Institut européen
European Institute

Master in Advanced European and International Studies

Applied European Policy and Governance Studies

The EU Trade and Climate Change Nexus: A Study of European Climate Ambition Inclusion Paths in Free Trade Agreements

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2023

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis supervisor,
Laurent Baechler, who guided me throughout this project.

I would like to show my appreciation to my second reader *Anna Dimitrova*.

Furthermore, I deeply appreciate the year-long efforts of programme director
Susann Heinecke-Kuhn and the entire CIFE staff.

I would also like to thank my friends and family,
who supported me during this time.

Abstract

The European Union has positioned itself as the global climate leader over the past decades. Its ambitions are wide-ranging. Enshrining the goal of net-zero carbon neutrality until 2050 in the European Green Deal legislative package, the EU has mandated one of the world's most ambitious climate change addressing policy frameworks on its territory. However, climate change knows no borders. As a human-made phenomenon with drastic global repercussions, the climate crisis is an issue that will not be resolved by the Union alone. As the European Union is the international community's largest trading block, a huge bargaining capacity is conferred to it due to its market size. Recently, the EU has used preferential free trade agreements to push for climate ambition among its trading partners, recognising the need for environmental action and the efficiency of trade policy to achieve the latter. The central research question answered by means of a multi-method qualitative research approach, utilising literature, policy analysis and theory, reads "*In which ways do the European Union's preferential and free trade agreements with global partners include and reflect the EU's self-given climate ambitions?*". This thesis argues that four theoretical foundations best explain how the EU includes these climate ambitions in four different trade agreements. Arguably, the Mercosur trade agreement follows the theory of economic policy, CETA includes climate ambitions in efforts outlined by issue linkage theory, the SADC EPA mirrors logics of political ecology and Vietnam's EVFTA references climate goals along paths of Europeanisation theory.

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"Trade is an essential tool in our arsenal for climate action — for mitigation, adaptation, and fostering a just transition. […] Trade - even though physical transport involves emissions - can be a force for good for the climate. Trade is not just a vital means for diffusing green technology, it is an enabler of greater prosperity and resilience in the face of climate shocks. […] Trade is part of the solution for a low-carbon, resilient and just transition - a force multiplier for global efforts to address climate change"

WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (2022)

I – Introduction

I.1 - Climate Change: A Global Issue with Destructive Consequences for the European Union

Climate change is one of the most important and pressing challenges the world is facing currently. It threatens the Union already today by continuing to affect Europe and the rest of the world: Land and sea temperatures are increasing, precipitation patterns are changing, the sea ice extent is decreasing while sea levels are rising and climate-related extreme weather events such as heat waves, heavy precipitation and drought are increasing in both frequency and intensity (EEA 2017). In fact, temperatures in Europe have increased more than twice the global average in the last 30 years, higher than in any other continent according to the World Meteorological Organisation (Ellerbeck 2022). The State of Climate in Europe report, produced and issued jointly with the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service, notes that over the 1991 to 2021 period, temperatures in Europe have increased at an average rate of about half a degree Celsius per decade (WMO 2022). As these trends proliferate themselves, extreme weather events such as floods, wildfires or droughts will continuously impact society, economies and ecosystems (idem). These ramifications are highly dangerous not only for Europe but also for the European Union: Northern member states will suffer from floods and fires, while the EU's south will experience unprecedented cases of drought, urban heat and an agricultural decline accenting one of the Union's biggest political fault lines (Mathiesen et. al. 2021). According to a Politico survey of more than 100 scientific papers, these disruptions will deepen existing divides and potentially have severe consequences on Europe's historically unique grand political integration project (idem).

Indeed, the projected damage tolls from climate change are considered to be highest in southern Europe, however, the entire Union will suffer from high economic costs, even for modest levels of climate change (EEA 2017). Already today, the levies of climate change are undeniable. Within the European Union, climate-change-related events such as heat waves, floods and storms, have caused economic losses of over 145 billion Euros just over the past decade (Eurostat 2022). But addressing these issues solely domestically

is not an effective path towards the mitigation of climate change. Europe is vulnerable to climate change outside of the continent. The European Environmental Agency identifies six pathways through which global climate change impacts affect the Union: the trade of agricultural commodities, the trade of non-agricultural commodities, infrastructure and transport, geopolitics and security risks and human mobility related to migration and finance (EEA 2017). These cross-border spill-over effects as a consequence of climate change will challenge the EU for decades to come. Climate change is a global issue, calling for global solutions. Developing countries, states with high levels of poverty and countries with ineffective governments are most at risk from climate change (Law 2019). Although being a global problem, the impacts of climate change will not be felt equally across the planet (EPA 2023). Africa may be most vulnerable to climate variability because of existing stresses and low adaptive capacity (idem). Increased flooding and population growth affect the heavily populated delta regions in southeast Asia, Savanna is projected to slowly replace tropical forests in eastern Amazonia and disturbances from fires are increasing areas burned in North America, highlighting the planetary scale of climate change fallouts (idem).

I.2 - The European Union: An Ambitious Climate Leader with Distinct Environmental Goals

The European Union recognises these challenges of climate change and has positioned itself as a frontrunner in climate change mitigation with highly ambitious policy goals aiming to curb the emission of greenhouse gasses in order to limit the global rise of temperatures. The European Green Deal, a priority of the Von der Leyen Commission, sets out clear targets. By 2030, a 55% reduction of carbon emissions compared to 1990 levels is aimed at (Consilium 2022 a). Ultimately, the EU is set to become climate-neutral by 2050 (idem). These goals shape the EU's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to achieve the 1.5 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels goal embedded in the 2015 Paris agreement (European Climate Foundation 2021). Key elements of the European Green Deal include, but are not limited to, prioritising energy efficiency, developing a power sector based mainly on renewable energies, securing an affordable energy supply,

a circular economy action plan, a review and revision of the relevant climate-related policy instruments, including the Emissions Trading System (ETS), a Farm to Fork strategy, a revision of the Energy Taxation Directive and looking closely at fossil fuel subsidies and tax exemptions, a sustainable and smart mobility strategy and an EU forest strategy (Christoforidou 2020: 6-8). The European Green Deal is set to be achieved through partnerships with industry and member states and through supporting research and innovation on transport technologies, such as batteries and clean hydrogen (idem: 9).

However, since the EU only accounts for 8 per cent of global emissions, with a downward trend, an ambitious Union-internal climate policy is not enough (Consilium 2023 a). "Climate change does not stop at borders and spares no country. EU countries work with global partners to advance and finance climate action" (idem). The European Union has thus embedded climate change as a shaping element of its external action policy to work together with global partners in order to advance international initiatives addressing climate change. As early as 2008, High Representative Javier Solana and the European Commission have identified climate change as a threat multiplier for security and stability across the globe (Consilium 2008: 2). The "Solana Report" focussed on the impact of climate change on international security and how this affects Europe's own security with an emphasis on responsive action paths (ibid.). Conflicts over resources, economic damage and risks to coastal cities and critical infrastructure, loss of territory and border disputes, environmentally-induced migration and tensions over energy supply are some of the most important threats to EU security enumerated and call for clear addressing through EU external action means (idem: 3-5). The enhancement of capabilities at the EU level, EU multilateral leadership and cooperation with third countries were recommended (idem: 9-11). These environmental menaces to EU security have remained and EU climate diplomacy has since evolved into a central aspect of the Union's external action. Prioritising climate action with partners worldwide is a defined goal of the European Union - in diplomatic dialogues, public diplomacy and external policy instruments (Climate Diplomacy 2023). Making the case for more ambitious climate action in bilateral interaction with partner countries is thus of central importance to the EU (idem).

I.3 - The Global Trade-Climate Nexus

In the climate-foreign policy debate, only limited attention is paid to international trade and trade agreements. Trade, being an EU exclusive competence, takes a central position in the Union's external action approach. The European Union is the world's largest trading block and the top trading partner for over 80 countries (European Commission 2023 a). Indeed, the connections between climate change mitigation and global trade systems become ever more important. Trade is a defining feature of globalisation through cross-border supply chains, production networks and other transnational economic developments (Dent 2021: 1). From just 30 per cent in the 1970s, trade has risen to a dominant 60 per cent share of global GDP in the 2020s (ibid.). As the contemporary international value creation system heavily relies on the use of carbon-intensive resources, trade cannot be ignored in a determined effort to tackle climate change issues. By some, trade is seen as a central catalyst of global warming. The key assumption is that an increase in international trade inevitably leads to more natural resource use and upward trends in fuel use to transport goods (Box 2021). Rules set by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and free trade agreements (FTA's) would have exacerbated issues such as deforestation and pollution (idem). Similarly, a "race to the bottom" in environmental standards as a result of fears of decreasing international competitiveness is argued to be a pitfall of the global trade regime (NBER 2002). Conversely, trade could play a major role in helping countries to reduce emissions by increasing the availability and affordability of environmental goods, services and technologies (WTO 2022). Arguably, international trade and climate change policies can be mutually supportive in facilitating the considerable economic investments needed to transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy (idem).

Taking the abovementioned into account, preferential free trade agreements have become another means through which climate action goals can be achieved for an increasing number of countries (Dent 2021: 4). By removing tariffs, harmonising standards on environmental goods, eliminating distorting subsidies on fossil fuels and in the agricultural sector, committing to international climate agreements and exchanging best-practice climate knowledge, trade agreements can help foster climate change mitigation strategies (Balogh and Mizik 2021: 1). Concurrently, trade agreements have to be

fashioned in a manner that accounts for the pejorative consequences of increased value exchanges: pollution-intensive activities, carbon emissions from fossil fuel combustion, degradation of natural resources through production growth and deforestation inter alia (idem: 2). Clauses and language of trade agreements of the past years have indicated a more symbiotic relationship between the climate ambitions of the signing partners and the desired intensification of bilateral trade (Griffin et. al. 2019: 11). The EU has preferential trade agreements with about 70 countries worldwide (Department for Enterprise 2023). These represent nearly 32 per cent of the EU's external trade (idem). According to the European Commission, negotiating these trade agreements on behalf of its member states, these must safeguard the effective implementation of the Paris agreement on climate change, enforce environmental laws, prevent a "race to the bottom", emphasise sustainable resource use and induce cooperation for a shift to a circular and resource-efficient economy as set out in the EU's vision for a climate neutral Union (Commission 2023 b).

I.4 - Research Question, Studied Cases and Thesis Structure

This thesis centres its analysis on the above-described trade-climate nexus. As outlined, trade and the introduction of climate change-sensitive clauses within free trade agreements could factor positively into the planetary struggle against global warming. Conversely, trade can foster developments impinging on goals agreed upon internationally, namely the 1.5 per cent target of the Paris agreement. The European Union prides itself on being the global climate leader whilst also being the largest trading block in the world, contributing to unprecedented levels of development within its member states. Only moderate research has been undertaken into the intersection of the EU's climate goals and its ambition for intensified and "greener" trade with its present and future partners. The exploratory-prescriptive research question "*In which ways do the European Union's preferential and free trade agreements with global partners include and reflect the EU's self-given climate ambitions?*" arises from this European aspiration and guides this thesis' research outlook. This thesis hypothesises that four distinct theoretical frameworks best explain climate goal inclusion within the four trade agreements.

This thesis academically assesses this central research question by means of four case studies. In order to reflect both the global scale of climate change issues as well as the diverse and international range of the Union's trade relations, four distinct EU trade agreements, on four different continents and in varying stages of application, have been considered and evaluated as for their incorporation of defined EU climate goals, ambitions and international commitments. The EU-Mercosur agreement, although not yet entered into force, would represent the largest trade deal struck by both the EU and Mercosur in terms of the number of citizens involved (FT 2019) – it is however criticised as driving deforestation and lacking effective environmental enforcement mechanisms. The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the European Union is famed as including some of the strongest binding commitments promoting environmental protection (Commission 2023 c). The EU-Southern African Development Community (SADC) Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) aims to facilitate investment, trade and development in a region considered to be one of the most vulnerable to climate change with specific asymmetric provisions in favour of the signing South African countries (FES 2021). Finally, the EU-Vietnam Trade Agreement includes a chapter on sustainable development addressing climate issues, in the eyes of some compromising between business interests and environmental goals. The continued relevance and need for climate action motivate this thesis' research on environmental and climate-sensitive goal incorporation in these trade agreements.

