
Framing the Climate Crisis in European Media: A Comparative Study of Five Major News Outlets

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Abstract

This study examines how five major national news outlets in EU member states framed climate change between 2022 and 2025, a period shaped by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, implementation of the European Green Deal, and growing political contestation over the pace of the green transition. Drawing on Entman's framing theory, comparative media-systems research, and critical discourse analysis (CDA), it analyses a purposive corpus of 112 articles from *Der Spiegel*, *Le Monde*, *La Repubblica*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and *El País*. Each article was assigned one primary frame and, where applicable, one secondary frame. Across the corpus, national sovereignty was the most frequent primary frame (39 of 112 articles), although patterns varied substantially by outlet: *Gazeta Wyborcza* was distinctive for its emphasis on just transition, while *El País* was the only outlet in which scientific urgency was the leading primary frame. The article introduces the Energy Security Bridge-Delay Framework, which distinguishes energy-security discourse that accelerates decarbonisation (Bridge), temporarily accommodates fossil-fuel use within a defined transition pathway (Transitional), or justifies indefinite postponement (Delay). A 21-article CDA sub-sample examines these categories in greater depth. The findings indicate that energy-security discourse is not inherently supportive of or hostile to climate transition; its implications depend on how responsibility, costs, technologies, and transition timelines are framed.

Keywords

climate change framing; European media; comparative journalism; critical discourse analysis; Green Deal; energy crisis; media systems

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale

Climate change poses a persistent communication challenge: scientific assessments call for rapid mitigation, while political and social responses often proceed more slowly. Media research has long examined how journalistic selection, sourcing, and framing shape public understandings of climate change and its policy implications (Boykoff, 2011). In the European Union, the European Climate Law makes climate neutrality by 2050 legally binding and requires a reduction in net greenhouse-gas emissions of at least 55% by 2030 compared with 1990 levels (European Union, 2021). The Fit for 55 package sets out legislative measures intended to deliver the 2030 target (European Commission, 2021). Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 intensified debates over energy security, affordability, national autonomy, and the pace of the green transition, adding a geopolitical dimension to climate communication (McWilliams et al., 2022). This study therefore treats climate coverage not simply as communication about environmental science, but as journalism produced within overlapping political, economic, and institutional pressures.

1.2 Research Gap

Research on climate communication in Europe has expanded, including work on cross-national variation and the political framing of the European Green Deal (Boykoff, 2011; Dubský et al., 2025). Yet the post-2022 energy crisis creates a specific analytical problem: energy-security language can support decarbonisation by linking renewable energy to strategic autonomy, but it can also be used to legitimise delay. Existing climate-delay research identifies arguments that accept the reality of climate change while deferring or weakening action (Lamb et al., 2020), but comparative media research has not consistently separated constructive energy-security framing from transitional or delay-oriented variants. This study addresses that gap through an exploratory comparison of five major national news outlets and by proposing a framework that distinguishes these three uses of energy-security discourse.

1.3 Research Objectives

Two objectives guide the study. First, it identifies the dominant and secondary interpretive frames used by five major EU news outlets between 2022 and 2025. Second, it examines how energy security is framed, distinguishing discourse that supports decarbonisation, discourse that accepts temporary fossil-fuel use within a defined transition pathway, and discourse that postpones climate action without a credible endpoint.

