political difficulties caused by the Arab Spring have intensified. In this regard, the EU's goals intertwined with the principles of the UN "Sustainable Energy for All" (SE4ALL) in 2012. Indeed, the main goal is to maintain global access to modern energy, develop energy efficiency, and increase the usage of renewable energy at the international

level. This report focuses on fostering regional development and tackling economic challenges (European Commission, 2013, p. 4). It emphasizes EU's view of energy security as a cornerstone for achieving both sustainable development and poverty reduction in addition to the EU's strategic use of financial tools to secure its energy needs. In addition to that, as mentioned in the “Water Security” and “Food Security” chapters, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the UN’s SDGs also support greener energy and the EU has been integrated into these initiatives to protect its economic sustainability in the region as well as to provide social equality in one of the most vulnerable areas in the world (European Commission, 2013, p. 4). This view has been supported by the World Bank. It is argued that a move towards cleaner energy sources presents a significant job creation opportunity. Estimates suggest that Egypt could generate millions of new jobs within the next three decades by embracing renewable energy targets. This shift opens doors for countries like Tunisia, Jordan, and Morocco, traditionally reliant on fossil fuel imports, to tap into clean energy projects and create new economic opportunities. Additionally, the European Union's search for alternative energy sources could position the MENA region as a dependable supplier of solar, wind, and hydrogen power (Belhaj, 2022).

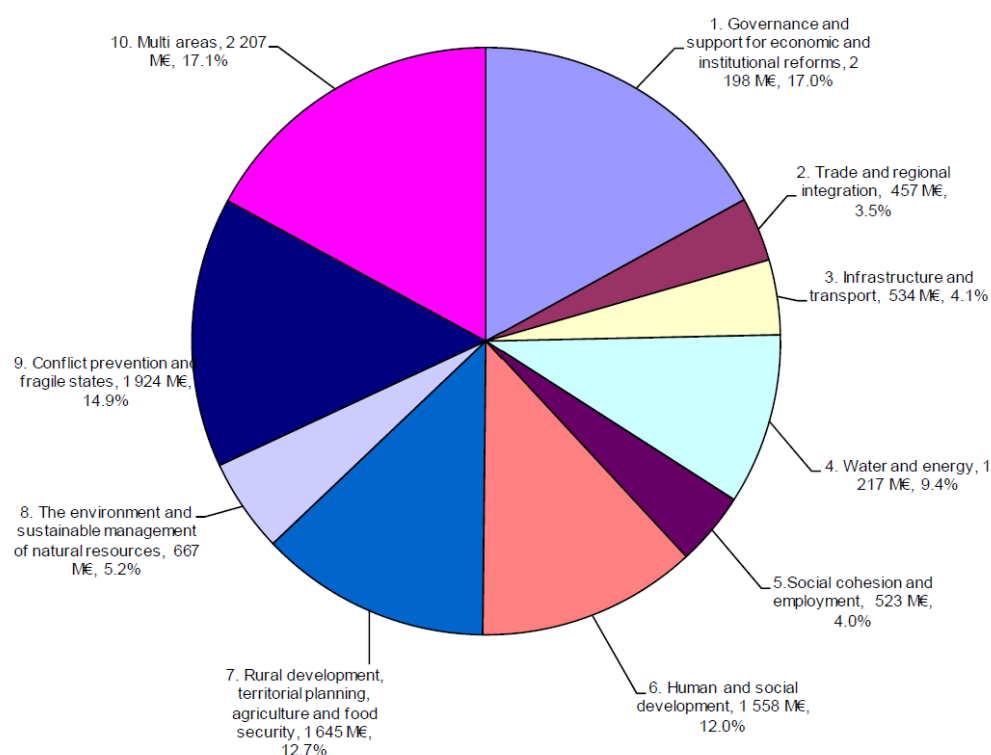
The Parliament’s report, entitled “Post-Arab Spring: way forward for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region”, underscores EU’s perspective on the region has been experiencing political and economic crises. This analysis emphasizes the need for EU to adjust its strategies in light of the evolving situation. The report tackles the importance of fostering political and economic transformations, supporting regional cooperation, and achieving stability. In fact, the report approaches the EU’s attitude toward the mitigation of climate challenges in a critical way. It was coded as “Prevention of climate disasters” with the following sentences; *“the need for stronger consideration of climate change imperatives, as well as the challenges arising from the lack of a cohesive approach by the Member States; is concerned that these factors are leading the EU’s action in relation to the region to rely excessively on an ideology of short-term stability, thereby disregarding other important aspects”* (European Parliament, 2019, p. 95). The difference between the two articles is that, taking into

account the difference in years, the need for more sustainable attempts to be made in the measures taken against climate change is addressed by EP in critical language.

4.3.4. Irregular Migration and Terrorism

According to the statement of Javier Solana, who is the former EU's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, some of the EU's neighbors are highly vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change, leading to high concern about migratory pressure at Europe's borders. In connection with this, the potential increase in socio-political and economic instability and conflicts is also emphasized at every opportunity as a security threat to Europe (Madariaga Solana, 2008). In other words, due to its location on EU's southern periphery and potential susceptibility to security issues, the MENA region is a prominent point of climate security discourses

Table 2: European Consensus: Areas relating to EU development cooperation



Commitments 2012 in € million

ODA resources managed by European Commission

Figure 2: 2013, Annual Report 2013 on the European Union's Development and external assistance policies and their implementation in 2012, European Commission

(Rothe, 2016, p. 150). As a critical result of the Arab Spring, mass mobility has been seen as a significant threat to the EU's stability in each field. That is why, the increase in migration, without necessarily linking to climate change, emphasized the European Union's sensitivity even more clearly. At this point, the analyzed documents show that the term **Irregular Migration** indicates that this issue is integrated into the EU's security agenda but embedded in the framework of stability, conflict, terrorism, or interests, as supported by other codes (European Parliament, 2019; European Commission, 2013).

According to the World Bank's analysis, it is emphasized that the MENA countries are among those most affected by climate change and the least well-equipped for it. In this region, 60% of the population lives in areas experiencing high levels of water scarcity, and 75% of agriculture relies on rainfall, which is estimated to decrease in the coming years, worsening food security. In North Africa, rising sea levels, decreasing freshwater resources, declining crop yields, and increasing desertification could result in 20 million people becoming internal climate migrants (Belhaj, 2022). In addition to the climate challenges, when large segments of society, particularly young people, are shut out from opportunities and feel powerless, it can breed desperation. This can lead them to seek risky escapes like irregular migration or make them susceptible to extremist ideologies. The economic health of these regions also directly impacts their security. Furthermore, widespread corruption, nepotism, and a lack of accountability weaken the system (European Parliament, 2019a, p. 93). The Parliament's report also says that millions of refugees, mostly women and children, are living in poverty in host countries. This unfortunately creates conditions that worsen domestic violence, child marriages, and child exploitation within these communities (EP, 2019b, p. 96).

While the report from 2013 does not utilize the terms **migration or displacement** to refer to the mass movement from the MENA region, the other report of the Parliament mentions these terms as a security threat against the European social and economic structures. On the other hand, this issue is intertwined with terrorism, and the European Parliament's codified document (2019) gives more attention to this issue. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, each social or economic condition has worsened such as the oil prices, conflicts, and terrorism (EP, 2019c, p. 92). The goal of terrorism is to suppress a political course of action through "the use or threat of use of violence".

Unlike other violent acts, terrorism aims to spread fear beyond the immediate victims, impacting the larger population. In this context, environmental terrorism is more prominent in the post-Arab Spring as symbolic violence in the areas vulnerable to climate challenges. For instance, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have displayed their capacity by targeting water sources as a means to manipulate the social, political, and economic powers. In regions already facing severe resource limitations, particularly water scarcity, conflict actors are exploiting these vulnerabilities. By disrupting water access or manipulating its quality, they gain a tactical edge (Spadaro, 2020). As mentioned in the Parliament's report, it is highly crucial to disrupt the financial support to terrorism through any including states and financial entities and to cease sharing of energy resources or raw materials that could strengthen terrorist groups (EP, 2019, p. 99).

In sum, the European Parliament highlights the expectation to provide security on migration issues with the following point;

“Calls for the EU to address the root causes of migration such as conflicts, environmental issues, extreme poverty and social exclusion and to re-orient political cooperation towards a more balanced and equal partnership with the MENA region, putting youth policies and investments towards local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) at its heart (European Parliament, 2019, p. 96)

4.4. Conclusion

In other reports written by the EU or its branches, many different areas the EU considers security factors are mentioned. These include transport, agriculture, crisis management and humanitarian aid, telecommunications, environment, and climate change (European Commission, 2011, p. 102). As the 2019 report shows, the EU is taking a more forward-looking, comprehensive approach to the MENA region, where long-term challenges are discussed. This includes climate change, water issues, renewable energy sources, and migration. However, although climate-related challenges have been acknowledged as security issues and threat multipliers that deteriorate the existing regional conflicts, it does not appear that this issue is fully integrated (EC, Climate Change and International Security,

2008, p. 3). This view combines with the argument of the report “Post-Arab Spring: way forward for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (2019)” as it criticizes the incomplete collective actions or unmet expectations of sustainability goals (EP, 2019, p. 95).

On the other hand, in this chapter, these coded reports touch upon well-known issues such as food, water, energy, migration, and terrorism because they are the triggering factors to exacerbate existing problems. The points emphasized in the two reports are different depending on the demands and conditions of the time. The codes show that the 2013 report focuses on the immediate impacts of the Arab Spring due to the closeness of this event, whereas the other report tackles the requirement of democratic reforms to maintain a sustainable environment and reduce security risks. The narrative towards the goals and initiatives of the EU for cooperation and partnership takes more place in the 2013 report (European Parliament, 2019; European Commission, 2013).

In sum, this chapter showed that the EU’s approach to risks and threats from environmental challenges represents a situation that has not yet been balanced in the EU’s human rights identity and the management of security risks.

CHAPTER 5

This chapter will evaluate the perspective of the EU towards the Middle East and North Africa and how that perspective interacts with the EU's standpoint regarding climate change at the moment of the signing of the Paris Agreement. This helps us answer our research question "How is the European Union Securitizing Climate Change in the Middle East?" because The Paris Agreement represents an important moment in the international climate debate, where the EU's engagement to address climate change was strengthened on a worldwide stage. In this context, the emphasis on international cooperation and its impact on the region can enable us to consider the critical aspects to comprehend securitization. Furthermore, the analysis of the post-Paris Agreement policies of the EU helps us to tackle the integration of climate securitization into the EU's external policy, particularly in vulnerable areas like the Middle East.

In this chapter, the realist theory also frames the EU's involvement in the Paris Agreement and its impact on the Middle East. In this context, the main argument is how the EU utilizes the agreement as a means to secure its interests in the MENA region, particularly in terms of energy security and management of mass movement flow. In general, the EU's foreign policy reflects a realist approach while emphasizing the strategic importance of the Middle East. On the other hand, Critical Security Theory is employed when discussing the broader effects of the Paris Agreement on regional stability and security. The analysis emphasized the need for a more comprehensive approach that considers the socio-economic dimensions of security.

5. PARIS AGREEMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND THE MIDDLE EAST

The unprecedented shift in Earth's climate poses a critical challenge, with cascading effects on environments, livelihoods, and social structures. In the last three decades, it has been increasingly discussed that events that seriously affect human life such as the increase in greenhouse gas emissions, problems in food production and security, sea level rise, or flood disasters are the products of climate change. In this context, the report of the European Economic and Social Committee (2016) frames the perspective on climate change in line with the goal of sustainable development. That is why, the following point regarding this goal has been underscored;

“The risk that sustainable development is seen as a threat and not as an opportunity for the future can be headed off by spreading a simple message: while climate action means change, every member of society has the opportunity, either alone or in cooperation with others, to actively shape that change — and in such a way that not only benefits the climate, but also improves living conditions on the ground.” (EESC, 2016, p. 23).

In this regard, the Paris Agreement has been acknowledged as a decisive step in mitigating the devastating impacts of climate change. The reason is that the main and long-term goal of the treaty is to keep the average temperature below 2°C above the pre-industrial level (Khabbazan & von Hirschhausen, 2021, p. 1). This aim and the rising impacts of climate change have helped bring together many countries to identify and sustain measures most effectively.

The Paris Agreement is the first legally binding international accord about global climate challenges and their impacts. 196 Members embraced this accord at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) on 12 December 2015 and it was ratified in November 2016. According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the underlying target of this attempt is “to restrict the increase in the temperature to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels” and “keep the temperature

increase below 2 °C". It is indicated in the COP21 that the starting point of this goal is the concerns about more challenges, including more desertification or rainfall. That is why, the Paris Agreement is an important milestone adopted by a large number of parties against climate change (UNFCCC, 2023).

Given the proactive climate discourses and initiatives of the European Union, its relationship with the Paris Agreement must be taken into consideration. The Paris Agreement has been signed and ratified by all EU members in line with the same goal of preserving the overall increase in the temperature and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions by 43% until 2030. The European Union has committed to a significant transformation, aiming to be the world's first entity with a climate-neutral economy and society by 2050 (Council of the European Union (Council of Europe, 2024a).

In this context, the European Union presented its strategy for long-term emissions reduction and its refined climate goals (known as its nationally determined contribution, or NDC) by the end of 2020. This strategy committed the EU to slashing emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. The EU, along with its member states, further strengthened these climate plans in 2023 (Council of Europe, 2024b).

On the other hand, at the intersection of the Paris Agreement with the Middle East and North Africa lies the vulnerability of the region to climate challenges, while also having a multifaced role as a large-scale producer of fossil fuels (Khabbazan & von Hirschhausen, 2021, p. 3). The perception of the threat multiplier toward deteriorating climate conditions and existing conflicts has pushed many regional and international actors to be involved in crucial processes as seen in the Paris Agreement. In this regard, the EU's involvement with the MENA region and the Paris Agreement is related to the mitigation of climate-induced security issues, as well as other kinds of securities like socio-economic relations or resource management (Ahmad, Adeleye, & Tilovska-Kechedji, 2023, p. 292-293). In this respect, this chapter investigates how the EU reflects the goals of the Paris Agreement in its climate action plans, specifically regarding the Middle East. By analyzing the EU's strategies and actions within this context, I aim to understand the influence of security concerns on its approach to climate change in a politically unstable region.

5.1. Key Points of the Paris Agreement

While researching the correlation between climate change and security, the agreements made at the international level, their binding nature, and the limits they set are of great importance considering that climate change is a threat multiplier. That is why, the core goals and mechanisms of the Paris Agreement will be discussed in line with the securitization of climate change in the Middle East and North Africa in this part of the thesis. In this context, “Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘Building a coalition of civil society and subnational authorities to deliver commitments of the Paris Agreement (2016)’” and “The Road from Paris: assessing the Implications of the Paris Agreement and Accompanying the proposal for a Council decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the Paris agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2016)” published by European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Commission have been analyzed through computer assisted qualitative coding that will be included in the chapter.

The Paris Agreement, forged at COP21, points out an important turning point in international climate actions. Different from the previous agreements, it has a legally binding characteristic that requires collective combat and acknowledgment of the threat dimension of climate change. It has pushed the international community to realize the first and foremost goal which is to keep the increase in temperature below 2°C and even higher than before the Industrial Revolution (EESC, 2016, p. 21). At this point, as shown in the figure below, the codes of **Climate goals and Cooperation for a sustainable environment** show a crucial emphasis on proactive and collective efforts for sustainability to realize the strategic objectives. For instance, the neutrality of global greenhouse gas emissions is among the main goals of the agreement considering that the agreement makes the EU pay more attention to the low carbon economy (EESC, 2016, p. 21; European Commission, 2016a, p. 2). In addition, the involvement of the European Commission in the 2030 climate and energy policy framework for the EU determined goals that envision by 2030, greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced by at least 40%. A minimum of 27% is even aimed for the synchronized increase in renewable energy use and energy efficiency improvements (European Commission, 2016b, p. 9).

Besides these, the term “adaptation” which is included in Article 2 of the Paris Agreement is one of the other crucial goals of the Paris Agreement. This objective was frequently pointed out by the Commission report as it is crucial for promoting a global aim of strengthening climate resilience, touching upon the vulnerable regions around the world, and boosting capacity. Parties are also significantly supported in realizing the objectives (European Commission, 2016c, p. 3-4). Furthermore, the agreement emphasizes that adaptation to the challenging effects of climate change is one of the most important attempts as it supports mitigation initiatives towards climate change. In the context of the codes of **Climate goals and Cooperation for a sustainable environment**, working together across different levels of government, this coalition can be a key player in achieving a sustainable future for everyone (European Commission, 2016d, p. 7). For instance, more adaptation also aims to the more climate resilience and low carbon emissions in order not to damage or change the flow of food production (Paris Agreement, 2015, Article 2).

On the other hand, according to the agreements made in the early 2000s, the term adaptation has not received as much attention as mitigation, although the Kyoto Protocol, for example, wanted to establish an ‘Adaptation Fund’ to support the adaptation process to the adverse effects of climate change (Ghaleigh, 2020). The concept of adaptation gained significant traction as it was acknowledged in the Copenhagen Accord and later incorporated into various mechanisms (UNFCCC, 2009). These mechanisms include global systems for monitoring and reporting emissions, and a unique provision within the Paris Agreement, Article 7, which emphasizes adaptation alongside mitigation. Notably, for this discussion on adaptation, Article 2 of the Paris Agreement is particularly significant. For the first time, adaptation is given equal weight to mitigation efforts (Paris Agreement, 2015, Article 2&7).