This thesis will first provide a theoretical framework serving as an analytical lens for the ensuing argumentation. Relevant theories such as the theory of economic policy, political ecology, issue linkage and global Europeanisation theory are discussed. The following chapter touches upon the methodological research strategy used to answer the research question. The case study multi-methods approach is discussed in detail while highlighting the benefice of triangulating primary and secondary sources such as trade agreements, academic contributions and journalistic work. Furthermore, an exhaustive literature review introduces previously studied mechanisms of the trade agreements and the academic debate on the interconnectivity of trade and climate action within the four cases and illustrates the identified literature gap. Based thereon, a hypothesis is developed. The analytical chapter of this thesis presents key research outcomes in linking theories to trade agreements and introduces diverging patterns of goal inclusion and reasonings based on

an analysis of literature and the agreements themselves. Finally, a discussion of thesis findings considers limitations, before concluding on thesis outcomes as well as remaining questions and suggestions for further research.

II – Theoretical Framework

The following chapter outlines this thesis' theoretical foundations. The four theories framing the ensuing analysis of the four respective EU trade agreements are the theory of economic policy, issue linkage, political ecology and global Europeanisation theory. The theoretical framework touches upon key assumptions of each theory and highlights the main academic contributors to their development. Furthermore, each theory is operationalised for means of this analysis in assessing their relevance and pertinence to an understanding of the international trade-climate nexus.

II.1 - Theory of Economic Policy: Bridging Economic and Non-Economic Policy Goals

For the European Union, trade and market access to the single market is both a means to attain economic goals such as an intensification of value exchanges between its member states and global partners, but also a tool to pursue non-economic goals – values such as environmental protection and the fight against climate change. Indeed, the Union's external action goals stem from its own internal values: Among others, the EU's domestic ambition to limit greenhouse gas emissions and its effort to transition to a green economy in a climate-neutral society by 2050 thus shape its interaction with global partners (European Union 2023). In her 2020 state of the Union address, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stated in front of the European Parliament plenary that the EU will "continue to believe in open and fair trade across the world. Not as an end in itself – but as a way to deliver prosperity at home and promote our values and standards. […] We will use our diplomatic strength and economic clout to broker agreements that make a difference […] This would be one of the biggest acts of environmental protection in history. We will form high ambition coalitions on issues such as […] fighting deforestation – and develop partnerships with all like-minded partners – from Asian democracies to Australia, Africa, the Americas and anyone else who wants to join" (European Commission 2020). The President openly states that the Union pursues a mix of economic and value-driven aims in its external trade policy and in the brokerage of international trade agreements. The theory of economic policy offers a framework for

assessing the joint pursuit of economic objectives and non-economic objectives such as climate change policy forwarding. The theory of economic policy ranges back to the contributions of Tinbergen and Theil and presents solutions to policy problems "resulting from the interaction of a policy objective, representing some abstract policymaker's desires, with a policy model representing the feasible outcomes of policy actions" (Preston and Pagan in Acocella et. al. 2012). Economic policy as applied to trade was pushed for mainly by Meade, Corden, Johnson and Bhagwati and partners (Francois et. al. 2022: 10). Here, economic objectives are defined as distortions and policy responses thereto – for example, the elimination of government-made trade barriers to the free flow of goods (ibid.). Non-economic objectives are outlined as goals non-measurable by capital and seen more as constraints to the achievement of the latter (ibid.). Put more simply, the theory can be reduced to three basic questions: "What is the problem?", "What instruments are available to deal with the problem?" and "Of those instruments, which politically feasible one(s) achieves the goal at the lowest cost?" (idem: 8). Although these three questions may seem straightforward, they are essential to be defined in detail for the sake of this thesis' research.

The economic objective of EU trade policy and its trade agreements with global partners can be described as increased economic welfare for its citizens. The EU negotiates trade agreements to strengthen the Union's economy and create jobs, help businesses access resources at a low cost, compete more effectively abroad, export more to countries outside of the EU and give consumers a wider choice of products at lower prices (European Commission 2023 d). As to the first question of problem-identification, Arthur Cecil Pigou, a pioneer of welfare economics, recognises that the differentiation between economic and non-economic goals might not always be unambiguous, however, "though no precise boundary between economic and non-economic welfare exists, yet the test of accessibility to a money measure serves well enough to set up a rough distinction" (Pigou 1920: 30). Whereas economic growth and the intensification of trade relations through imports and exports can be easily traced through money measures, non-economic value goals such as environmental aims cannot be easily quantified monetarily. This distinction serves as the main contrast between trade – the economic objective, and climate action – the non-economic objective. This thesis does not assess these non-economic objectives

as constraints on the achievement of economic objectives. Much rather, it assumes the possibility of parallel achievement of both, in line with EU external policy goals.

The use of preferential access to its market in the achievement of non-trade policy objectives is a long-standing practice in EU foreign policy (Borchert et. al 2020). Relating to the second question of the theory of economic policy, it has been argued that trade policy is indeed the central tool of EU external action (Sapir in idem). The carrot-and-stick mechanism of trade with one of the world's most desired consumer bases is thus arguably the best available instrument to deal with the issue of pushing for global ambition in climate change policy (Borchert et. al 2020). Furthermore, the European Union, its member states and the European Investment Bank are the biggest contributors of public climate finance to developing economies, providing over 23 billion Euros in 2021 alone (European Commission 2023 e). The EU has developed an action plan for financing sustainable growth as well as a strategy for financing the transition to a sustainable economy, emphasising the Union's willingness to strive towards of global solution of equitable and sustained transition mechanisms (idem). Both of these are crucial in allocating significant funds towards the international struggle against climate change – however, from a theory of economic policy perspective, alluding to its third central question, are not the policy solution with the lowest cost. This thesis will not argue to abandon these important EU contributions towards environmentally sustainable growth but instead focuses on the potentially most cost-efficient means of climate action: trade agreements with stringent climate clauses. In what manner the EU's climate goals reflect in its trade agreements is central in an academic assessment of whether this cost-efficient manner of climate goal achievement is a viable path for EU international environmental action. Non-economic goals or non-trade provisions in EU trade agreements could systematically positively affect non-trade outcomes in partner countries (Ferrari et. al. 2021: 13). The theory of economic policy will thus serve as an assessing lens in the ensuing analysis of climate goal inclusion in four selected EU trade deals.

II.2 - Issue Linkage Theory: Coordinated Settlement of Joint Issues

As repeatedly argued by the European Union and evident in its global trade strategy, international trade agreements play an important role in the cross-border diffusion of environmental norms and values. The trade policy of the European Union set out by the European Commission will support "achieving its domestic and external policy objectives and promote greater sustainability" emphasising the significance of trade in the green transition needed to work towards a "more resilient Europe in the world" (IISD 2021). The mandating of so-called climate clauses in trade agreements has become an EU goal in adopting new trade deals with global partners. Increasingly so, this inclusion is achieved through issue linkage – the simultaneous negotiation of two or more issues for joint settlement (Poast 2013: 1). This bargaining tactic not only increases the probability that two parties reach a negotiated agreement but also, and perhaps even more importantly, motivates these parties to remain committed to the agreement (ibid.). Issue linkage can create benefits for parties who would otherwise find little value in an agreement. In the studied case, it remains questionable if EU partner states would be interested in signing purely climate-oriented agreements with the EU, knowing of the added policy implications and need for stringent regulation on domestic economic activities. EU practices of linking environmental clauses to trade agreements take account of this reality. Furthermore, including greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction provisions in a free trade treaty may induce all parties to uphold their codified environmental obligations as the prospect of losing trade access outweighs the potential benefits of neglecting climate commitments (idem: 2).

The aimed-at significant reduction in global GHG emissions requires such cooperation between international actors. Greenhouse gas reduction is an international public good requiring long-term and global economic efforts (Kemfert 2004: 455). Previous negotiation outcomes show that "individual countries are mainly concerned with potential economic disadvantages resulting from emissions reduction. Maximization of national welfare leads to either unilateral operations, a formation of small coalitions or "free rider" actions" (ibid.). Issue linkage targets this problem, linking climate cooperation and trade patterns. However, it is argued that domestic opposition to issue linkage provisions in international agreements, including trade deals, can reduce these provisions to mere

"symbolic window dressing" (Moravcsik 1998). Contrasting the latter, enforcement remains one of the key problems of global policies addressing the reality of climate change and aiming towards climate neutrality. Reciprocity is often identified as a key mechanism enabling cooperation on policies on the same issue as long as the negotiation counterpart maintains agreed-upon reforms (Rowan 2022: 2). International trade is the archetype of reciprocal international agreements, as both parties traditionally agree to same-level trade barrier elimination, allowing for sustained trade and economic growth between the signing parties (ibid.). As reciprocity is a powerful enforcement tool, with no party wanting to give up on agreed-upon trade furtherance, the bundling or linking of issues such as climate goals and trade can incorporate the enforcement powers of the latter on the former (Koremenos et. al. in idem). In this manner, issue linkage can overcome the collective action problem often associated with climate change policies.

Issue linkage is further defined as follows. Maggi distinguishes between three types of linkage: enforcement linkage, negotiation linkage and participation linkage (Maggi 2016: 514). These types of issue linkages are not limited to the trade and climate framework. In essence, the author defines enforcement linkage as if a violation of an issue-linked agreement in one area is punished by sanctions in the other area (ibid.). In the climate-trade debate, the neglect of climate ambitions part of an EU trade deal would be sanctioned by reduced market access through the deal and ultimately the loss of privileges under the agreed mechanisms. Negotiation linkage is present if agreements in one and the other policy area are negotiated jointly as opposed to being separate agreements and bargains (ibid.). This negotiation linkage is made evident by EU statements and publishing: To globally push for stringent climate policies mirroring the EU's internal ambition of climate neutrality, the Union uses its major trade leverage in inclusive bargains on trade and emission reductions. Finally, participation linkage is observed when the threat of sanctions in one policy area is used as leverage and encouragement to participate in an international agreement in the other policy area (ibid.). This third kind of issue linkage would allude to formalised sanction mechanisms in potential EU trade agreements, a priori disincentivising the infringement of climate goals formulated as part of the accord.

Sometimes, the above-described issue linkage instances can be informal, such as trade sanctions as a form of retaliation in situations of security agreement violations – this can be observed in the case of the ongoing war in Ukraine and since the beginning of Russian aggression in 2014 (idem: 516). Accordingly, even though the 1975 Helsinki accords made no mention of trade sanctions, the international community identified an informal link between security and trade (ibid.). Issue links can conversely also be formalised, such as in the case of the EU's rule of law mechanism: The continued government-led rule of law infringements were formally linked to budgetary mechanisms. Issue linkage proves to be an effective mechanism of international compliance-seeking, oftentimes used by global actors and the European Union. There are numerous examples of especially trade policy being linked to non-trade issues. Human rights ambitions are historically often associated with trade facilitation agreements (Charnovitz 1998 and Hafner-Burton 2005). For example, the 1825 Amity, Commerce and Navigation Treaty between UK and Argentina mandated the suppression of the slave trade by Argentina, the Lomé agreement and the Cotonou agreement, facilitating trade between Europe and its ex-colonies, commit members to an upholding of human rights and fundamental freedoms and a 1921 commercial agreement between Austria and the Czech republic included mutual respect clauses on workers' rights (idem). The issue-linkage between trade and climate change policies is still rarer: For example, the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer encourages members to enact restricting import measures on ozone-depleting products from non-members (Maggi 2016: 517). The EU's ambitions of environmental issue linkage could thus pioneer a new issue linkage chapter. The theoretical structure of issue linkage will therefore subsequently be utilised in the analysis of climate goal inclusion in EU trade agreements, perfectly exemplifying a case of issue linkage.