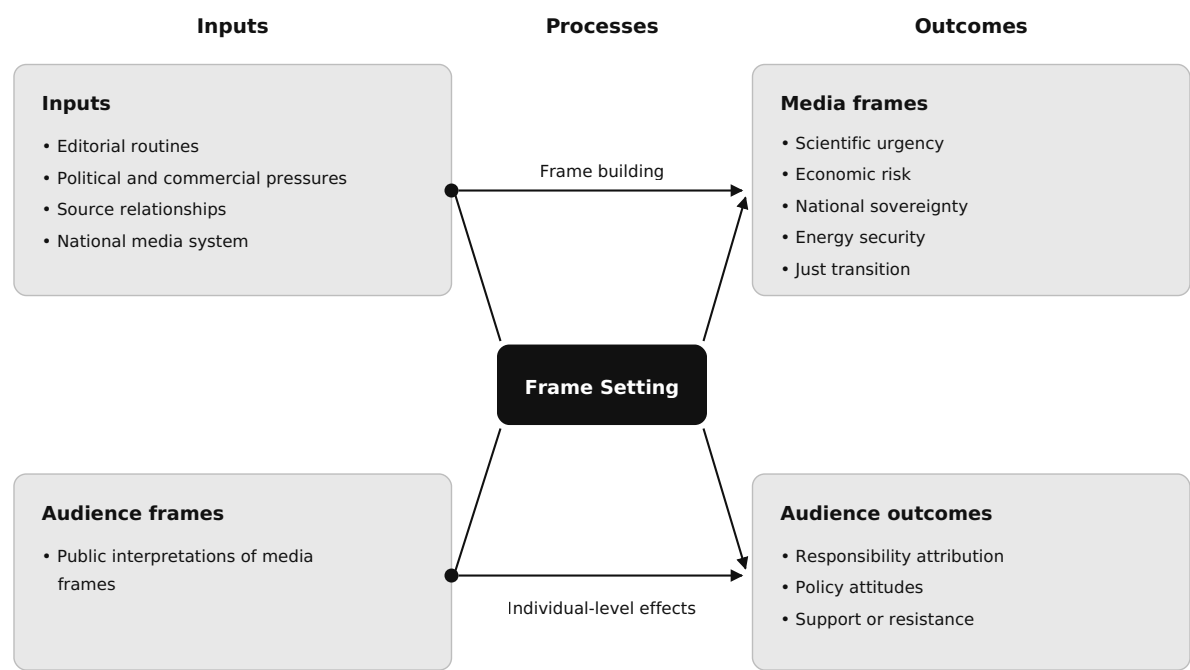
2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Framing Theory

Framing theory provides the principal analytical foundation for the study. Entman (1993) defines framing as the selection and increased salience of particular aspects of perceived reality, and identifies four recurring functions: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgements, and suggesting remedies. These functions guide the analysis of how climate and energy issues are organised within the selected news texts. Later framing research has further emphasised the cultural, institutional, and digital contexts in which frames are produced and circulated (Van Gorp, 2007; López-Rabadán, 2022).

The distinction between media frames and audience frames is also important (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Media frames concern how journalists and news organisations select and present an issue, while audience frames refer to the interpretive schemas readers bring to that content. This study analyses media frames rather than audience effects: it does not assume that the frames identified in news coverage generate identical interpretations among readers in different national contexts.

Figure 1. The media frames and audience frames model



Source: Author’s adaptation of Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007).

Figure 1 summarises the relationship between frame building, media frames, and audience interpretation described by Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007). On the media side, editorial routines, political and commercial pressures, source relationships, and wider institutional contexts shape frame building. The resulting media frames enter a broader process of interpretation in which audiences bring their own prior schemas and judgements. Reese (2007) similarly stresses that

framing is socially situated rather than reducible to individual editorial choice. This perspective supports the present study's focus on media frames while locating them within wider organisational and political contexts.

2.2 Comparative Media Systems

Comparative media-systems research provides a structural context for the analysis. Hallin and Mancini (2004) distinguish Liberal, Democratic Corporatist, and Polarized Pluralist ideal types, each associated with different relationships among journalism, political institutions, professional autonomy, and political parallelism. Brüggemann et al. (2014) later revisited these models empirically and identified four clusters, underlining that the original categories are useful heuristics rather than fixed national templates. In this study, media-system characteristics are therefore treated as contextual factors that may be associated with framing differences, not as deterministic explanations of them.

The five outlets — *Der Spiegel*, *Le Monde*, *La Repubblica*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and *El País* — were selected to provide variation in editorial traditions and national energy-policy debates. The classification of individual countries requires caution. Hallin and Mancini (2004) placed France within the Polarized Pluralist model. In Brüggemann et al.'s (2014) empirical re-analysis, France appears as a border case: it falls in a central cluster in one solution and shifts to the Southern cluster in another. This study therefore treats France as an intermediate or mixed case rather than reclassifying it straightforwardly as Democratic Corporatist. Poland was not included in Hallin and Mancini's original Western European and North American sample; the label "Polarized Pluralist (hybrid)" is used here as an analytical shorthand for selected features rather than as a direct transplantation of the original model. Throughout the paper, these classifications are heuristic reference points rather than predictors of framing outcomes.

Cross-national climate journalism also varies in professional routines, source hierarchies, and the ways scientific authority is translated into news. The comparative volume edited by Kunelius, Eide, Tegelberg, and Yagodin (2017), which examines journalism around the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report across more than 20 countries, shows how climate knowledge is filtered through different national and professional contexts. This supports treating source authority and journalistic norms as part of the interpretive context rather than assuming uniform climate journalism across Europe.

