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'CLIMATE EMERGENCY': HOW EMERGENCY FRAMING AFFECTS THE UNITED KINGDOM'S CLIMATE GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

This article addresses the relationship between how discourses are framed, how they influence processes of change and stability, and how liberal democracies—here, the UK—govern the risks posed by climate change. It analyses divergent ways in which 'emergency framing' is employed in the UK's climate governance field—a contested, multi-actor field where strategic communications works to influence processes of goal setting, policy making, standard setting, and implementation. The article inquires who is and who is not using emergency frames at varying levels of intensity, and why.

It concludes that 'incumbent' actors are more inclined to reject the emergency frame; they tend to employ implicit 'techniques of emergency' only when in support of adaptation and resilience measures. Conversely, explicit emergency framing is the defining discursive characteristic of disempowered 'challengers', who employ it confrontationally in their fight to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Keywords—*strategic communications, strategic communication, framing, frame analysis, climate governance, climate change communications, climate emergency*

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Introduction

In 2018, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C (SR15)*. The key takeaway for policymakers and publics was that to limit global warming to 1.5°C—the level nations agreed to in signing the 2016 Paris Agreement to avoid the most severe impacts of climate change—we must reduce annual global emissions by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030. For many this represented a 'startlingly brief'[1] period given progress to date. The 45% by 2030 timeframe translated into alarming headlines that relayed an emergency on a catastrophic scale: 'we have 12 years to limit climate change catastrophe, warns UN' wrote *The Guardian*.[2] 'Why we're heading for a "climate catastrophe"' proclaimed *BBC Newsnight.*[3] *SR15*'s findings informed revised emissions targets in major economies, such as the United Kingdom's move to net-zero[4] by 2050. It seemingly justified newfound claims from Green politicians[5] and NGOs[6] that we are in the midst of a 'climate emergency'.

From relative obscurity, the term 'climate emergency' became 100 times more common in the year following the publication of *SR15*;[7] it was even chosen as the Oxford Dictionary's 'word of the year' for 2019. Correspondingly, the notion of a 'climate emergency' has now been endorsed by disparate actors, from social movements and campaign groups to government authorities, though

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1 Barry Gills and Jamie Morgan, 'Global Climate Emergency: After COP24, Climate Science, Urgency, and the Threat to Humanity', *Globalizations* Volume 17 № 6 (2020): 894.
2 Jonathan Watts, 'We Have 12 Years to Limit Climate Change Catastrophe, Warns UN', *The Guardian,* 8 October 2018. Accessed 1 November 2020
3 BBC Newsnight, 'Why We're Heading for a "Climate Catastrophe"', [YouTube video] 8 October 2018; cited in Bounegru, L., K. De Pryck, T. Venturini, and M. Mauri, '"We Only Have 12 Years": YouTube and the IPCC report on global warming of 1.5°C', *First Monday*, Volume 25 № 2/3 (2020).
4 The term 'net-zero' refers to an overall balance between emissions produced and emissions taken out of the atmosphere.
5 See UK Green Party politician Carla Denyer's 2018 motion to declare a 'climate emergency' in Bristol City Council.
6 See The Club of Rome, *Climate Emergency Plan: A Collaborative Call To Action*, December 2018.
7 Oxford Languages, 'Word of the Year 2019', [online]. [Accessed 7 November 2020].

it is not without its critics.[8] Motivated by unprecedented climate protests in April 2019, the UK Parliament followed in the footsteps of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly by officially declaring a 'climate emergency'—a move that marked a striking shift in political rhetoric. However, this supposed 'acceptance' of the emergency frame did not happen 'naturally' or merely in accordance with shifting scientific evidence. Nor can we say that discourses regarding the 'climate emergency' are settled. The struggle between competitive discourses and interpretations of the 'climate emergency' with regard to future policy directions and governance continues.

This article focuses on how the communicative process of 'framing'—the persistent selection, emphasis, and exclusion of ideas within discourse that shapes how we think about an issue[9]—is strategically employed to justify or influence what should be done to address the problem of climate change. Purposeful use of framing to telegraph meaning, prioritise a specific course of action, and focus a target audience's attention on particular aspects of a topic to gain a favourable response, is also referred to as 'strategic framing'.[10] Effective strategic communications derives from 'persuasion and explanation (in terms that resonate with target audiences), finding shared perspectives[…] compromise, credibility, legitimacy, partnership, and support'.[11] Consequently, framing—with its central role in processing information—sits at the heart of Strategic Communications. By analysing how arguments are framed, we are better placed to understand how specific frames and discourses become dominant or hegemonic,[12] and how they come to constitute a specific field of policy[13] such as climate governance.

Though framing and frame analysis are essential skillsets for strategic communicators, the overlap between strategic framing and governance is often overlooked in the literature on Strategic Communications. Therefore, this

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8 See veteran climatologist Mike Hulme's website. He has criticised the language of climate 'emergency' as 'dangerous talk' due to its closeness to political states of emergency. [Accessed 11 August 2020].
9 The 'selection, emphasis, and exclusion' made use of within a frame is applicable, but not limited, to words, phrases, metaphors, images, themes, and storylines; Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani, 'Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: a Constructionist Approach', *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 95 № 1 (1989): 1-37.
10 Kirk Hallahan, 'Strategic Framing' in W. Donsbach (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Communication* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).
11 Christopher Paul, *Strategic Communication: Origins, Concepts, and Current Debates* (Oxford: Praeger, 2011) p. 9.
12 Matt McDonald, 'Discourses of Climate Security', *Political Geography* Volume 33 (2013): 42–51; Arjen Boin, Paul 't Hart, and Allen McConnell, 'Crisis Exploitation: Political and Policy Impacts of Framing Contests', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Volume 16 № 1 (2009): 81–106.
13 Frank Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

article examines competing climate governance discourses in the UK, where the 'emergency frame' is used variously to legitimise or delegitimise[14] climate governance structures—namely, the goals, policies, and procedures used to address climate change. By understanding the constitutive power of framing in climate governance structures, we may better understand processes of change and stability in how liberal democracies such as the UK address climate change, and how emergency framing is employed to affect such change or stability.

I conduct a frame analysis of 18 prominent policy documents sourced from a variety of political actors. These include 'incumbent' entities such as government departments, non-departmental public bodies, and the Conservative Party, and 'challengers', such as opposing political parties, non-governmental organisations, and environmental social movement organisations. This article asks who is and who is not employing the emergency frame, how it is being done, and why. The subsequent discussion borrows from political sociology—primarily the concept of 'governmentality' and Fligstein and McAdam's idea of the 'strategic action field'—to interpret the findings in the broader context of change and stability in UK climate governance. Such conceptual frameworks link different discursive 'moves' to specific political and institutional contexts and ways of understanding.

The language of emergency in politics generally acknowledges that there is only a short time horizon available to reverse an existential threat or potential catastrophe.[15] Hence, such language is used in appeals to accelerate social, juridical, or political change to meet such challenges. By using terms such as 'emergency', 'crisis', and 'catastrophe', risk and danger are problematised in a specific way. For political actors to speak of the climate in such terms is to frame climate change in a specific way and to render it governable through a specific field of knowledge, practices, and technologies. Emergency-oriented problematisations of 'danger' are traditionally used to justify treatment of an issue through a state's security apparatus and/or legitimise exceptional measures to deal with it. In the oft-quoted words of literary critic Roland Barthes,

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14 *Legitimacy* here speaks to whether actions of an entity are desirable and proper within the context of a society's systems of norms, values, and beliefs—a quality akin to a general perception of appropriateness (Suchman, Mark C., 'Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches', *Academy of Management Review,* Volume 20 № 3 (1995): 571–610; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). This quality is established or contested through a discursive process of *normative evaluation* referred to as '*legitimization*' or '*delegitimization*' from which legitimacy or illegitimacy emerges (Jens Steffek, 'Discursive Legitimation in Environmental Governance', *Forest Policy and Economics*, Volume 11 № 5/6 (October 2009): 313–18.

15 Stefan Skrimshire, 'Activism for End Times: Millenarian Belief in an Age of Climate Emergency', *Political Theology* Volume 20 № 6 (2019): 518–36.

'language is never innocent'.[16] As indicated by theories of securitis*ation*[17] and c*risification,*[18] security issues, crises, and emergencies alike are socio-politically constructed. That means that certain events are considered emergencies, while others of equal gravity are not. Following this constructivist tradition of frame analysis, the unique risk of climate change must be 'represented, depicted and ordered before it can be governed'.[19]

While the emergency frame applied to climate change, like other emergency designations, aims to communicate *urgency*, *necessity*, and a *high level of risk*, the notion of a 'climate emergency' has grown to represent a wider narrative regarding the consequences of humanity's current relationship with the natural world. Veteran naturalist David Attenborough says:

> It may sound frightening, but the scientific evidence is that if we have not taken dramatic action within the next decade, we could face irreversible damage to the natural world and the collapse of our societies.[20]

Attenborough's words highlight three key representations of climate change bound in the term 'climate emergency', which make it a unique type of emergency. Let us analyse what he says.

First, although the 'climate emergency' argument rests solely on 'scientific evidence', climate change is characterised by uncertainty ('*we could face*'). This uncertainty is criticised by 'climate sceptics' (we can never be sure what exactly will happen or what exactly constitutes 'safe' emissions).[21] The 'climate emergency' argument acknowledges that we have yet to understand the 'non-linear' feedback and other complexities abound in the climate system,[22] and that we should expect sudden leaps in climate disruption and 'bumpy temporalities'.[23]

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16 Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1967) translated from the French *Le Degre Zero de L'Ecriture* (Editions du Seuil, 1953), p. 53.
17 Ole Wæver, 'Securitization and Desecuritization' in Ronnie Lipschutz (ed.) *On Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 46–86.
18 E. Paglia, 'The Socio-scientific Construction of Global Climate Crisis', *Geopolitics* Volume 23 № 1, (2018): 96–123.
19 J. Stripple and H. Bulkeley, 'Governmentality' in Karin Bäckstrand and Eva Lövbrand (eds) *Research Handbook on Climate Governance* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015), p. 50.
20 David Attenborough, Climate Change – The Facts, *BBC One*, (2019). [Accessed: 12 August 2020].
21 Maxwell T. Boykoff, David Frame, and Samuel Randalls, 'Discursive Stability Meets Climate Instability: A Critical Exploration of the Concept of 'Climate Stabilization' in Contemporary Climate Policy', *Global Environmental Change*, Volume 20 № 1 (2010): 53–64.
22 Gills and Morgan, 'Global Climate Emergency'.
23 William E. Connolly, *Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming* (London: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 89.

