# Climate Change: The World Leaders Are Looking Away!

Analytical and Synthetic Summary of the Study (118 pages)

**Source Author:** Thierry Lamireau | **Domain:** Political Science, Law & Climate Governance

**Format:** Strategic 2-Page Executive Summary

## 1. PROBLEM STATEMENT & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### The Paradox of Selective Attention

The study analyzes the structural gap between the ubiquity of climate discourse in international summits and the persistence of energy trajectories incompatible with the Paris Agreement. The phrase *"looking away"* does not denote individual ignorance among leaders, but a **political selection of attention**: focusing on visible sectoral successes to conceal the deferral of fundamental reforms.

### Essential Distinction: Two Gaps

- **Ambition Gap:** Inadequacy of pledged targets (Nationally Determined Contributions - NDCs) relative to scientific targets (1.5°C / 2°C).
- **Implementation Gap:** Discrepancy between committed pledges and the legal, budgetary, or administrative instruments actually deployed. Even if 100% implemented, current NDCs would close only one-third of the global action deficit.

## 2. TYPOLOGY OF DELAY MECHANISMS

The study establishes a rigorous distinction between three key concepts:

- **Climate Denial:** Epistemic challenge to the reality or anthropogenic origin of global warming (declining in official arenas).
- **Organized Obstruction:** Coordinated actions by fossil interest networks to block or dilute specific regulations (e.g., litigation, lobbying).
- **Discourse of Delay:** Formal acceptance of scientific findings paired with systematic postponement of responses in the name of economic costs, uncertainty, or social sacrifice.

### Main Research Question (Forschungsfrage)

Through what political, economic, and discursive mechanisms do major powers divert attention or delay action, and what levers can align implementation with pledges?

## 3. POLITICAL, ECONOMIC & DISCURSIVE MECHANISMS

### A. Carbon Lock-in & Stranded Assets

Path dependency perpetuates fossil investments. Capital concentration and exposure of coal, oil, and gas reserves create powerful veto points within public institutions. In the United States, territorial fossil reserve ownership correlates directly with state participation in legal challenges against environmental regulations.

### B. Media Framing & Expertise Capture

Industrial strategies have evolved: corporate messaging no longer denies the transition but frames hydrocarbons (natural gas) as "indispensable partners" to renewables. Furthermore, partial capture of research (targeted funding) and politicization of uncertainty turn distributive political choices into endless scientific controversies.

### C. Responsibility Dilution & Competing Priorities

Political attention is discontinuous. Security, employment, or inflation crises relegate climate action to the background. Administrative fragmentation enables each level (national, local, corporate) to shift blame for inaction onto another tier.

## 4. SHORTCOMINGS OF INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

**The Paris Agreement** relies on a non-punitive, transparency-based, facilitative logic. Lacking enforcement mechanisms, pledges often lack execution guarantees. Similarly, **G20** commitments to phase out fossil fuel subsidies stumble over absent common definitions and mandatory accountability.

## 5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MAJOR POWERS

| Power | Primary Drivers of Delay | Action Dynamics |
|---|---|---|
| **United States** | Political polarization, fossil network influence, veto-point litigation. | Massive industrial policy (IRA) alongside persistent record fossil fuel exports. |
| **China** | Energy security priority & coal reliance, centralized governance. | Giant renewable deployment combined with ongoing thermal power expansion. |
| **European Union** | Member State friction, industrial competitiveness constraints. | Major regulatory power (CBAM, ETS market), trade normativity. |
| **G20 & Emerging** | Fiscal dependency, debt burdens, development vs. climate trade-offs. | Demands for climate justice amidst unmet North-South funding pledges. |

## 6. CLIMATE JUSTICE & NORTH-SUD ASYMMETRIES

### Finance & Historical Responsibilities

The credibility of international governance rests on developed nations fulfilling financial commitments ($100B/year, Loss and Damage Fund). Disbursement delays erode trust and hamper action across the Global South. Furthermore, carbon footprints are deeply unequal: the top 10% wealthiest account for a major share of global emissions and investment power.

### Pitfalls of Adaptation Financing

The study highlights the risks of adaptation fund capture by bureaucratic intermediaries or local elites, diverting aid away from highly vulnerable communities (e.g., case studies in Madagascar and Sub-Saharan Africa).

## 7. SYSTEMIC REORIENTATION LEVERS

### 1. Supply Regulation & Fossil Phase-Out

Addressing demand alone is insufficient. Setting extraction caps, reforming investment protection treaties, and progressively eliminating public guarantees for carbon-intensive infrastructure projects are imperative.

### 2. Budgetary Transparency & Subsidy Reform

Adopting a standardized and universal methodology for accounting direct and indirect fossil fuel subsidies (G20/OECD), paired with targeted social compensation to prevent public backlash.

### 3. Legal Accountability & Information Integrity

Leveraging judicial mechanisms to compel states and corporations to adhere to binding carbon budgets. Enforcing strict reporting standards (clear separation between gross reductions and uncertain carbon offsets/removals).

## 8. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

**Overall Study Synthesis**

Climate delay is neither a sociological inevitability nor a mere lack of scientific awareness, but the adjustable outcome of institutional design choices and economic trade-offs.

**Key to Success:** Replacing vague, long-term statements of intent with an unbroken chain of accountability — linking annual carbon budgets, traceable investments, upstream democratic participation, and mandatory corrective mechanisms.

*Note: Summary produced in strict alignment with the source study text (118 pages).*