Adaptation also triggers many economic, social, and political incentives, while looking at the approaches to climate change. In this context, to promote climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emission development, financial flows must be consistent with low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development (Paris Agreement, 2015, Article 2). Given the goals of adaptation and socio-economic initiatives, since 2020, contracting countries have been providing national climate

action plans, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs). This is part of countries' increasingly ambitious five-year cycle of climate action. Each successive NDC is intended to reflect an increasingly higher ambition than the previous version. Within their submitted plans, countries outline actions to curb their greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen their adaptability to the consequences of climate change. Climate finance, at this point, is highly supported for mitigation due to the necessity for substantial investments to markedly lower emissions. It is equally vital for adaptation, as considerable financial resources are required to adjust to and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change (UNFCCC, 2023). In this context, the UNFCCC advocates within the scope of the Paris Agreement that the developed countries should take the lead in the effort to offer financial support to less affluent and more vulnerable countries. In this context, the agreement has a crucial role in the implementation of these goals in the Middle East, a region well known for its vulnerability to climate change. In addition to the MENA region being highly vulnerable to the various impacts of climate change, it is prominent in the production and exportation of oil and natural gas. *That is why, the objectives of the Paris Agreement to cut global greenhouse gas emissions significantly impact the Middle East.* Achieving these targets necessitates a reduction in fossil fuel extraction, which has economic repercussions for the region's primary fossil fuel exporters (Khabbazan & von Hirschhausen, 2021, p.3).

5.2. European Union's Securitization of Climate Change in the Framework of the Paris Agreement

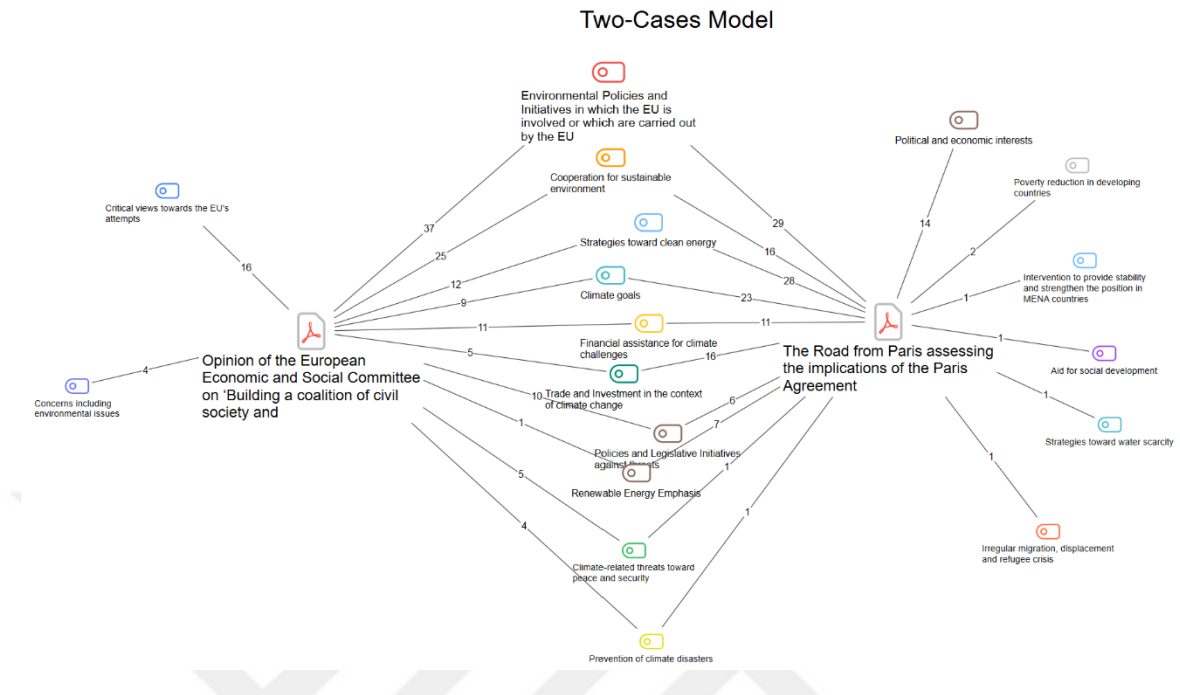


Figure 3: “Opinion of the EESC on Building a Coalition of civil society and Subnational Authorities to deliver commitments of the Paris Agreement” and “The Road from Paris: assessing the Implications of the Paris Agreement and Accompanying the proposal for a Council decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the Paris agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change” were analyzed in MAXQDA

In this direction, the code charts above may help visualize the data on climate-related themes of the following documents of the European Commission’s “The Road from Paris: assessing the Implications of the Paris Agreement and Accompanying the proposal for a Council decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the Paris agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change”, published on March 2016 and European Economic and Social Committee’s “Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Building a Coalition of civil society and Subnational Authorities to deliver commitments of the Paris Agreement”, published on October 2016.

Considering the above analysis, the approach to **Environmental Policies and Initiatives in which the EU is involved or which are carried out by the EU** in the documents published by the European Union bodies is the top code. However, this code develops within the framework or structure of the three other codes below it,

namely **Cooperation for a sustainable environment, Strategies toward clean energy, and Climate goals.**

The European Union aspires to reach net-zero emissions in the long term, which is an important part of the EU's own climate goals, including the neutrality objective, and is frequently mentioned in EU reports and the Paris Agreement. Additionally, they underscore the EU's dedication to a future free from climate impacts, a cornerstone of its Paris Agreement strategy. To see these attitudes more concretely, the objectives to mitigate the direct and indirect climate impacts stated in the agreement are as follows;

Article 2

1. This Agreement, in enhancing the implementation of the Convention, including its objective, aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by:

(a) Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1,5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;

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

(c) Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development. (Paris Agreement, 2015, p. 5)

At this point, from a cooperation perspective, under the code of **Cooperation for a sustainable environment**, the agreement seeks further to strengthen the influence of civil society in this situation. This is also highlighted in the EU-centered reports analyzed. For instance, the European Economic and Social Committee encouraged the establishment of a coalition of politics, administration, and civil society which

mitigated climate challenges in the framework of the civil society. For this purpose, supporting bottom-up climate action and the principle “think global, act local” is crucial as well as accepting the diversity of civil society organizations and their broad perspectives toward the climate strategies (EESC, 2016, p. 20). While the EESC report emphasizes civil society as a collective reaction against climate challenges, the Commission’s report underscores the EU’s diplomatic efforts to build a global coalition, entitled High Ambition Coalition (2015), including developed and developing countries. This coalition, according to the report, played a key role in building constructive negotiations and securing participation from major emitters in the Paris Agreement (European Commission, 2016a, p. 2). The report also highlights the need to bolster existing support initiatives, like the Global Climate Change Alliance+, to empower developing nations to achieve their climate goals. This aligns perfectly with the 2030 Agenda, emphasizing the interconnectedness of climate action and sustainable development. Furthermore, the EU intends to maintain its commitment to political dialogue and capacity-building programs with partner countries, particularly within the framework of its enlargement and neighborhood policies (European Commission, 2016b, p. 8). Within this framework, the agreement establishes a strengthened transparency and accountability framework. This includes all countries submitting reports on greenhouse gas emissions every two years, along with additional information to monitor their efforts. Independent experts will then review these reports, followed by a collaborative international discussion on each country’s progress. Finally, the agreement includes mechanisms to support implementation and encourage adherence to the goals (European Commission, 2016a, p. 3). The two analyzed reports reveal the extent to which the EU emphasizes collective action, cooperation, or partnership to take measures to address climate change.

On the other hand, given the influence of the Paris Agreement, some MENA countries have tried to involved in the agreement’s goals. For instance,

International and regional cooperation as well as support for emission reductions in regions significantly affected by climate change, such as Syria, is crucial for achieving the above-mentioned goals and following the path to success ((UNFCCC), 2023). In this context, it can be seen that there is an emphasis on the need for a balance between greenhouse gas emissions generated and their removal from the atmosphere within the

scope of the **strategies toward clean energy**. Emission reduction included in the mitigation strategies can be seen as one of the core elements in this analysis as it constitutes the main initiative of the Paris Agreement. In this direction, there is a focus on the quantitative goals, of at least 27 percent renewable energy and energy efficiency including reducing the use of fossil fuels by 2030 (European Commission, 2016, p. 9; EESC, 2016, p. 23). Additionally, the emphasis on renewable energy and accordingly energy efficiency take place in the climate goals because it is a crucial point of the EU's and its branches' mitigation strategies. It is reflected that the Paris Agreement paves the way for a worldwide shift towards clean energy, aligning with the goals of sustainable development by 2030. This transformation requires adjustments in how businesses operate and invest, along with policy changes across the board that incentivize new approaches. The European Union approaches this transition assertively to gain significant advantages, particularly in terms of job creation and economic growth. The goals of the Conference of the Parties (COP) 21 are explicit and the European Council sets forth a comprehensive approach to reach a low-carbon/resource-efficient Europe. In this regard, the EU envisages a future with significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions, aiming at a decrease at the level from 80% to 95% by 2050. This transformation will have a crucial impact on all aspects of European life, affecting both individuals and all sectors of the economy (EESC, 2016, p. 23). In line with this perspective, the Commission report mentions the EU's irreversible and non-negotiable commitment to the transition to clean energy. The Energy Union, launched in 2015 within the Commission, aims to “move away from an economy driven by fossil fuels, an economy where energy is based on a centralized, supply-side approach and which relies on old technologies and outdated business models, to empower consumers and (...) to move away from a fragmented system characterized by uncoordinated national policies, market barriers, and energy-isolated areas” (EC, 2016, p. 5). According to the Commission's report, the shift will spur investment and innovation in renewable energy sources, potentially solidifying the EU's position as a global leader in this sector. Additionally, it will expand markets for EU-made products and services, especially those related to energy efficiency. The European Union established a significant goal to cut domestic greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% within the next six years. This target aligns with

international forecasts that support the Paris Agreement's mid-term objectives (European Commission, 2016, p. 2).

On the other hand, **Financial Assistance** is present in all areas of strategy and objectives and emphasizes that actions should be taken in this context. The general approach is that the global belief in the adoption of clean energy could stimulate investment and innovation in renewable energy, in particular enabling the EU to take a leading position in this field. Moreover, goods and services produced by EU Member States may become more favorable as markets grow (European Commission, 2016, p. 2). In addition to that, effective implementation of reduction and mitigation strategies hinges on robust **Economic Support and Investments**. This means a need for funding, capacity development, and effective research and development initiatives. The emphasis on economic backing underscores its critical role in driving successful adaptation strategies and broader climate action (EESC, 2016, p. 25). As mentioned above, the Commission's report says that the Agreement has the potential to direct the world towards the clean energy transition. In terms of investments, the International Energy Agency estimates that reaching climate goals will require important funding for clean energy developments. This would mean an annual average investment of USD 840 billion from 2015 to 2030, totaling USD 13.5 trillion (European Commission, 2016, p. 5). These approaches highlight how the European Union utilizes economic tools, like carbon pricing, within its climate change strategy. By establishing these mechanisms, the EU aims to both control greenhouse gas emissions and generate funds to support further climate initiatives. It reflects the EU's belief that market-driven solutions are crucial for achieving significant emission reductions (EESC, 2016, p. 23; European Commission, 2016, p. 7).

While the above-mentioned are indirectly part of the EU's security concerns, looking at the code of **Securitization of Climate Change**, gives us the extent to which the climate security is addressed in the documents published by the EU. Especially in politically and economically unstable regions such as Middle Eastern countries, it is seen that this issue should be addressed more frequently and it is tried to be encouraged. While security is not as prominent as other elements in terms of terminology in the reports, it is clear that it is directly or indirectly involved in many issues such as climate resilience, carbon emission initiatives, water scarcity, migration,

refugee crisis, food security, or regional and international cooperation. Given these issues, the Paris Agreement is an important milestone because the Council or Commission of Europe supports the agreement's provisions to ameliorate or mitigate the climate challenges and to preserve natural resources (European Commission, 2016, p. 8).

Besides these, in the reports of the EESC and Commission, the issue of security was mostly covered under the following codes; **climate-related threats towards peace and security, irregular migration, displacement and refugee crisis, and policies and legislative initiatives**. The consequences of COP 21 in Paris are highly crucial milestones in the fields of negotiations on climate because the Paris Agreement is the first to be legally binding under international law including the responsibilities of each party against the threats of climate change. In this context, as an application of multilevel governance, it is underlined that the parties can significantly achieve the task of climate protection, which is a task that concerns the whole society, in line with this agreement (EESC, 2016, p. 23). In addition to the EESC's report, the Commission highlighted that climate diplomacy must concentrate on maintaining climate change policies and implementation of the Paris Agreement as a priority and focusing on necessary efforts to undertake the relationship between climate change and the exhausting natural resources because they have an important impact on the management of water and agricultural resources and, in turn, migration (European Commission, 2016, p. 8).

As a different dimension of the securitization of climate change, the analyzed EESC report puts forward the following idea within the framework of the Paris Agreement and the code of **Critical views towards the EU's attempts**. The approach under this code can be assessed through **Policies and Legislative Initiatives against threats, and Environmental policies**. Effective climate policy requires a collaborative effort, not just top-down mandates. Businesses, local governments, and citizens all need to be actively involved and supportive for any policy to succeed. A bottom-up approach that fosters broad participation is essential to ensure long-term success (EESC, 2016a, p. 22). For instance, the Commission's report mentions that they launched the Energy Security Package in 2016 to mitigate challenges to security due to the conflicts in the global energy discussion (European Commission, 2016, p. 9). However, challenges to

effective climate action persist in the region due to limitations in governance, financial initiatives, and political consistency. The concept of ‘climate action’ needs to be made more practical and clearer. While many examples exist, there is a gap in organizing them. A structured approach, perhaps categorizing different types of people involved, could be helpful. This is because individuals with varying resources will have very different ways to contribute (EESC, 2016b, p. 24).

The report shows some examples from the codes of **Renewable Energy Emphasis, Strategies toward clean energy, Trade, and Investment in the context of climate change** to strengthen this view; “trade unions that generate climate projects for workers, the communities who produce their electricity or support carbon sink (greening) in their neighborhoods”. Civil society groups, with their varying capacities, all share a similar logic for action. They strategically invest their resources (time, money, etc.) only when they believe they can make a concrete difference. This means there is a potential risk for them to remain on the sidelines or even oppose efforts if they do not see a possibility of positive change (EESC, 2016c, p. 24). It is seen that the EU gives high importance to the existence of Civil Society in the fight against climate challenges. This is because climate action is acknowledged as a highly crucial strategic foreign policy challenge in European external policies such as development aid, enlargement implementations, economic and political diplomacy, and security (European Commission, 2016, p. 8). Furthermore, financial initiatives, climate-related investments, and capacity building must play a proactive role to prevent the risks of climate change. However, efforts by civil society actors to address climate change are often restrained by a lack of recognition from policymakers. Political actors have not fully grasped the potential of civil society initiatives in environmental protection. There has been a general disinterest in the climate strategies, needs, and support requirements of these groups. In some cases, regulations might even unintentionally hinder their climate action efforts (EESC, 2016b, p. 20). To achieve lasting progress, the plan needs to prioritize long-term vision and secure investment opportunities. Frequent political shifts that create uncertainty are the biggest hurdle to achieving the necessary level of commitment (EESC, 2016c, p. 26). Given this critical approach, the reports emphasize that these policies and initiatives of the EU are necessary.

Additionally, in the context of the Middle East, larger strategic frameworks, particularly the European Neighbourhood Policy, ENP, and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, EUROMED, underscore the commitment of the European Union to mitigating climate change within the Middle East. The ENP was initially established in 2004 and reformed in 2015, with the primary goal of achieving stability, security, and wealth in the neighborhoods of the EU by providing economic integration and political cooperation (European Parliament, 2023, p. 154-155). The EUROMED, launched by the Barcelona Declaration back in 1995, envisions establishing peace, stability, and common prosperity in the Mediterranean region through political dialogue, economic cooperation, and socio-cultural exchange. The two frameworks are coherent with the goals of the Paris Agreement in promoting climate change resilience and sustainable development projects, particularly in the Middle East, which is a region highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. What is more, the fine integration of these policies within the EU Climate Strategy is representative of an approach that is comprehensive to mitigating climate-induced security risks and promoting regional cooperation and development (European Commission, 2023, 21).

Besides these, the main common targets between the Paris Climate Agreement, the ENP, and the EMP are numerous, especially in the sustainability, climate resilience, and regional cooperation of the Middle East. All these three frameworks put forward the need for combating climate change and environmental degradation through shared efforts and policy integration. Thereby, The Paris Agreement and ENP reflect the need for transformation to an economy low in carbon content and with growing energy efficiency. The EU commits itself to supporting its neighbors in sustainable energy production and consumption (European Commission, 2015, p. 12). Similarly, EMP emphasizes the need for environmental protection and sustainable development within the region as a lynchpin for regional stability and prosperity, reflecting the Paris Agreement's overarching commitments (European Parliament, 2023, p. 158). In addition, the ENP and EMP urge for improved collaboration on climate resilience and environmental management and acknowledge that "climate change is the most serious threat to regional security and economic conditions" (European Commission, 2023, p. 160; European Parliament, 2023, p. 159). All these are achieved on a collaborative basis for a sustainable, secure environment for the Middle East with a mutual effort and mutual obligation.