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This type of uncertainty lends itself to a frightening 'catastrophic imaginary'.[24]

Second, the nature of the risk tied to climate change is represented as '*irreversible damage*' and '[societal] *collapse*', positioning climate change as 'catastrophic'. Rather than being a knowable threat, 'catastrophe' denotes a 'radical moment of interruption'[25] to our way of life, characterised by novelty, surprise, and rupture.[26] The logic of catastrophes induces a sense of limit, which functions as a 'tipping point'. In the context of climate change, when a tipping point is unexpectedly crossed (at a certain place and time), the affected ecosystem passes irreversibly into potentially catastrophic disequilibrium.[27] Here, planetary subsystems, on which life and society depend, are pushed into a qualitatively different state.[28]

Third, although the most severe medium- and long-term climate change consequences have not yet materialised, the 'climate emergency' necessitates the acceleration of '*dramatic*' action in the relatively short-term. Transformation must happen '*within the next decade*'. Yet this timescale for action does not align with conceptions of 'immediate' action in current political schedules, allowing for a kind of 'exploitable proactive complacency'.[29] Skrimshire argues that the 'temporally quickening tendency' of proponents of the 'climate emergency' is at odds with the 'liberal political order's favoring of gradual, incremental change'.[30] This tension is particularly acute when the threat is non-traditional and cannot be addressed by the established security apparatus of the state. Similarly, the 'invisible', 'spectral' threat of catastrophic climate change requires a radical transformation of all aspects of life.[31] Yet it still may not materialise as predicted and has no 'shadowy' actor, or dangerous 'other', supposedly at its root, that can be easily blamed. Therefore, legitimising immediate radical transformation to address climate change is a difficult task for governance.

To summarise, the emergency frame applied to climate change captures three key representations tied to risk, temporality, and strategic action: (a) its uncertain and complex character; (b) its catastrophic potential (climate change is 'non-

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24 Skrimshire, 'Activism for End Times', p. 527.
25 Claudia Aradau and Rens van Munster, 'Governing Terrorism Through Risk: Taking Precautions, (un)Knowing the Future', *European Journal of International Relations* Volume 13 № 1 (2007): 89–115, p. 4.
26 Ibid.
27 Roger Scruton, *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously About the Planet* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013).
28 T. M. Lenton et al, 'Tipping Elements in the Earth's Climate System', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Volume 105 № 6 (February 2008): 1786–93.
29 Gills and Morgan, 'Global Climate Emergency', p. 890.
30 Skrimshire, 'Activism for End Times', p. 532.
31 Mark Lacy, *Security, Technology and Global Politics: Thinking with Virilio* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014).

linear' and may cause 'irreversible' damage to the natural world upon which all societies depend); and (c) the need for urgent transformation in the short term (despite being a medium- to long-term threat).

Literature Review

(I) Modernity, Risk, and Futurity

By the 1990s, sociologists were describing a major temporal and spatial reconfiguration of modernity.[32] 'Fluid', 'post-industrial', 'global systems' were replacing the 'bounded', or 'fixed', structures of modern industrial society.[33] Risks previously limited to known and bounded environments—making them more calculable, controllable, and predictable—were now falling on unknown others thanks to processes of 'globalisation'.[34] Just as the forces of globalisation accelerated production and the flow of transportation and information across the world, various commentators argued that risks, disasters, and catastrophes were being accelerated in tandem.[35] For John Urry, this conceptual reconfiguration recognises 'emergent global complexities' rooted in a new 'profound relationality'[36] between a diverse array of people, objects, events, and information.

In this new domain of global systems, the principal governance task for securing the future was re-addressed by sociologists such as Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck. These authors emphasised risk-laden consequences in their diagnoses of modernity. In *The Risk Society*, Beck theorised that in the late modern era scientific and technological advances had created a new kind of society, in which the consciousness of risk became the first concern of politics. Rather than a linear notion of 'progress' that was concerned with the development and employment of technologies in the realms of nature and society, the new *sine qua non* of governance was political and economic 'management' of risks derived from actual or potential technological enterprise,[37] such as those related to carbon-based technologies and infrastructure. Giddens, Beck, and Paul Virilio—with

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32 Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1990); Ulrich Beck, *The Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1992); Scott Lash and John Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space* (London: Sage, 1994).
33 Lash and Urry, *Economies of Signs*.
34 Scruton, *Green Philosophy*.
35 Paul Virilio and John Armitage, 'From Modernism to Hypermodernism' in John Armitage (ed.), *Virilio Live* (London: Sage, 2001); Virilio and Drew Burke, *Grey Ecology* (New York: Atropos Press, 2010).
36 Urry, *Global Complexity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), p. 139.
37 Beck, *The Risk Society*.

the latter's critique of Western society's blinkered desire for progress, efficiency, and security[38]—suggested the need to look inwards, at ourselves and at our now global systems and beliefs to 'secure' an increasingly contingent future. Accordingly, the new modernity is 'reflexive'.[39] It requires 'self-confrontation' and acquiring an awareness of unintended, latent side-effects and hidden dangers of emergent technologies and an understanding of the increasingly intensified connections between many parts of the world.[40]

The language of risk and futurity was not new to the 1990s. However, as the Soviet threat collapsed, the practice of anticipatory governance became more complex in the West. Giddens argued 'ontological security'—a sense of order, continuity, and knowledge of roughly what to expect—had vanished.[41] This *Zeitgeist* shaped both the security and military establishments. Aradau and van Munster believe expert knowledge was now needed to tackle the limits of knowledge: the unknown.[42] After the Cold War—a period marked by a military logic of containing and deterring quantifiable material threats—the goal of 'security' was seen to be better pursued by proactive strategies of prevention and pre-emption that seek out distant dangers before they can materialise into proximate threats.[43] Significantly, Dörries sees the end of the Cold War as opening up the space for the issue of climate change to gain traction and replace nuclear war as the prevailing apocalyptic fear.[44]

Political leaders such as Donald Rumsfeld and Tony Blair spoke of how the limits of knowledge could be addressed for governance.[45] This governance task was further consolidated in the minds of security professionals and bureaucrats when the 9/11 Commission Report criticised intelligence agencies for failing to imagine a dangerous future. Moreover, Paglia saw in 9/11 a 'new catastrophic benchmark',[46] and there emerged a post-9/11 association of climate change

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38 Virilio, Mark Polizzotti (trans.),'*Popular Defence and Ecological Struggles'*, (New York, Colombia University: Semiotext(e), 1990), originally published as *Defense populaire et Luttes ecologiques* (Paris: Edition Galilee, 1978); Lacy, *Security, Technology and Global Politics*.
39 Beck, *The Risk Society*; Beck et al, *'Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order'* (Stanford University Press, 1994).
40 Beck, 'Risk Society and the Provident State' in S. Lash, B. Szerszynski and B. Wynne (eds), *Risk, Environment and Modernity*. (London: Sage, 1996), p. 27–43, p. 28.
41 Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).
42 Aradau and van Munster, 'Governing Terrorism Through Risk', p. 4.
43 Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Marieke de Goede, Stephanie Simon, and Marijn Hoijtink, 'Performing Preemption', *Security Dialogue*, Volume 45 № 5 (2014): 411–22.
44 Matthias Dörries, 'Climate Catastrophes and Fear', *WIREs Climate Change* Volume 1. (2010).
45 Scruton, *Green Philosophy*, p. 104.
46 Paglia, 'The Socio-scientific Construction', p. 114.

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with catastrophe.[47] This focus on futurity reflects the theorisations of Beck and Giddens, wherein our changing relationship with time is a common theme. For Beck, 'the concept of risk reverses the relationship of past, present and future'[48] as governance styles become attuned to what *might* happen, and the past loses its sway. For Giddens, 'futurology'—the charting of possible, likely, and available futures—has become more important than charting the past.[49]

(II) The Climate Change Domain

Representing, Depicting, and Ordering Climate Change

O'Neill's literature review of climate change communication identifies ten dominant frames:[50]

- settled science—science has spoken, others must act
- uncertain science—scientific or technological uncertainty creates ambiguity
- political/ideological struggle—a power struggle among nations, groups, or personalities
- disaster—experienced or predicted impacts have severe consequences
- opportunity—the re-imagination of how we live and/or invest in 'co-benefits'[51]
- economic—a focus on economics and the market and on the monetary costs of action or inaction
- morality and ethics—moral, religious, or ethical reasons for action or inaction
- role of science—concerned with the role of science in society rather than focussing on scientific evidence
- security—human, national, or international security is threatened
- health—severe danger to human health, for example malnutrition

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47 Hulme, 'The Conquering of Climate: Discourses of Fear and Their Dissolution', *Geographical Journal*, Volume 174 № 1 (2008): 5–16.
48 Beck, 'Risk Society Revisited: Theory, Politics and Research Programmes', in Barbara Adam, Ulrich Beck and Joost van Loon (eds), *The Risk Society and Beyond: Critical Issues for Social Theory*, (London: Sage, 2005), p. 211–29, p. 214.
49 Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 51.
50 S. O'Neill et al, 'Dominant Frames in Legacy and Social Media Coverage of the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report', *Nature Climate Change* Volume 5 № 4 (2015): 380–85.
51 'Co-benefits' refer to a win-win strategy or policy that captures both development and climate benefits in a single measure or policy

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Keywords that frame the problem of climate change include 'risk', 'danger', 'emergency', 'disaster', 'crisis', 'catastrophe', 'apocalypse', and 'extinction'. Scholars differentiate these variously. For Diez et al, the term 'risk' denotes 'indirect' and 'manageable' problems, commonly evoking ideas such as uncertainty, contingency, long-termness, resilience, preparedness, statistics, and precaution.[52] Conversely, 'danger' is linked to more traditional conceptions of security threats that are immediate, clear-cut, urgent, existential, extraordinary, and inevitable.[53] The terms 'emergency', 'disaster', and 'crisis' are used interchangeably and in combination.[54] The word 'emergency' is traditionally used to refer to risks and dangers that are developing into events in which severe consequences are about to materialise, requiring pre-emptive or precautionary action, or have materialised, requiring reactive measures.[55] However, unlike crises and disasters, emergencies are not always sudden.[56] The literature shows the unique features of an emergency as contradictory. 'Emergencies are usually unanticipated',[57] yet can be imminent.[58] This is an important observation given that framing climate change as 'climate emergency' includes the idea of reversing possible future catastrophe.