II.3 - Political Ecology: Climate Change as Catalyst of Inequality Urging for Sustainable and Equitable Development

The concept of political ecology ranges back to the 1960's and to a group of French scholars around Michel Foucault, linking ecological issues to questions of power (Cohen 2022). Essentially, it is a group of theoretical assumptions linking politics, meaning government and institutions, to the environment (idem). Stemming from a critical background, the theory focuses on the interaction of social groups between themselves and the wider ecological system. The connections between environmental degradation, nowadays mainly assessed through the frame of climate change, social inequalities and power form the analytical backbone of political ecology (idem). In this tradition, much attention is paid to the effects of climate change in the developing world: "Research has sought primarily to understand the political dynamics surrounding material and discursive struggles over the environment in the third world" (Bryant 1998: 98). Political ecology thus differentiates itself from an apolitical studying of ecological questions by politicising environmental issues at the global level.

Political ecology lends itself to a broad understanding of the theoretical lens. Nonetheless, central common assumptions can be identified across the academic field. Raymond L. Bryant and Sinéad Bailey developed three fundamental premises for the practice of political ecology (Environment and Ecology 2023). First, the costs and benefits resulting from environmental and climate change are assumed to be distributed unequally across the globe (idem). Due to political, social and economic differences, society is not subjected to the effects of climate change in a homogenous way (idem). Indeed, this fact drives the EU's ambition for global climate justice. In its 2017 climate justice own-initiative opinion, the European External Action Service (EEAS) states that "climate justice is typically viewed in a global context of spatial and temporal interdependence and recognises that the most vulnerable and poorest in society often suffer the greatest impact of the effects of climate change, despite these people being the least responsible for the emissions that have driven the climate crisis. Climate justice recognises the need to consider the fairness of the often disproportionate impact of climate change on citizens and communities" (EESC 2017). In this light, EU trade policy strives towards promoting climate justice and the need for mitigating climate change through the sustainable

development of its global trade partners (European Commission 2023 f). EU law requires all relevant EU policies, including trade policy, to promote sustainable development in light of climate change through EU trade agreements, special incentives for developing countries, and trade and development policy (idem). The EU's Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) policy focuses on tackling climate change through trade liberalisation and the removal of barriers to goods facilitating a circular economy (European Commission 2023 g). These undertakings are justified by the fact that the economies of the global South bear the heaviest burden of climate change consequences due to warming temperatures, unpredictable weather patterns driving economic hardships, food insecurity and migration (Reschechtko 2020). Climate change uncovers these global inequalities. The world's most affluent nations in the global North, including the European Union's member states, are responsible for around half of all emissions since the Industrial Revolution and have advantaged access to direct economic benefits thereof, such as decade-long energy consumption through fossil fuel use (Generation Climate Europe 2022). This inequality puts countries of the global South at a disadvantage, where they are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts (idem).

Second, this unequal distribution of climate costs and benefits is assumed to inherently reinforce or reduce existing social and economic inequalities (Environment and Ecology 2023). Ultimately, "any change in environmental conditions must affect the political and economic status quo" (Bryant and Bailey 1997: 28). The inclusion of policies addressing climate inequalities in the EU's global environmental ambitions – thus also in its trade policy aiming to mitigate climate change – would therefore be in line with this second theoretical assumption of political ecology. Global economic growth of past decades through the proliferation of international trade has lifted millions out of poverty and has reduced inequalities between countries (Guivarch et. al. 2021). However, unmanaged climate change "threatens to set back that progress by damaging poverty eradication efforts worldwide, and disproportionately affecting the poorest regions and people" (idem). Climate change is thus not only a catalysator for rising inequalities, directly working against the Union's goals of sustainable development, but these inequalities also threaten the EU's global climate goals as climate-shock-induced inequalities curtail country's actorness in working together with their European partners in achieving international climate objectives. Addressing inequality is thus linked to the Union's

climate ambition through climate-sensitive trade policy. “Achieving climate neutrality and tackling social inequality can be done in a hand-in-glove approach that seeks to deliver a double dividend for low-income and vulnerable groups” as the achievement of sustainable climate change policy requires addressing social inequalities beyond Europe (European Environmental Agency 2021). Accordingly, EU trade agreements with partners of the global South – as opposed to deals with highly developed states - should reflect this reality in order to successfully address climate change.

Third, and stemming from the two prior assumptions, the unequal distribution of climate costs and benefits and the climate-change-facilitated reinforcement of pre-existing inequalities hold political implications in terms of resulting altered power relationships. The European Union is the world's largest exporter of manufactured goods and services and the biggest export market for around 80 countries (European Commission 2023 h). Together, the Union’s member states account for 16% of world imports and exports (idem). The European Commission describes this as a “prime position when it comes to global trade” (idem). In its external action, the Union successfully uses this power issued by its trade leverage. As a trade superpower with the only real multi-country internal market in the world, the EU holds an attractive negotiating asset (Malmström 2022). Trade agreements with the EU are thus created in conditions that facilitate the projection of European values and standards, called the “Brussels Effect”. This effect refers to the EU’s power to regulate global markets as the Union “wields significant, unique, and highly penetrating power to unilaterally transform global markets, including through its ability to set the standards in diverse areas such as […] environmental protection” (Bradford 2019). The political implications of such power relationships for the inclusion of climate clauses in EU trade agreements reflect this thesis’ central research question. Does the EU use its relative power in an unequal international climate system to push for environmental ambition through trade policy? Political ecology will serve as a theoretical framework allowing for an assessment of the inclusion of EU climate goals in four trade agreements. Noting the importance of inequality and resulting power dynamics, trade agreements with developing partners should reflect this climate injustice according to theoretical assumptions of political ecology.

II.4 - Global Europeanisation Theory: EU Norm and Value Proliferation Around the Globe

Article 3 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) guides the EU's relationship with actors on the international scene. Accordingly, "in its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights" (TEU 2023). The Union pursues these objectives with the competencies conferred to it in the treaties (idem). Trade policy, being an exclusive EU competence, thus plays a central role in the international promotion of EU values. Free and fair trade and the sustainable development of the planet, reasoning for the Union's ambitious climate goals, are specifically named as external action frames. Arguably, the Union shapes its trade policy in manners to bring non-member climate change policy closer to its own, high-staked objectives. This process of Europeanisation has been studied since the 1990's (Katsaris 2012). The theoretical framework of Europeanisation has mainly been utilised to analyse the EU's impact on member states and, to a lesser extent, candidate countries in the direct vicinity of the Union (idem). It can be defined as "processes of construction, diffusion, and institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things', and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies" (Radaelli 2003). Strikingly, an increasing branch of Europeanisation studies also focuses on Europeanisation beyond Europe. Europeanisation in the global context studies EU norm and policy diffusion at the domestic level of non-European countries (idem). EU "external governance" and "normative power Europe" perspectives lend themselves to inclusion in the international Europeanisation lens.

Europeanisation and climate policy change are highly correlated. From the European perspective, efficient Union policy goals are not sufficient to address climate change. Apt policies thus require global transfusion in order to address the challenges of the climate crisis. Environmental policy is one of the most regulated and most Europeanised policy

arenas in the EU (Ladi 2017). Within the Union, a trend towards convergence of national environmental policies can be observed (Jordan and Liefferink in idem). Similarly, non-EU member states in the neighbourhood of the European Union have introduced policies similar to EU examples in processes of gradual transfusion of EU norms (idem). For instance, Norway adopted CO_2 regulation mirroring key policy features of EU legislation (idem). Interestingly, these patterns of policy convergence are often similar between EU and non-EU member states (idem). Processes of climate Europeanisation do not seem to be confined to EU members but are part of a global process of environmental policy convergence around EU standards. The spreading of EU values, not limited to the environmental sphere, is central to European external action. Europeanisation theory encompasses both the active and passive diffusion of norms beyond the EU borders. Ladrech described this process as the situation when EU political and policy dynamics become part of the logic and norms of domestic policy-making (Ladrech 1994: 69). EU trade policy can thus be seen as a functional tool of climate Europeanisation, acting as a catalyst for the furthering of European values in the field.

It is thus generally accepted that the EU has a relevant domestic impact on member states, states that participate in the internal market and candidate states that adopt the acquis communautaire to qualify for membership (Schimmelfennig 2015). Similarly, EU institutions, policies and decisions have a distinctive and systematic influence of this kind on countries beyond the latter group (idem). Europeanisation beyond Europe is driven by specific mechanisms, that push for the aligning of domestic policy along European Union lines in the absence of the incentive of EU membership through the adoption of the acquis. This international Europeanisation can be EU-driven or domestically induced (idem). Institutionally, Europeanisation can be pushed for through a “logic of consequences” or a “logic of appropriateness” (March and Olsen 1989). A logic of consequences approach to Europeanisation assumes that international partners choose policy options in order to maximise their utility under specific circumstances, such as sanction and benefit mechanisms that alter the cost-benefit calculations of a state (idem). This approach reflects the incorporation of climate policy targets in EU trade agreements. Europeanisation, in this case measured through the aligning of partner states’ mimicking of the EU climate goals, becomes an attractive policy option when included in the wider bargain of beneficial access to the EU internal market. The long-term upholding of

climate values through the adoption of effective environmental policy would be ensured through sanctions of diminished trade flows. A logic of appropriateness perspective goes beyond this bound utility maximisation process. Correspondingly, this method of Europeanisation argues that actors choose behavioural paths based on their social role and social norms of the moment (idem). Europeanisation may thus be driven by social learning: Partner states adopt EU-mirroring rules and policy because they consider them legitimate and identify with EU values (idem). Climate policy, as evident in the negotiation and adoption of the Paris agreement goals, has moved to the agenda beyond the EU, across a wide variety of worldwide states. Among its trade partners, the EU is not only confronted with actors opposing codified climate objectives, in an EU perspective necessitating the enforcement incentive of market access, but also with countries identifying with similar climate norms and values as the Union. The EU, as a frontrunner in the policy implementation of climate and GHG reduction intentions, potentially sees its climate policy spread and reflected in its trade agreements with third countries because of a wider identification with EU values and the perceived legitimacy of determined goals. Europeanisation theory therefore serves as an analytical frame for this thesis' study of EU climate goal reflection in trade agreements with partner countries, advancing and proliferating EU environmental norms and values internationally as per Europeanisation's claims of successful EU policy transposition towards other countries.

III – Methodology

The following chapter outlines the methodological approach this thesis utilises in order to answer its central research question. Focusing on a comparative case-centred research outline, the following analysis is based on a qualitative multi-methods approach that encompasses literature analytical elements and policy content analysis to ensure a proper triangulation of research data.