The Middle East region is strategically important for the European Union due to its geography, partnerships, and coordinated policies towards climate threats. Therefore, **Political and economic interests** can be included in the framework of securitization of climate change in the Middle East. Given the EU's objectives of initiating peace, security, and human rights with the help of adherence to international law, it is acknowledged that the EU's goals and interests played an important role in the securitization perspective. (European Parliament, 2022, p. 25). In this respect, the Paris Agreement includes key elements that enable the EU to realize sustainable development goals in addition to the focus on investments, circular economy, and energy transition. According to the Commission's report, political coherence, and willingness were highly maintained at the Paris Conference in line with the protection of stabilization in the region through addressing the main reasons of climate challenges (European Commission, 2016, p. 2-4). The Paris Agreement acts as a tool for the EU to champion investments in renewable energy. These investments have a dual benefit: they cut greenhouse gas emissions and drive sustainable economic growth, creating jobs within the region (European Commission, 2016, p. 5). Through collaboration on clean energy and long-term development, the EU aims to lessen economic strains that can fuel conflict and displacement, as seen in Syria (European Commission, 2016, p. 8). Additionally, the EU prioritizes weaving climate resilience into its trade and investment deals. This ensures its economic ties in the Middle East align with its environmental goals, ultimately promoting regional stability and safeguarding its strategic interests in a crucial geopolitical zone (EESC, 2016, p. 26).

5.3. Paris Agreement and the Middle East (with a Focus on Syria)

MENA region has been significantly impacted by the Paris Agreement process. However, the participation of MENA countries in the Paris Agreement in the MENA countries can be evaluated in terms of to what extent the countries are implementing certain practices in line with the objectives of the agreement.

Under the Paris Agreement, countries were required to submit their updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) - a plan for how they aim to reduce emissions and alleviate the consequences of climate change - and signatory countries in the Middle East were required to submit their progress in 2020. At this point, the UNFCCC's

Regional Collaboration Centre (RCC) for the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia has an important role in promoting regional cooperation and fostering climate attempts by providing support in technical issues to strengthen capacity-building in the region. This assistance involves supporting the regions to develop and apply their NDCs, which are pivotal to meeting the Paris Agreement's goals (UNFCCC; The National MENA, 2021).

In this context, while reviewing the details about the progress in line with the Agreement's targets, for instance, Morocco is acknowledged as the most remarkable actor in renewable energy as the country has carried out various projects like the Noor Ouarzazate Solar Complex that displays the reduce in greenhouse gas emissions (The National MENA, 2021). However, the progress made by countries across the region is unbalanced. While some countries are making significant progress in renewable energy adoption and climate mitigation, others are falling behind due to political challenges and economic instabilities (The National MENA, 2021).

The IMF accordingly emphasizes the significance of effective policies and international support to mitigate climate challenges faced by the MENA region. In fact, the IMF has underscored the need for a comprehensive approach to fiscal policy adjustments, including investment in green technologies and measures to increase climate resilience, which are the objectives of the Paris Agreement. For example, the IMF has called for increasing fossil fuel subsidies, which are often used in the region to increase the use of cleaner energy sources (Azour, Dudu, & Zhu, 2023).

A recent study conducted by the Carnegie Endowment analyzing climate adaptation strategies in a specific region supported the IMF's perspective and identified positive initiatives. However, it emphasizes that significant improvements in governance, financing, and implementation are needed to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. Examples include Jordan and Lebanon, which have developed adaptation plans but where fiscal constraints and political/economic instability have prevented implementation. Strengthening local institutions and securing long-term financing are vital to the success of these adaptation efforts (Osman, 2024).

The Paris Agreement's targets raise concerns for the Middle East, a region dependent on fossil fuel exports. Critics argue that these cuts will hurt the region's economies,

given their different levels of emissions and ability to reduce them. While there are large emitters such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, other countries have lower emissions, requiring a tailored approach (Khabbazan & von Hirschhausen, 2021a, p. 4). Khabbazan and von Hirschhausen, for example, argue that Iran could benefit more from regional cooperation than Saudi Arabia. However, the deal could worsen the terms of trade in the region, potentially leading to an economic downturn. Thus, in addition to the sources cited above, the Khabbazan and von Hirschhausen study also emphasizes the need for specific strategies and cooperation to effectively achieve the Paris targets, noting that the costs of mitigation are high (2021b, p. 24).

On the other hand, for the Middle East, overwhelmingly Syria, the agreement provides a framework for tackling climate-related challenges that contribute to regional instability. Syria's adherence to the Paris Agreement is demonstrated through a range of mitigation measures designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote sustainable practices. These measures include increasing renewable energy use to 10% by 2030, decreasing dependence on fossil fuels, and managing solid waste to prevent random burning. Syria is also committed to rehabilitating degraded pastures, sustainably managing forests, and enhancing agricultural productivity in the face of devastating droughts. Furthermore, to further support the goals of the Paris Agreement, Syria is enhancing its public transportation system by increasing the use of gas-powered vehicles and encouraging eco-friendly technologies (Djoundourian, 2021a, p. 488).

Developing early warning systems to detect and protect against extreme weather conditions has been another critical priority. In terms of adaptation, Syria was implementing an integrated coastal zone management plan, raising awareness about the importance of capacity building and climate change, and rehabilitating degraded lands. Introducing plant species to mitigate the effects of dust storms and protecting endangered plants through nurseries have been also significant initiatives. Additionally, improving irrigation efficiency and supporting research and development efforts are crucial for building Syria's resilience to climate impacts (Djoundourian, 2021b, p. 475-488). In addition to that, at the international level, the EU has also helped the World Food Programme (WFP) in Syria through programs like giving vouchers for healthy groceries and delivering emergency food supplies. This

aligns with the goals of the Paris Agreement (European Commission, 2023, p. 21; Paris Agreement, 2015, Article 6).

Within the framework of the Paris Agreement, Syria, like all Middle Eastern countries vulnerable to climate change, has become a part of a global structure. This was stated by Roua Shurbaji, a spokeswoman at the Syrian mission to the United Nations;

"We will get there, we are in the process of becoming part of the agreement. We will have our commitments and targets" (Friedman, 2017).

It can be seen that climate policies play a major role in shaping the political, social, and economic health of the Middle East as a whole, considering the differences in pollution levels and the ability of these diverse countries to reduce them. Putting the Paris Agreement into action in the Middle East requires a close look at the costs of reducing emissions, how it will affect people's well-being, and ways for countries in the region to work together, both with each other and with outside partners (Khabbazan & von Hirschhausen, 2021, p. 4-24).

5.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, the codes generated from the two reports, "The Road from Paris: Assessing the Implications of the Paris Agreement" and "Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Building a Coalition of Civil Society and Subnational Authorities to Deliver Commitments of the Paris Agreement," varied significantly in use frequency and thematic emphasis.

As a whole, the "Road from Paris" report, published in March 2016, places the most emphasis on **Political and economic interests**, **Poverty reduction in developing countries**, and **Intervention regarding stability and strengthening of position in the case of the MENA** countries. Accordingly, these codes underline the EU's strategic approach to mitigating climate change through underlining the interaction and integration of these policies with other political and economic goals. For example, the code of **Political and economic interests** appears 14 times, which demonstrates that there is a strong emphasis on how climate policy interplays with wider geopolitical objectives in the EU. On the other hand, **Poverty reduction in developing countries** appears twice, indicating probably that the EU is now realizing that one of the matters

it needs to address within the socio-economic disparities is the fight against climate change.

Compared with this, the "Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee" report, October 2016, has a more balanced set of codes with an outstanding focus on **Environmental policy and initiatives**, **Strategies toward clean energy**, and **Climate goals**. The highest frequency code is that of **Environmental policy and initiatives**, which appears 37 times and again underlines how much the EU is committed to sustainable environmental practices and how the region leads from the front in global climate governance. This report also focuses more on financial aid to climate challenges, namely **Financial assistance for climate challenges** which enjoyed an 11-mention frequency, and **Cooperation for a sustainable environment** which appeared 25 times, thus putting it in broader scope and approach of collaboration in mitigating climate change.

The reason for the code frequency difference is due to the difference in their scope and focus. The "Road from Paris" report is much more concentrated on the immediate implications of the Paris Agreement, in particular within the context of EU political and economic interests. This report seems more pragmatic about dealing specifically with how policies of climate change mitigation can align with the strategic objectives of the EU in the MENA region. It often mentions the interests in political and economic domains and strategies of intervention that would underscore the desire to stabilize the region and to use the climate policy to expand the influence of the EU.

The "Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee" report, on the other hand, has followed a broader and holistic approach. The report underlines building coalitions and the involvement of civil society in the execution of the Paris Agreement. The high frequency of codes on environmental policy and cooperation shows an understanding that climate change requires collective actions and the bringing together of many actors. This report places long-term goals, as set by the EU, within the net-zero emissions and promotion of renewable energies necessary to attain sustainable development.

The socio-economic impacts of climate change are another point where differences have been brought out between the two reports. While "The Road from Paris" does mention **Aid for social development** and **Strategies towards water scarcity**, these codes are not as present as those that refer to political and economic interests. On the other side, the "Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee" does have strong mentions of financial assistance and, is linked to the issues of **Trade and Investment in the context of climate change**. This points to more holistic engagement with the economic dimensions of climate change; for instance, massive investments in clean energy and putting in place supportive financial mechanisms.

Moreover, the "Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee" contains, in addition, 16 critical views concerning the EU's attempts, highlighting the problems and critics the EU faces while trying to enforce its climate policies under the code of **Critical views towards the EU's attempts**. All this critical view is still not transparent in "The Road from Paris," which cares more about the design of strategic plans and direct actions envisaged for the EU.

While the frequency and thematic emphasis of codes in these two reports provide a clear contrast between two different aspects of the EU's climate strategy, some more subtle tones and differences need to be brought out. While the "Road from Paris" report takes a more selective approach to the issue, mainly focusing on the alignment of climate policies with the EU's political and economic interests in general and, more specifically, in the MENA region, the "Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee" report has a broader emphasis on inclusiveness, drawing attention to environmental policy, financial aid, and cooperative efforts in this sphere. These reports provide a clear and objective perspective on how the EU addresses, its complex handling of climate change through the prism of the Paris Agreement.

This chapter analyzes how the EU has incorporated climate change into its foreign policy in the Middle East. It underscores the Paris Agreement as a significant point in global climate politics. With the help of the Paris Agreement, the analysis reflects that security concerns have shaped the EU's policies towards climate change due to its influence on regional stability. For a better understanding of the EU's geopolitical

strategy in MENA, it is crucial to consider its approach to climate change in the context of the Paris Agreement.



CHAPTER 6

This chapter will analyze the EU's approach to the Middle East and North Africa within the scope of the European Green Deal and how this perspective intersects with the EU's climate initiatives. By examining the European Green Deal, my goal is to answer the research question: "How does the European Union securitize climate change in the Middle East?". In this context, the EGD represents an important milestone in the EU's climate strategy, emphasizing the EU's commitment to climate neutrality by 2050. Focusing on the interaction between the European Green Deal and the EU's foreign policy towards the MENA region will shed light on the wider impact of climate securitization. This analysis will tackle the legislative and policy initiatives of the EGD, analyzing their influence on regional stability and security in vulnerable areas like the Middle East.

This chapter underscores the EU's way of searching for economic self-interest and energy security by supporting green energy in the Middle East within the sphere of the realist perspective. The study also examines how the Green Deal acts as a tool to advance the EU's regional prominence. From a critical security standpoint, the analysis assesses the potential impact of the EU's decarbonization efforts on vulnerable Middle Eastern populations and how these attempts may contribute to or mitigate prevailing socio-political tensions.

6. EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Since climate change has played a role as a threat multiplier for the existing and forthcoming problems or conflicts, the European Union and its members have had to enhance their initiatives in almost every field. Following the Paris Agreement, the

European Commission proposed a new action, “The European Green Deal (EGD)” in 2019 that would contribute to the initiatives regarding a resource-efficient and solution-oriented economy to sustain the aim of zero-net emission of greenhouse gases in 2050. This initiative aims to protect and develop the Union’s existing capital and to enable European citizens to live in a climate-friendly environment, without risks of climate challenges (Sassoli & Fernandes, 2021).

Besides these, this policy initiative was forged to support a sustainable economy aiming to redefine global energy dynamics and rebuild diplomatic engagements with the actors in the Middle East and North Africa. That is because the European Union's ambitious plan to transition to a low-carbon economy and revamp its energy sources has significant global consequences. This strategic move not only affects Europe's energy security but also reshapes its political ties with Middle Eastern countries (Leonard et al., 2021, p. 3-4). Additionally, the European Council has frequently highlighted the need for and recognizes the need for the necessary policy areas to work towards the ultimate climate-related goal in a holistic and cross-sectoral approach (European Council, 2024). Furthermore, the Council mentioned the following sentences to define the main target of the EGD;

“The transition to climate neutrality will bring significant opportunities, such as potential for economic growth, for new business models and markets, for new jobs and technological development.” (European Council, European Council conclusions, 2019)

The EU aims to bolster international security by prioritizing climate change considerations within its foreign and security strategies. This approach addresses potential threats like resource scarcity, mass migration, and regional destabilization that climate change can trigger. Given these initiatives, the European Green Deal can be included among the important milestones to provide a sustainable environment for the European Union and the Member States. The reason is that, beyond the EGD’s impact on climate-induced challenges and economic safety, this deal has significant importance in the securitization of climate change, especially in highly vulnerable areas like the Middle East and North Africa. Democratic governance, energy efficiency, cooperation, alignment, and climate-related issues like extreme heat waves

and their effects on agriculture or migration can be assessed as the intersection of the EGD's impact areas (Fakoussa, 2020, p. 8).

This chapter will accordingly explore the elements of the EGD within the framework of climate securitization and the focused area will be the MENA region, predominantly Syria. Legislative initiations and mechanisms of the EGD will accordingly be tackled. In this context, “Promoting regional stability and security in the broader Middle East region European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2022 on promoting regional stability and security in the broader Middle East region (2022)” and “A new outlook on the climate and security nexus: Addressing the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defence (2023)” published by the EP and the EC has been analyzed with the help of the code group that will be included in the chapter.

6.1. Key Points of the European Green Deal

The introduction of the European Green Deal document put forward that “The atmosphere is warming and the climate is changing with each passing year. One million of the eight million species on the planet are at risk of being lost. Forests and oceans are being polluted and destroyed” (The European Green Deal, 2019, p. 2). These sentences from the introduction of the EGD reflect the general concerns and threat perception of the European perspective. That is why, these challenges have given the EU the right to counter-attack and the EGD was acknowledged as a pathway to success in minimizing climate-related risks. In essence, as stated above, the EGD prioritizes a fair and all-encompassing shift towards a climate-neutral economy, ensuring everyone benefits from this transition (Sassoli & Fernandes, 2021, p. 1-2).

Given the EU reports on the EGD, the relationship between climate change and security in climate-sensitive countries like the Middle East region has been frequently outlined. Indeed, the requirement is for the EU impact to be seen in this relation (European Commission, 2023, p. 3). This strategy aligns with the concept of climate securitization, which emphasizes the need for fair and effective solutions to climate change to minimize its security threats. Indeed, the EGD acts as a tool within the EU to achieve climate securitization by incorporating climate action into security planning, boosting resilience against climate risks, and promoting a long-term future

that is both sustainable and secure for all European citizens through cooperations and partnerships (Sassoli & Fernandes, 2021, p. 1-2). This approach was categorized under the codes of **Policies and Legislative Initiatives against threats** and **Cooperation for sustainable environment** because they were reviewed concerning climate securitization in the two documents analyzed above. Even, while analyzing these two documents, these two codes are intertwined and reflect the common idea of the European Union.

The European Union is dedicated to creating a sustainable and competitive economy, aligning with the Paris Agreement's objectives. The European Green Deal serves as a roadmap to achieve these goals, aiming for net-zero emissions by 2050. This initiative aims to position Europe as “the first climate-neutral continent in the world” (The European Green Deal, 2024). In this context, looking at the main goals of the EGD, climate neutrality is the most prominent one, as it is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and maintain the balance between emissions and their removal from the atmosphere. Additionally, the EGD prioritizes an economic model that minimizes resource consumption while maximizing competitiveness. It focuses on stimulating innovation, generating jobs that benefit the environment, and fostering long-term economic health. Biodiversity is another important point that needs to be preserved to sustain efficiency in future generations. Besides these, the EGD supports the changeover to a circular economy that includes the reuse of products, efficient utilization of natural resources, sustainable transport, and clean energy transition (Sassoli & Fernandes, 2021, p. 1-3).

Within the framework of the **Environment Policies and Initiatives in which the EU is involved or which are carried out by the EU** and **Trade and Investment in the context of climate change**, all areas related to the environment in which the EU has undertaken initiatives have been addressed. The EU Commission’s roadmap for climate neutrality guides the long-term strategy the EU submitted to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in early 2020. To ensure a smooth and equitable transition, provide investor confidence, and guarantee progress is irreversible, the Commission proposed the first European “Climate Act” in 2020 and it entered into force in 2021. This legislation aims to solidify the 2050 climate neutrality issue and requires all EU policies and sectors to contribute to achieving it

(The European Green Deal, 2019, p. 4). Additionally, the Climate Law aims to forge a system to control the EGD's progress and to create predictability for investments in climate actions. The goal of the irreversibility of climate neutrality can be included in the most important element of the Climate Law (European Commission, European Climate Law 2021). Besides these, the European Union's funding initiatives for research and innovation, including Horizon 2020 (2014-2020) and the current Horizon Europe program (2021-2027), are instrumental in addressing knowledge gaps related to climate change and environmental threats. This focus on scientific evidence empowers policymakers to craft effective solutions (European Commission, 2023, p. 7).