Crisis scholars Boin and Rhinard argue that we speak of catastrophe when a crisis is perceived to have extremely severe consequences.[59] Catastrophes have also been defined on an empirical level, as 'those in which many millions of people could suffer severely harmful outcomes'.[60] However, others see 'catastrophes' as distinct from 'crises' in that the term evokes the idea of a temporal disruption with the present, followed by an unexpected and unknown future.[61] Catastrophes appear at the limits of management and are 'generally seen as the intensification of disaster on a gradual continuum of destruction

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52 Thomas Diez, Franziskus von Lucke and Zehra Wellmann, *The Securitisation of Climate Change Actors, Processes and Consequences*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2016).
53 Ibid.
54 Hajer F. Al-Dahash, Menaha Thayaparan, and Udayangani Kulatunga, 'Understanding the Terminologies: Disaster, Crisis and Emergency' in P.W. Chan and C. J. Neilson (eds) '*Proceedings of the 32nd Annual ARCOM Conference*, 5–7 September 2016, Manchester, UK, Association of Researchers in Construction Management, Volume 2, p. 1191–200.
55 Hodder and Martin, 'Climate Crisis?'.
56 Al-Dahash et al, 'Understanding the Terminologies'.
57 David Alexander, 'Towards the development of a standard in emergency planning', *Disaster Prevention & Management: An International Journal* 14(2), (2005) 158–75, p. 159.
58 Ibid.
59 Arjen Boin and Mark Rhinard, 'Managing Transboundary Crises: What Role for the European Union?', *International Studies Review,* Volume 10 (2008): 1–26.
60 Lauren Hartzell-Nichols, 'Precaution and Solar Radiation Management', *Ethics, Policy & Environment* Volume 15 № 2 (2012): 158–71, p. 160.
61 Aradau and van Munster, 'Governing Terrorism Through Risk', p. 4.

[…] it is the worst-case scenario'.[62] Importantly, this continuum is not traversed in a gradual, linear fashion; rather, catastrophes are characterised by rupture, novelty, surprise.[63]

The origins of climate catastrophe discourse have been traced back to the late-1980s.[64] Most discussions of 'climate emergencies' among scientists and researchers normally have 'tipping points' in mind.[65] They are closely tied to the notion of catastrophe in climate change literature. What is unique to 'climate emergency' is a specific type of emergency construction, rationalised by potential future catastrophe, combining risk *and* danger. The forthcoming frame analysis shows that articulations of catastrophe often combine elements of risk ('long-termness', 'uncertainty', 'contingency', 'diffuseness') and danger ('existential', 'extraordinary', 'direct', 'security', and 'survival'). Hence, the 'parallel invocation of danger and risk' have a particularly strong political impact as this approach 'legitimises extraordinary measures to counter the immediate threats, while it also strives to prolong these measures into the infinite future to cope with the remaining risks'.[66] Both political leaders and grassroots activists have been found to articulate the problem of climate change as potentially catastrophic, and needing sustained emergency action.

The Emergency

Definitions of emergency imply the properties of danger or difficulty, immediacy, the unexpected (at a specific place and time), and the need for a specific response.[67] The elements of 'high-risk', 'immediacy', 'uncertainty', and 'necessity' (of action) are thus important to the concept of emergency. In response to the task of governing the uncertain future climate change catastrophe, discursive techniques used to convey the idea of emergency function in various ways. They can draw attention to the problem,[68] instil a sense of urgency in high-level

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62 Ibid., p. 5.
63 Ibid., p. 2–15.
64 Paglia, 'The Socio-scientific Construction'.
65 Joshua B. Horton, 'The Emergency Framing of Solar Geoengineering: Time For a Different Approach', *The Anthropocene Review*, Volume 2 № 2 (2015): 147–51.
66 Diez et al, *The Securitisation of Climate Change* Actors, p. 14.
67 Nils Markusson, Franklin Ginn, Navraj Singh Ghaleigh, and Vivian Scott, 'In Case of Emergency Press Here: Framing Geoengineering as a Response to Dangerous Climate Change', *WIREs Climate Change*, Volume 5 № 2 (2014): 281–90; Council Action in the Climate Emergency 'The Climate Emergency', *caceonline.org*, [web page] n.d. [Accessed 12 June 2020].
68 Hodder and Martin, 'Climate Crisis?'; Shannon O'Lear and Simon Dalby, *Reframing Climate Change: Constructing Ecological Geopolitics* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2015).

decision-making,[69] prioritise the issue,[70] transcend procedural constraints of 'normal' politics,[71] and legitimise or delegitimise governance structures.[72] When an emergency or crisis delegitimizes the power and authority that dominant social, political, or administrative discourses underpin, then 'structural change is desired and expected by many'.[73] Emergencies that hold a future catastrophe as the referent subject work to change what is expected in normal governance and politics by necessitating a pre-emptive and/or precautionary logic, one that 'justifies action in the present on the basis of events at the limit of imagination and calculation'.[74] So we can see how framing a situation as an emergency to encourage an audience to reverse a possible future catastrophe aligns with the changes in security and governance thinking (oriented toward 'futurology') that have been taken hold since the 1990s.

Political theorists have noted authoritarian and undemocratic tendencies inherent in states of emergency and exception.[75] In *Green Philosophy*, Roger Scruton argues that what is central to emergency politics is its opposition to the ordinary politics of compromise and its endorsement of 'top-down', state-led, goal-oriented structures. This assumes that only governments have the capacity to create the kind of change that is needed quickly enough.[76] The undemocratic, state-centric implications of emergency politics are apparent in the Copenhagen School's 'securitization' theory. In this framework, audience acceptance of a 'speech act' articulating an existential threat elevates an issue to a higher place on the political agenda, and legitimises the transcendence of normal democratic politics and its deliberative processes.[77]

In the study of climate change policy, one group of scholars[78] sees the promotion of undemocratic, emergency techniques to achieve policy change ('eco-authoritarianism') as dangerous and counter-productive to popular mobilisation

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69 McDonald, 'Discourses of Climate Security'; Markusson et al, 'In Case of Emergency'.
70 Piki Ish-Shalom, Piki, *Beyond the Veil of Knowledge: Triangulating Security, Democracy, and Academic Scholarship* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2019).
71 McDonald, 'Discourses of Climate Security'.
72 Boin et al, 'Crisis Exploitation'.
73 Ibid., p. 81.
74 Aradau and van Munster, 'Governing Terrorism Through Risk'.
75 Giorgio Agamben, 'No to Bio-Political Tattooing', *Le Monde*, 10 January 2004. [Accessed 2 March 20]; Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
76 Patrick Hodder and Brian Martin, 'Climate Crisis? The Politics of Emergency Framing', *Economic and Political Weekly* Volume 44 № 36 (2009): 55–60.
77 Barry Buzan, 'Rethinking Security After the Cold War', *Cooperation and Conflict*, Volume 32 № 1 (1997): 5–25, p. 13–14.
78 Hulme, 'The Conquering of Climate'.

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around climate change.[79] However, others outline how the 'securitization' framework—with its invocation of an emergency—could elevate climate change to 'high politics' and provide motivation for aggressive emissions cuts and the systematic de-carbonisation of industrialised economies.[80] However, there is a consensus that climate securitising speech acts have not led to emergency measures and have failed to gain sufficient audience acceptance at domestic and international levels.[81] Importantly, one group of scholars argues that the securitisation of climate change, rather than fostering radical engagement with its causes, actually mobilises *resilience* in the current system as the dominant mode of securing the future.[82] For this group, uncertainty, catastrophe, and apocalyptic scenarios fail to mobilise political action among the public (creating apathy) and instead legitimise technocratic governance.[83] Based on these studies, it is important to ask if disseminating the 'emergency' frame also fosters this type of resilience opposed to exceptional measures that would mitigate the threat.

Frame Analysis and Methodology

Framing refers to discursive processes of 'sense-making' where aspects of reality are selected and/or emphasised while others are not selected and/or de-emphasised.[84] Central to *stability* and *change* in the political world, frames justify, contest, and/or (de)legitimise incumbent actors and institutions, and their governance structures.[85] Robert Entman provides the key definition: '*selection* and *salience* [...] *promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described'.[86] Gamson and Modigliani introduce the idea of 'framing devices',[87] which tell us how to think about an issue, and 'reasoning devices',[88] which tell us what should be done about it.

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79 Hodder and Martin, 'Climate Crisis?'.
80 Angela Oels, 'Security' in Karin Bäckstrand and Eva Lövbrand (eds), *Research Handbook on Climate Governance* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015).
81 Ibid.
82 Chris Methmannand Angela Oels, 'From "Fearing" to "Empowering" Climate Refugees: Governing Climate-induced Migration in the Name of Resilience', *Security Dialogue*, Volume 46 № 1 (2015): 51–68; Marieke de Goede and Samuel Randalls, 'Precaution, Preemption: Arts and Technologies of the Actionable Future', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* Volume 27 № 5 (2009): 859–78.
83 De Goede and Randalls, 'Precaution, Preemption', p. 874.
84 Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26 (2000): 611–39; Mike S. Schäfer and Saffron O'Neill, 'Frame Analysis in Climate Change Communication', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science*, September 2017.
85 Steffek, 'Discursive Legitimation', p. 315.
86 Robert M. Entman, 'Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm', *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), (1993): 51–58, p. 52.
87 Gamson and Modigliani, 'Media Discourse and Public Opinion'.
88 Ibid.