III.1 - Comparative Case-Centred Research

A case study can best be understood as "an in-depth examination, often undertaken over time, of a single case – such as a policy, programme, intervention site, implementation process or participant" (Goodrick 2014: 1). Comparative case studies investigate two or more cases in manners that produce more generalisable knowledge about causal questions such as how and why specific programmes or policies work or fail to work (ibid.). Accordingly, comparative case studies emphasise comparison within and across contexts and synthesise the "similarities, differences and patterns across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal" (ibid.). In order to allow for this, a thorough understanding of each case is essential in order to establish the basis for an ensuing cross-case analytical framework (ibid.). The four cases at the centre of this thesis' research effort share a common end goal, namely the facilitation of trade and investments between the European Union and the signing partnering party. In order to assess how the EU furthers climate goals through trade agreement mechanisms, all four agreements will be scrutinised in light of the theories framing this analysis academically, in order to allow for comparative and generalising conclusions. The fundamental intent of a comparative case study is thus the development of knowledge, incorporating qualitative analysis in extending the depth of the studied cases across several cases in time or space (Knight 2001). Comparative case studies are effective tools to understand policy across three different axes of social science research: a horizontal axis across different spaces, a vertical axis across various scales and a transversal axis across time (Parreira do Amaral 2022). The four chosen cases, namely EU trade agreements with Canada, the Mercosur bloc, the SADC regional economic community and Vietnam provide for these axes, focussing on different spaces

and scales and making future-outlooking concluding remarks on the EU trade-climate nexus workwise possible. The small sample of four trade agreements made this purposive, non-random selection necessary (Gerring 2009). This small-N comparative case study followed a "diverse cases" case-selection strategy. This selection manner has for goal to achieve the greatest variance along these relevant dimensions (idem). Accordingly, the logic of this diverse case analysis lies upon typological theorising: "Different combinations of variables are assumed to have effects on an outcome that vary across types" (Elman in Gerring 2009). The chosen cases thus exemplify different causal mechanisms (Gerring 2009). This diversity is given by the selection of cases in this thesis, accounting for variances in regional focus and economic scale among the four EU trade treaties. As follows, the internal validity of this thesis will be ensured by a multi-methods qualitative research approach, allowing for the triangulation of data to obtain valid research outcomes. The external validity of this qualitative research is elevated by having proposed theories that frame and embed this thesis' conclusions in a wider academic and scholarly context. In this manner, the following comparative case study provides descriptive contextualisation, applying existing theory to new contexts. The chosen cases are thus utilised to test defined theories and to reveal and highlight relationships which cannot be studied by other means (Yin in Halperin and Heath 2017: 215).

III.2 - A Qualitative Multi-Method Approach

The analysis of this comparative case study centred thesis relies on a multi-method approach that ensures the triangulation of data by combining literature-analytical elements with policy content analysis. The hypothesis to be tested by these research means is developed based on a literature analysis providing an overview and summary of relevant scientific publishing on the four chosen cases, taking into account EU climate change policy and their effect on the four trade agreements central to this thesis.

III.2.A - Literature Analysis

This thesis' research will be grounded partly on a detailed literature analysis. Building research on and relating it to existing knowledge is fundamental to all academic research activities (Snyder 2019: 333). The aim of the ensuing literature analysis is thus to systematically collect and synthesize previous research and publishing with varying foci on the trade-climate nexus in the EU-trade partner relations, focussing specifically on Canada, Mercosur, SADC and Vietnam (ibid.). These contributions will be reviewed to allow for further analysis in light of this thesis' research angle. This thesis will do so by identifying the many schools of thought on the issue and outlining the connections between each of the works being discussed. The literature analysis follows a systematic, reproducible method to make a selection of available literature possible and allow for a synthesis of outcomes and key statements of each identified publication. A thorough examination of the literature offers a solid basis for knowledge expansion and the creation of theory while highlighting any possible gaps in the literature that are to be addressed through policy content analysis, contributing further to the academic discourse (Webster and Watson in Snyder 2019: 333). A descriptive evaluation of the literature body is therefore "followed by a content analysis on the basis of a specific pattern of analytic categories derived from a typical research process" (Seuring and Gold 2012). This analysis takes place within the framework and lens of the theories defining the research foundation of this thesis.

III.2.B - Policy Content Analysis

In addition, this thesis will allow for the drawing of conclusions based on policy content analysis, providing data for identified literature shortcomings. Policy content analysis is a research tool utilised in order to assess the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data, such as texts, legislative proposals or, as in this case, EU trade agreements (Columbia Public Health 2023). Using policy content analysis, this thesis is able to quantify and analyse the meanings and relationships of these words, themes or concepts within the chosen documents published by the European Commission (idem). Policy content analysis can therefore be defined as "any technique

for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages" (Holsti 1968). Adding to this definition, this method of qualitative knowledge production is "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" or official documents (Berelson 1952). Document-based policy content analysis proves effective: By working with documentary data instead of data collected from human subjects, ethical approval is not often needed, the unobtrusive nature of policy content analysis makes it non-reactive as research takes place behind the scenes and it is a manageable qualitative research method with a pre-defined scope (Cardno 2018: 626). Policy content analysis, as in this thesis' case, is often chosen as a supplementary way of collecting data in order to add rigour or internal validity to a research undertaking through a multi-method form of data triangulation (ibid.). Indeed, "the rationale for document analysis lies in its role in methodological and data triangulation, the immense value of documents in case study research, and its usefulness as a stand-alone method for specialised forms of qualitative research" (Bowen 2009: 29). In analysing the four EU trade agreements, forming the comparative case study of this thesis, special attention is given to policy context, policy text and policy consequences. Policy context refers to the purpose of the policy and to the values that underpin and guide the policy (Cardno 2018: 625). Policy text analysis focuses on policy structure and evidence of purposeful policy construction and development and on the presence of specified procedures in the text providing guidance for practice (idem: 632). By policy consequences, an analysis of the overall impact of the policy as well as monitoring and reviewing practices is meant (ibid.). This thesis will thus assess the presence of climate clauses in the four trade agreements along the three latter analytical foci in order to reach reasoned conclusions on EU climate goal inclusion in trade agreements with global partners.

IV – Literature Analysis

The following chapter reviews existing academic contributions on the topic of the four chosen EU trade agreements. In doing so, an overview of the trade agreements, their main trade facilitation mechanisms and goals are provided before critically delving deeper into the climate change addressing instruments embedded within the agreements. This discussion is essential to ground further theoretical assessments of the trade agreements and to depict the added academic value of this thesis' theoretical contribution.

IV.1 – The Mercosur Agreement: Free Trade in a Region of Central Importance to the World's Climate

In June 2019, after nearly 20 years of negotiations, the European Union and Mercosur, a customs union covering Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, reached a political agreement on a trade deal (Baltensperger and Dadush 2019: 2). However, the free trade agreement is still not in force as it requires ratification from the European Parliament, the 27 EU member state national parliaments as well as from the Mercosur national parliaments (Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2023). Observers are moderately optimistic that the trade deal will finally be concluded after negotiations were opened in 2000, as EU-Brazilian relations have normalised after the election of President Lula da Silva (Aarup 2023). Environmental questions, especially EU concerns over protecting the Amazon rainforest as part of its global climate ambitions remain the biggest hurdles to be overcome (idem). Under the free trade agreement, the EU will remove tariffs on 100 per cent of its imports of industrial goods from Mercosur, while the latter will remove 90 per cent of tariffs on industrial goods imports from the EU (Baltensperger and Dadush 2019: 3). Also, the EU will remove 82 per cent of tariffs on agricultural imports from Mercosur, and Mercosur will remove 93 per cent of agricultural goods tariffs on imports from the Union (ibid.). According to the European Commission, heading the negotiations on behalf of its member states, the trade agreement will remove trade barriers and make it easier for EU businesses to sell and invest in Mercosur, shape global trade rules in line with the highest EU standards and "project our values via detailed obligations on trade and sustainable development, including climate change and labour" (European Commission

2023 i). The free trade agreement thus has, next to clear economic objectives, also calculated goals of EU value propagation through the inclusion of clauses on climate change, environmental protection and sustainability. This value-based trade agenda aims at protecting the environment and fighting climate change and deforestation, a problem in the Amazon of global impact (idem). Deforestation remains the main source of concern for many critics of the agreement, arguing that a deal could expedite logging in the crucial global "green lung". Indeed, after the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation is the second biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change (CFR 2023). According to research, halting and reversing land clearance in tropical forests could reduce global carbon emissions by nearly 18 per cent by 2030 (idem). It becomes evident why the EU needs to address these climate-related issues if its global ambitions for facilitating trade are to be advanced conjunctively with its goals of halting climate change.

However, including references to climate commitments proves challenging. Firstly, for mixed agreements such as the EU-Mercosur trade deal, provisional application applies to the trade part of the agreement, as it is an EU exclusive competence (Titievskaia 2019). The provisions for political dialogue and cooperation may not be applied for many years as they require ratification from every member state, sometimes with multiple parliaments (idem). It can thus take longer for the EU to leverage the political dialogue motivating climate action (idem). Furthermore, climate action in EU trade agreements is most often inscribed in the Trade and Sustainable Development Chapter (TSD), which is arguably not enforceable to the same degree as economic sections of the trade deal (idem). Trade-facilitating measure infringements are in many cases more easily assessed against the agreement by an arbitration body, whereas non-economic clauses, such as in the climate sector, are harder to conclude on systematically as scientific analyses as well as political interpretations play a role in their evaluation. The agreement in principle, published by the Commission tries to address this difficulty as will be analysed subsequently. Importantly, it references Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA's) in its provisions. Article 5 of the Mercosur TSD chapter includes the regular exchange of information regarding the ratification of MEA's (Heyl et. al. 2020). Next to that, the parties shall effectively implement the UNFCC and the Paris agreement, implement measures to combat illegal logging and related trade and uphold trade-related aspects of the climate change regime and in particular of the Paris agreement (idem). The provision

of these MEA's most often contain soft measures which leave their effectiveness up to the discretion of the parties (idem). Nonetheless, by requiring the EU and Mercosur to effectively implement the Paris agreement, this trade agreement "incorporates at least one important transnational standard in terms of combating climate change" (idem).

The general dispute settlement mechanism of the agreement will not apply to the trade and sustainable development issues – thus also not to climate provisions. However, an independent and expert-staffed sub-committee on trade and sustainable development may be requested for consultation if one party were to question the upholding of the TSD provisions (idem). If within 120 days of a requested consultation, no resolution has been reached, a party may request the establishment of a panel of experts to examine the matter (idem). This panel will publicly provide recommendations for implementation by the parties to resolve a matter on, for example, climate change issues. Furthermore, specifically addressing the issue of deforestation in the Amazon, the parties will encourage trade in sustainably harvested timber as well as share information and cooperate on the issue (Colli 2019: 2). Whereas sustainable timber, taking account of renewable forest management and the inclusion of local and indigenous communities is to be facilitated market access, stringent supply chain assessment is to reduce the trade of unsustainably harvested woods (ibid.). Combined with measures on supply chain management in the agreement, this puts comprehensive and multilateral action by both companies and states to the front (ibid.). This focus on climate change accelerating deforestation is more detailed than in previous agreements such as the EU-Andean community agreement with Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, which also house large parts of the Amazon rainforest but did not include specific articles on deforestation (ibid.). However, it is still argued that "the EU-Mercosur agreement does not move radically beyond the EU's general approach in trade agreements, with low enforceability of the chapter on trade and sustainable development" (ibid.). The trade agreement could thus have both positive and negative effects on the environment and the fight against climate change. An impact study by the University of Manchester highlights a potential for improvement of environmental services, a risk of increased water pollution, requiring stricter regulations and a potentially adverse effect on biodiversity (Ghiotto and Echaide 2020). The literature thus praises new ambitions set out in the agreement, especially the reference to re-commit to previously signed MEA's, but criticises the low enforcement

to legally uphold sustainability allegiances. It is argued that potentially, the proposed EU-Mercosur agreement puts the EU's own environmental sustainability goals at risk (Kehoe at. al. 2020).

IV.2 – CETA: A Climate-Progressive Trade Deal with a Goal-Aligned Partner

The EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) entered into force provisionally in 2017 (European Commission 2023 j). The European Commission states that "CETA features some of the strongest commitments ever included in an EU trade agreement, including […] on protecting the environment, and on sustainable development. CETA integrates EU and Canadian commitments to apply international rules on […] environmental protection and climate action. These obligations are binding" (idem). The agreement eliminates 99 per cent of all tariff lines, defends the EU's geographical indicators on goods and improves EU companies' access to the Canadian market (idem). Since its entry into force, nearly all customs duties between the EU and Canada have been eliminated for goods and services traded between both parties (Stam and Ketelsen 2019). The trade agreement is a so-called living agreement (Meyer-Ohlendorf et. al. 2016). This means that the text can be altered with the consent of both parties to account for changing circumstances. The EU hails the agreement as one of the most progressive and ambitious free trade agreements beyond the facilitation of trade flows. Canada and the EU have followed similarly ambitious obligations with respect to environmental and climate change standards in their trade policies for multiple years (Bartels 2017: 1). CETA thus follows this logic in three distinct ways: It includes references to uphold multi-lateral obligations, mandates that the parties do not reduce existing levels of climate protection and encourages both parties to raise levels of climate ambition and environmental protection (idem: 2). Multilateral obligations, such as the Paris agreement, are systematically embedded into the trade agreement. In 2018, the CETA joint committee noted the importance of the Paris agreement in shaping mutually supportive trade and climate change policies (IISD 2018). CETA stands out in its ambition of mutual supportiveness of economic and environmental objectives and the

prime urgency to achieve the goals of the Paris agreement (idem). The treaty text thus states that the "parties commit to cooperate in trade-related aspects of the current and future international climate change regime, as well as domestic climate policies and programmes relating to mitigation and adaptation, including issues relating to carbon markets, ways to address adverse effects of trade on climate, as well as means to promote energy efficiency and the development and deployment of low-carbon and other climate-friendly technologies" (idem).