In addition to the above-mentioned initiatives, the European Investment Bank (EIB) can be assessed within the framework of the mechanism of the European Green Deal. The EC works with all national promotional banks and institutions, as well as with the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group in line with the EU's climate objectives (The European Green Deal, 2019, p. 16). The European Investment Bank (EIB) stands as a key player in achieving the goals of the European Green Deal. As the EU's financial champion for climate action, the EIB prioritizes projects that build resistance against climate change and promote a healthy environment. Aligning its funding with the Paris Agreement and UN Sustainability Goals is central to this mission. By 2025, the EIB aims to dedicate at least half of its financing to climate and environmental initiatives, highlighting its strong commitment to tackling climate change and fostering sustainable development. This strategic focus translates into significant investments in renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, sustainable transportation, and cutting-edge green technologies. By strategically utilizing its financial resources and knowledge, the EIB contributes to the EU's goal of climate neutrality and assists in the global shift towards a low-carbon economy. The bank's efforts are crucial in addressing climate-related security issues faced by the Middle East. They do this by facilitating the implementation of sustainable infrastructure and promoting economic stability in the region. The EIB's climate action framework serves as a model for how financial institutions can support the ambitious vision of the European Green Deal, propelling progress towards a sustainable and secure future, regionally and globally (European Investment Bank, 2021).

Following the Climate Law launched under the European Green Deal, the “Renewable Energy Directive” needs to be assessed under the framework of the analysis of **Strategies toward clean energy** and **Renewable energy emphasis**. The Commission bolsters the consumption and distribution of renewable hydrogen and initiates investments in low-carbon hydrogen with the Member States (European Commission, 2021, p. 12; Pisani-Ferry et al., 2023). In this direction, the production of renewable energy creates both challenges and advantages at the global level, particularly for the Euro-Mediterranean countries like the MENA region. A significant portion of the world's oil (57%) and natural gas (41%) is concentrated in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region, along with the Middle East. However, this distribution is uneven. Interestingly, the Mediterranean, particularly the Southern and Eastern countries (SEMCs), boasts vast potential for renewable energy development. This includes abundant sunshine, strong winds in many areas, and suitable terrain. This natural wealth presents a unique opportunity for SEMCs to meet their growing energy needs and become electricity exporters to Europe (Varouxakis, 2013, p. 264-265). Indeed, the directive has gained an important place in the EGD with updates since 2009. The currently revised directive entered into force in 2023 and involves various renewable energy goals. In addition to aligning with EGD targets, these targets aim for at least 32 percent renewable energy by 2030 (European Commission, 2023). Additionally, in synchronization with the security part described above, The European Union faces the challenge of importing renewable energy to meet its ambitious climate targets. In addition, Middle Eastern countries, heavily dependent on hydrocarbon extraction and trade, need economic diversification in the face of global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move away from fossil fuels (European Parliament, 2022, 7; European Commission, 2023, p. 15).

6.2. European Union's Securitization of Climate Change in the Framework of the European Green Deal

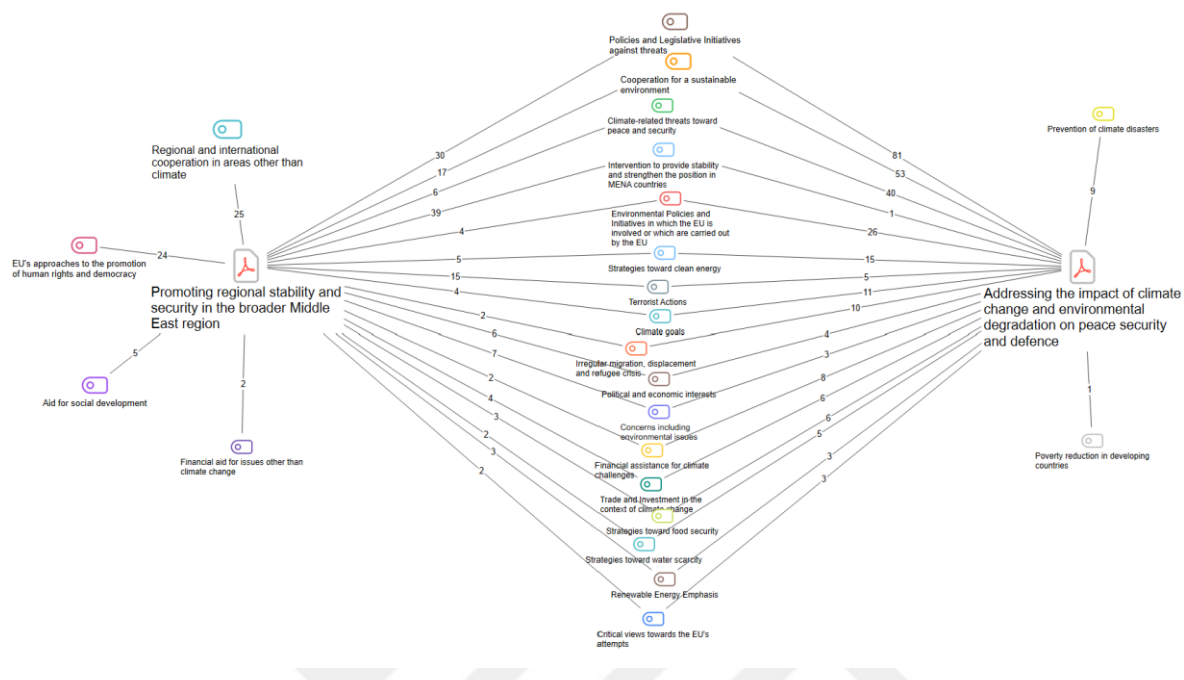


Figure 4: “Promoting regional stability and security in the broader Middle East region European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2022 on promoting regional stability and security in the broader Middle East region” and “A new outlook on the climate and security nexus: Addressing the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defence” were analyzed in MAXQDA

A deteriorating environment, marked by worsening climate trends and resource depletion, threatens global stability. Factors like extreme weather, rising sea levels, and dwindling water supplies endanger human health and well-being. This can lead to mass migrations, disease outbreaks, and societal unrest, potentially fueling conflict. Notably, many countries most susceptible to these environmental challenges already face internal strife (European Commission, 2023, p. 1). Existing literature (Commission, 2023; Larhlid, 2023) suggests that the EU's discussion of climate change as a security threat in Southern Mediterranean aligns with its own political strategy towards the MENA region and argues that this strategy is suitable for expansion. This alignment leads to the emergence of solutions for climate change in the southern Mediterranean proposed within the EU framework, specifically the European Green Deal (EGD), which differs from the more extreme measures suggested by general security studies. Concerning this, the EU primarily emphasizes regional cooperation with MENA countries and international cooperation within the

region. This joint approach aims to tackle the challenges of climate migration and energy security. However, the success of this cooperative strategy hinges on the willingness of MENA governments to work together on these pressing issues (Rothe, 2016, p. 161). In this context, the following terms coded from two reports of the European Union, entitled “Promoting regional stability and security in the broader Middle East region (2022)” and “A new outlook on the climate and security nexus: Addressing the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defense (2023)”, may help to better understand climate securitization nexus within the framework of the European Green Deal.

As indicated in the previous paragraphs, the EU perceives climate change as a “threat multiplier” worsening existing social, political, and economic conflicts, notable in areas reliant on resources vulnerable to climate challenges. The EU's new growth strategy, the European Green Deal, which aims to make Europe the world's first climate-neutral continent with net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, is considered to address the EU's security concerns in many areas (Avrupa Birliği Başkanlığı, 2024). Within the security framework, this plan outlines a practical roadmap for achieving a circular economy. It envisions a future with a carbon-free and equitable society, where economic prosperity is independent of resource consumption. According to data from coded documents, international cooperation and strong economic relations are crucial to bringing this vision to life. The EGD has also an influence on the existing economic partnerships (Hussein & Sandri, 2022). At this point, the coded documents allow us to see that the most emphasized security approaches are grouped under the codes of **Policies and Legislative Initiatives against threats** and **Cooperation for a sustainable environment** within the scope of the EGD.

According to the European Commission's report, since 2008, the EU has recognized climate change as a factor that can worsen existing problems and has actively sought solutions. Additionally, since 2020, the EU has explored connections between climate change and its efforts to manage crises and ensure European security (European Commission, 2023a, p. 1; Borrell, 2023). In this context, the link between climate challenges and security has been seen as highly crucial because it requires to be assessed in line with the goals in the external dimension of the European Green Deal

and the Strategic Compass on Security and Defence an ambitious action plan prepared by the European External Action Service (EEAS) to strengthen the EU's security and defense policy by 2030. The main idea lies behind the Commission's argument as follows;

“It is essential to better connect the different policy strands and ensure that external action, policies and capabilities are fit for the future. The EU needs to adopt a more proactive and comprehensive response to the multifaceted challenges. As these are global challenges, the EU will seek further close cooperation with its international partners and stakeholders to promote multilateral solutions.” (European Commission, 2023b, p. 3).

That is because the security and defense approaches to climate challenges and their consequences were characterized as “urgent, challenging, and multifaceted” (European Commission, 2023c, p. 16). In this regard, to ensure the connection between climate change, environmental issues, and security is considered in high-level political and strategic discussions, the EU Commission and the EEAS have indicated that they could launch a yearly in-depth analysis of trends. This analysis would focus on, but not be limited to, how climate change and environmental damage affect conflicts, displacement patterns, competition for resources, and migration flows. The Climate and Environmental Security Data and Analysis Hub developed in the EU framework, would contribute to this analysis, and close collaboration with other relevant departments, like the Emergency Response Coordination Centre, would be established. Additionally, the EU's Earth observation program, Copernicus, would be utilized (European Commission, 2023d, p. 5). In addition to the Commission's report, the report of the European Parliament emphasized that the EU has been a highly important actor in providing stability and prosperity in vulnerable regions such as the Middle East. The EU should be able to assert itself as an effective partner, utilizing its mediation skills to achieve this goal (European Parliament, 2022, p. 26; Larhlid, 2023).

On the other hand, The European Green Deal is deeply linked to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) in the Middle East, with a concentration on addressing climate change and heightening regional stability and collaboration. The EGD, the EU's highly ambitious strategy to

reach climate neutrality by 2050, stresses the pivotal role of environmental sustainability and its implications for security and economic engagements (European Green Deal, 2019, p. 2). It promotes the transition to a low carbon economy, emphasizing renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable development, which are fundamental to the EU's relations with the Southern Neighbourhood. The revised partnership with the Mediterranean prioritizes climate resilience, energy and environmental sustainability, aiming to reinforce cooperation and policy convergence between the EU and the Southern Neighbourhood countries (European Parliament, 2023, p. 154).

The integration of the EGD with the ENP and EMP constitutes a strategic step forward to address common challenges and realize mutual benefits through green energy cooperation and environmental protection. The ENP's objective of fostering dialogue and cooperation with neighboring countries overlaps with the EGD's objectives of promoting economic development and achieving energy security using renewable resources in the Mediterranean region (European Parliament, 2023, p. 155). This coherence is embedded in economic and investment plans that prioritize human development, effective governance, and green transformation, thus improving the resilience of both the EU and its partner countries (European Commission, 2021, p. 12). Climate change as a “threat multiplier”, the EGD consolidates the EU's role as a key partner in the region, seeking to reduce potential conflicts and promote stability in the Middle East through comprehensive and sustainable action (European Commission, 2023, p. 2).

Besides these, climate challenges have had various significant influences on peace and security, as their results act as a threat multiplier by using other types of security issues such as migration, food insecurity, or terror. The European Green Deal acknowledges that these subjects have been included in the sources of conflict and have an important impact on the definitive decisions about environmental resilience. Working with partners to strengthen the objective of removing the risks of mass displacement, migration, and food insecurity has been justified by the EGD in line with the EU's security perspective (The European Green Deal, 2019, p. 21). The code of **Climate-related threats toward peace and security** underscores these concerns in the two

European-centered reports. For instance, the Commission's report starts with the following sentences;

“Climate change and environmental degradation pose increasing risks to international peace and security. Extreme weather events, rising temperatures and sea levels, desertification, water scarcity, threats to biodiversity, environmental pollution and contamination and loss of livelihoods threaten the health and well-being of humanity, and can create the potential for greater migratory movements and displacement, pandemics, social unrest, instability and insecurity. Of the 20 countries that are the most vulnerable and least prepared for climate change, 12 were in conflict in 2020” (European Commission, 2023, p. 2)

In addition to that, the Parliament report highlights the importance of the EU's intervention in climate-related issues by focusing on the Middle East region. According to the report, this view was supported with the following sentences;

“whereas the stability and security of Europe and the broader Middle East region are interdependent, and whereas the security situation in the region is currently characterised by ongoing conflicts with strong regional and extra-regional dimensions, and is both fragile and very concerning;” (European Parliament, 2022, p. 26).

As the issue of migration has an influential and important impact on the EU's security perspective, it is frequently discussed in these reports and the relevant statements have been categorized with the code of **Irregular migration, displacement, and refugee crisis**. The Commission report mentioned in 2023 that an annual average of 21.5 million people are displaced every year due to extreme weather events like floods and heatwaves, according to the UN Refugee Agency. This number is predicted to rise in the coming years, placing a burden on cities as demand for essentials like housing and jobs surges, in parallel with what has been explained in EGD. This strain is expected to worsen social problems caused by climate change (European Commission, 2023, p. 1-2; The European Green Deal, 2019, p. 21). This issue is not addressed in the Parliamentary report on the climate framework as much as in the Commission report. However, the effects of social and political tensions on displacement have been

underlined in line with the driving force of terrorism in line with the code of **Terrorist Actions**;

“the Syrian civil war is one of the region’s most deadly conflict in decades, having caused the deaths of half a million people and having forcibly displaced 14 million Syrians; recalls the human tragedy caused by the displacement of over half of Syria’s population internally and as refugees across the region and Europe;” (European Parliament, 2022, p. 31)

Given these challenges, the code of **Intervention to provide stability and strengthen the position in MENA countries** shows the European Union’s acknowledgment of the climate risks on the European interests in the region and the attempts to reduce them. According to the EGD, the EU is taking a leading role in fighting climate change in the Middle East, recognizing its potential to destabilize the region and impact its own interests. By viewing climate action as a form of conflict prevention and a pathway to global sustainability, the EU is pushing for stronger environmental commitments from Middle Eastern partners. This is achieved through trade agreements, joint regulations, and the promotion of green technologies and fair-trade practices. This approach aligns with the EU's international commitments and highlights the inseparable link between climate change and trade relations. Ultimately, the EU's proactive attitude aims to secure its own well-being while fostering a more sustainable future for the Middle East (The European Green Deal, 2019, p. 20-21). In this context, the code of **Environmental Policies and Initiatives in which the EU is involved or which are carried out by the EU** and **Financial Assistance** gather related parts of the documents emphasizing the EU’s stance in the region. For instance, the goal of clean energy and accordingly a circular economy are highlighted by the Commission's report with these sentences;

“The green energy transition is the only way to simultaneously ensure sustainable, secure, and affordable energy worldwide. To be successful, that transition must be socially just and fair, leaving no-one behind. It means not only phasing out fossil fuels and outdated practices, but phasing in green energy, innovative technology, better markets, and circular

economy. It requires tackling already now the potential future risks and dependencies.” (European Commission, 2023, p. 3)

Additionally, to establish a clear framework for a successful and neutral climate change, alongside securing predictability for investors and ensuring the transition's permanence, the European Commission introduced the first-ever European "Climate Law" in 2020. The EGD views this legislation as a strategic tool to definitively achieve climate neutrality by 2050. Moreover, the Climate Law is seen as a mechanism to guarantee that all EU policies align with the objective of climate neutrality, requiring participation from all sectors (The European Green Deal, 2019, p. 4).

On the other hand, while the EGD points out the EU's intervention within the climate framework, the other two documents of the Commission and the Parliament do not dwell on climate challenges in the intervention attempts, and point out human rights as a reference point. This is also the basis for the climate issue.

“The European Parliament welcomes all efforts by the EU, its Member States and civil society to document and prosecute crimes against humanity and calls for the EU to intensify efforts to end impunity; notes that since the start of the conflict, none of its main drivers have been resolved, while regional tensions have increased and Syria's economic crisis has further deteriorated, causing terrible civilian suffering;”
(European Parliament, 2022, p. 31)

6.3. European Union's Perspective on the Securitization of Climate Change in the Middle East in the post-Arab Spring Period

The European Union's approach to tackling climate change as a security issue in the Middle East can be analyzed through the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal. These frameworks demonstrate distinct approaches the EU utilizes to address climate change as a security threat in the region.

The Paris Agreement prioritizes international collaboration and binding commitments to reduce the negative impacts of climate change. The EU's active engagement in the Paris Agreement underscores its dedication to lowering greenhouse gas emissions and boosting global climate resilience. For instance, the Paris Agreement aims to keep

global temperature rise well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, striving to limit it to 1.5°C (UNFCCC, 2023). The EU has embraced this objective, pledging to cut its emissions by at least 55% by 2030 and to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 (Council of Europe, 2024). This commitment shows the EU's intention to address climate-induced concerns, especially in vulnerable areas like the Middle East, where climate change exacerbates pre-existing socio-economic and political conflicts (Khabbazan & von Hirschhausen, 2021, p. 3).

In contrast, the European Green Deal provides a more comprehensive framework that incorporates climate action into the EU's foreign and security policies. The goal of the European Green Deal is to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, emphasizing the EU's proactive approach to embedding climate considerations into its security strategy. The Green Deal focuses on regional and international collaboration, particularly with MENA countries, to address climate migration, energy security, and regional stability. For instance, it seeks to promote renewable energy initiatives and improve energy efficiency in the Middle East, recognizing that these efforts are vital for long-term stability and security (European Commission, 2023, p. 3).