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This article employs the 'manual holistic' (standardised) approach to frame analysis by '[using] an *a priori* frame definition and frame set which are then searched for'.[89] It constructs a criterion for identifying the 'emergency frame' (see *Table 1*) based on the academic literature to capture the main ways emergency framing (or lack thereof) is used to justify or contest governance structures. The methodology employs Matthes & Kohring's approach, which divides a frame into separate elements that are then coded into the analysis. By breaking the frame down into three parts—representations of risk, timeframe, and strategic action—it helps us identify the emergency frame and differentiate between intense (explicit) framing, where most or all of the elements are present, and weaker (implicit or absent) framing, where some or none are present. 'Techniques of emergency' refers to constituent elements and/or keywords/phrases (see *Table 1*). A text can exhibit 'techniques of emergency' and yet not be considered explicit emergency framing. Furthermore, explicit use of the term 'climate emergency' is a good *indicator* of the emergency frame, but it does not mean that all three key constituent elements of the emergency frame will be invoked.

Though Entman's definition of framing contributes to identifying and interpreting frames, this analysis also uses three basic indicators suggested by Diez: (a) frequency of articulation; (b) position in the document—do they appear in the title, executive summary, conclusion, or somewhere in the middle of text?; (c) intensity of articulation—articulations may use alarmist and dramatic vocabulary or more cautious, neutral terms.[90] 'Frequency of articulation', 'position in the document', and 'intensity of articulation' have all been applied to the keywords and phrases, which are *a priori* classed as constitutive elements of the emergency frame (see *Table 1*).

The policy documents cited below have been drawn from the following categories of actors: governmental departments; non-departmental public bodies (specifically, the UK Committee on Climate Change); political parties; environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGO); and social movement organisations (SMO). These are not the only categories of actors that affect UK climate governance—they do not include corporate actors or news media. However, by analysing the discourses of incumbent UK government and governmental departments, a 'neutral' body such as the Committee on Climate Change, as well as prominent challengers to the status quo in the form of opposition parties, ENGOs, and SMOs, the scope of this article captures the main categories of variations of emergency framing.

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89 Schäfer and O'Neill, 'Frame Analysis', p. 11.
90 Diez et al, *The Securitisation of Climate Change* Actors, p. 29.

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CODING SCHEME USED TO IDENTIFY EMERGENCY FRAMING		
Elements of the problem[91]	Aspects of the frame	Language and common themes
PROBLEM DEFINITION Predicted impacts of climate change are numerous and severe, with potentially catastrophic and/or existential consequences. The most vulnerable are impacted already. **CAUSE/MORAL EVALUATION** Situation cannot be ignored and is generally represented as negative. Cause is attributed to the failure to enforce or lack of governance goals, rules, policies, procedures. **REMEDY** Immediate and exceptional action, change, or transformation is necessary. The action may be reactive, pre-emptive and/or precautionary; 'business as usual' is morally unacceptable.	**RISK** A perception of risk as 'high' and 'dangerous', with a reasonable likelihood of occurrence, and with substantial damage expected.[92] **TEMPORALITY** Sense of urgency or immediacy[93] **STRATEGIC ACTION** A feeling of necessity is communicated to the exceptional response in question.[94]	**KEYWORDS/PHRASES** short-term, long-term, high-risk, threat, catastrophic, apocalyptic, huge challenge, chaotic, out-of-control, cataclysmic, severe, irreversible, inescapable, runaway, abrupt, rapid, accelerating, immediately, urgent, necessity, emergency, emergency measures, clear-cut, existential, extraordinary, unprecedented, security, direct, danger, certain, destruction, survival, eradicate, aggressive, defence, non-linear, uncertain, tipping point, crisis, disaster, breakdown, huge disruption[95] **OTHER COMMON THEMES, METAPHORS, OVERLAPPING FRAMES** Lists and details of severe impacts 'Pandora's Box': potential catastrophe[96] 'frightening language: e.g. 'apocalyptic', 'immense risk'[97] runaway greenhouse scenario'[98] or 'tipping points'[99] unnatural weather: 'violent' or 'extreme' weather, 'weather on steroids', 'runaway climate change'[100] 'disaster frame': disaster 'strikes'—severe consequences already clear, something must be done[101] and/or a new model of social progress required[102] 'security frame': human/national/international security[103] 'settled science frame': science producing 'unprecedented', 'bombshell', 'brutally detailed' reports[104] 'uncertain frame': dangerous, unknown

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91 Extracted from: O'Neill et al, 'Dominant Frames in Legacy and Social Media Coverage of the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report', Nature Climate Change Volume 5 № 4 (2015): 380–85; Lieven, 2020; McDonald, 'Discourses of Climate Security'.
92 Horton, 'The Emergency Framing'; James Painter, Climate Change in the Media: Reporting Risk and Uncertainty (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).
93 McDonald, 'Discourses of Climate Security'; Markusson et al, 'In Case of Emergency'; Horton, 'The Emergency Framing'; Scruton, Green Philosophy.
94 Markusson et al, 'In Case of Emergency'; Aradau and van Munster, 'Governing Terrorism Through Risk'; Scruton, Green Philosophy.
95 Keywords/phrases gathered from qualitative analysis of academic literature, including: O'Neill et al, 'Dominant Frames'; Diez et al, The Securitisation of Climate Change Actors.
96 Matthew C. Nisbet, 'Communicating Climate Change: Why Frames Matter to Public Engagement', Environment Volume 51 № 2 (2009): 514–18.
97 O'Neill et al, 'Dominant Frames'; Chris Methmann and Delf Rothe, 'Politics For The Day After Tomorrow: The Logic of Apocalypse in Global Climate Politics', Security Dialogue, Volume 43 № 4 (2012): 323–44.
98 Horton, 'The Emergency Framing'.
99 Aradau and van Munster, 'Governing Terrorism Through Risk'.
100 Simon Dalby, 'Climate Change and the Insecurity Frame' in Shannon O'Lear, and Simon Dalby (eds), Reframing Climate Change: Constructing Ecological Geopolitics (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2015).
101 Doulton & Brown, 2009.
102 Ibid.
103 O'Neill et al, 'Dominant Frames'; McDonald, 'Discourses of Climate Security'; Lieven, 2020.
104 O'Neill et al, 'Dominant Frames'.

Identifying the 'Emergency Frame' in Current UK Policy Documents Concerning Climate Change[105]

Government Departments

> I.   *Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA): implicit emergency framing*

DEFRA's stated mission is to 'protect and enhance the environment—with policies and actions that are also key to sustainable national growth'.[106] Since the 2016 Paris Agreement, DEFRA has published three major policy papers influential to climate governance structures: the 2017 *Climate Change Risk Assessment* (CCRA),[107] the *2018 National Adaptation Programme* (NAP),[108] the *25 Year Environment Plan* (25EP).[109]

The term 'climate emergency' is not used explicitly in any of these papers. Nonetheless, emergency framing is apparent in how DEFRA define the problem, the temporal dynamics, and type of response required. DEFRA frame the problem facing us as 'already *unescapable*'[110] and '*unavoidable*'[111] impacts. This is 'due to *past emissions* of greenhouse gases'[112] and 'rates of change *far greater* than those experienced historically'.[113] This has positive and negative moral implications—presenting '*challenges* and *opportunities*'[114] in achieving the goal of 'a stronger, more resilient economy and […] natural environment'.[115] What DEFRA call 'high future risks' demand '*urgent*' action 'to reduce *long-term vulnerability* to climate change'.[116] To remedy the most urgent problems, 'new, stronger or different [adaptation and resilience] government policies' are needed in the next 5 years.[117] Due to uncertain knowledge—'the future is *uncertain*, and our climate and weather particularly so'[118]—DEFRA's 'cornerstone principle' is 'resilience preparation', and must plan for a '*reasonable worst case scenario*, in parallel

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105 All emphases (italics) added.
106 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Single Departmental Plan, updated 27 June 2019.
107 DEFRA, *Climate Change Risk Assessment* (CCRA), 18 January 2017.
108 DEFRA, *2018 National Adaptation Programme* (NAP), 19 July 2018.
109 DEFRA, *25 Year Environment Plan* (25EP), 11 January 2018, last updated 16 May 2019.
110 CCRA, p. 1.
111 NAP, p. i.
112 CCRA, p. 1.
113 NAP, p. 1.
114 CCRA, p. 3; NAP, p. 5.
115 CCRA, p. 3.
116 CCRA, p. 7.
117 Ibid.
118 NAP, p. i.

with taking actions to reduce the likelihood of that scenario becoming reality [i.e. mitigation measures]'.[119] It clarifies the priority (moral judgement) between national mitigation and national adaptation in the following sentence: '*while* we continue to play a leading role in *international* efforts to keep global temperature rises well below 2°C […] our resilience will only be robust if we *prepare for worse* climate change scenarios'.[120]

The *25 Year Environment Plan* warns that 'major ecosystems (such as seas and oceans) that support *billions of people are under threat*' and the 'damage we cause can be *multiplied*, creating conditions *hostile to our existence*'.[121] Negative, existential framing is used to justify 'joint action on a *global* scale'.[122] The document highlights the threat multiplier of climate change—'prime drivers of poverty, food insecurity and instability [that] can trigger conflict and migration'.[123] However, implicit emergency framing does not appear until the final chapter. The remedy entails 'achieving global change' by 'showing international leadership, supporting developing countries and reducing our own environmental footprint'.[124] Notably, national mitigation is backgrounded here, whilst 'work[ing] together to confront pressing challenges'[125] is presented as the fundamental solution to climate change.