2.3 Climate Communication Research

European climate coverage has varied over time and across countries in urgency, source use, problem definition, and the balance between scientific, political, and economic considerations (Boykoff, 2011). Recent research on Green Deal communication likewise shows that climate and energy policy are refracted through national political and media contexts (Dubský et al., 2025). For the purposes of this study, three concepts are kept analytically distinct. Climate science refers to empirical evidence about climate processes and impacts; climate policy refers to governmental

and EU measures intended to address them; and climate framing refers to the interpretive structures through which journalism presents those issues.

The 2022 energy crisis added a particularly important layer to European climate communication. High and volatile energy prices, supply insecurity, and the political response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine encouraged governments and media to connect decarbonisation with security of supply and national resilience (McWilliams et al., 2022). At the policy level, the European Green Deal also reflects the broader evolution of EU climate and energy policy towards increasingly integrated policy mixes (Skjærseth, 2021). The key analytical question for this study is therefore not simply whether energy security appears in climate coverage, but how it is linked to decarbonisation, cost, sovereignty, responsibility, and time.

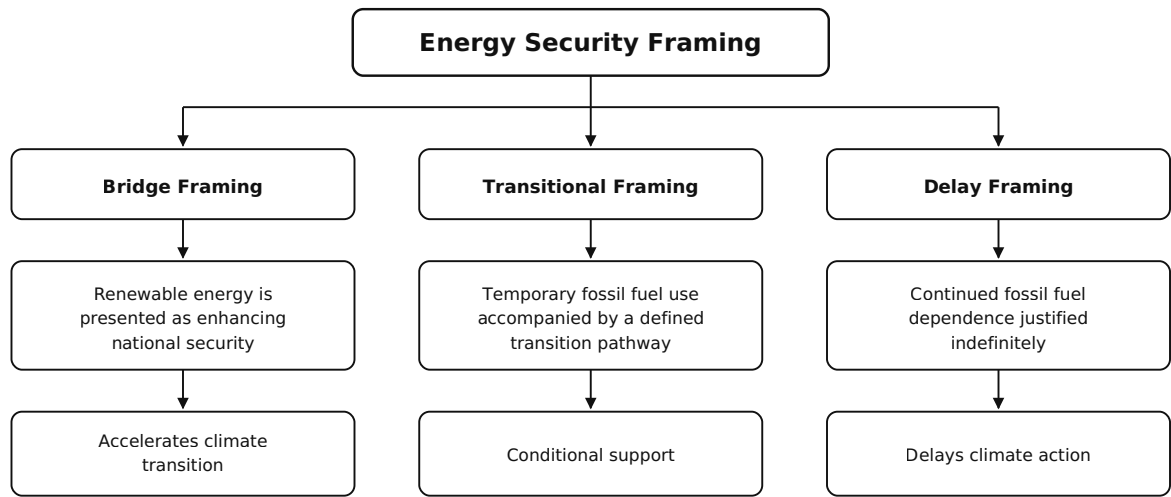
2.4 Climate Delay Discourse

Lamb et al. (2020) describe climate-delay discourses as arguments that accept the existence of climate change but justify inaction or inadequate action by redirecting responsibility, promoting non-transformative solutions, emphasising the downsides of climate policy, or suggesting that meaningful mitigation is no longer feasible. Climate delay is therefore distinct from climate denial: the dispute shifts from whether climate change exists to what should be done, by whom, how quickly, and at what cost.

This distinction is particularly relevant in the European energy-security context, where arguments about affordability, technological readiness, competitiveness, and sovereignty may either describe genuine transitional constraints or function as rationales for postponement. Research on sustainable-energy transitions likewise shows that populism, post-truth politics, and local resistance can intensify political contestation around transition policies (Fraune & Knodt, 2018). The Italian and Polish sub-corpora receive closer qualitative attention because of their distinctive relationships with the EU green transition; this focus is interpretive and should not be read as a claim that delay framing is statistically most prevalent in those two outlets.

2.5 Proposed Analytical Framework: The Energy Security Bridge-Delay Framework

Figure 2. The Energy Security Bridge-Delay Framework



Source: Author’s analysis.

Energy-security framing and climate-delay framing have generally been studied as related but distinct concepts. This study argues that energy-security narratives are not uniform in their relationship to climate action. Some coverage links energy independence to renewable-energy expansion, diversification, and reduced dependence on imported fossil fuels, thereby supporting decarbonisation. Other coverage accepts limited short-term fossil-fuel use while specifying a transition pathway. Still other coverage uses energy-security language to justify open-ended postponement. Building on Lamb et al.’s (2020) typology of climate-delay discourse, this study introduces the Energy Security Bridge-Delay Framework to distinguish these three forms.