Both the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal emphasize the EU's acknowledgment of climate change as a significant security issue. The Paris Agreement focuses on binding international commitments and cooperative action, while the European Green Deal embeds these commitments into a broader strategy that involves regional cooperation and sustainable development. This two-pronged approach reflects the EU's overarching strategy to address the multifaceted challenges of climate change in the Middle East and ensures that climate action is a key priority and a fundamental aspect of security policy. Combining these two approaches, the EU intends to reduce climate-related security threats in the Middle East through international collaboration and specific regional initiatives, promoting a stabilized and sustainable future for the region (Ahmad Adeleye & Tilovska-Kechedji, 2023, p. 292-293; European Commission, 2023, p. 1).

6.4. Conclusion

The EU's approach to climate change, embodied in the European Green Deal, signifies a significant move towards tackling this global crisis. By framing climate action as a

matter of security and long-term viability, the EU proactively addresses environmental threats. Through ambitious goals, groundbreaking policies, and strategic investments, the EU safeguards the well-being of its citizens for the future, while also inspiring international collaboration on climate change. As the analysis suggests, the European Green Deal serves as a blueprint for a more sustainable future, highlighting the interconnectedness of environmental health, economic success, and societal well-being (European Commission, 2024, p. 1-3).

The two reports, "Promoting regional stability and security in the broader Middle East region European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2022" and "A new outlook on the climate and security nexus: Addressing the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defense," give a comprehensive analysis of the EU approach to the Middle East, particularly understanding on climate change and regional security. An analysis of the codes in these documents reveals differences in the importance and frequency of various topics over the years.

The Parliament report (2022) focuses on the codification of the **EU's approaches to the promotion of human rights** and **Financial aid for social development**, with a significant emphasis on regional and international cooperation beyond climate-related issues. These are common approaches that underline the EU's overarching strategy to help stabilize the Middle East through socio-political means. This approach is mirrored by repeated references to policies aimed at reinforcing governance and ensuring socio-economic assistance to tackle the underlying causes of instability.

In turn, the Commission's report (2023) on the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security, and defense indicates a significant rise in the emphasis on climate-related threats and their direct security effects. Codes of **Climate-related threats toward peace and security**, **Intervention to provide stability and strengthen the position in MENA countries**, and **Strategies toward clean energy** are more constant, marking a change in the EU's approach to more explicitly integrate climate action into its security and foreign policies. This document underlines the issue of climate change as a significant threat multiplier that exacerbates existing fragilities and conflicts in the Middle East.

The frequency of codes concerning environmental policies and initiatives, such as **Environmental Policies and Initiatives in which the EU is involved or which are carried out by the EU**, increased from 2022 to 2023. This change demonstrates the EU's increasing commitment to environmental sustainability and its integration into broader security discussions. The 2023 document elaborates the EU's efforts to support renewable energy projects, improve energy security, and encourage sustainable development, which is seen as essential for long-term regional stability.

Moreover, the Commission's report underscores the EU's focus on irregular migration, displacement, and the refugee crisis, with the code **Irregular migration, displacement and refugee crisis** appearing frequently. This emphasis demonstrates the EU's recognition of how climate-induced migration can destabilize regions and pose new security challenges. The integration of climate goals with migration points to a comprehensive perspective on managing the complicated interaction between environmental changes and mass mobility.

The Parliament's report also highlights political and economic interests, as mentioned in the codes of **Political and economic interests** and **Trade and Investment in the context of climate change**. This reflects the EU's strategic perspective in providing stability and economic relations with Middle Eastern countries, recognizing that economic stability is important for regional security. The frequent reference in the Commission report to financial assistance for climate challenges, as indicated by codes of **Financial assistance for climate challenges**, further demonstrates the EU's commitment to promoting the region's economic transition towards sustainability.

In sum, the code analysis of these two reports announces a clear enlargement in the EU's approach to the Middle East in the context of the EGD. While the 2022 report has a general focus on promoting stability through socio-political and economic pathways in addition to initiatives against various threats, including climate ones under the code of **Policies and Legislative Initiatives against threat**, the 2023 document reveals a strong focus on addressing climate change as a main component of the EU's security perspective. This shift demonstrates the increasing recognition of the interconnectedness between climate change and regional stability and the requirement

of integrating climate sustainability into the EU's foreign and security policies to effectively tackle the various challenges confronting the Middle East.

This chapter shows that the EGD is a turning point aiming to assess the EU's integration into climate policies with the claim of addressing climate change while promoting regional stability. The EGD also highlights the importance of climate change as a security issue, particularly in highly vulnerable areas. It intersects with energy efficiency, cooperation, and governance. This analysis shows how the EGD is not only a climate policy but is also used as a tool to increase the EU's geopolitical influence and ensure long-term security in regions like the Middle East, where climate challenges are becoming increasingly severe.



CHAPTER 7

In this chapter, the relationship between climate change, drought, and terrorism in Syria, and how these factors have fueled the ongoing Syrian conflict, particularly by intensifying existing vulnerabilities will be examined. The chapter will explore how climate change has acted as a threat multiplier, exacerbating existing tensions and contributing to the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War. Additionally, it will delve into the EU's approach to climate security in Syria, focusing on the Union's policies and actions to address the interrelated challenges of drought, migration, and terrorism in the region. Through assessing these issues, the chapter aims to provide a comprehensive perception of Syria's complicated relationship between climate and security concerns.

Realist Theory is taken into consideration to examine how the EU's framing of climate change as a security threat in Syria is impacted by concerns about migration, terrorism, and regional destabilization. This chapter scrutinizes the EU's engagement in Syria as a strategic maneuver to pursue its security interests, including the management of natural resources and the prevention of increased migration. Critical Security Theory is employed to investigate the social and political consequences of the EU's policies in Syria. The discussion considers how the portrayal of climate change as a security issue affects local communities, particularly in terms of access to water and food resources. The chapter also highlights the significance of policies that tackle the root causes of insecurity, rather than relying solely on state-centric approaches.

7. CASE COUNTRY: SYRIA

7.1. Climate Change, Drought, Terror

The Arab Upheavals commenced in the spring of 2011, accelerated for the cause of political change, transcended regional borders, and greatly affected Syria. According to the literature, a wave of popular uprisings across the Arab world challenged “uncivil” authoritarian regimes. These protests arose from a strong desire for more representative and accountable governments, rejecting the legacy of colonial influence and restrictive systems (Ismael & Ismael, 2013, p. 229). While many countries faced challenging results of the Arab Spring, Syria has encountered the most destructive ones. It is estimated that more than 300,000 people have been killed in the civil war that began in March 2011 and half of the population has been displaced for various reasons, such as economic instability, security, or famine due to climate change or terrorism. Besides these, discontent with the Bashar Al-Assad regime on a variety of issues (partly due to the high unemployment ratio) has been a prominent factor in the anti-government protests in 2011 partly inspired by the Arab Spring demonstrations that have continued in the Middle East and North Africa (Read, 2019, p. 168-172). In this context, numerous actors such as the coalition of Assad, the ISIS, the Islamic Front, and the People Defense Units (YPG), have played an important role in exacerbating the conflict and leading to its perpetuation (Uludağ, 2015, p. 4-5).

Given this background, the impact of climate change cannot be underestimated on the breakout of the Syrian Civil War in March 2011 as a variant of the Arab Spring. The climate characteristics of Syria are composed of a semi-arid and desert plateaus, summers are hot and dry and winters are mild. Most importantly, 75% of the country's land is suitable for agricultural activities and 20% of the country's GDP is derived from farm products such as wheat, barley, and cotton (Read, 2019, p. 171). While economic and political elements dominate the leading reasons for the conflict in Syria, some

scholars, and researchers argue that climate-induced conditions such as prolonged drought and relevant factors may have an important influence on the process (Read, 2019, p. 172).

According to many international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academics, policymakers, or even statesmen, climate change must be assessed as a “threat multiplier”. Various resources in the existing literature have drawn attention to anthropogenic climate change as a leading factor in the Syrian Civil War because it encourages the early problems in Syria. (Selby et al., 2017, p. 232). For example, the important drought from 2006 to 2011, deteriorated by climate change and strained the Syrian agricultural effectiveness. It also led to massive movements from rural areas to urban ones. This movement resulted in crucial social and economic repression in the urban areas, contributing to prevalent discontent (Gleick, 2014, p. 333). In addition, food security, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs, has also been significantly impacted by the exhaustion of water and this fueled people’s displeasure towards the regime in Syria.

On the other hand, the above-mentioned drought and economic and political destabilization paved the way for the renaissance of terrorist groups in Syria. Diverse terrorist organizations such as ISIS, took advantage of the destabilized and chaotic environment and obtained control over borders and natural resources in line with their own agendas. This situation not only impacted the Syrian conflict but also triggered menace to the perception of security in every sense (Uludağ, 2015, p. 5).

The EU has been involved in the process due to Syria’s geopolitical proximity, as well as the desire to uphold humanitarian responsibilities, and its commitment to protect the security of each European citizen. Numerous policies created by EU have served Syrian refugees because migration flows have threatened European security in terms of economic and social capabilities, scarcity of natural resources, and spread of extremism through terrorist groups. In this regard, this chapter will examine the European Union’s securitization of climate change through a case country; Syria. The existing vulnerabilities in the pre-Arab Spring period that fueled the situation in Syria will be discussed within the scope of drought and terror that the EU perceived as “threat multipliers”.

7.1.1. Impacts of Drought in Syria

Notwithstanding there is more focus on the economic, social, and political aspects of the Syrian Civil War, as mentioned in the previous parts, climate change, and its effects have been taken into consideration among the causes of this catastrophic war. It is even often argued that climatic consequences have been an increasing security threat since the beginning of the war.

Syria suffered a severe drought due to anthropogenic or non-human-induced climate change between 2006 and 2010 that significantly impacted economic, social, and political patterns (Selby et al., 2017, p. 232). Considering the vulnerabilities of the region and Syria in particular, it has been observed that the drought period has caused greater disasters due to the mismanagement of water resources. According to De Châtel (2014), the northeastern region, especially Hassakeh, Deir ez-Zor, and Raqqa encountered the most catastrophic consequences of the drought. It was reviewed that the rainfall ratio went down to the lowest levels, and even in the 2007/8 season, the overall percent of rainfall across Syria declined to 66% of the long-term overall. Some regions in the country did not get any rain at all (p. 524).

The accelerating impacts of drought had significant results for the rural populations in the country. According to De Châtel, the region Jezira known as the least developed area had been affected in terms of agriculture and the already poor people became even worse off and experienced severe poverty. Even though Jezira had an important amount of the nation's oil reserves and produced fundamental grains like wheat and barley, the region remained plagued by poverty, limited healthcare services, widespread illiteracy, and a lack of diversification beyond agriculture (p. 525). In this context, the drought underscored the long-lasting vulnerabilities and compounded the regression in the productivity in agriculture, accordingly following the humanitarian crisis (Gleick, 2014, p. 399).

On the other hand, the existing literature and research say that more than 1.3 million people were affected by the long-lasting drought in the region. As mentioned, agricultural activities that provide a large number of job opportunities were the hardest hit, and production fell. These people were coerced to abandon the rural areas because crop failure and livestock deaths had reached a very serious point. In addition to that,

the rural communities encountered more serious problems in 2008 and 2009 due to the increase in the prices of diesel fuel and fertilizer (De Châtel, 2014, p. 525-526; Selby, *On Blaming Climate Change for the Syrian Civil War*, 2020).

Given these events, one of the most important consequences of drought is internal and external migration. According to the agencies of the United Nations, 65,000 families and approximately 300,000 people moved from the northeastern part of Syria and a significant portion, ranging from 60 to 70 percent, of villages in the Hassakeh and Deir ez-Zor governorates were abandoned in 2009. Many people were forced to leave their homes and convened in informal settlements near cities like Damascus and Aleppo. Basic needs such as clean water, and toilets were missing in these settlements. Additionally, the sudden arrival of many people from rural areas to urbanized regions overwhelmed the resources of these cities, leading to increased friction among residents ((UNOCHA), 2009). The Syrian government's neglect of the drought and the crisis in the early stages and its handling of the crisis in the aftermath led to mismanaged processes and aid programs that did not solve the problem. The government's applications for drought relief in 2008 and 2009 were only able to cover a small fraction of the funds requested. In addition, aid distribution reportedly failed to reach the most vulnerable populations, particularly those who had moved to the cities (De Châtel, 2014, p. 527).

The existing environmental issues from mismanagement and unsustainable practices deteriorated the influence of climate change and the drought. While future climate models predict drier periods for the region, human actions like mismanaged policies and exhaustion of resources were the main culprits behind the 2006-2010 drought. Lastly, the aforementioned results of climate change like migration, resource depletion, and socio-economic inequalities exacerbated the internal socio-economic stresses that set the stage for the country's 2011 Uprising and eventual descent into war and paved the way for extreme groups and events, such as terrorist groups, to increase their role in the region through depleted resources (Gleick, 2014, p. 339; Selby, *On Blaming Climate Change for the Syrian Civil War*, 2020).

7.1.2. The Relationship between Terrorist Actors and Climate Change in Syria

The climate vulnerabilities provide a basis for non-state actors as the consequences contribute to economic, political, and social destabilization. In Syria, insufficient water resources and severe droughts led to decreased agricultural productivity and displacement from rural to urban areas (Loiseau, 2024, p. 4).

The existing literature and some researchers argue that environmental conditions can deteriorate the existing vulnerabilities, which extremist organizations can take advantage of (Van Veen et al., 2021a, p. 13-15). A report by the Clingendael Institute suggests that the Syrian government's forceful measures on protests and the resulting civil war created an opportunity for terrorist groups to take place such as the YPG and ISIS. This destabilization helped these actors to obtain territorial control, particularly in the areas most impacted by the climate challenges (Van Veen et al., 2021b, p. 15). According to various studies and academics, the main driver of the droughts is climate change, and the 12 driest winters have happened in the Middle East since 1902, and 10 of them have occurred in the last 20 years (Hoerling et al., 2012, p. 2146). In this context, climate change has been acknowledged as a factor that *“may have acted as a stress multiplier exacerbating environmental and social stresses”* by Femia and Werrell (2013, p. 32). Given these perspectives on the impacts of climate change, the "threat multiplier" view of climate change has gained strength.

On the other hand, the control of water and agricultural production has been among the important strategies of ISIS to maintain its influence on regional populations. These events highlight the importance of climate-related factors in broader security variables of Syria (Van Veen et al., 2021b, p. 16). That is why, being aware of the leverage water provides in conflict, ISIS made seizing water resources and control systems a central pillar of their military approach from the outset (Mazlum, 2018, p. 113). Additionally, according to von Lossow, *“gaining control over the large dams on the Euphrates and Tigris, which makes it possible to manipulate the region’s most important water resources, has been a central pillar of ISIS expansionist strategy”* (von Lossow, 2016, p. 82).

In sum, the interaction between environmental challenges and the existence of terrorist groups in Syria underscores the necessity for comprehensive and advanced solutions.

Mitigating the devastating impacts of climate change is significant for long-term peace and security in the Middle Eastern region. That is why, the European Union's existing policies and financial aid play a vital role in bolstering Syria's resilience and promoting sustainable development, ultimately contributing to broader security. This also reflects the EU's focus on the security implications of environmental issues.

7.2. European Union's Securitization of Drought in Syria

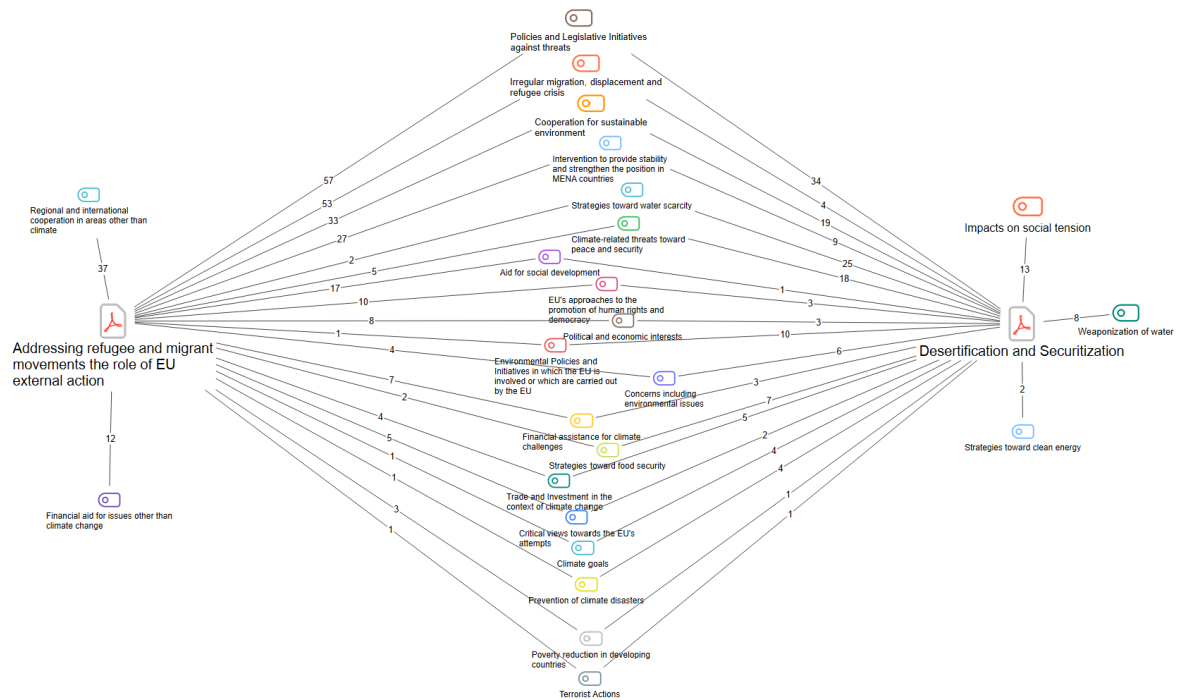


Figure 5: “Addressing refugee and migrant movements: the role of EU external action” and “Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘Water politics – Between desertification and securitization – Time for a Blue Diplomacy’” were analyzed in MAXQDA

The perspective of the European Union towards climate securitization in Syria includes a complex interplay between climate challenges and the element of stability. While EU leaders have often dwelled on the climatic pressures behind the conflict in Syria, the EU's position in this conflict has been remarkably distant at the same time. However, the Union is aware that climate challenges like droughts or floods tend to increase vulnerabilities in conflict-impacted communities (Lazard & Youngs, 2021, p. 8-20). The EU considers that climate-related problems in Syria, in particular water-related problems, hurt people's lives and have a significant impact on conditions across borders by increasing events considered security threats, such as migration or the influence of terrorist groups in the region. At this point, the EU recognizes climate

change as a security threat against its existence in the region and its economic and strategic interests (Vardakastanis, 2023, p. 2-5; European Parliament, 2018, p. 1-3). In this context, this part of the chapter will tackle the European Union's security perspective with drought and terrorist activities in Syria this is because these two points are both related to each other in terms of being a driving force, but also because they are issues that the EU addresses more from a security perspective in its reports.