DEFRA do not explicitly use the term 'climate emergency' or 'emergency' to represent climate change, but use techniques of emergency to represent the problem and moral judgement ('*inescapable* [change]'; '*unavoidable* impacts'; '*billions of people are under threat*'; 'conditions *hostile to our existence*'; '*uncertain* [future]'; '*urgent* action [...to create] the *step change required*'). However, all three papers discuss this problem within the 'opportunity frame'. DEFRA's remedy to this problem includes adaptive measures to make the economy and natural environment more resilient[126] and leading joint action on a global scale.[127]

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119 NAP, p. i–ii.
120 NAP, p. ii.
121 25EP, p. 110.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid., p. 111.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 CCRA and NAP.
127 25EP.

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II. *Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS): background/reject emergency framing*

BEIS's current mission statement is 'building a stronger, greener future by fighting coronavirus, tackling climate change, unleashing innovation and making the UK a great place to work and do business'.[128] The key policy document is BEIS's *2017 Clean Growth Strategy* (BEIS CGS), which 'sets out how we will deliver the clean, green growth needed to combat global warming'.[129]

This paper's foreword firmly situates the strategy within the 'opportunity frame'—addressing climate change as a way to invest in co-benefits: 'In short, we need higher growth with lower carbon emissions'.[130] The problem of climate change is framed as an opportunity to steer societies onto a new 'clean growth' trajectory. The executive summary frames greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as 'of course, […] a global problem [...for] all countries'[131] and backgrounds 'domestic targets'.[132] The strategy sets out the 'policies and proposals that aim to accelerate the pace of "clean growth"',[133] i.e. 'deliver **increased** economic growth and **decreased** emissions' (original—bold).[134] Not until the annex section does the document begin to use emergency language regarding climate change. Here, it lists 'great risks' posed by 'global climate instability',[135] and states 'scientific evidence shows that increasing magnitudes of warming increase the likelihood of *severe, pervasive* and *irreversible* impacts on people and ecosystems'.[136] Like DEFRA, BEIS states 'there will be an *unavoidable* level of climate change, regardless of future global emissions'.[137] Therefore, 'as a consequence, some level of adaptation will be necessary in the UK'.[138] 'Uncertainty' is mentioned 18 times in the document and climate governance is said to reflect 'huge uncertainties'.[139] Uncertain 'projections' and 'shifting evidence' about the impact of policies is used to justify a 'flexible' approach, where emissions reductions can be supplemented by 'surplus from previous carbon budgets or the purchase of good quality international carbon credits' to meet carbon budgets.[140]

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128 Department for Business , Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), *What the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy does'*, [Accessed 13 August 2020].
129 BEIS, 'Clean Growth Strategy' (BEIS CGS), 12 October 2017, last updated 16 April 2018.
130 Ibid., p. 3.
131 Ibid., p. 7.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid., p. 10.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid., p. 139.
136 Ibid., p. 140.
137 Ibid., p. 141.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid., p. 47.
140 Ibid., p. 40.

In short, the paper emphasises the 'global problem' of GHG emissions and frames reducing national emissions as an 'opportunity' for co-benefits. Emergency language regarding the impacts of climate change ('*unavoidable*… climate change'; '*severe*, *pervasive* and *irreversible* impacts on people and ecosystems') is used to justify this strategy, but not until the annex. Furthermore, the terms 'uncertainty', 'uncertain projections' and 'shifting evidence' are used to justify a 'flexible' approach to climate change mitigation.

III.   Ministry of Defence (MOD): implicit emergency framing

The *Global Strategic Trends* paper published by the Ministry of Defence in 2018 describes 'a strategic context for those in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and wider government who are involved in developing long term plans, strategies, policies and capabilities'.[141]

The executive summary emphasises the 'increasing disruption and cost of climate change' and predicts 'an increasingly volatile climate' and concerns about an 'approaching ecological "*tipping point*"'.[142] Emergency language is apparent in the report's list of 'discontinuities' regarding climate change. It defines discontinuities as factors that 'cause disruption and change the path of trends, or even cause them to disappear'[143]: they function similarly to catastrophes/'tipping points'. Discontinuities 'occur in *unexpected* ways due to the *accelerating* pace of change and complex interaction of the key drivers'.[144] Discontinuities regarding climate change risks include 'ecosystem *tipping point* reached',[145] '*abrupt* changes in the natural environment',[146] and 'unilateral adoption of geoengineering'.[147] The 'implications' section for climate change also exhibits emergency language. The first bullet point states: 'the climate is changing and will have *major consequences for humanity*. The *impacts of climate change need to be mitigated* effectively, otherwise it could act as a driver of instability and conflict with *far-reaching humanitarian, economic, and geopolitical consequences*'.[148]

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141 Ministry of Defence (MoD), 'Global Strategic Trends' (GST), 2 October 2018.
142 GST, p. 14.
143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
145 Ibid., p. 57.
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.

In general, the MOD's *Global Strategic Trends* employs implicit emergency framing on the problem of climate change. The paper ties 'discontinuities' to uncertainty and global complexity as the key characteristic of the climate change threat. This use of 'discontinuities' sets the discussion in the emergency frame by invoking the idea of catastrophe and tipping points. The *Implications* section represents the problem of climate change as having 'major' and 'far-reaching' consequences for 'humanity'. According to the MOD, a remedy to the problem of climate change is to effectively mitigate '*impacts*', as opposed to causes.

Non-departmental public bodies

IV. Committee on Climate Change (CCC): implicit emergency framing

The CCC is an independent non-departmental public body that 'advise[s] the UK and devolved governments on emissions targets and to report to Parliament on progress made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for and adapting to the impacts of climate change'.[149] Three key policy documents set forth this analysis: *Independent Assessment of the UK's Clean Growth Strategy* (CGS) published in January 2018, *Net Zero* (NZ) published in May 2019, and *Reducing UK Emissions 2019 Progress Report to Parliament* (PRP) published in July 2019.

Generally, the CCC construct the problem of climate change within the 'settled science frame', blaming governmental sluggishness in reducing emissions and enacting structural change. In response to the *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*, the CCC 'emphasised the *critical importance* of limiting further warming to as low a level as possible and the need for *deep and rapid reductions* in emissions to do so' in the executive summary of *Net Zero.*[150] The summary emphasises that '**delivery** [of emissions reduction] **must progress with far greater urgency**' (original—bold).[151] The committee warns that UK action is 'lagging behind' and, since June 2018, the government 'has delivered only 1 of 25 critical policies needed to get emissions reductions back on track'.[152] Though there are no explicit mentions of an 'emergency', implicit emergency framing can be detected throughout the documents due to the representation of risk, timeframe, and action required. For example, the *Clean Growth Strategy* emphasises the 'urgency' (mentioned 17 times) required in policy development,

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149 Committee on Climate Change (CCC), 'About the Committee on Climate Change', Accessed 1 August 2020.
150 CCC, 'Net Zero' (NZ), 2 May 2019, p. 12.
151 Ibid., p. 11.
152 CCC, 'Reducing UK Emissions 2019 Progress Report to Parliament' (PRP) [outline], 10 July 2019.

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and stresses that gaps in meeting targets '**must be closed**' (original—bold)[153] through 'new policies beyond those in the *Clean Growth Strategy*'.[154] Furthermore, the foreword of *Net Zero* outlines three key factors leading to the committee's recommendation: *necessity*, feasibility, and cost-effectiveness.[155] 'Necessary' or 'necessity' (used 61 times) is one of the most prominent words in the CCC lexicon, and is applied to contexts ranging from carbon capture and storage being 'a necessity not an option',[156] to the 'necessary innovation, market development and consumer take-up of low-carbon technologies'.[157] Moreover, 'urgent'/'urgency' is mentioned 16 times in the *Clean Growth Strategy*; notably in the foreword, where the committee equates setting a net-zero target to 'handling climate change with appropriate urgency'.[158] The committee warns Parliament that committing to a net-zero target means that 'a *major ramp-up* in policy effort is now required',[159] and 'a net-zero GHG target is not credible unless policy is **ramped up significantly**' (original—bold).[160] The final line of the foreword of *the Progress Report to Parliament* captures the 'emergency' mood of the report: 'The *need* for *action* has *rarely been clearer*. Our message to government is simple: *Now, do it*.'[161] 'Urgency'/'urgent' is mentioned 10 times—including 'urgent need for action',[162] the closing of policy gaps as 'urgently necessary',[163] '**delivery must progress with far greater urgency**' (original—bold),[164] and 'bold and decisive action is *urgently* needed from Government'.[165] All three reports reproduce some of the latest scientific evidence from SR15, such as conclusions regarding '**irreversible changes**' (original—bold),[166] where 'ice sheet instability in Antartica and/or irreversible loss of the Greenland ice sheet could possibly be triggered by warming between 1.5°C and 2°C'.[167]

Neither alarmist language nor explicit mention of 'emergency' is found in the CCC policy discourse. However, emergency language is used ('*critical* importance'; '*deep* and *rapid*'; 'far greater *urgency*'; '*bold and decisive action is urgently*

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153 CCC, 'Clean Growth Strategy' (CGS), 17 January 2018, p. 9.
154 Ibid., p. 11.
155 Ibid., p. 8.
156 Ibid., p. 23.
157 Ibid, p. 12.
158 Ibid., p. 8.
159 NZ, p. 11.
160 PRP, p. 11.
161 Ibid., p. 9.
162 Ibid., p. 8.
163 Ibid., p. 54.
164 Ibid., p. 65.
165 Ibid., p. 67.
166 NZ, p. 31.
167 Ibid.

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needed'; '*Now, do it*'), especially in emphasising the severity of the problem as proven by scientific evidence ('*irreversible* changes'), and the necessity of urgently developing governance structures to achieve the net-zero 2050 target.