Moreover, CETA binds parties to existing levels of climate protection and encourages future further-reaching climate legislation. For example, the agreement states that the parties "shall not, through a sustained or recurring course of action or inaction, fail to effectively enforce its […] standards [environmental law] to encourage trade or investment" (idem). CETA specifically details positive rules on inspections, domestic enforcement and a right to appeal to uphold these commitments and environmental standards crucial to fight climate change (idem). For future outlook, CETA provides that both parties are to continue to improve and uphold environmental laws and standards in order to stick to high levels of protection (idem). Accordingly, the parties to CETA express their "commitment to promote sustainable development and the development of international trade in such a way as to contribute to sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions" (Douma 2021). The inclusions of chapters on trade and the environment as well as the ambition of both Canada and the EU to cut back CO_2 emissions inscribes the trade deal's reputation as a new "gold standard" of climate change and trade connectivity (idem). Indeed, the above-outlined Mercosur trade deal aims to mirror aspects of CETA in multiple passages (idem). However, it is argued in the literature that some aspects could be linked to practices of greenwashing: For example, CETA does not prohibit the non-enforcement of environmental and climate change legislation per se (idem). It is only adverse to clauses in the trade agreement if done to encourage trade – a high bar that might be difficult to prove (idem). An infringement of the trade agreement is thus only evident if it can be proven that a party has chosen not to enforce climate change laws to explicitly gain an advantage in the EU-Canada trade system. This link might, however, not always be blatantly apparent, making infringement procedures based on non-enforcement of climate action legislation unlikely to succeed. Furthermore, CETA contains an obligation to seek to ensure high

environmental standards. According to the agreement, “each Party shall seek to ensure that … [its environmental] laws and policies provide for and encourage high levels of [environmental] protection and shall strive to continue to improve such laws and policies with the goal of providing high levels of [environmental] protection” (Bartels 2017: 4). Although some argue that these commitments have little to no practical meaning as they are characterised as mere best endeavour provisions, such passages could ensure current high levels of climate change legislation in the future (ibid.). Laws that fail to work towards climate change addressing in the most blatant ways would indeed violate such provisions (ibid.). These considerations are based on a reoccurring logic in the EU-Canada free trade agreement, namely that increased trade should not come at the expense of the environment but should promote the fight against climate change as a crucial aspect of sustainable development (McNeill 2020: 2). Specific passages illustrate how environmental protection is prioritised over trade liberalisation. For example, concerning water use and protection, CETA provides that the parties “have a right to protect and preserve their natural water resources, with no obligation to permit commercial use” (idem: 8). Also, the trade of used cars is limited, presumably to maintain air quality and in acknowledging the high emissions of older automobile models (idem: 9). CETA establishes a committee on trade and sustainable development to monitor the implementation of the sustainability chapters, thus also to regularly check the abidance of climate goals (Bartels 2017: 5). Experts regularly meet to discuss the current state of implementation in coordination with civil society (ibid.). For this purpose, a civil society forum is convened once a year to “conduct a dialogue” on climate change issues of the agreement among other topics (ibid.). Dispute settlement in case of disagreements follows a traditional state-to-state model, however. The consequences of civil society organisations finding a failure could thus be rather weak (ibid.). The literature thus emphasises the strong commitment to multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Paris agreement, and how the EU-Canada trade agreement binds the parties to current environmental standards and incentivises the development of future climate-change-addressing legislation. However, it also points out the low enforceability of these measures.

IV.3 – The SADC EPA: Climate Change through a Sustainable Development Lens

The European Union's Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) with the ACP countries, in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific are trade and development agreements that open up the EU's market fully and immediately while the Union's partners open only partially to EU imports, over transitioning periods (European Commission 2023 k). These agreements are tailor-made in order to fit particular regional circumstances, they are WTO compatible, but have the ambition to go beyond mere conventional free trade agreements in covering sustainable development and cooperation to help ACP countries to benefit from their participation in EU trade (idem). This is particularly relevant in many ACP countries, as they represent some of the most vulnerable states to climate change worldwide, affecting food production, water and the natural environment, infrastructure, and disaster risk management (ICR 2023). These EPA's thus include specific asymmetric provisions in favour of ACP countries, such as "the exclusion of sensitive products from liberalisation, long liberalisation periods, flexible rules of origin, and special safeguards and measures for agriculture, food security and infant industry protection" (European Commission 2023 k). Furthermore, the ACP partners have 15 years (with protection for sensitive goods) and up to 25 years in extraordinary circumstances to open their markets to imports from the EU whereas EU markets are instantly and completely opened (idem). Additionally, 20 per cent of the most sensitive items' manufacturers will be permanently shielded from competition (idem). This process, whereas SADC countries do not have to respond with the same level of market opening is sometimes called asymmetric liberalisation (Rosario and Fougner 2016). The EU's economic partnership agreement with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) covers Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Eswatini and was signed on June 10th 2016 (European Commission 2023 k). It provisionally entered into force later that year (idem). Under the agreement, the EU opens its market to 100 per cent of all imports from Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, and Eswatini, in a duty-free and quota-free manner (idem). Additionally, the EU removes customs duties on 98.7 per cent of South African imports, however applying certain quantity quotas (idem). The EPA directly references the Cotonou agreement between the EU and ACP countries, linking former

colonies to the European continent, and is based on its "essential and fundamental" elements (idem). One of these elements is climate change, forming a main priority area within the agreement (Consilium 2023 b). One central aim of the EPA is thus sustainable development (Mellstig and Welander 2009). The European Union defines sustainable development as "a core principle of the Treaty on European Union and a priority objective for the EU's internal and external policies" (European Commission 2023 l). Goal 13 of the SDG's, entitled "Climate Action", states that "supporting vulnerable regions will directly contribute not only to Goal 13 but also to the other SDGs", as "global warming is causing long-lasting changes to our climate system, which threatens irreversible consequences if we do not act" (UNDP 2023). Environmental challenges of trade facilitation measures are thus embedded within the EPA, with governments, businesses and civil society necessitating the right capabilities to review environmental and climate impact (GIZ 2021). The Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapter within the EPA phrases these ambitions into the agreement. Accordingly, technical barriers to trade, or TBT measures, can be implemented for the protection of the environment, without infringing the EPA (UNDP 2021). Also, the agreement references the EU's Ecolabel, promoting the circular economy by encouraging producers to generate less waste and CO_2 during the manufacturing process (idem). However, this represents a voluntary and soft measure (idem).

The European External Action Service (EEAS) recognises that "trade between developed and developing nations has, while generating the much-needed foreign exchange to the latter, also meant environmental degradation, pollution of rivers, loss of forests through logging, eviction of local people to make way for dams, mines and plantations, and other ills" (EEAS 2017). To address these issues, the EU-SADC EPA will "pay attention to social and environmental elements of trade by helping partner countries achieve trade that is fully in line with sustainable development goals" (idem). The EPA thus helps the developing countries of the SADC group to attain a "greener" economy (idem). At the EU-SADC political dialogue meeting at the ministerial level, EU officials and the chair of the SADC council of ministers reiterated their commitment to, on the one hand, generate investment, jobs and sustainable and equitable economic growth, and on the other, cooperate more effectively on global challenges, such as climate change (SADC 2015). Article 6 of the EPA thus states explicitly that the parties will uphold their

international obligations, alluding to international climate agreements inter alia and "their commitments to promote the development of international trade in such a way as to contribute to the objective of sustainable development, in its three pillars (economic development, social development, and environmental protection) for the welfare of present and future generations, and will strive to ensure that this objective is integrated and reflected at every level of their trade relationship" (SADC-EU EPA Outreach 2017). The parties agree to uphold and implement environmental laws and not derogate from these laws, contributing to the global fight against climate change (idem). Civil society plays a strong role in the agreement, in supporting the implementation of the EPA, through involvement in monitoring and assessing its impact (idem). It has to be noted, however, that the academic literature on environmental and climate impacts and goal inclusion in the EPA is severely limited. This might be due to the comparatively low trade flows facilitated by the EPA in comparison to other EU trade agreements, or by lower environmental research traditions in the countries covered by the treaty. Certainly, climate change issues are of high importance in the region, endangered by the climate crisis to a high degree and putting at risk the development successes of past decades (WFP 2021). This thesis thus also contributes to an existing literature gap, by elaborating on crucial existing action paths within the agreement, highlighting EU climate goal inclusion in an EPA of central importance to its sustainable trade and climate change strategy on a global level.

IV.4 – EVFTA: The EU's First Free Trade Agreement with a Developing Country with a Distinct Climate Focus

The EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) was signed in June 2019 and subsequently approved by both the European Parliament on the second of February 2020 and the Vietnamese National Assembly on the eighth of June of the same year (Nguyen 2021). Being one of the most recent EU free trade agreements, it is also the first one with a developing country like Vietnam (idem). The trade agreement and investment protection agreement are set out to increase trade and support job creation and economic growth amongst both partners (European Commission 2023 m). The agreement ensures

the elimination of 99 per cent of tariffs on trade between the parties, reduces regulatory barriers, ensures the protection of regional and geographical indicators, opens up the public procurement markets and according to the Commission, makes sure that the agreed-upon rules are enforceable (idem). The European Commission arguably constructed an ethical trade narrative around the agreement to ensure its ratification, keeping in mind the difficulties of CETA and the failure of a potential trade agreement with the US (Nessel 2022). The literature highlights how environmental and climate concerns play a central role in the trade agreement with Vietnam, showcasing how the EU incorporates past experiences of ratification difficulties due to low standards and the inclusion of its own climate goals. In this logic, the trade agreement contains rules on sustainable trade, ensuring that "economic growth based on the neoliberal paradigm and development based on the developmental paradigm can be achieved" (idem). The agreement thus seeks to bridge differences between the environmental standards, crucial to the EU's goals of climate change addressing, and Vietnam as a new preferential trading partner (EU 2023). Accordingly, the agreement includes a strong, legally binding commitment to environmental protection (idem). These commitments cover the effective implementation of international environmental agreements, such as the Paris agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Kyoto Protocol on climate change (idem). Furthermore, it aims to set the basis for bilateral cooperation on the transition to low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient economies and to prevent a race to the bottom on domestic environmental laws, by committing parties not to lower environmental standards to attract trade or investment (idem). Also, civil society is incorporated to monitor the sustainable development chapter, covering these climate-change-related issues and a dispute settlement mechanism is introduced for the Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapter (idem).