Syria's current turmoil stemmed from a confluence of issues. Discontent with the government, controversial religious issues, social tensions, and a struggling economy all contributed to the eruption of violence. The economic problems were further exacerbated by water and climate challenges (Gleick, 2014, p. 331). Water scarcity has been framed as a security threat by the following two reports through computer-assisted qualitative coding; the European Parliament's report "Addressing refugee and migrant movements: the role of EU external action (2018)" and the European Economic and Social Committee's report "Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Water politics – Between desertification and securitization – Time for a Blue Diplomacy (2023)'"'. These two reports also help to understand which issues the EU addresses as security issues based on water scarcity.

Given the approaches of the European Union towards climate challenges, as seen in these two reports, it can be claimed that its approach is based on a perception of threat. With the help of the coding analysis, it is seen that the most prominent threats are related to climate-induced migration, and the points related to this are gathered under the code **Irregular migration, displacement, and refugee crisis**, together with the **Climate-related threats toward peace and security** code highlights other related threats.

In this context, before the 2011 uprising in Syria, the Syrian government failed to consider the link between water scarcity, climate change, and population displacement as a threat to national security. A prolonged drought plagued Syria from 2006 to 2011, triggering mass migration from agricultural regions. This mass migration led to food shortages, malnutrition, and the growth of informal settlements around cities. Notably, neighboring countries like Iraq, Turkiye, Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan experienced similar drought conditions, but none witnessed a humanitarian crisis as severe as

Syria's. Furthermore, despite previous Ba'ath Party policies emphasizing food security and rural development, the government under Bashar Al-Assad disregarded the drought's impact, particularly on migration (Weinthal et al., 2015, p. 301; Feitelson & Tubi, 2017, p. 46).

Considering the regional attitude before and after the 2011 uprising, as mentioned in the Parliament's Report, entitled, "Addressing refugee and migrant movements: the role of EU external action", migration is a human right cherished in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights Article 13. In addition to the UN's perspective, the EU also argues that people have a fundamental right to reside in their birthplace, where their roots and culture are firmly established (European Parliament, 2018, p. 40). When comparing the two reports on whether migration is a threat in the Middle East, it can be seen that the Parliament's report places a severe emphasis on it, given that this threat is not the main topic of the EESC report. Instead, it emphasizes the drivers of migration and does not mention this threat as often as the Parliament report. More people are moving than ever before, driven by issues like war, environmental changes, and economic inequalities. These movements are complex, with refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), and economic migrants in search of respect for the fundamental rights and well-being of everyone involved (European Parliament, 2018, p. 41, Vardakastanis, 2023, p. 4). Additionally, the EESC report, published in 2023, mentioned that;

"Climate change is also increasing the frequency, intensity, extent, and duration of droughts in many parts of the world. According to forecasts, droughts may affect over three-quarters of the world's population by 2050. Various UN reports estimate that by 2050, a combination of water and climate-related problems and conflicts will force approximately a billion people to migrate. In the global south, in particular, access to water is heavily restricted. This will further encourage displacement and migration towards the global north. The EESC, therefore, calls for the root causes (including water scarcity) to be tackled, rather than taking action against the refugees themselves, in order to curb these developments." (Vardakastanis, 2023a, p. 4).

On the other hand, some academic sources published in the same timeframe as the Parliament report (2018) also support the significance of the relationship between climate change, drought, and migration issues in Syria. Climate change has made a reverse contribution to the arid and semi-arid regions such as the Middle East and has increased droughts. Droughts have frequently affected the agricultural sector which is crucial for economic expansion (Feitelson & Tubi, 2017, p. 45; Weinthal et al., 2015). Agriculture, as the area most affected by drought, was a major source of livelihood in Syria pre-2011, with the industry generating around 20% of the country's \$45 billion GDP in 2009. For this reason, a long period of environmental decline in rural communities and ecosystems left them especially vulnerable when the drought hit (Weinthal et al., 2015, p. 301).

In this context, the mass movement to urban areas has triggered poor conditions for the urban population regarding employment rates, economic growth, resource depletion, and other social and economic areas. This situation not only exacerbated the Syrian civil war but also constituted a serious human rights violation for the people who migrated. Many conditions, including health conditions, have worsened for people staying in illegal tents (Feitelson & Tubi, 2017, 45). The European Union approaches this issue in a very close manner that exposition to physical and psychological violation, has been steadily repeated (European Parliament, 2018, p. 41). The EESC's 2023 report also emphasizes the importance of the EU spreading its influence to promote peace and environmental sustainability. According to the report, the committee sees the EU as a key player in driving progress and solutions in the Mediterranean and MENA regions, where shared water resources are a frequent source of tension, worsening the effects of climate change and desertification (Vardakastanis, 2023b, p. 1).

Considering these two reports published by the EU, water scarcity is the main theme and all other codes are shaped on it. The code of **Strategies toward water scarcity** represents the EU's approach to water scarcity in line with the climate-related threats. Given these two reports, the European Union needs to address water scarcity with comprehensive and strategic approaches. The Parliament's report drafted in 2017 and published in 2018 does not reflect the EU's strategic perspective towards water scarcity and droughts as much as the EESC's 2023 report. It commonly focuses on the

indirect consequences of water scarcity. For instance, the ongoing food crisis, unmet basic needs, and issues about nutrition are the most emphasized points in addition to violence and pressures against civilians by extremist groups (European Parliament, 2018, p. 41-51). The EESC report, entitled, “Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘Water politics – Between desertification and securitization – Time for a Blue Diplomacy’” argues that water management is highly crucial for the Middle East and North Africa and must be involved into other fields like agriculture or energy to deal with the devastating impacts of climate change. In this context, the EESC emphasizes the significance of the EU’s attempts to maintain peace and environmentally friendly actions. They believe the EU can be a catalyst for progress and transformation in the MENA region, where shared water resources have been a source of tension, worsening the effects of climate change and land degradation (Vardakastanis, 2023a, p. 2).

Additionally, while health problems, another consequence of the water problem, are mostly covered in the Parliament report within the scope of social rights, the EESC report emphasizes the awareness of water scarcity-related diseases and hygiene. For instance, the EESC mentioned that the EU’s Blue Diplomacy on water has also directly addressed health issues as a strategic initiative (Vardakastanis, 2023b, p. 1). According to the recent approaches to this issue, the ongoing conflict in Syria has devastated critical infrastructure, leading to a surge in illnesses caused by contaminated water. Before the war, Syrians relied on a robust network for clean water and sanitation, but much of it has been destroyed by violence, drought, lack of energy, or deliberate acts. This has left people with no choice but to resort to unsafe water sources like polluted rivers, unauthorized wells, and an increasingly prominent private water market (Lund, 2023; Reza, 2022).

Besides these, while the Parliament report points out the direct and indirect consequences of climate change, the EESC report sheds light on a specific issue in the context of the climate. **The Weaponization of water** code stands out as a sub-code of **Strategies toward water scarcity**. The concerns of desertification and resource scarcity have the EESC think that the European bodies must take various precautions to restrain the weaponization of water.

According to the report, in Syria, conflicts often arise from competing demands on water, such as irrigation, industrial use, flood control, pollution management, and navigation. However, extreme weather events and a growing shortage of fresh water are already causing disputes over access to and control of water resources around the world (2023b, p. 4). This situation foresees the weaponization of the water problem in a scenario where climate change is a threat multiplier and the European side has developed a security perception for this situation. Access to water is becoming a growing concern, especially in conflict-affected areas of the Middle East. In this regard, the conflict in Syria is a crucial example of this weaponization. The government has restricted access to water for millions of civilians, while ISIS has used water as a means of control. In addition, Türkiye has been accused of blocking water supplies. In another example, a water treatment plant in Idlib was targeted by Russian forces in early 2022 (2023c, p. 4). Furthermore, the report argues that there is a critical need to analyze the complex relationship between different functions of water and how various stakeholders rely on each other. The sides should look at the whole picture, including how water, energy, and food supplies are interconnected. The EU could be instrumental in pinpointing water-related challenges and potential conflicts between different groups. It is important to remember that water scarcity, along with the tensions and potential for violence it creates, is a growing threat to global peace and stability (2023d, p. 6). In this regard, the weaponization of water in Syria has been considered a crucial aspect of the Syrian conflict through diverse actors, including non-state actors, utilizing water to gain control over strategic advantages in the region (King, 2015, p. 8). In sum, according to a report published in 2015, a common argument was that the debate on access to water should be kept away from political discussions in Syria, as water is used as a tool by warring factions to gain benefits (The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 2015).

While reviewing the relationship between drought and different types of security in Syria, within the EU's framework, the most prominent code is **Policies and Legislative Initiatives against Threats** which represents the policies that the EU has identified or taken part in to realize its climate and sustainability goals. A global leader in addressing climate change, the European Union realizes its extensive impacts on security, stability, and economic growth, particularly in Syria. Europe has approached with a vigorous framework of policies and legislation to withstand these climate

challenges in the region. Recognizing the complex web of security, development, and human rights, the EU's foreign policy strategy underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to migration and climate change. The European Union tackles climate change and security risks towards people, economy, or social issues through various programs in this context. For instance, initiatives like the European Green Deal (2020) and the Climate Pact launched as part of the European Green Deal, promote sustainable practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (European Union, 2020). Additionally, the EU advocates "blue diplomacy" in the Middle East and North Africa, promoting water cooperation to prevent conflict, migration, and resource exploitation and bolster regional stability (European Parliament, 2018, p. 48; Vardakastanis, 2023, p. 5-6). Furthermore, Parliament recalls the importance of the EU adhering to its values and principles in all its policies and promoting them in its external relations, including those set out in Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union. In other words, it emphasizes the need for coherence in the EU's foreign policies and other policies with an external dimension (European Parliament, 2018, p. 42). Considering the speeches made by the European Union bodies on the consequences of climate change in Syria and the code analysis in the reports, it is seen that the EU approaches water-related issues as a threat. Indeed, migration and mass displacement due to water scarcity and declining agricultural activities are among the most important security threats.

On the other hand, the EU has prioritized the necessity and effectiveness of cooperation to maintain a balanced environmental space while pursuing a path of policies and legislative initiatives. This priority is categorized under the code of **Cooperation for a sustainable environment** to analyze the EU's security perspective towards humans, the economy, or other related issues and the relations in which it is integrated within the scope of climate. On the other hand, based on data from the Parliament's report, the code of **Regional and international cooperation in areas other than climate** represents the attempts regarding non-climate related issues. This part will merge these two codes for better understanding.

Within this scope, the EESC underscores that effective water management and integration of water with energy or food need to be taken into consideration through the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and its Water Expert Group which were

created within the scope of the Barcelona Process and enhance regional cooperation and necessary projects to provide sustainable development and stability. Moreover, the initiatives taken under this Union serve to realize the common political commitment to strengthen the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and are expected to be a driving force for change against desertification in the MENA region (Vardakastanis, 2023, p. 2; UfM, 2023). Furthermore, the Parliament report emphasizes that the EU must focus on the main reasons for forced displacement and migration and spend more effort to address them. It argues that these security threats must be addressed by promoting peace and security, justice and equity, and by strengthening institutions, administrative capacity, democracy, the rule of law and the emphasis on human rights and fundamental freedoms, and by acting in line with the Sustainable Development Goal in the 2030 Agenda and the principles set out in the United Nations Charter and international law (European Parliament, 2018a, p. 43).

The European Parliament also highlights the devastating consequences of environmental change because it is highly concerned by the ceaseless conflict in Syria: attacks against civilians, infrastructure destruction, disrespect for international law, and deteriorative living conditions due to climate challenges. These factors have forced the displacement of half of Syria's population in just five years. These urges the EU and member states in the report to strengthen their conflict prevention and crisis management tools. It emphasizes the need for a more active role in resolving conflicts near the EU's borders in Syria. Furthermore, the Parliament expresses its support for Syria's neighboring countries, which demonstrate remarkable solidarity by sheltering millions of refugees despite their limitations (2018b, p. 51; Feitelson & Tubi, 2017, p. 46).

Besides these, due to the ongoing political and economic destabilization in addition to the climate impacts, life turned extremely vulnerable for internally displaced people (IDPs) in Syria. The EU has been integrated into an important cooperative initiative aiming at conducting the flow of refugees and migrants; the EU-Türkiye Deal in March 2016. The main goal of the deal is to mitigate irregular migration and advance the living conditions of refugees in Türkiye. In this pact, Türkiye committed to receiving all migrants and refugees who entered Greece unlawfully. In return, for every Syrian who was sent back to Türkiye from the islands, European Union nations agreed to

accept one Syrian refugee who had been residing in Türkiye. Additionally, there has also been a debate on Türkiye's EU accession process and Schengen visa facilitation (Terry, 2021; What is the EU-Turkey deal?, 2022). In this context, the European perspective is aware of the pressure of international migration's impact on socioeconomic development that creates xenophobic approaches. That is why, they integrated into the "Together" campaign by the UN to decrease the negative approach to refugees and migrants. Additionally, the report emphasizes that the proportion of migrant or refugee children forges a crucial part of the massive movements and the EU must take action in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (European Parliament, 2018, p. 43-44).

Given the analysis of the EU reports, the code of **Cooperation for a sustainable environment** cannot be assessed without reviewing the economic engagements in the MENA region. **Financial assistance for climate challenges** code helps us understand that international trade agreements are evolving to address environmental concerns. Frameworks like the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the EU's agreements with the actors from the Middle East and North Africa prioritize sustainability alongside economic growth. This aims to minimize environmental damage and encourage practices that benefit the planet. In this regard, given the EU- Türkiye Deal again, the EU has provided certain financial assistance in line with its objectives. In exchange for Syrian refugees staying in Türkiye with improved conditions, 6 billion euros in aid to Turkey has been agreed (Terry, 2021). However, according to some critics, the agreement turned Türkiye into a temporary location for refugees, where conditions can be poor. Research has shown issues like crowded camps, limited access to essential services, and legal difficulties for refugees seeking asylum. Additionally, critics view the deal as a way for the EU to outsource its responsibility for refugees, raising concerns about how refugees are treated and cared for in Turkey (Malik, 2016). Additionally, the European Parliament adopts the Commission's proposal for the External Investment Plan (EIP) to mobilize EU investments in the EU's neighboring countries and third-developing countries, such as the MENA countries, provided that it is implemented that investments help improve conditions in beneficiary countries, addressing climate and other vulnerabilities; notes that the proposed European Sustainable Development Fund will be partly financed by allocations from the European Development Fund (EDF), the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI)

and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), which constitutes the use of development funds to stimulate private sector investment. In this context, the Parliament underlines the €3.35 billion earmarked for the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) as part of the EIP (European Parliament, 2018, p. 52). In addition to the Parliament report, according to the EESC report, in the MENA region, climate change and desertification worsen the existing problems. The EU, with its ongoing policies, can become a global and regional leader in promoting long-term solutions. Through initiatives like NDICI-Global Europe, the EU has committed significant funding (over €380 million) to collaborate with countries, water basin organizations, and regional bodies on better transboundary water management practices, aligning with the Global Gateway's goals (Vardakastanis, 2023, p. 7).

On the other hand, it is possible to say that the EU's approach to this issue is seen as an intervention and is realized in line with protecting its interests. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the EU's actions in its interests beyond the above-codified issues of policies, cooperation, and climate-related financial assistance. The code of **Intervention to provide stability and strengthen the position in MENA countries** and **Political and economic interests** enable this part to display the correlation between the EU, climate change, and securitization.

In Syria, devastating droughts have led to economic and social hardship, triggering migration and conflict. The EU's approach to these problems includes a fusion of humanitarian assistance, development initiatives, and the promotion of political settlement. The most significant facet of the EU's intervention is its approach to the migration issue aggravated by the Syrian Civil War. According to the European Parliament, the EU views forced migration as a complex issue with extensive consequences, extending beyond immediate humanitarian needs. The large number of displaced people, over 6.7 million, experiencing long-lasting displacement over 26 years with limited permanent solutions raises concerns for governance and economic development (European Parliament, 2018a, p. 41). The view behind this approach, which provides a broader perspective, is presented in the Parliament's report as follows. According to the report, the European Parliament;

“Stresses that the humanitarian aid system is extremely overstretched and that its financial resources will never be sufficient to respond to forced displacement crises, particularly given the protracted nature of a majority of them; takes note therefore of the new policy framework outlined in the Commission communication on ‘Forced Displacement and Development’ of April 2016 as a step in the right direction and calls on the EEAS and the Commission to implement its content within the new Partnership Framework with third countries; notes the importance of a comprehensive and more sustainable approach on migration, including the promotion of closer humanitarian-development links and the need to engage with different partners — regional actors, governments, local authorities, the diaspora, civil society, including refugee and migrant organisations, local religious organisations and relevant NGOs, and the private sector — to develop targeted evidence-based strategies to tackle this challenge while recognising that humanitarian aid is not a crisis management tool as stated in the EU Consensus for Humanitarian Aid;” (2018b, p. 43).