Political Parties

V. *Conservative Party: background/reject emergency framing*

The Conservative Party manifesto of 2019 mentions 'climate change' 8 times, 'environment' 22 times, and 'climate emergency' only once. Here, climate emergency is framed as a global problem (rather than domestic emergency): 'climate emergency means that the challenges we face stretch far beyond our borders'.[168] Moreover, the document positions both 'fighting climate change' and 'promoting international development' as matters of foreign policy.[169] Climate change is downplayed in the very structure of the manifesto—the topic does not appear until the penultimate section. The document places the problem of climate change within the socio-political context of the Conservatives' proud 'stewardship of the natural environment', and asserts that 'conservation is, and always has been, at the heart of Conservatism'.[170] In the Conservative view, the problem is that not having Brexit 'done' is holding Britain back from achieving 'the most ambitious environmental programme of any country on earth'.[171] The Conservative approach to climate governance involves a moral/ideological judgement: 'Unlike Jeremy Corbyn [the opposition leader], we believe that free markets, innovation and prosperity can protect the planet'.[172] This justifies the party's clean growth strategy and market-based solutions to climate change. In general, emergency-associated language is avoided.

VI. *Labour Party: explicit and intense emergency framing*

The Labour Party manifesto of 2019 mentions 'climate change' 11 times, 'environment' 13 times, and 'climate emergency' 21 times. The foreword claims that the government has 'failed […] on the *climate crisis*'[173] and promises to 'kick-start a Green Industrial Revolution to tackle the climate emergency'.[174] The manifesto also emphasises that 'Labour *led* the UK Parliament in declaring

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168 '<u>Conservative Party Manifesto 2019</u>', p. 55, [Accessed 12 August 2020].
169 Ibid., p. 51.
170 Ibid., p. 55.
171 Ibid., p. 3.
172 Ibid., p. 55.
173 '<u>Labour Party Manifesto 2019</u>', p. 1. [Accessed 20 August 2020].
174 Ibid., p. 6.

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a climate and environmental emergency'.[175] The foreword closes with the statement: 'This is *our last chance* to tackle the climate emergency'.[176] Emphasis on the 'climate emergency' is also reflected in the first section, titled 'A Green Industrial Revolution'—the proposed remedy to Conservative failings. Here, the opening paragraph states: '**This election is about the crisis of living standards and the climate and environmental emergency. Whether we are ready or not,** *we stand on the brink of unstoppable change'* (original—bold).[177] The recent election was framed as 'our best hope to protect future generations from an *uninhabitable planet'*.[178] The manifesto evokes the emergency frame by describing global warming as 'the *most serious threat to our shared humanity'*[179] and by using the phrase 'climate *catastrophe'*.[180] However, the opportunity frame is also evoked, for example in the statement, 'Averting climate catastrophe offers huge economic opportunities.'[181]

Labour's 2018 policy paper of *The Green Transformation: Labour's Environment Policy* evokes catastrophic climate change: 'It is now imperative that earth does not cross certain *tipping points* beyond which *abrupt and irreversible* impacts occur'.[182] To address the 'environmental crisis', the papers claims a 'transformational effort from government' is required, and 'this is not a task for tomorrow's leaders, but one that requires urgent interventions today'.[183] In contrast to BEIS *Clean Growth Strategy's* indication that cutting emissions should not harm the economy, Labour's first principle is that their '**ambition is based on science**' ('settled science' frame; original—bold)[184] and their policies 'will be defined, *not by political compromise*, but by what is *necessary* to keep temperatures within safe levels'.[185] They use the analogy that 'winning slowly on climate change is the same as losing'.[186] For Labour, 'building a sustainable economy for the long run, requires *nothing short of societal transformation*'.[187]

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175 Ibid., p. 11.
176 Ibid., p. 8.
177 Ibid., p. 11.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid., p. 98.
180 Ibid., p. 16.
181 Ibid.
182 Labour Party, 'The Green Transformation: Labour's Environment Policy', September 2019, p. 3. [Accessed 12 June 2020].
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid., p. 5.
185 Ibid.
186 Ibid.
187 Ibid.

In short, the Labour Party heavily espouses the 'climate emergency' frame and use intense articulations to describe their current position: 'we stand on the brink of unstoppable change'. According to Labour, the problem is the economic system created by the Conservative Party. To remedy this 'emergency' and 'catastrophe', we must support 'societal transformation' immediately through a Green Industrial Revolution: 'this is our *last chance*'; we need '*urgent* interventions today'.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

VII.   *Environmental NGOs (ENGOs): explicit and intense emergency framing*

Prominent ENGOs such as Greenpeace, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and Friends of the Earth (FoE) have all published policy reports that explicitly use the 'climate emergency' frame and heavily employ emergency language. Greenpeace, the world's largest environmental NGO, is well-known for investigating, documenting, and exposing causes of environmental destruction. Their 2019 climate manifesto *How Government Should Address The Climate Emergency* uses the phrase 'climate emergency' 32 times. The introduction begins: 'We are in the midst of a climate emergency'.[188] Based on the 2030 deadline proposed by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to cut global emissions by 45%, the report states 'we *must* listen and we *must* act'.[189] This includes delivering '"net zero" greenhouse gas emissions significantly sooner than 2045'.[190] Furthermore, the report *Government Investment for a Greener and Fairer Economy* of September 2019 calls on the government to '**allocate at least £42 billion of public expenditure per year to help address the climate and nature emergency at home and abroad**' (original—bold).[191] The report asserts that government investment on this scale 'must begin *immediately* to drive forward the *transformation'*.[192]

Similarly, in its 2019 report *Keeping It Cool*, the world's largest conservation NGO, the WWF, emphasise that '**in order to** […] **limit global warming to 1.5°C we need urgent action to prioritise deep emissions cuts**' (original—bold).[193]

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188 Greenpeace, 'How Government Should Address the Climate Emergency', p. 1. [Accessed 20 August 2020].
189 Ibid., p. 1.
190 Ibid., p. 3.
191 Greenpeace, 'Government Investment For A Greener and Fairer Economy', p. 3. [Accessed 20 August 2020].
192 Ibid.
193 WWF, 'Keeping It Cool', p. 1. [Accessed 13 August 2020].

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Their report of April 2019 *WARNING: CLIMATE EMERGENCY* opens with: 'UK CLIMATE EMERGENCY PACKAGE: IMMEDIATE ACTIONS TO AVOID RUNAWAY CLIMATE DISASTER [sic]'.[194] The opening paragraph emphasises that the UK government is '*failing* to take action at anything like the *scale and speed necessary* if we are to avert disaster' and that reaching net-zero by 2045 at the latest is 'necessary for our survival'.[195] Emergency framing is further emphasised on the first page: 'Our planet has warmed by 1°C over the last century. We are *running out of time*, and we're the last generation with the power to avert a *climate breakdown. The time to act is now.*'[196]

Friends of the Earth—an international network of environmental organisations—released a briefing in November 2018 in response to SR15, entitled *12 Years to Save Our Planet: The Solutions to the Climate Crisis*. The document begins with **'A summary of the transformative change government must drive, and ways in which people can take action to align the UK to the 1.5°C Paris Climate Agreement.'** (original—bold)[197] It frames climate change as 'the biggest threat to humanity', stating that 'we are already feeling its impacts'.[198] To avoid '*catastrophic climate change*',[199] the report calls for 'evidence-based solutions'[200] for reaching net-zero by 2045, including 'large-scale investment […] to enable the *transformational changes* that will help avoid *catastrophe*'.[201] Furthermore, it states, that the 'climate crisis we face requires an even greater and bolder response' than 'the creation of the welfare state that followed the devastation of World War 2'.[202]

Social Movement Organizations (SMOs)

VIII. Extinction Rebellion (XR): explicit and intense emergency framing

Environmental social movement organisations such as Extinction Rebellion (XR)—the No. 1 influencer on climate awareness[203]—have spearheaded the 'climate emergency' discourse and led the call for the UK to declare a 'climate emergency'.

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194 WWF, 'WARNING: CLIMATE EMERGENCY'. [Accessed 12 July 2020].
195 Ibid.
196 Ibid.
197 FoE, '12 years to save our planet', p. 1. [Accessed 10 June 2020].
198 Ibid.
199 Ibid.
200 Ibid., p. 2.
201 Ibid.
202 Ibid., p. 5.
203 Onalytica, 2020 [https://onalytica.com/]

XR's policy brief *The Emergency* begins: '*The science is clear. It is understood that we are facing an unprecedented global emergency. We are in a life or death situation of our own making. We must act now*.'[204] The document heavily employs functional honorifics to imbue the piece with credibility before the argument is even laid out, quoting James Hansen, former Director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies: 'We are in a planetary emergency'.[205] And, Ban Ki-Moon, former UN Secretary General: 'This is an emergency and for emergency situations we need emergency action.'[206] The first subheading in the document reads: '**Human activity is causing irreparable harm to the life on this world**' (original—bold).[207] This section emphasises that '*catastrophic* effects on human society and the natural world may *spiral out of control* if this climate and ecological emergency is not addressed in time'.[208] The paper details the environmental impacts and human consequences of 'destabilizing events'—'millions displaced' and 'increased risk of war and conflict'.[209] Much emphasis is placed on 'tipping points'—'if we do not change course by 2020, we risk missing the point where we can avoid *uncontrollable climate and ecological breakdown*, with disastrous consequences for people and for all life on Earth'.[210] Further sections employ terms such as '**urgency**', '**faster than expected**', '**risk and the precautionary principle**', and '**feedback and tipping points**' (original— all bold).[211] The brief concludes: 'If we don't take radical action, or [if we] trigger these tipping points, the outcome would be devastating for natural ecosystems and human societies across the world'.[212]

Ultimately, emergency framing is used to legitimise the organisation's three demands. The government must: declare a climate and ecological emergency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2025, and must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens' Assembly on climate and ecological justice.

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204 XR, 'The Emergency'. [Accessed 13 July 2020].
205 Ibid.
206 Ibid.
207 Ibid.
208 Ibid.
209 Ibid.
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
212 Ibid.

Discussion

Our frame analysis shows that XR, Greenpeace, WWF, FoE, and the Labour Party all explicitly embrace the 'climate emergency' frame and frequently and intensely employ techniques of emergency. By contrast, the CCC, DEFRA, and the MoD implicitly use emergency framing when addressing climate change by employing techniques of emergency without explicitly using the terms 'emergency' or 'climate emergency'. Then, finally, the Conservative Party and BEIS downplay emergency language in depicting climate change or avoid it altogether.