The trade agreement can arguably be analysed as a successful attempt to protect Vietnam's environment while pushing for economic integration (Stockhaus 2017). While certainly increasing the pressure on Vietnam's environmental and climate change ambitions due to prospected economic benefits, the agreement provides for additional protection within the southeast Asian country (idem). To advance environmental protection in Vietnam, the country can adopt and enforce measures that are either necessary to protect human, animal or plant life or health or relate to the conservation of

exhaustible natural resources if they are applied in manners that do not "constitute an arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or which constitute a disguised restriction to trade" (idem). Mirroring clauses normally attributed to global environmental frontrunners such as the EU, the agreement thus explicitly encourages more stringent climate action legislation, however prohibiting hidden barriers to trade between the parties within environmental laws. Furthermore, Vietnam retains the right to restrict the cross-border supply of services for the sake of environmental and climate protection (idem). Again, however, such measures cannot have for aim to restrict trade flows in covert ways in order to gain an unjustified advantage within the trading relationship (idem). Such exemptions for the sake of environmental and climate sustainability are found in further passages of the agreement. For example, environmental technical barriers to trade are not explicitly banned. Article 2.2 of the TBT agreement "allows technical regulations aimed at environmental protection as long as they are not more trade restrictive than necessary, taking account of the risks non-fulfilment would create. In assessing such risks, relevant elements of consideration are available scientific and technical information or the intended end-uses of products" (idem). Chapter eight of the EU-Vietnam free trade agreement preserves both parties' right to regulate within their territories to achieve legitimate policy objectives such as the fight against climate change through environmental protection (idem). These provisions are innovative as they are interpreted in a manner that states that environmental and climate protection measures are legitimate even if they have adverse effects on investments and trade flows between the signing parties (idem).

Indeed, the EVFTA highlights that when trade and the environment-climate network are considered together, the issue of relaxing environmental and climate laws to foster economic growth through increased trade is addressed (Nhung and Trinh 2022). It is assessed that the trade agreement presents itself as "a meeting point between the EU's priority policy and Vietnam's internal need of addressing trade and sustainability" (idem). By pushing for the inclusion of policy areas of high topicality to the EU, such as climate change policies, which cover a range of different sectors such as environmental protection, the EU thus imprints its priorities on a global trading partner while nurturing sustainable economic growth through trade. However, through its dispute settlement mechanism, open to investors but not to natural persons or non-governmental institutions,

the agreement creates significant inequalities in the challenges to environmentally destructive or climate-negative trading or investment practices (Heyl et. al. 2021). Again, the literature highlights enforceability as one of the main questions for the future success of the inclusion of progressive climate change clauses within the agreement. It is argued that the EVFTA, "even with its best efforts to harmonize trade liberalization with non-trade preoccupations, is far from balanced" (Duong 2022). Although having the ambition to present itself as an ethical agreement, some authors claim that environmental and climate protection are still not given the same value as trade provisions in the free trade agreement (idem). It, therefore, does not harmonise trade policy with the pillars of sustainable development perfectly and can, according to some, not be relied upon to be the sole vehicle for delivering sustainable development goals, a priority amongst the EU's internal climate goals (idem). Nevertheless, the EU-Vietnam free trade agreement is recognised as promoting and protecting EU standards and values, reaffirming the EU's focus on sustainability and climate protection worldwide (EIAS 2020).

IV.5 – Literature Gap

As discussed above, the reviewed literature on EU climate goal inclusion in the EU-Mercosur, EU-Canada, EU-SADC and EU-Vietnam trade agreements largely focuses on the Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapters, with a specific spotlight on the environmental impacts of the trade agreements. While these foci in the literature certainly inform research into EU-internal climate goal inclusion in EU trade agreements with its global partners, the agreements have not been scrutinised according to the aims of this thesis. Environmental protection can not be read synonymously with CO_2 reduction paths to fight climate change, central to the EU's plans to become climate-neutral. While environmental protection plays a large role in the latter, notably as the major carbon sink of the planet, the literature has not sufficiently elaborated on climate change addressing path mechanisms in the agreements. Furthermore, most of the literature remains on a lower level of abstraction, remaining largely descriptive and not choosing to link climate and environmental goals within the treaties to major theories framing the academic debate on the climate-trade nexus. Accordingly, the subsequent will add to the existing literature in two specific manners. Firstly, the four trade agreements will be systematically analysed

for the inclusion of EU climate ambitions, elaborating on inclusion paths, priorities and aimed at consequences. Secondly, the next chapter will link these dynamics to the theoretical framework established prior. In doing so, this thesis will associate climate goal inclusion instruments in the trade treaties with the larger theoretical underpinnings connecting trade and climate change and proposes a new understanding of EU climate and trade policy by adding to the academic debate on the EU trade-climate nexus.

V – Hypothesis

Subsequently, the ensuing analysis builds upon the literature review to provide analytical answers to the central research question. To do so, a hypothesis is developed to be supported or negated by the research outcomes. This thesis hypothesises the following, based on reviewed literature in light of the four theories providing the scholarly framework for this research: The European Union includes its internal climate goals in its trade agreements with global partners in multiple ways. Firstly, it reinforces its own commitment and that of its trading partners to multilateral environmental agreements with detailed climate change addressing paths in its agreements. Furthermore, it reserves the parties' right to expand its climate legislation but more importantly, creates enforceable pledges to abide by current levels of climate ambitions within the international trade partnering country or country grouping. Moreover, the EU further aligns climate ambitions amongst partners with lower levels of climate ambition by, for example, bringing global partners' legislative frameworks closer to the EU climate outlook, in this way spreading its climate values through trade agreements through concrete technical changes in national law sets indicated by the trade agreements. These developments follow logics of established theories on the climate-trade nexus. Reflecting the diversity amongst its trading partners, this thesis hypothesises that four distinct theoretical frameworks best explain climate goal inclusion within the four trade agreements. In this manner, the Mercosur trade agreement depicts elements of the theory of economic policy in pushing for climate change fighting. The EU-Canada trade agreement CETA includes climate clauses in mechanisms best explained by issue linkage. The EU-SADC EPA was phrased in manners following the more critical stances of political ecology. Finally, the EU-Vietnam trade agreement pushes for the international spread of EU climate values according to global Europeanisation theory.

VI – Analysis

VI.1 – Analytical Approach

As elaborated on above, this thesis' method of analysis is centred on the triangulation of literature with policy content analysis within a defined theoretical framework. The argumentative structure of the ensuing analysis follows from this framework, accentuating correlations between climate goal ambition inclusion in each EU trade agreement with academic theories operationalised for the sake of this analysis, allowing for the introduction of reasoned assertions. This chapter illustrates these inclusion paths by quoting extensively and directly from the published texts of the trade agreements, focusing exclusively on paragraphs and clauses within the treaties referencing climate change ambitions.

VI.2 - Mercosur: A Theory of Economic Policy Approach to Climate Action

The Trade and Sustainable Development Chapter of the EU-Mercosur free trade agreement outlines the treaty's climate change and environmental framework. Article six of the chapter, entitled "Trade and Climate Change", mandates that "The Parties recognise the importance of pursuing the ultimate objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in order to address the urgent threat of climate change and the role of trade to this end" (Art 6.1 TSD; EU-Mercosur Trade Agreement 2022). Trade is directly linked to climate change addressing, recognising both threats and opportunities of the international exchange of goods, services and investments. Accordingly, "The Parties recognize that the economic, social and environmental dimensions are interdependent and mutually reinforcing dimensions of sustainable development, and reaffirm their commitment to promoting the development of international trade in such a way as to contribute to the objective of sustainable development, for the welfare of present and future generations" (Art 1.3 TSD; idem). Trade, a tangible, measurable economic factor, observable in the monetary value of exchanges between the two trade blocs, is thus linked to normative policy goals,

namely sustainable development, taking account of climate change responsibilities and the aim of protecting the environment. These links are observed throughout the chapter and the agreement at large.

In fact, the normative nature of these commitments is acknowledged in stating that "the Parties agree that this Chapter embodies a cooperative approach based on common values and interests" (Art. 1.5 TSD; idem). The European Union thus is an international actor that uses its "market size to externalize its domestic regulatory policies" (Poletti et. al. 2020). Due to its large-sized domestic market, the EU is conferred a huge bargaining power to include norm-propagating clauses in trade negotiations because of the costs that its trading partners are willing to incur to gain access to it (idem). The gaining of entry to the European market is thus a cost-efficient tool of climate norm promotion for the Union, also with partners less ambitious than the EU. The EU-Mercosur free trade agreement, part of the association agreement between the Southern American and European member states, thus includes EU climate change objectives, such as the upholding of international climate agreements, the protection of the environment, biodiversity and the sustainable exploitation of forests and seas, as part of a larger economic treaty. This is done through a number of technical and sector-specific climate regulations within the treaty, such as for example the sustainable management of forests, a highly salient policy area in the Amazon region: The parties are to "cooperate, as appropriate, bilaterally, regionally and in international fora on issues concerning trade and the conservation of forest cover as well as sustainable forest management, consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (Art. 8.3b TSD; EU-Mercosur Trade Agreement 2022). The prospect of market access thus allows for the introduction of non-economic and value-oriented goals within the treaty. As opposed to international climate finance, this trade-based approach pushes for climate action in the Mercosur states without putting additional costs on EU member states, but mobilises environmental standards through conditioned market opening. This cost-efficient, targeted and specific inclusion of climate provisions in the agreement thus jointly pushes for both economic as well as non-economic goals, following the theoretical logic of the theory of economic policy developed by Tinbergen and Theil.

The theory of economic policy finds striking applicability in the EU-Mercosur trade agreement. Policy problems are theorised by Theil, building upon Tinbergen's previous work, as maximising a certain social preference function (Acocella et. al 2011). Climate change features prominently in Commission President Von der Leyen's policy priorities, as the latter wants Europe to take a position as the global climate leader (European Parliament 2022). The European Commission commits to "promoting trade's positive contribution to the fight against climate change" in the Mercosur agreement (European Commission 2023 n). Promoting climate goals is thus a clear social preference within the EU-Mercosur trade deal. Mercosur states are, however, not always aligned with EU climate goals. The former President of Brazil Jair Bolsonaro explicitly ran on an anti-environmental agenda (Gonzaga 2022). There is thus a need, as outlined by the theory of economic policy, to decide between multiple policy instruments on how to best push for a non-economic objective such as climate protection at the lowest possible cost for the EU. In this light, the theory of economic policy outlines how this non-economic goal can best be achieved by establishing a politically feasible instrument at the lowest toll available (Francois et. al. 2022). Mutually agreed-upon environmental standards and regulations within the trade agreement thus demonstrate a congruency between an EU policy goal, namely climate change addressing clauses within the agreement incentivising ambitious climate protection in the Mercosur states, and the policy instrument, the trade agreement. This connection is part of the TSD chapter: a goal is "the development of trade and economic relations in a manner that contributes to the objective of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and supports their respective labour and environmental standards" (Art. 1.4a TSD; EU-Mercosur Trade Agreement 2022). Climate clauses in the trade agreement are thus set out to be a low-cost, high-efficiency policy instrument to push for EU climate values externally in the Mercosur region. As per the theory, trade – the economic objective, and climate action – the non-economic objective, are both featured strongly in the treaty and provide mutually reinforcing incentives. Preferential market access is the main tool of climate norm propagation within the treaty. The theory of economic policy thus explains this mechanism in the EU-Mercosur free trade agreement by answering the three fundamental questions at the heart of the theory. "What is the problem?" – Climate change challenges in the Mercosur region and inadequate police responses thereto. "What instruments are available to deal with the problem?" –

Amongst other policy responses beyond the scope of this analysis, are trade agreements. “Of those instruments, which politically feasible one(s) achieves the goal at the lowest cost?” – Conditional market access based on climate change addressing. The theory of economic policy addresses the problem of how to choose policy approaches when the policymaker is confronted with multiple possible solution paths to a given problem. Climate change action in the Mercosur region is in this way maintained and built up through a trade agreement that works based on the premises of the theory of economic policy, acknowledging diverging ambitions and the simultaneous need for an efficient policy instrument of climate goal propagation.