Bridge framing links energy security directly to renewable-energy expansion, strategic autonomy, and long-term decarbonisation. Transitional framing permits short-term fossil-fuel use or another temporary compromise, but only where the argument includes a clear commitment to climate targets and a credible pathway or endpoint for transition. Delay framing uses energy-security language to justify indefinite or weakly specified postponement, for example through burden shifting, technological deferral, economic exceptionalism, or appeals to national sovereignty that displace a credible transition timetable.

The framework does not treat energy-security discourse as inherently supportive of or hostile to climate action. Instead, it asks how the argument is structured, what endpoint is specified, and where responsibility is placed. The corpus appendix records an exploratory Bridge, Transitional, Delay, or None label for all 112 articles, but the article does not use those full-corpus labels to estimate prevalence. In the 21-article CDA sub-sample, the category identifies the dominant type of energy-security argument represented in the article; it does not by itself imply editorial endorsement. The CDA separately assesses whether the outlet adopts, neutrally relays, challenges, or reframes that argument. None indicates that no identifiable energy-security

argument was sufficiently developed for classification. This narrower use of the framework keeps the paper’s central contribution interpretive rather than quantitative.

Table 1. The Energy Security Bridge-Delay Framework

Category	Characteristics	Relationship to climate action
Bridge framing	Renewable energy and diversification are presented as enhancing national security	Supports or accelerates transition
Transitional framing	Temporary fossil-fuel use or other compromise with a defined transition pathway and endpoint	Conditional, time-bounded support
Delay framing	Fossil dependence or postponement is justified without a credible transition endpoint	Defers climate action

Source: Author’s analysis.

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Research Methodology

The study uses a qualitative comparative case-study design combining framing analysis with critical discourse analysis, supplemented by descriptive counts of the coded primary frames. The aim is interpretive rather than statistically representative: framing analysis identifies how problems, causes, judgements, and remedies are organised in news texts, while CDA enables closer examination of lexical choices, rhetorical strategies, presuppositions, and intertextual references (Clark et al., 2021; Fairclough, 1992; Van Gorp, 2007).

The five-outlet comparison is designed to identify similarities and contrasts across selected national media contexts, not to estimate the prevalence of particular frames across European journalism as a whole. The design therefore combines systematic coding with close reading and treats media-system typologies as contextual aids rather than causal variables.

3.2 Data Sources and Corpus Construction

The main corpus consists of online articles from *Der Spiegel* (Germany), *Le Monde* (France), *La Repubblica* (Italy), *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Poland), and *El País* (Spain). The outlets were selected because of their national reach, agenda-setting role, and sustained online publication. Articles were identified through systematic keyword searches of outlet archives, supported by Factiva, for January 2022 to December 2025. Searches used outlet-specific language equivalents of “climate change”, “EU climate policy”, “energy crisis”, “Green Deal”, and “Fit for 55”. An initial pool of 55 articles per outlet (275 in total) was assembled. Purposive sampling reduced this to a final analytical corpus of 112 articles: *Der Spiegel* (22), *Le Monde* (23), *La Repubblica* (22), *Gazeta Wyborcza* (22), and *El País* (23). Selection considered relevance to major climate-policy events, coverage across the study period where available, thematic diversity between domestic and EU-level stories, and a balance of news reports, editorials, features, and opinion pieces. Duplicate items and articles that mentioned climate policy only incidentally were excluded. Academic literature and EU policy documents were used as contextual sources and were not coded as part of the news corpus.

The unit of analysis is the full news article. Each article is assigned one primary frame (the frame receiving the greatest structural and rhetorical emphasis) and, where applicable, one secondary frame. The corpus appendix published alongside this article (Supplementary File S1) records, for each of the 112 included articles, the article ID, outlet, publication date, title, URL or archive source, primary and secondary frame, Energy Security Bridge-Delay classification, and CDA inclusion status. It also provides an audit trail of 26 candidate links removed at the screening stage as duplicate URLs, topic or archive pages rather than individual articles, or off-topic items. The appendix does not reproduce the complete initial candidate pool, so the study does not claim that every screening decision from the original search can be reconstructed from the supplementary material.

Table 2. Selected news outlets and corpus rationale

Country	News outlet	Media-system context	Corpus focus	Articles
Germany	<i>Der Spiegel</i>	Democratic Corporatist	Green Deal, Energiewende, coal exit	22
France	<i>Le Monde</i>	Intermediate / mixed	Nuclear debate, Green Deal, COP diplomacy	23
Italy	<i>La Repubblica</i>	Polarized Pluralist	Gas dependency, Meloni government, just transition, Green Deal	22
Poland	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	Polarized Pluralist (hybrid)	Coal transition, EU compliance, media freedom	22
Spain	<i>El País</i>	Mediterranean / Polarized Pluralist	Solar leadership, droughts, EU climate policy	23

Source: Author's analysis.