But what does this really tell us about power struggles in the world of climate governance and activism? And why is this relevant for strategic communicators trying to gauge how language is used to shift and shape longer term discourses, policies, and attitudes toward climate change?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to view these framing examples in relation to specific political and institutional contexts, structures, and rationalities in which they can be meaningfully understood. Here, by using concepts borrowed from political sociology—primarily, the concept of 'governmentality' and Fligstein and McAdam's idea of the 'strategic action field'—we can connect the findings of our study to broader, extratextual dimensions in understanding how language and discursive frames influence processes of change and stability in UK climate governance.

I.   **Competing mentalities in the UK's climate governance**

From the outset, this article has borrowed from the language of 'social field' theory by differentiating 'incumbents', those who help to produce and reproduce the status quo, from 'challengers', those who articulate an alternative vision of the field and their position within it. 'Incumbents' are those dominant actors who 'wield disproportionate influence within a field and whose interests and views tend to be heavily reflected in the [field's] dominant organization'.[213] 'Challengers', by contrast, 'occupy less privileged niches within the field and ordinarily wield little influence over its operation'.[214] This classification helps us grasp how relative power differentials affect particular mentalities (ways of

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213 Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam, 'Toward a General Theory of Strategic Action Fields', *Sociological Theory* Volume 29 № 1 (2011): 1–26, p. 5.
214 Ibid., p. 6.

thinking and acting) invested in the process of governing climate change. This mode of inquiry is akin to governmentality approaches to climate governance, which contextualise and examine its particular articulations, rationalities, and programs.[215] The concept of 'governmentality' was originally advanced by Michel Foucault in the 1970s as a perspective on how power finds new expressions through new circumstances of governance. It has since been adopted and adapted by a range of scholars, so that governmentality today is conceived of as a 'cluster of concepts that can be used to enhance the think-ability and criticize-ability of past and present forms of governance.'[216]

In line with governmentality approaches to climate governance, I now redeploy three mentalities borrowed from Anthony Giddens, what he calls 'adaptive reactions' to a risk-laden modernity: 'sustained optimism', 'radical engagement', and 'pragmatic acceptance'.[217] These broad but divergent mentalities are reflected in the language analysed in the previous section.

The Incumbents: Pragmatic Acceptance and Sustained Optimism

The case study shows that, for the most part, incumbent actors embrace 'pragmatic acceptance' and 'sustained optimism'. However, the same cannot be said for the Committee on Climate Change, who advocate a more radical engagement in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

'Pragmatic acceptance' involves a 'concentration on "surviving"'.[218] It takes the position that much in the modern world is contingent; therefore, pragmatic participation maintains a focus on day-to-day problems and tasks.[219] In the context of climate change, this translates as a focus on adapting to its 'already inescapable'[220] impacts. With its focus on the day-to-day, the mentality of 'pragmatic acceptance' fosters the integration of an ecological reasoning into the operational routines of a range of actors using the logic of resilience—a broad process that Angela Oels refers to as 'climatization'.[221] Therefore, adaptation

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215 For an in-depth analysis of governmentality in the context of climate governance, see Stripple and Bulkely, 'Governmentality', in Karin Bäckstrand and Eva Lövbrand, (eds) *Research Handbook on Climate Governance*, (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015).
216 William, *Governmentality*, p. 2.
217 Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 134–37.
218 Ibid., p. 135.
219 Ibid.
220 DEFRA, 'CCRA', p. 1.
221 Oels, 'From 'Securitization' of Climate Change to 'Climatization' of the Security Field', In Scheffran J., Brzoska M., Brauch H., Link P., Schilling J. (eds) *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict*. Hexagon Series on Human and Environmental Security and Peace Volume 8. (Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg, 2012): 185–205.

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and resilience are generally the privileged modes of action for the 'pragmatic acceptance' mentality. While the strategy of *mitigation* constitutes a process of 'interception', or dealing with risks by ensuring they will not arise, the strategies of *resilience* and *adaptation* entail preparing for adversity rather than striving to avoid it.[222] Instead of influencing or eliminating the sources from which risks arise (such as CO_2 emissions), resilience and adaptation focus on improving competences or changing operational routines so that we are better able to cope when things change for the worse.

Several indications from this analysis support the conclusion that incumbents maintain a mentality of 'pragmatic acceptance'. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Defence—both concerned with adaptation and resilience—are more inclined to use emergency language in framing the problem of climate change than the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which is tasked with mitigation. For example, DEFRA foregrounds emergency language, using such words as 'unescapable', 'unavoidable', 'accelerating', 'hostile', and 'uncertain' to describe the impacts of climate change in the UK. For DEFRA, the causal interpretation emphasises 'past emissions', and the remedy is to reduce 'long-term vulnerability' through new adaptation and resilience policies in the coming five years. The MoD's *Global Strategic Trends*, with its discussion of 'discontinuities' and 'tipping points', also invokes potential future catastrophe. However, again, the answer given by the MoD relies on mitigating the *impacts* of climate change, as opposed to attacking its root causes.

Compare these to BEIS's *Clean Growth Strategy*, in which the few examples of emergency language used are relegated to the annex section. Furthermore, all three organisations use the 'uncertainty frame' and concept of 'contingency' in their reports. However, rather than using the uncertain character of the climate emergency to justify *pre-emptive mitigation*, for example, these concepts are invoked to justify the strategies of resilience and adaptation and to necessitate radical preparedness: 'the future is uncertain' and thus 'we prepare for worse climate change scenarios'.[223] Therefore, we can say that the use of emergency language to justify the strategies of *adaptation* and *resilience* indicates the inclination of incumbent power towards a mentality of 'pragmatic acceptance' in addressing climate change.

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222 Scruton, *Green Philosophy*.
223 DEFRA, 'NAP', p. i.

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In this context, 'sustained optimism' most often refers to 'faith' in the capitalist zone of 'free markets' and technological innovation to master and control complex climate change and its risk-laden consequences.[224] The Conservative *Manifesto* reflects this mentality: '[W]e believe that free markets, innovation and prosperity can protect the planet.'[225] Furthermore, BEIS's framing of 'clean growth' celebrates the creativity of capitalism in adapting to climate change. While many scholars and practitioners maintain that one of the most significant impediments to meaningful change in reducing carbon in the atmosphere is 'our system of capital accumulation with its commitment to material growth of economies'.[226] The UK's national mitigation strategy is rooted in investing in co-benefits (i.e. 'growth') rather than intervening in the economy (e.g. through regulation). BEIS externalises climate change as a 'global problem' and practices 'sustained optimism' in the UK's ability to tackle the problems posed by climate change without deviating from the status quo. Therefore, we can say that the language used by BEIS and the Conservative Party reflects a mentality of 'sustained optimism', one that is at odds with the radical change proposed by challengers, as we shall see next.

The Challengers: Radical Engagement

'Radical engagement' is an 'attitude of practical contestation towards perceived sources of danger'.[227] In the case of climate change, the main source can be identified as the carbon-based economic system we rely on, and as GHG emissions in particular. Those who take this position recognise that we are increasingly beset by major problems and believe that 'we can and should mobilise either to reduce their impact or to transcend them'.[228]

The approaches to governing risk that are most associated with the mentality of 'radical engagement' are *precaution* and *pre-emption*—strategies that seek to shape the contingencies of the future through immediate engagement with the source of the risk.[229] As reflected in the concept of 'precautionary risk management',[230] the focus here is on avoiding catastrophic futures via drastic pre-emption, involving 'policies that actively seek to prevent situations from

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224 Paul Virilio, Friedrich Kittler and John Armitage, 'The Information Bomb: A Conversation', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* Volume 4 № 2 (1999): 81–90; Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 136.
225 'Conservative Party Manifesto 2019', p. 55.
226 Gills and Morgan, 'Global Climate Emergency', p. 897.
227 Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 137.
228 Ibid.
229 Hodder and Martin, 'Climate Crisis?'.
230 Aradau and van Munster, 'Governing Terrorism Through Risk', p. 89–115.

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becoming catastrophic at some indefinite point in the future'.[231] Here, risk must be prevented at all costs, even in the absence of complete scientific evidence. This approach views the probable risks that stem from climate change as unpredictable, but irreversibly catastrophic should they in fact occur.[232]

There are numerous instances in the documents produced by challengers that reflect the mentality of radical engagement. The 'climate emergency frame' in and of itself epitomises a call for 'radical engagement' and 'precautionary risk management' by defining the problem as already severe and potentially catastrophic, thus necessitating immediate and radical change and transformation to prevent the worst potential consequences from becoming reality at all costs. Here, radical engagement is needed in response to an identified failure in climate governance, in combination with our current economic model.[233] The proposed remedy is investing in a 'greener and fairer economy'[234] and 'prioritis[ing] deep emissions cuts'.[235] We have seen that challengers use the language of emergency intensely and frequently to justify the need for radical engagement. Labour warns that 'we stand on the brink of unstoppable change'[236]—i.e. our current lack of engagement means the scale of the challenge is almost overwhelming, and Friends of the Earth's *12 Years to Save the Planet* clearly emphasises the short time horizon for radically engaging and thus reversing catastrophe.

At the heart of the power struggle in the world of climate politics is a conflict in governance mentalities—pragmatic acceptance and sustained optimism versus radical engagement. Though not all language used by the different groups will neatly reflect this division, the frame analysis has allowed us to identify these mentalities, which play a large part in determining the direction of climate policy in the UK.

II.   An episode of contention: how climate change came to be seen as an emergency

Beyond governance mentalities, we can further contextualise the analysis presented here so as to understand the central role emergency framing plays in the development of collective strategic action by challengers to the status quo.

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231 Ibid., p. 105.
232 Oels, 'Rendering Climate Change Governable By Risk: From Probability to Contingency', *Geoforum*, Volume 45, (2013): 17–29.
233 'Labour Party Manifesto 2019', p. 6.
234 Greenpeace, 'Government Investment For A Greener and Fairer Economy'
235 WWF, 'Keeping It Cool', p. 1.
236 Labour Party Manifesto 2019', p. 11.