VI.3 – CETA: Issue Linkage Theory Binding Two Similar Partners to Climate Ambitions

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the European Union includes climate change commitments. The two G7 partners perceive and portray themselves as global climate leaders: the government of Canada is committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 – a goal shared by the European Union (Canada 2023). The EEAS recognises the shared aims of the two entities in stating that “Canada and the EU share the same goals, values and a common world view. As one of EU's global strategic partners, Canada works closely with the EU towards further deepening effective, mutually-beneficial political and economic cooperation” (EEAS 2023). In this light, in a climate change addressing lens, CETA is outlined as “not just one of the most ambitious trade agreements the EU has ever concluded, but also the most progressive” (idem). The inclusion of climate goals in the trade agreement between Canada and the EU is thus heavily facilitated by similar ambitions, establishing a permissive political framework for the inclusion of climate clauses in the treaty. However, both Canada and the EU are concerned with the economic disadvantages of these domestic commitments, as industries and carbon-heavy economic sectors are feared to relocate due to added carbon costs (Fraser Institute 2019). The negotiation of CETA thus emphasised the need to mutually uphold climate goals and underscored the importance of reciprocity in environmental

ambitions on both sides of the Atlantic. To reduce the risk of free-riding problems, the EU included climate goals in CETA following the theoretical model of issue linkage.

Issue linkage is argued to be the best and most powerful mechanism "to encourage cooperation on issues where free-riding incentives are significant" (Currarini and Marchiori 2022). The basic idea, to link cooperation on issues that are feared to be susceptible to free-riding with issues that provide mutual benefits, finds itself central in the accord (idem). An increase in overall welfare in both partners can be observed when the linked issues are complements (idem). The CETA agreement clearly outlines climate change addressing and the facilitation of trade and investment flows as complementary and accords this linkage a central role in the treaty. Article 24.12 "Cooperation on environment issues" states that "The Parties recognise that enhanced cooperation is an important element to advance the objectives of this Chapter, and commit to cooperate on trade-related environmental issues of common interest, in areas such as: […] trade-related aspects of the current and future international climate change regime, as well as domestic climate policies and programmes relating to mitigation and adaptation" (Art. 24.12; Comprehensive Economic And Trade Agreement 2017). The links between trade and climate change issues are further emphasised: "The Parties underline the benefit of considering trade-related labour and environmental issues as part of a global approach to trade and sustainable development. Accordingly, the Parties agree that the rights and obligations under Chapters Twenty-Three (Trade and Labour) and Twenty-Four (Trade and Environment) are to be considered in the context of this Agreement" (Art. 22.1; idem). The simultaneous discussion and joint settlement of trade and climate change in the agreement thus motivate both parties to uphold climate ambitions and to remain committed to their environmental agendas as the welcomed increase of trade between the partners is inherently linked to climate change addressing in the agreement.

Recognising each other's high-staked climate goals, the question of upholding commitments, a central concept in issue linkage theory, features prominently in CETA. The agreement mandates to "enhance enforcement of their respective labour and environmental law and respect for labour and environmental international agreements" (Art. 22.1; idem) as well as that "each Party reaffirms its commitment to effectively implement in its law and practices, in its whole territory, the multilateral environmental agreements to which it is party" (Art. 24.4; idem). The effect of issue linkage on

commitment credibility becomes apparent. The incentive of increased trade and welfare pushes the two agreeing parties to reinforce and uphold their ambitions, mutually assuring their counterpart of their credible adherence to international and domestic climate change policies. Although some argue that signing partners "add issues to a treaty only because agreement on the primary issue was likely to be reached in the first place" (Poast 2013), it has been established that "linkage is associated with a reduced risk of violating a treaty's terms" (idem), fulfilling the aim of Canada and the EU to bind their trading partner to ambitious climate action. Including climate goals in a free trade agreement thus induces all parties to uphold their codified environmental obligations. In this light, as the obligations are linked to trade, both parties cannot step back behind their climate goals to gain a more advantageous trading position: "The Parties recognise that it is inappropriate to encourage trade or investment by weakening or reducing the levels of protection afforded in their environmental law" (Art. 24.5; Comprehensive Economic And Trade Agreement 2017).

CETA thus contains forms of enforcement linkage, negotiation linkage and participation linkage. Enforcement linkage, the fact that the infringement of climate goals within the agreement would have effects on the issue-linked factor, namely trade, is the least prevalent, as the normal dispute settlement mechanism does not apply to the trade and environment chapter. However, the agreement does state that a panel of experts may forward recommendations for the resolution of an environmental matter – including on trade issues (Art. 24.15; idem). Negotiation linkage is clearly present, as trade and climate change goals are negotiated jointly and not in two separate agreements. CETA reinforces this link as "the Parties recognise that the environment is a fundamental pillar of sustainable development and recognise the contribution that trade could make to sustainable development" (Art. 24.2; idem). Also, participation linkage is clearly centred within the agreement as encouragements to participate and stick to obligations in international climate agreements are mandated: "The Parties recognise the value of international environmental governance and agreements as a response of the international community to global or regional environmental problems and stress the need to enhance the mutual supportiveness between trade and environment policies, rules, and measures" (Art. 24.4; idem). The latter is also mandated by potential sanctioning mechanisms as it falls under the scope of the panel of experts. Issue linkage theory thus explains climate

goal inclusion paths in the Canada-EU free trade agreement. Similar levels of ambition and the need for committed upholding thereof therefore explain why the Union opted for mechanisms mirroring issue linkage within the trade deal.

VI.4 – SADC EPA: Sustainable Development Addressing Climate Change as Outlined by Political Ecology

While the entire world is susceptible to the effects of climate change, Southern Africa is, according to the SADC community, particularly touched by the climate crisis (SADC 2023). Among others, climate change severely impacts SADC goals for regional economic development by increasing the frequency of floods, cyclones, and droughts that may damage infrastructure, destroy agricultural crops, disrupt livelihoods, and cause the loss of life (idem). The EU-SADC EPA is a specifically development-oriented trade agreement that is based on the essential and fundamental elements of the Cotonou agreement and thus contains "some of the strongest language on rights and sustainable development available in EU agreements" (European Commission 2023 o). In this light, the trade agreement contains clauses "recognising the special circumstances and needs of the Least Developed Countries ('LDCs') of the SADC EPA States through the use of special and differential treatment and asymmetry" as outlined prior (Economic Partnership Agreement 2016). The Economic Partnership Agreement references climate challenges and the addressing thereof within this specific development-focused context recognising the EU's responsibility to further regional development in the SADC countries through a trade relationship that takes account of the drastically divergent economic development levels between the EU and Southern Africa. In doing so, the parties "reaffirm their commitments to promote the development of international trade in such a way as to contribute to the objective of sustainable development, in its three pillars (economic development, social development, and environmental protection) for the welfare of present and future generations, and will strive to ensure that this objective is integrated and reflected at every level of their trade relationship" (Art. 6.2; idem). Furthermore, "the Parties reaffirm that the objective of sustainable development is to be applied and integrated at every level of their economic partnership, in fulfilment of the

overriding commitments set out in Articles 1, 2 and 9 of the Cotonou Agreement, and especially the general commitment to reducing and eventually eradicating poverty in a way that is consistent with the objectives of sustainable development" (Art. 7.1; idem). This focus on inequality, the eradication of poverty in a way that ensures sustainable development in acknowledgement of the need for environmental protection and the addressing of climate challenges politicises environmental issues at the global level. Due to factors of unequal development, global society is not subjected to the effects of climate change in a homogenous way, but disproportionately affects the poorest regions and people. A focus on global climate governance, central to the EU's worldwide approach to climate change, is thus inscribed in the EPA, stating that the importance of "international environmental governance and agreements as a response of the international community to global or regional environmental problems as well as decent work for all as a key element of sustainable development for all countries and as a priority objective of international cooperation" (Art. 8.1; idem) is recognised. These clauses within the EPA, in synergy with asymmetric preferential trade relationship commitments, highlight how political ecology frames the inclusion of climate goals in the agreement at large.

Political ecology emphasises the need for sustainable development in synergy with coherent, globally just and power relationship recognising climate change policy. Climate change, in this theoretical reading, uncovers power inequalities and differences in development between the global North and South. Accordingly, the EPA outlines how "the Parties commit to cooperating in order to implement this Agreement and to support the SADC EPA States' trade and development strategies within the overall SADC regional integration process" (Art. 12.1; idem), while recognising "the importance of working together on trade related aspects of environmental and labour policies in order to achieve the objectives of this Agreement" (Art. 11.1; idem). According to political ecology, goods and opportunities are distributed unequally among the world's population. Any kind of trade agreement taking account of this could therefore not be fully reciprocal as it would wrongly equate two imbalanced partners, affected by the climate crisis in different ways and responsible for climate change in highly unequal degrees. The EPA with the SADC states thus manifests that the EU will support a "new trading dynamic between the Parties by means of the progressive, asymmetrical liberalisation of trade

between them and reinforce, broaden and deepen cooperation in all areas relevant to trade" (Art. 1.f; idem), as the aim is to strengthen the relationship between the parties on the basis of "solidarity and mutual interest" (idem). Trade is thus not seen as mere means to an economic end, but contributes to the addressing of societal issues of environmental inequalities and works towards the mutual goal of sustainable development in a region particularly touched by climate change. EU officials stress that this cooperation with countries in the SADC regional state grouping is essential "in order to reduce the devastating effects of climate change, and in today's complex geopolitical context, building trusted and sustainable connections with our partner countries is more important than ever" (European Commission 2023 p). Taking note of this commitment, it becomes evident that market-oriented theories and aspirations only partly explain the conclusion of the EU-SADC EPA. More importantly, the agreement links sustainability, development, climate change and global justice reflecting the theoretical assumptions and calls for action of political ecology. This critical outlook highlights how the EU is theorised to be a normative trade power, an "actor that is structurally bound to promote norms and values beyond its borders through trade" (Poletti et. al. 2020). Political ecology reflects this thinking. The EPA between SADC and the EU thus accepts that costs and benefits associated with environmental change are distributed unequally, issues mechanisms that aim to mitigate existing social and economic inequalities through environmental sustainability and asymmetric trade opening and appreciates the political implications of the latter two, namely as trade aspects of climate policies are driven to be cooperatively addressed in international fora and multilateral environmental agreements (Art. 11.3.a; Economic Partnership Agreement 2016). Political ecology hereby emphasises the analysis of environmental consequences resulting from political and economic decisions and explains how underlying power dynamics, economic interests and social impacts are reconciled with the ambition for climate change addressing in the EU-SADC EPA.

VI.5 - EVFTA: Global Europeanisation Theory Explaining EU Climate Value Inclusion in the Free Trade Agreement

The EU-Vietnam trade agreement (EVFTA) contains, next to the now standard sustainable development chapter, commitments to the green economy and the fight against climate change that mirror EU-internal ambitions. The trade agreement's "commitments on trade and sustainable development in the deal reflect the EU's standards and values. Accepting to commit and then implement these social-environmental standards that are considerably high compared to the common standards of the world helps Vietnam ensure the harmonization between social-environmental protection and economic activities. This is also a premise for Vietnam to continue developing steadily, and achieve the goal of sustainable development" (Nguyen 2023). The trade agreement thus facilitates the spreading of EU climate norms and values through the trade agreement and ensures their incorporation into the Vietnamese green development path. The policy instruments referenced in the agreement strongly remind of the EU's own climate change addressing tools. For example, a carbon price, emission trading schemes and carbon markets are priorities of the Union and are aimed to be spread to Vietnam by means and incentive of trade facilitation: "Within the UNFCC framework, the Parties recognise the role of domestic policies in addressing climate change. Accordingly, the Parties shall consult and share information and experiences of priority or of mutual interest, including: (a) best practices and lessons learned in designing, implementing, and operating mechanisms for pricing carbon; (b) the promotion of domestic and international carbon markets, including through mechanisms such as Emissions Trading Schemes and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation; and (c) the promotion of energy efficiency, low-emission technology and renewable energy" (Art. 13.6.2; EVFTA 2020). The export of EU best practices, experiences and climate policy frameworks through the agreement is recognised by EU Commission Executive Vice President Timmermans on a visit to Vietnam: "The European Union stands ready to continue its support to Vietnam in its green transition. Vietnam has tremendous potential for further […] development. Over the past days we have discussed ways in which Europe's own experience, expertise and financial support […] can help accelerate this transition" (EEAS 2022). This exchange of policy experience

and information along the EU climate change model is enshrined in the agreement, recognising that the spread of EU procedures mutually benefits the common fight against climate change as a part of trade liberalisation: “sharing information and experience about trade-related aspects concerning the definition and implementation of green growth strategies and policies, including but not limited to sustainable production and consumption, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and environmentally sound technology” (Art. 13.14.m; EVFTA 2022). This explicit sharing of climate norms, values and environmental “ways of doing things” that are first developed and defined in the European Union and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies at the Vietnamese level within the framework of the free trade agreement follows processes of construction, diffusion, and institutionalisation of global Europeanisation theory. Through EVFTA, EU political and policy ambitions and policy mechanisms become a part of Vietnam’s domestic policy outlooks. The prospect of national implementation of climate best practices, mirroring the advanced framework of EU legislation and international climate goals, is recognised directly in stating that “each Party reaffirms its commitment to effectively implement in its domestic law and practice the multilateral environmental agreements to which it is a party” (Art. 13.5; idem) in synergy with cooperation and promotion of positive contributions to enhancing the parties’ capacities to transition to a low carbon economy (Art. 13.6.1; idem). The EU-Vietnam free trade agreement thus spreads EU climate norms and values to a global partner, aiming to build up national legislation and policy on successful models established in the Union. EVFTA thus conforms to the larger theoretical outlook of global Europeanisation theory in two central aspects.