The following statement supports this article and calls on other actors within the framework of the Paris Agreement;

“Calls on the EU and Member States to take their responsibilities seriously concerning the challenge of climate change, to swiftly implement the Paris Agreement and to take a leading role in recognising the impact of climate change on mass displacement, as the scale and frequency of displacements are likely to increase; calls in particular on the EU to put sufficient means at the disposal of countries affected by climate change in order to help them to adapt to its consequences and to mitigate its effects; emphasises that this must not occur at the expense of traditional development cooperation aimed at reducing poverty; takes the view that persons displaced by the effects of climate change should be given a special international protection status which takes account of the specific nature of their situation;” (2018c, p. 47).

In addition to the article mentioned above, the interfering initiatives have been highlighted with the following sentences;

“Calls for the Common European Asylum System to also allow requests for asylum, as well as the processing of asylum claims, to take place outside the EU or at the EU’s external borders; calls for EU support in setting up humanitarian corridors when dealing with severe refugee and displacement crises, with the aim of providing humanitarian aid and ensuring that the most basic needs of these refugees are covered and their human rights are respected; notes the Commission’s proposal regarding the establishment of an EU framework on resettlement, but calls for work to continue at EU level on the creation and strengthening of legal routes that would be complementary to resettlement;” (2018d, p. 49).

However, as seen in the EU and non-EU reports analyzed, the EU's security approach does not have a very specific presence in Syria, contrary to the steps taken to mitigate the climate change effect in the Middle East region. In other words, there are general mitigation policies towards general climate change. However, the ones that are directly related to Syria are mostly socially and economically oriented to the conditions of migrants or to protect economic and political interests through specific cooperation. These are the approaches gathered under the following codes; **Political and economic interests**, **Aid for social development**, and **Financial aid for issues other than climate change** (European Parliament, 2018; Vardakastanis, 2023; van Veen et al., 2021).

This framework of the code of **Political and economic interests** focuses on the EU’s priority toward regional stability in the MENA region. However, the inclusion of Syria in the EMP, launched in Barcelona in 1995, was a noticeable manifestation of the EU's interest. Europe's recognition that stability and prosperity in its Southern Neighbors was crucial for the well-being of its member states led it to develop a relationship of interest towards Syria. Through the EMP, the alliance's objectives included promoting democracy and respect for human rights, facilitating trade, implementing liberal economic and social policies, and encouraging civil society and cultural exchanges. Syria's stability is crucial for the EU because of its potential to destabilize neighboring

countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and Türkiye. A protracted refugee crisis emanating from Syria is expected to cause serious challenges to the socio-economic and political components of these countries. Moreover, the EU is deeply concerned that Syria could enter a protracted period of chaos characterized by a fragmented state and internal divisions, similar to Lebanon's fifteen-year civil war. This scenario could lead to uncontrolled weapons proliferation, the risk of chemical weapons falling into the wrong hands, and the movement of extremist fighters (Pierini, 2014). In this regard, the Parliament resolution underscores the EU's initiatives regarding migration and Syrian refugees in the framework of the EU's external action, solidarity, human rights protection, and collaboration. It focuses on building a holistic strategy for addressing international conflicts and crises. This strategy aims to analyze the far-reaching impacts (economic, environmental, social, financial, and political) of displaced people on neighboring countries. This analysis can then be used to adjust development programs to better meet the needs of affected countries (European Parliament, 2018, p. 49).

The importance of the EU and the Member States is emphasized to follow the evidence-based data and economic and political stability both in the Member States and Syria. The closer cooperations with the UN bodies, particularly with the UNHCR and the UN-related International Organization for Migration (IOM) were acknowledged as a comprehensive attempt to strengthen the EU's position in this context. Additionally, the EU Action Plan towards migration is welcomed by the Parliament's resolution (European Parliament, 2018a, p. 43-48; Vardakastanis, 2023, p. 2). In this context, a balanced approach is tackled in line with the Partnership Framework by stating that it *“warns against any quantitative approach in the new Partnership Framework and the related ‘migration compacts’, which would consider the ‘measurable increases in the number and rate of returns’ as the EU’s main goal;”* (2018b, p. 41-49).

Looking at the code of **Aid for social development** to understand the EU's stance on non-climate related issues and tendency towards the socio-economic issues of the country, the report highlights the disproportionate burden on poor countries of the adversities faced in various areas, as 86% of global refugees reside in areas of high vulnerability. Least developed nations, hosting a quarter of the total, are particularly

strained. This influx further weakens their already fragile social and economic structures. To address this imbalance, the report emphasizes the need to prioritize humane living conditions for refugees, both within member states and camps. This includes ensuring access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities (2018c, p. 46). Within the scope of this code highlighted by the reports, the European Union and its member countries have been the primary providers of humanitarian aid and support to Syria and neighboring nations since 2011, contributing over €33 billion in humanitarian, developmental, economic, and stabilization assistance (EU pledges €2.12 billion in support of the future of Syria and the region, during Brussels Eight Conference, 2024). In addition, the EESC report differs, emphasizing that the potential of government representatives, private sector and civil society organizations, and women actors should also be assessed, taking into account that the EU requires cooperation between various actors (Vardakastanis, 2023, p. 6).

On the other hand, the code of **Financial aid for issues other than climate change** represents the indirect results of climate change in Syria. The Parliament report underlines the EU's leading role in global humanitarian aid, in particular in supporting refugees. However, the report makes a call for both the EU and its member states to realize their existing promises and boost financial contributions as humanitarian needs grow in line with the increasing refugee crisis. As a result of the code analysis conducted in the report, the code **Financial aid for issues other than climate change** gives importance to humanitarian aid by underlining that it should be the first line of defense in climate, non-climate, or displacement crises. It also emphasizes the importance of respecting international law and fundamental humanitarian principles (humanity, impartiality, neutrality, impartiality, and independence) in guiding the EU's response to refugee and displacement situations (European Parliament, 2018, p. 44). The report emphasizes the importance of strengthening the EU's external borders. This would deter unauthorized arrivals, disrupt human trafficking, and minimize migrant deaths at sea. The establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard, building upon Frontex's experience, is seen as a positive step towards improved migration management from a social and economic perspective. However, the report underlines the need for increased financial and technical assistance for border security in all southeastern EU member states (2018b, p. 49). In addition to that, according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the EU

contributed 150,000 EUR to humanitarian funding to support the people in vulnerable conditions due to the devastating water crisis and drought in Syria. This contribution enables the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) of the IFRC to address the crisis comprehensively (The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), 2021).

7.3. European Union's Security Perspective on the Relationship between Terrorist Activities and Climate Change in Syria

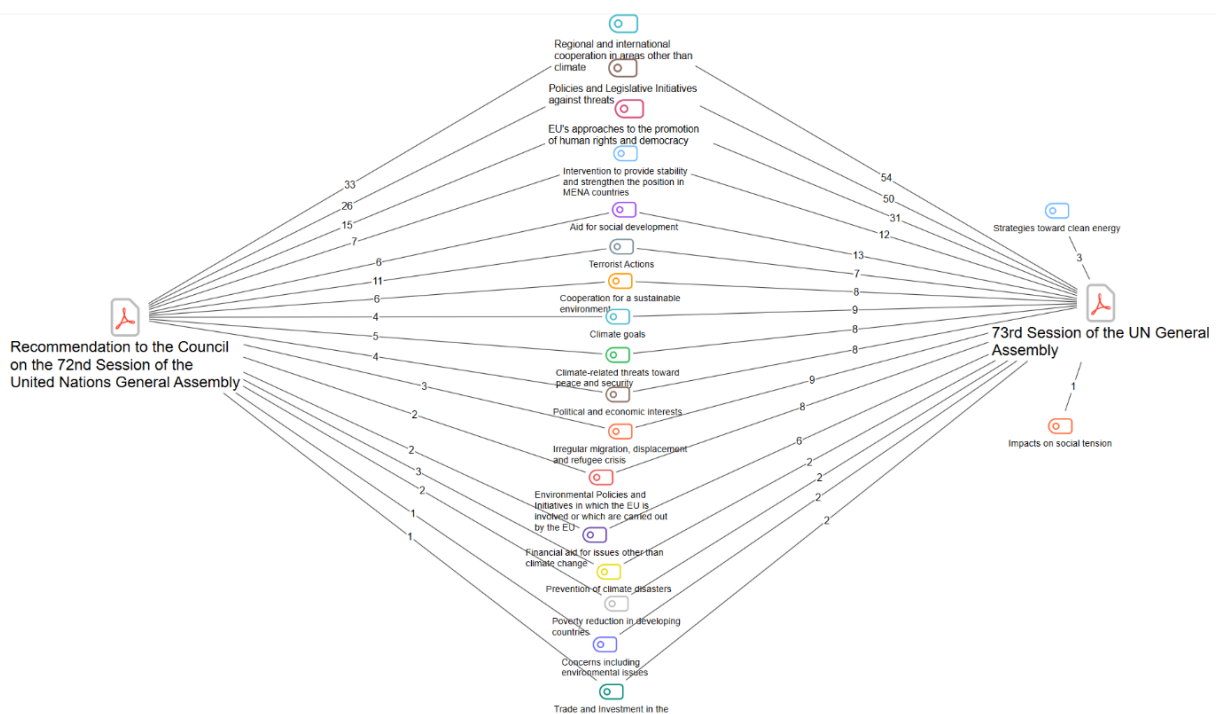


Figure 6: “Recommendation to the Council on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly”, and “European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly” were analyzed in MAXQDA

The European Commission indicated in 2014 that the European Union has encountered an important rise in violent acts derived from extremist ideologies. These incidents, often carried out by individuals or small groups, have had a devastating impact. Looking ahead, the EU is likely to continue to be spurred by the challenge of extremism. This could pose a security threat to the EU (European Commission, 2014, p. 11). Indeed, the Syrian Civil War which has been acknowledged as one of the worst humanitarian crises, has a rising destabilizing effect beyond the region through the mass displacement from the home country, and the spread of terrorism (European Commission, Elements for an EU Strategy for Syria, 2017). The European Union is

increasingly realizing the complex link between climate change and security, especially in conflict-intensive regions such as Syria. As mentioned by the European Parliament, the effects of environmental challenges aggravate the existing conflicts and vulnerabilities and create a suitable area for terrorist activities. From the security perspective, the EU highlights the significance of building climate resilience within conflict prevention initiatives. This aims to weaken the ability of terrorist groups to benefit from environmental pressures (European Parliament, Recommendation to the Council on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2018). A comprehensive perspective is required due to the varying challenges coming from climate change and terrorist activities. That is because the EU bodies point out the importance of advanced cooperation between national and international actors (European Parliament, European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2020). The EU recognizes that ensuring global security requires addressing climate change, as its negative impacts can destabilize regions and fuel terrorism.

Terrorist actors and their activities in the framework of climate change in Syria have become prominent in this context. Given the significance of the issue of terror in environmental challenges, this part of the chapter will tackle two reports from the European Parliament, respectively, “Recommendation to the Council on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly (2018)”, and “European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly (2020)”. These two reports help us understand which issues the EU addresses as security issues regarding the perspective of terrorism. Instead of examining the frequency of use, I am primarily aiming to analyze the impacts of climate change on terrorist / extremist activities through the code group of **Climate-Related Threats toward Peace and Security, Irregular Migration, Displacement, and Refugee Crisis** and **Terrorist Actions** that displays the direct and indirect results of environmental degradation within a cause-and-effect framework.

Within the framework of **Climate-Related Threats toward Peace and Security**, the European Union prioritizes how environmental changes worsen existing vulnerabilities in Syria as they consider that they pose security risks. Environmental pressures like water scarcity, intense weather conditions, and limited resources can

exacerbate instability, leading to disputes and environments conducive to violent extremism. The EU demonstrates its dedication to proactive climate solutions and global collaboration through its comprehensive approach to integrating climate action into all external endeavors (European Parliament, European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2020, p. 178). Additionally, the 2020 Parliament report reflects that the EU emphasizes the significance of addressing climate-induced issues through efficient disarmament, environmental sustainability, and contributing to a rule-based international order by following the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (European Parliament, 2020b, p. 166). In this context, the European Union has faced a complicated web of security threats, both longstanding and recent. These range from violent conflicts and cyberattacks to organized crime and climate change. The scale and interconnectedness of these challenges necessitate a coordinated and powerful response beyond national borders. The Parliament report argues that effective solutions need to be based on regional and global cooperation built on active engagement (European Parliament, Recommendation to the Council on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2018, p. 179). Given these factors, the EU's position is substantiated by various sources, demonstrating the validity of its standpoint and various sources provide compelling evidence supporting the EU's perspective. For instance, according to a news released in 2017, in Syria, natural resources, particularly water resources, have been steadily affected devastatingly and the conditions made it a “*valuable source of power*”. Terrorist groups, accordingly, can use water as a tool or tactic and control the sources by gaining control over dams. For instance, the Islamic State can use rivers and water resources as a weapon (Rüttinger, 2017) .

As another threat, the **Irregular Migration, Displacement, and Refugee Crisis** code is of great importance to the European Union. The European Union acknowledges that environment-induced pressures derived from climate change have led to the displacement of millions of Syrians since the beginning of the Syrian conflict. Effective support and enhanced cooperation have been emphasized by the European Parliament (European Parliament, European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2020, p. 176). The EU underlines the need to safeguard the rights of those displaced

internally and to create conditions that allow for their safe and dignified homecoming (European Parliament, 2018, p. 184; European Parliament, 2020, P. 178). Additionally, the main concern of the EU for Syrian refugees is that “*conflict, rising extremism and terrorism, human rights violations and other challenges to international law, and economic upheaval have resulted in major refugee flows*” and “*Growing numbers of refugees are arriving at the European Union's borders hoping to find a safer future*” (European Commission, Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, 2015). Differently from this view, the movement of young people migrating to conflict areas like Syria to join armed groups raises security concerns for the European Union. The European authorities think these individuals may become radicalized and pose a threat upon returning home (European Commission, An open and secure Europe: making it happen, 2014, p. 11).

Given the code of **Terrorist Actions**, European security concerns regarding Syria mostly focus on the dangers posed by extremist groups like ISIS. These groups thrive in unstable environments caused by war and environmental issues. The EU has continuously denounced terrorism and actively supports efforts to eliminate these groups as threats to regional and global security (European Parliament, Recommendation to the Council on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2018, p. 178). The EU prioritizes disrupting terrorist funding and strengthening global collaboration to combat terrorism (European Parliament, European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2020, p. 170). According to the existing literature, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) comes to the forefront in the context of climate vulnerabilities in Syria as the fragility in the region gives a breeding ground for this violent non-state actor (VNSA) to gain favor from the livelihood insecurity and water scarcity (Nett & Rüttinger, 2016; Ulutaş, 2016; Middendorp, 2019).

ISIS, a militant extremist group that originated from instability in Iraq and was later active in the civil war in Syria, has played an important role in the Syrian conflict through its violence and territorial control. Initially known as ISIL or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, it declared its caliphate. Government repression, existing ethnic and religious tensions, and widespread economic hardship have created a fertile

ground for extremism. Climate change, particularly severe droughts, has exacerbated these problems. In Syria, prolonged droughts have devastated agricultural communities, caused mass migrations, and strained urban resources. These environmental challenges have fueled instability and desperation, making the population more susceptible to the group's recruitment efforts. Their control over water resources, essential for both survival and agriculture, has become a strategic weapon, further cementing their dominance in the region (Nett & Rüttinger, 2016, p. 20-24; Ulutaş, 2016, p. 137-140). At this point, the view that there was a regional and international threat to the security of the countries and citizens of the European Union has been adopted (European Parliament, European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2020, p. 170).

The European Union prioritizes proactive measures to address threats perceptions and security concerns about the EU's stability. The code of **Policies and Legislative initiatives against threats** reflects the Union's strategy that focuses on policy and legislation to combat threats like climate change, terrorism, and regional instability (European Parliament, European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2020a, p. 168). The European Union emphasizes that effectively countering terrorism requires comprehensive approaches that address underlying issues like climate change. They advocate for collaboration with the UN to address terrorist financing, strengthen international police coordination, and prioritize education to counter radicalization such as *"support counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation policies in line with the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism"* (2020b, p. 170; Council, 2015, p. 19). The EU advocates for a Syrian-owned political solution facilitated by the UN, urging an immediate end to hostilities. They emphasize the need for justice for war crimes and atrocities, encompassing those involving environmental damage used as a weapon of war. The EU's strategy focuses on fostering a stable and inclusive political landscape to undermine the operational capacity of terrorist organizations like ISIS (European Parliament, Recommendation to the Council on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2018, p. 180-181).