The 'strategic action field' framework proposed by Fligstein and McAdam's in their work on cooperation and collaboration in social fields helps us see how the emergency frame has functioned to facilitate collective action since the publication of *SR15*.

A strategic action field (SAF) is 'a meso-level social order where actors (who can be individual or collective) interact with knowledge of one another under a set of common understandings about the purposes of the field [e.g. in the climate governance context, the goals, policies, and procedures used to address climate change], the relationships in the field (including who has power and why), and the field's rules [i.e. the tactics that are possible, legitimate, and interpretable for each category of actor in the field].'[237] The idea of the SAF emphasizes the contingency and plasticity of interaction within social fields. Here, incumbents and challengers vie for strategic advantage by deploying 'social skills'. Social skill is premised on the idea that actors produce collective action by strategically engaging others—so to secure their 'willing cooperation'—in an effort to create, stabilise, or transform the structures of the field.[238] Framing is an aspect of social skill; it is a cognitive mechanism that is ubiquitously employed in power struggles among unequal actors within a contested field,[239] such as the field of climate governance in the UK. The SAF framework helps to clarify how discursive mechanisms, such as the emergency frame, are linked to broader processes of collective power-making and power-countering. The remaining discussion will trace how the emergency frame became hegemonic in the UK's climate debate, and thus how it came to steer climate governance in a new direction.

The rapid rise of the emergency frame began with publication of the *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C* by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This report can be understood as an 'exogenous shock', disrupting the conversation that had been carried on within the UK up to that point. Exogenous shocks refer to significant changes in one field that can threaten the stability of many proximate fields; typically, by 'undermining the legitimating ideas on which the field rests'.[240] In the case of *SR15*, the report facilitated, or at least consolidated, the co-construction of the threat of climate change as 'catastrophic'. From its opening lines, the report emphasised the

....
237 Fligstein and McAdam, 'Toward a General Theory', p. 3–4.
238 Ibid., p. 2–7.
239 Benford and Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements'.
240 Fligstein and McAdam, 'Toward a General Theory', p. 17.

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urgency and immensity of the challenge humanity faces: 'Now more than ever, unprecedented and urgent action is required of all nations.'[241] Moreover, the data presented in the report—significantly, that limiting warming to 1.5°C would require annual emissions to fall by 45% by 2030—played a crucial role in anchoring the emergency discourse and providing a metric through which to understand the crisis. In response to the publication of *SR15*, various actors within the field of governance in the UK joined in the co-construction of the idea of climate change as a catastrophic threat by communicating it for broader consumption in emergency-laden terms, so as to precipitate urgent action. The CCC's *Net Zero* report, Greenpeace's *Climate Manifesto*, the WWF's *Keeping It Cool*, and FoE's *12 Years to Save the Planet* all take up the baton. Furthermore, as already mentioned, the 45%-by-2030 timeframe was translated into alarming news headlines that evoked a sense of emergency, such as BBC Newsnight's report 'Why we're heading for a "climate catastrophe"'.[242]

This collective construction of climate change as a catastrophic threat was the first step in the 'episode of contention' that followed the publication of *SR15*. For Fligstein and McAdam, an episode of contention is 'a period of emergent, sustained contentious interaction between […] actors utilizing new and innovative forms of action vis-a-vis one another'.[243] During such episodes, a diverse array of challengers can be expected to propose and seek to mobilise consensus around a particular conception of the field.[244] Therefore, those who undertake strategic action must be able to secure the willing cooperation of multiple groups, even if they differ on core beliefs, facts, and values.[245] To do this, it is common that actors form a coalition centred on a particular frame or storyline, i.e. interpretation of risk or threat. This type of 'discourse coalition'[246] allows for shared ways of thinking about and discussing issues and, in turn, drives the argumentation process by empowering unequal and divergent actors.[247] In other words, actors interact with other actors to create 'webs of meaning'.[248]

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241 IPCC, *Global Warming of 1.5°C*; cited in Gills and Morgan, 'Global Climate Emergency', p. 885.
242 BBC Newsnight, 'Why We're Heading for a "Climate Catastrophe"', [YouTube video] 8 October 2018.
243 Fligstein and McAdam, 'Toward a General Theory', p. 9.
244 Fligstein, 'Markets as Politics: A Political-Cultural Approach to Market Institutions', *American Sociological Review* Volume 61 № 4 (1996): 656–73; David Snow and Robert Benford, 'Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization' in Bert Klandermans, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Sidney Tarrow (eds), *International Social Movement Research: From Structure to Action* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1988): 197–218.
245 Fligstein and McAdam, 'Toward a General Theory', p. 7.
246 Maarten Hajer, 'Discourse Coalitions and the Institutionalization of Practice' in John F. Forester and Frank Fischer, (eds) *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning* (Duke University Press Books, 1993).
247 Ibid.
248 Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy,* p. 113.

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We posit that the 'climate emergency frame' functioned as a shared 'storyline' used by divergent actors to effect change in the UK's climate governance field. Originally propagated most notably by the social movement organisation Extinction Rebellion, the 'climate emergency frame' became endorsed by a range of challengers and, eventually, by incumbents as well. But, crucial to its persuasiveness, rather than it having 'a stable core of cognitive commitments and beliefs',[249] the 'climate emergency' storyline was vague on particular points, e.g. it simply 'declare[d] a climate emergency'. Rather than sharing core beliefs, its proponents shared a particular way of thinking about and discussing climate change—as catastrophic; if we don't act radically and act now the consequences will be dire.

An important next step in the rise of the 'climate emergency' was its 'organizational appropriation', i.e. the process by which the emerging conception of the threat of climate change came to be wedded to a specific organizational vehicle.[250] Here, the advocacy of the emergency storyline by opposition political parties allowed Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn to make a play for 'organizational appropriation' when in May 2019 he introduced a motion in Parliament to declare an environmental and climate emergency. In his speech to the House, he asserted that '[W]e are living in a climate crisis that will spiral dangerously out of control unless we take rapid and dramatic action now.'[251] Action at the level of civil society—the unprecedented climate protests of 2019—brought about further consolidation of the emergency frame among both governance actors and wider UK and global audiences. 'Innovative action' (defined as action that violates accepted practices in support of group interests) by SMOs, such as the ten-day 'shut down' of central London by Extinction Rebellion in April 2019, and the strikes across the country organised by the UK Student Climate Network, in which roughly 300,000 students participated, further propelled the collective construction of the emergency framework.[252]

'Settlements' refer to new, or refurbished, field rules and cultural norms that arise following episodes of contention.[253] In response to the episode of contention that I have outlined, there are several apparent 'settlements' that are important to note. These settlements represent a significant change in

....
249 Ibid., p. 103.
250 Fligstein and McAdam, 'Toward a General Theory', p. 17.
251 Corbyn, Jeremy, 'Jeremy Corbyn Declares Environment and Climate Emergency', [speech], 1 May 2019. [Accessed 11 July 2020].
252 Matthew Taylor and Jonathan Watts, ' "Enough is Enough": Biggest-ever Climate Protest Sweeps UK', *The Guardian*, 20 September 2019. [Accessed 7 November 2020].
253 Fligstein and McAdam, 'Toward a General Theory', p. 10.

direction of UK climate governance. They include Parliament's declaration of a 'climate emergency' in May 2019 and the co-option of the emergency frame by incumbent actors in their public discourse;[254] the government's revision of its GHG emissions reduction schedule (bringing forward the target for net zero to 2050, instead of 80% by 2050); the commissioning of a Citizens' Assembly (UK Climate Assembly) by six cross-party House of Commons committees; and, most recently, the UK government's policy paper entitled 'The ten point plan for a green industrial revolution'.[255] Therefore, in summary, we can see how strategic framing in the form of emergency framing and the 'climate emergency' storyline was central in catalysing change in climate governance structures.

Conclusion

This article's study and discussion reveal several important conclusions regarding how emergency framing is used to influence, legitimise, or delegitimise the United Kingdom's climate governance structures. First, although this study has shown that it is rare for incumbent actors to explicitly employ the emergency frame, emergency language is widely used to legitimise their policies of adaptation and resilience, therefore also effecting a broader legitimation process for those government departments or actors. This can be seen in DEFRA and the MoD's implicit use of the emergency frame. The 'opportunity frame' is the preferred frame for the problem of climate change for incumbent actors BEIS and the Conservative Party: climate change provides an opportunity to promote investment in co-benefits. With these actors, the emergency language that is employed is downplayed or used to externalise climate change as a global problem requiring global joint action.

Second, explicit emergency framing and intense emergency language are a defining discursive feature in the policy documents of challengers such as ENGOs and Extinction Rebellion, and in those of the Labour Party. For these actors, it appears that the central function of emergency framing is to de-legitimise present governance structures and incumbent progress in addressing climate change. This process of de-legitimation also works to legitimise the challengers themselves, by portraying their radical solutions as desirable and proper and in accordance with the scientific evidence.

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254 DEFRA's most recent policy paper for the 2020 Environmental Bill where they explicitly use the term 'climate emergency'.
255 This paper co-opts the language of Labour's 2019 'Environment Policy' paper (See BEIS, *The Ten Point Plan For a Green Industrial Revolution*, updated 18 November 2019.

Third, actors such as the CCC also employ emergency language in support of rapid emissions reductions but are arguably fettered by cautious professional norms owing to their status as an official public body, and they therefore refrain from the dramatic normative pronouncements common in the discourse of the challengers.

It is interesting to observe how the various ways emergency language is employed reflect the divergent mentalities of the various actors towards managing risk. The mentalities correlate with the respective positions of the actors within the field. The incumbents resist transformation through adopting the mentalities of pragmatic acceptance and sustained optimism, while the challengers display an unfettered inclination towards radical engagement in the form of advocating deep structural change.

Finally, the Strategic Action Field framework helps us understand how the emergency frame functions with regard to broader processes of change in the field of UK climate governance. Significantly, the emergency frame functions as the key storyline—We are in the midst of a climate emergency!—for a discourse coalition amongst unequal but socially-skilled challengers.

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