Europeanisation in the agreement can be observed primarily through a logic of consequences approach. Accordingly, Vietnam would choose to introduce new climate change policies such as the above-mentioned ETS mechanisms and carbon market instruments to maximise the Vietnamese utility and welfare under specific circumstances. In the case of a free trade agreement, the benefits and possibility of withholding thereof alter the cost-benefit calculation of the country, making the following of an EU model of climate change addressing a viable alternative to the status quo. Once established, the parties are, under the agreement, no longer allowed to turn back environmental policies: “A Party shall not waive or derogate from, or offer to waive or derogate from, its

environmental or labour law" (Art. 13.3.2; idem). Infringements thereof risk the facilitation of trade flows between both parties as the trade treaty is set out to "promote trade and investment under this Agreement in a manner mindful of high levels of environmental […] protection and relevant internationally recognised standards and agreements" (idem). A logic of consequences thus pushes for this aspect of climate change legislation Europeanisation. Conditionality is upheld through the size and credibility of incentives – thus the prospects of development under EU market access, and through an added cost of noncompliance – the possibility of rescindment of the latter (Schimmelfennig 2010). The Europeanisation effect can thus be described as an externalisation of EU climate policy through the free trade agreement, using EU market size as well as the legalisation and centralisation of EU rules as mechanisms and conditions for increased climate ambitions in Vietnam, globalising EU internal goals (idem).

Moreover, Europeanisation is also evident in a logic of appropriateness perspective in the trade agreement. The agreement depicts instances of social learning and the convergence of norms around the EU model. Vietnam, as a partner of the Union, is further incentivised to strive towards stringent climate policy because of their perceived legitimacy and a wider identification with EU goals. This cooperative thought similarly shapes the agreement, using effects of socialisation and imitation, as the EU and Vietnam commit to "sharing experience on promoting the ratification and implementation of fundamental, priority and other up-to-date […] environmental agreements of relevance to trade" (Art. 13.14.d; EVFTA 2022). EVFTA thus spreads EU climate ambitions by means of trade facilitation. Europeanisation theory can therefore be seen as a main implementation path of these goals within the agreement, ensuring that a global partner transposes EU legislative standards within its national policy foundation and outlook. Successful EU climate policy transposition is thus achieved through the utilitarian tool of the EU free trade agreement with Vietnam, constructed along functional pathways of the global Europeanisation theory framework.

VII - Conclusion and Discussion

VII.1 - Discussion of Thesis Findings and Academic Limitations

Although this thesis has shown how the theory of economic policy, issue linkage theory, political ecology and global Europeanisation theory best explain climate ambition inclusion paths in the Mercosur, CETA, SADC EPA and EVFTA respectively, it is important to discuss these findings critically and to reflect on the limitations of this thesis' research outcomes. It is firstly important to note that while each theory certainly explains each's EU trade agreement's climate ambition inclusion path best as outlined above, minor elements of all four theories can be observed in all trade agreements. While instances of other theoretical frameworks may be more subtle as every EU trade agreement is tailored specifically to a unique global trading partner and the inherently special trading relationship with the latter, certain parts of the trade agreements follow a standardised model of climate change goal inclusion in all EU trade treaties. The European Commission states that "All EU's modern trade agreements include chapters on trade and sustainable development, with a broad set of mutually agreed commitments. […] In particular, the new approach will include the use of trade sanctions for breaches of core TSD provisions. It will be applied to future negotiations and to ongoing negotiations as appropriate" (European Commission 2022). While the TSD chapters between the four analysed trade agreements can vary drastically, certain formulations are prevalent in all trade agreements following this model of standardisation. Arguably, for example, elements of global Europeanisation theory can be found in the three trade agreements beyond the EU-Vietnam free trade agreement. It became obvious during the analysis of all four trade agreements, however, that one specific theoretical outlook best assesses one of four divergent trade agreements with highly different global partners as per this thesis' hypothesis.

Furthermore, it is interesting to highlight which aspects of the trade agreements' climate ambitions implications went beyond this thesis' analysis. This thesis has not analysed in depth how included goals are enforced and how specific climate clauses are upheld long-term. In part, this is also due to the short time between the implementation of some agreements and this analysis, as the Mercosur agreement is, for instance, still in the

negotiation and ratification phase. Further research into how the included climate ambitions actually affect climate change in the concerned partners is thus of particular interest. Can measurable effects be assessed in the Mercosur states, Canada, the SADC community and Vietnam? To answer these questions, long-term environmental data as well as an analysis of national legislation sets is needed. Though this goes beyond the scope of this thesis, this contribution is to be understood as a foundation for further academic debate and research, adding to a scholarly debate that is still in its infancy and only sparingly contributed to.

This limited academic dealing with the subject of the intersection of EU climate change policy forwarding and EU trade policy within the specific context of EU trade agreements also became evident during this thesis' extensive literature analysis, as the academic contributions to the field are still at a low number. Trade agreements with a higher societal topicality, such as the controversial Mercosur trade agreement or CETA are connected to a drastically higher number of academic contributions than the less discussed SADC EPA and EVFTA. Undoubtedly, further research would benefit from a higher amount of engagement with this important policy-bridging field. Similarly, this analysis reflects a stepping stone for further academic research in a scholarly field of high importance to European trade governance and international climate action.

VII.2 - Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis has shown how existing theoretical frameworks can be applied to a field of European governance of striking relevance to addressing climate change globally in order to come about a novel analysis of EU climate change ambition inclusion paths in international trade agreements. Building upon a qualitative multi-method approach, triangulating published academic literature with policy analysis, central findings of distinct relevance to climate goal mechanisms in EU trade treaties have been presented. This thesis' analysis is deeply rooted in theory. Four theories of European policy-making were operationalised exhaustively in order to serve as the main analytical framework in a scholarly assessment of four trade agreements. First, the theory of economic policy explains how non-economic and value-oriented goals can be pushed for

by means of economic policy mechanisms, answering the central policy-oriented question "Of all available instruments, which politically feasible one achieves a policy goal at the lowest cost?". Secondly, issue linkage theory, the simultaneous discussion of two issues for joint settlement, sheds light on how one can create benefits for parties who would otherwise find little value in an agreement. Thirdly, political ecology establishes a framework for politicising environmental and climate change issues at the global level, recognising normative values of injustice, inequality, power disbalances and resulting relationships affecting the communal resolving of the climate crisis through equitable and sustainable development. Lastly, global Europeanisation theory builds upon a pre-established academic foundation of EU norm and value propagation in showing how European policy priorities are internalised in national political and legislative frameworks worldwide through instances of utilitarian influencing and socialisation effects.

This thesis discusses existing literature on the EU-Mercosur, EU-Canada, EU-SADC and EU-Vietnam preferential and free trade agreements and provides an overview of the agreements' central aims of trade liberalisation and climate change inclusion paths. A detailed analysis depicts how each theory best explains these inclusion paths in respectively one of the four diverse trade agreements with global EU partners, concluded in different circumstances and political contexts. This thesis assesses the following in answering the main research question "*In which ways do the European Union's preferential and free trade agreements with global partners include and reflect the EU's self-given climate ambitions?*". An elaborate analysis supports the central hypothesis, namely that the analysed EU trade agreements follow mechanisms theorised by the four aforementioned theories on the climate-trade nexus. The European Union has included climate change ambitions in the Mercosur trade agreement in accordance with the theoretical assumptions of the theory of economic policy. A trade-based approach pushes for climate action in the South American state community without putting additional costs on EU member states, mobilising climate change action through conditioned market opening. This conditional and cost-efficient inclusion of climate clauses in the to-be-ratified free trade agreement thus jointly mobilises economic and non-economic targets, following a model theorised by main contributors Tinbergen and Theil. Furthermore, the EU-Canada trade agreement CETA reflects the joint climate goals of the two partners in conjoining trade and climate change issues, committing both parties to environmental

action. As issue linkage theory specifically addresses such areas prone to free-riding problems, CETA outlines climate change addressing and the facilitation of trade and investment flows as complementary and accords this linkage a central role in the treaty. The Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and the South African SADC states conforms to a critical theory issued academic approach. The trade agreement defines environmental and climate change problems within the wider need for sustainable development of a partnering community within a relationship affected by unequal levels of economic maturity. Political ecology thus serves as the main inclusion mechanism of climate ambitions within the treaty, taking note of the need for asymmetric trade opening to mutually address underdevelopment, sustainability and inequality in pushing for climate ambitions in the Southern African Development Community. The fourth analysed EU trade agreement, EVFTA between the Union and Vietnam includes climate aspirations in accordance with the theoretical mechanisms of global Europeanisation theory. The trade agreement emphasises a cooperative climate approach, sharing best practice experiences and incorporating tools of EU climate policy into the agreement, foreshadowing an inclusion of EU climate policy norms into the Vietnamese environmental policy framework through a logic of consequences and a logic of appropriateness.

The European Union, a climate front runner and global trade primus, thus shows how international trade agreements can, through varying inclusion paths, push for climate action across the international state community. Traditionally thought of as opposing policy fields, trade and investment liberalisation and facilitation and stringent responses to the planetary climate crisis do not have to be at odds. Trade can incentivise the introduction of climate legislation, commit international partners to global climate agreements and goals and foster the environmentally conscious and sustainable development of EU partners in an equitable manner. The recognition of theoretical underpinnings of climate change ambition inclusion paths in the four trade agreements at the heart of this thesis' analysis not only urges for further academic investigation into the global trade-climate nexus but also serves as a call for additional policy action following these established theoretical models of climate ambition inclusion. Increased trade between climate leaders and their international partners can contribute to a greater capacity to address climate change more effectively and provides positive incentives to

adopt more stringent environmental standards and to abide by previously brokered multilateral climate agreements in ensuring that national environmental legislation is not negatively altered. The European Union's trade strategy, set out to achieve its domestic and external policy objectives and promote climate change addressing policy worldwide in its commitment to fight the climate crisis is thus fully reflected in the Mercosur, CETA, SADC and EVFTA trade agreements. The EU's climate ambitions reflect strongly in its preferential and free trade agreements, ensuring that trade and climate approaches form an intrinsic policy nexus sustainably growing the global economy in recognition of the urgent and planetary-scoped challenge of climate change.

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IX - Appendix

IX.1 – Table of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	**Meaning**
EU	European Union
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
ETS	Emissions Trading System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
WTO	World Trade Organisation
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
CETA	Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement
SADC	Southern African Development Community
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
EEAS	European Union External Action Service
TSD	Trade and Sustainable Development
TEU	Treaty on the European Union
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
UNFCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
ACP	Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TBT	Technical Barriers to Trade
EVFTA	EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement
LDC	Least Developed Country