In contrast to the previous section explaining the relationship between drought and terrorism, although the relationship between climate and terrorism has direct effects within the scope of cause and effect, its indirect effects have been more prominent in the academic field and on the agenda. For this reason, the **Regional and International Cooperation in Areas Other Than Climate Change** code has been the most prominent. The European Union recognizes that the security of EU citizens, the economy, and borders must be addressed beyond climate change, requiring cooperation between regions and at the international level. It does this through partnerships with many countries or non-governmental organizations, in particular the UN, aiming to bring stability and peace to regions affected by terrorism (European Parliament, Recommendation to the Council on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2018a, p. 181). The EU and its Member States are fundamentally committed to multilateralism, to the core values of the UN as an important part of foreign policy, and to the three pillars of the UN system. These are Human Rights, Peace and Security, and Development. It is often reported that a multilateral system based on universal values is the best way to deal with crises and threats (European Parliament, European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2020a, p. 166). Parliament calls on the EU and its Member States to speak with one voice and supports improved coordination of EU positions by the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU Delegations in New York and Geneva and Member States to strengthen EU coherence at the UN to find common ground and take action (2020b, 168). In line with the EU's involvement in counter-terrorism and preventive measures against violent extremism, the Parliament supports the UN in making counter-terrorism a key element of its prevention agenda and wants to strengthen joint EU-UN efforts in research and capacity building in the field of combating the root causes of violence and terrorism and in cyber defense. It also supports increased EU contribution to UN capacity-building initiatives on countering foreign fighters and violent extremism (2018b, p.183; 2020c, p. 170). In addition, in the context of humanitarian rights, which are outside the scope of climate change but are at the heart of the issue, the EU has engaged in serious cooperation with both the regional government and international actors to accelerate the access and distribution of EU humanitarian aid (ECHO) to the

insurgency zones, in cooperation with UN agencies, the ICRC and international NGOs (Bouris & Nacrou, 2018, p. 92).

The code of **EU's Approaches to the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy** is the other most prominent code while analyzing the European Parliament's reports as the European perspective advocates that all initiatives have been created in line with the promotion of human rights (European Parliament, Recommendation to the Council on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2018; European Parliament, European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2020). The security approaches that the EU wants to implement in Syria are the promotion of human rights and democracy for long-term stability and security, which the EU often emphasizes in its reports. In fact, the 2018 report specifically said: *"The European Parliament insists that all measures taken in the fight against terrorism should be fully in line with international humanitarian and human rights law;"* (European Parliament, European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2020, p. 167; European Parliament, Recommendation to the Council on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2018, p. 183). The EU has called on the international community to take action to protect the rights of vulnerable populations, including women and children. This call emphasizes the need to address the fundamental problems that fuel conflicts and human rights violations (European Parliament, Recommendation to the Council on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2018, p.184; European Council, EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, 2015).

In this context, the code **Intervention to provide stability and strengthen the position in MENA** describes how Europe uses its branches, cooperation, or partnerships to pursue its interests and intervene in the region. The code shows that the EU has been involved in diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to mitigate the impacts of terrorist actions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, particularly Syria. The EU supports coordinated action between Member States to promote stability through a common position in international forums and a joint effort to promote human rights and democratic principles (European Parliament, European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the

United Nations General Assembly, 2020, p. 166; European Council, 2015, p. 12). The EU emphasizes the importance of diplomatic interventions to bring about peaceful and sustainable solutions to the conflicts in the region and calls for cooperation and support for UN-led initiatives. Furthermore, the EU focuses on the impact on the EU of the humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict in Syria and calls on all UN Member States to provide the necessary financial and humanitarian resources to assist and support the affected population. (European Parliament, Recommendation to the Council on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2018, p. 180). The EU's involvement in the region's conflicts through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership indicates the EU's strategic approach and interest in promoting democracy and stability (Pierini, 2014, p. 7).

7.4. Conclusion

“Due to increasing global water scarcity, water is understood as a strategic security asset, which provides advanced positions to those states that are in control of it. To this end, the EU should focus increasing efforts on blue diplomacy and streamline it in its foreign policy and external relations, including neighborhood, trade, and development policies.”
(Vardakastanis, 2023, p. 1)

Given the analysis acquired from the reports “Addressing refugee and migrant movements the role of the EU external action” published in 2018 and “Desertification and Securitization” published in 2023, it can be observed that there are specific trends and alterations in the frequency of the referred codes over the years. The differences in the frequency of themes extracted from the reports reflect the shifting focus of EU policies and initiatives over time and underscore the changing international context and priorities in approaching complicated issues such as migration, climate challenges, and security concerns.

While reviewing the code analysis to understand the EU's approach to the relationship between climate change and security in the MENA region, the themes concerning **Irregular migration, displacement and refugee crisis** have been steadily highlighted. This displays the intense migration crisis faced by the EU in response to the large numbers of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe due to the Arab Spring

and post-Arab Spring conflicts in the Middle East, mainly in Syria. Climate change has played the role of a threat multiplier in this process. The EU response involved a combination of humanitarian assistance, policy regulation, and cooperation with third parties to regulate migration flows and provide support to migrants, and policies to counter these threats are the most emphasized issues in the reports published in two different years, and mostly around drought-induced migration. This perspective was also emphasized in both reports under the code of **Cooperation for a sustainable environment**.

In the 2018 perspective, on the other hand, a security perception was developed on the increasing sudden wave of migration, whereas in the 2023 report, this situation is more concentrated in the **Strategies toward water scarcity** code. From this analysis, it can be inferred that the immediate effects of climate change and the conflicts of the period are addressed as a priority, and then in the following years, the main causes of this situation are considered and policies started to be developed.

In addition, the most remarkable difference of the 2023 report is the stress on the effects of the **Weaponization of water**. This reflects the significance of water resources in situations including conflicts, like in Syria where tensions on the management of water resources have the potential to aggravate existing conflicts and can be utilized as a tool of struggle. That is why, the diplomacy of water, called the notion of “Blue Diplomacy” in the report, can be acknowledged as an important point for the EU’s foreign approach to prevent climate-induced conflicts and develop partnerships and cooperations toward transboundary water management (Vardakastanis, 2023).

On the other hand, the Parliament’s 2018 report focused on two crucial points differently from the 2023 report; **Regional and International cooperation in areas other than climate**, and **Financial aid for issues other than climate change**. These codes are mainly related to the following points from the report;

“whereas humanitarian aid based on needs and respect of the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, as well on compliance with international humanitarian law and the human rights provided by the Geneva Conventions and the additional protocols thereto,

must be at the core of all EU external action; whereas aid independence — i.e. aid that is free from any political, economic or security considerations or any type of discrimination — must prevail;” (European Parliament, 2018a, p. 42)

The codes argue that the EU and the Member States should take the necessary actions and adjust their agenda according to the pledges while raising their financial attempts in line with humanitarian needs and principles (2018b, p. 44). From the perspective of these two codes, the emphasis on education, poverty reduction, and health conditions highlights that the underlying humanitarian problems have been exacerbated and made more difficult by the addition of climate problems in the post-Arab Spring period.

The EU's perspective on migration has undergone a crucial transformation. The 2018 report focused on urgent humanitarian needs, but the 2023 report takes a wider view. It considers environmental sustainability, security threats linked to climate change, and proactive initiatives that can be implemented by the EU. This transformation reflects the European Union's approach to the interconnectedness of environmental issues, security, and social well-being. It demonstrates their commitment to tackling these challenges with long-term, multifaceted policies.

In addition to the understanding of security brought about by drought and predominantly climate change, the second milestone is the relationship between terrorist activities and climate change in Syria. The codes extracted from the following two reports “Recommendation to the Council on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly” published in 2018 and “European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly” published in 2020, reflect the focus of the EU's approach in line with the UN General Assembly over time.

Regional and international cooperation in areas other than climate is the most prominent code in the analysis of the impacts of terrorist activities. It shows that there is a remarkable increase in the themes that the code refers to from 33 (2018) to 54 (2020). This increase demonstrates the rising concern about threats coming from the exacerbating conditions in the region. It also highlights the EU's emphasis on strengthening the legislative framework to develop effective responses to rising threat

perception. This attitude was categorized and supported under the code of **Policies and Legislative Initiatives against threats** as the second most emphasized theme in the reports.

In addition, the rise of the Parliament's emphasis on the code of **EU's approaches to the promotion of human rights and democracy** reflects an important focus, this increase may point to a more integrated approach and greater prioritization, where human rights and democracy are embedded in broader initiatives. The rising focus on **Aid for social development** over the years supports the EU's external approach to economic and social development. Unlike the other reports, in the 73rd session, it is observed that the EU, together with the UN policies, emphasizes a lot on women under the concept of equality. This reflects the emphasis on the fact that this group is highly vulnerable due to climate and terrorism and that the conditions are mostly against them.

“to recall that the impacts of climate change are experienced differently by women and men; to underline that women are more vulnerable and face higher risks and burdens for various reasons, ranging from unequal access to resources, education, job opportunities and land rights, to social and cultural norms; to stress that this should be reflected accordingly; to ensure that women play a central role in finding solutions for mitigating and adapting to climate challenges, including international climate negotiations, with a view to developing gender-sensitive responses to address underlying inequalities;” (European Parliament, European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2020, p. 179).

Besides these, unlike the previous two reports, there is no code for **Financial assistance for climate challenges**. This suggests that the perception of terror threats in these two reports, published in 2018 and 2020, is more concentrated in the social and political spheres. In this regard, the code of **Environmental Policies and Initiatives in which the EU is involved or which are carried out by the EU** was emphasized less than the other codes.

On the other hand, the main focus of this section is terrorist actions, the code **Terrorist Actions** is not often reported in terms of terminology, but conceptually forms the basis of other codes. The increase in the emphasis on terror between the two years supports this. This trend could be attributed to either the effectiveness of past interventions or a shift in the EU's security priorities. In this context, **Cooperation for a sustainable environment**'s consistent increase in the emphasizes the ongoing need to build a global stance against terror. Additionally, the code of **Climate-related threats toward peace and security** indicates an increase from 2018 to 2020 and it reflects the perception regarding the nexus between environmental challenges and security concerns in the MENA region. The themes included in the code of **Irregular migration, displacement, and refugee crisis** support the security concern of the EU because these themes are based on a highly interrelated cause-and-effect relationship. Climate change, especially the drought in Syria, affects a resource management issue that leads to the weaponization of natural resources and the active role of non-state actors. This in turn affects stability and social and economic security.

This chapter and the analysis show both persistent trends and changes in areas of emphasis. Increased references to broad cooperation and legislative action against threats and security risks linked to climate change indicate a shifting focus in the post-Arab Spring period. In contrast, the persistent mention or decline of promoting human rights, terrorist activities and non-climate financial assistance suggests adjustments in strategy or a more unified approach within the EU's overall policy framework. Additionally, the European Union's efforts to address climate-related security issues, migration, and terrorism in Syria have been examined. This analysis demonstrates the complex characteristics of these problems. The insights from this chapter provide a fundamental understanding of the factors contributing to instability in Syria.

Lastly, while looking at the theoretical framework of the thesis in the context of the case country; Syria, the Realist and Critical Security Theory have been used because they play a complementary role in discussing climate change's impacts. While the realist perspective allows the thesis to address traditional concerns about regional or human security, Critical Security Theory emphasizes the importance of other variables such as socioeconomic vulnerabilities or environmental challenges (Bilgin, 2005, p. 45). Combining these two approaches, the thesis shows that the EU's securitization of

climate change is not only a reaction to exacerbating threats but also demonstrates deeper ethical and security concerns regarding regional stability and human security (Daoudy, 2023, p. 2; Meyer et al., 2021, p. 7). Additionally, the Syrian case highlights the combination of these theories. It reflects how the intersection of state-centric issues and broader human security concerns creates a more comprehensive framework for understanding security in the context of climate change. This approach accordingly reveals that studying security cannot be restricted to military or state-focused concerns; rather, it must consider the broader social and environmental issues that pattern regional fragility and resilience (Anzellini et al., 2020, p. 15; Buzan et al., 1998, p. 22).



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C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Bu tez, Avrupa Birlięi'nin (AB) Orta Doęu ve Kuzey Afrika (MENA) blgesinde iklim deęiřiklięi ve blge ve insan gvenlięi arasındaki iliřkiye ynelik yaklařımını ele almaktadır. Bu baęlamda AB'nin Suriye'yi rneęi kapsamında benimsedięi politikaları da gz nn de bulundurarak iklim sorununu nasıl gvenlikleřtirdięi deęerlendirilmektedir. İklım deęiřiklięi, yalnızca evresel bir sorun olarak deęil, aynı zamanda blgede mevcut olan sosyal, ekonomik ve politik istikrarsızlıkları daha da derinleřtiren bir gvenlik sorunu olarak ele alınmıřtır.

İklım Deęiřiklięinin Gvenlikleřtirilmesi

Tezde, AB'nin iklim deęiřiklięi sorununu nasıl gvenlikleřtirdięi incelenmiřtir. Gvenlikleřtirme kavramı, bir sorunun, sadece politik bir perspektiften bakılmadıęı, acil mdahale gerektiren bir gvenlik tehdidi olarak ele alınmasını temsil etmektedir. AB, iklim deęiřiklięi ile ilgili meseleleri, Avrupa Komřuluk Politikası (ENP) ve Akdeniz iin Birlik (UfM) gibi stratejik adımlar aracılıęıyla bir gvenlik meselesi olarak iřlemiřtir. Bu erevede, AB'nin Orta Doęu'daki varlıęı, sadece iklim deęiřiklięinin olumsuz sonularını azaltmaya ynelik deęil, blgesel istikrarı saęlamaya ve gvenlięi artırmaya ynelik olarak da řekillendirilmiřtir.

Suriye rneęi

Tezde Suriye, AB'nin iklim deęiřiklięi ve bu konuyla iliřkili gvenlik politikalarının incelendięi bir vaka alıřması olarak ele alınmıřtır. Suriye'de 2011'de bařlayan i savař, uzun sreli kuraklık, ve ekonomik gerilemenin nemli bir rol oynadıęı toplumsal sorunların bir sonucudur. AB, bu durumun olumsuz etkilerini hafifletmeye ynelik politikalar geliřtirmeye meyillidir. zellikle, su gvenlięi, gıda gvenlięi ve enerji gvenlięi gibi kritik alanlarda, AB'nin blgedeki giriřimleri detaylı bir řekilde ele alınmıřtır.

İklim Değişikliği ve Güvenlik Arasındaki İlişki

Çalışma, iklim değişikliği ile güvenlik kavramı arasındaki etkileşimin ne kadar karmaşık olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Dolaylı da olsa iklim sorunu, Suriye'deki mevcut çatışmaların temel nedenlerinden biri olarak görülmekte ve bu durum, AB'nin bölgedeki güvenlik stratejilerini belirlemektedir. İklim değişikliğinin etkileri, özellikle tarımsal üretimdeki düşüş, su kaynaklarındaki azalma ve bu durumların yaratabileceği sosyal ve ekonomik baskılar, tezin merkezinde yer almaktadır.

AB'nin bu bağlamda benimsediği yaklaşım, sadece kısa vadeli insani yardımlar değil, aynı zamanda uzun vadeli dayanıklılık ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma stratejilerini de kapsamaktadır.

Avrupa Birliği'nin Politikaları

Tez, AB'nin MENA bölgesindeki güvenlik ve çevre politikalarının nasıl şekillendiğini ele almaktadır. AB, bu politikalar aracılığıyla, hem bölgedeki istikrarı sağlamayı hem de iklim değişikliğinin olumsuz etkilerini azaltmayı amaçlamaktadır. Analiz edilen raporlarda, AB'nin öncelikleri arasında, insani krizlerin önüne geçmek ve çevre merkezli işbirliklerini arttırmak yer almaktadır.

AB'nin Suriye'deki insani kriz, kuraklık ve terörizm gibi sorunları ele alma biçimi, AB'nin bölgedeki daha kapsamlı güvenlik politikalarına ışık tutmaktadır. Tez, AB'nin bölgedeki müdahalelerinin etkinliğini ve yıllar ve olaylara göre etkinliğini analiz etmekte ve bu bağlamda analizlerin ne anlama geldiğini açıklamaktadır.

Teorik Çerçeve

Çalışma, AB'nin MENA bölgesindeki iklim değişikliğine yönelik güvenlik politikalarını iki ana teorik perspektiften ele almaktadır: Realist ve Eleştirel Güvenlik Yaklaşımları. Realist perspektif, devletlerin uluslararası alandaki davranışlarını ve güvenlik kaygılarını ele alırken, Eleştirel Güvenlik Yaklaşımı, daha geniş bir bakış açısıyla iklim değişikliğinin toplumsal ve ekonomik etkilerini inceler. Bu iki perspektif, AB'nin bölgedeki stratejilerinin anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunurken iklim değişikliğinin çeşitli aktörler gözünde nasıl algılandığı tartışılmıştır.

Sonuç

Tezde AB'nin iklim deęişikliği ve güvenlik politikalarının, MENA bölgesindeki istikrar ve güvenlięi sağlamada, korumada ve iklim deęişikliğinin olumsuz etkilerini hafifletmede ne derece etkili olduęu ve iklim deęişikliği konusunu nasıl güvenlikleştirdiği tartışılmaktadır. AB'nin bölgedeki politikalarının, ilişkili ve çok taraflı yaklaşımlar gerektirdiği vurgulanmakta ve bu durumun sağlanması için öneriler sunulmaktadır.

Tez ayrıca, AB'nin bu politikaları uygularken karşılaştığı zorluklara da dikkat çekmekte ve bu sorunların giderilmesi için neden-sonuç ilişkisi kurarken daha güçlü bir işbirliği gerektiğinin de altını çizmektedir. Özellikle, yerel toplulukların desteklenmesi, bölgesel işbirliğinin sağlanması gerekmektedir.

Bu çalışma, AB'nin Orta Doęu'daki iklim deęişikliğine yönelik güvenlik politikalarının daha iyi anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır ve bu alanda yapılacak gelecek araştırmalar, çalışmalar ve analizler için bir referans noktası olmayı hedeflemektedir.

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