3.3 Analytical Methods

3.3.1 Qualitative Framing Analysis

The framing analysis proceeded in four stages. First, a primary and, where applicable, secondary frame was assigned to each article. Second, quoted sources and their institutional affiliations were recorded. Third, each article was examined for problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and proposed remedy, following Entman's (1993) framing functions. Fourth, patterns were compared across outlets and interpreted in relation to national and media-system context. Coding was conducted by a single researcher, so intercoder reliability is not reported. Approximately 15% of the corpus was recoded after a two-week interval as an internal consistency check. No formal agreement coefficient is reported, and the exercise is therefore treated as a consistency check rather than as reliability evidence. Ambiguous cases, including articles containing competing frames or quoted statements that diverged from the outlet's own narrative, were flagged and revisited against the coding protocol before a final classification was assigned.

3.3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

A purposive sub-sample of 21 articles (four to five per outlet) was selected from the 112-article corpus for closer critical discourse analysis; the article IDs and Bridge/Transitional/Delay classifications are listed in Supplementary Table S1. These 21 close-read cases provide the substantive evidence used to apply the Energy Security Bridge-Delay Framework in this article. Two cases classified as None are retained as negative comparison cases, illustrating articles in which an energy-security argument is not sufficiently developed for Bridge, Transitional, or Delay classification. The classification identifies the dominant energy-security argument represented in an article, while the CDA separately records the outlet's stance toward that argument. Selection sought representation across publications, dominant frames, and major policy contexts. The analysis follows the discourse-historical tradition within critical discourse studies, focusing on lexical choices used to describe climate change and relevant actors, metaphors and rhetorical

devices associated with urgency, risk, or delay, intertextual references to scientific and political texts, and presuppositions that structure the argument (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). Particular attention is paid to whether delay-oriented arguments are adopted, reproduced neutrally, challenged, or reframed by the outlet. The Italian and Polish cases receive additional qualitative discussion because of their distinctive transition contexts.

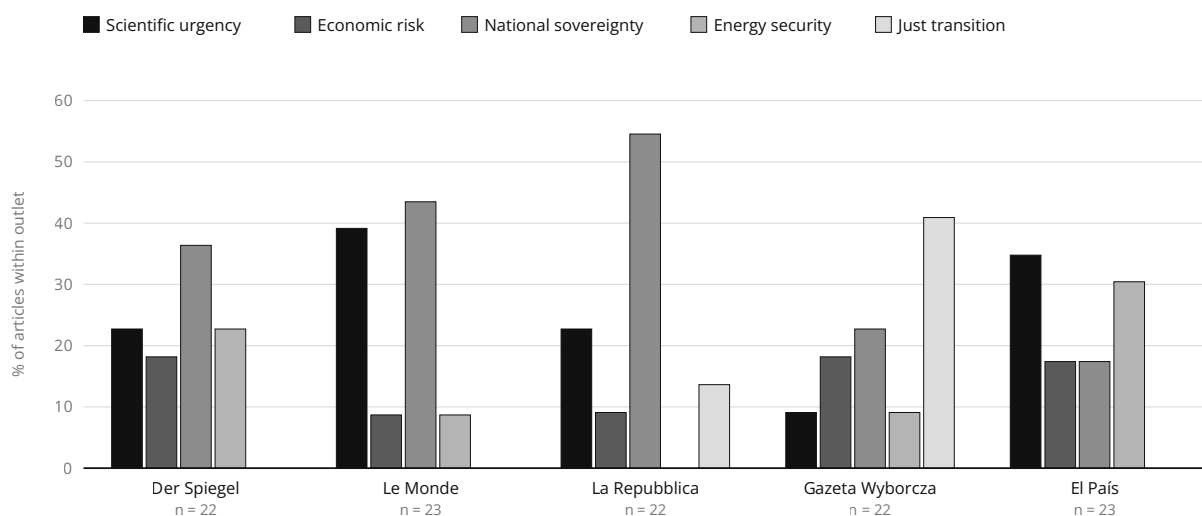
3.4 Research Tools and Software

NVivo 14 was used for coding, retrieval, and qualitative data management; Factiva supported systematic archive searching; ATLAS.ti 24 was used for close reading and annotation within the CDA sub-corpus; Microsoft Excel was used for sampling records, metadata tracking, and descriptive comparison tables; and Zotero was used to organise the academic and policy literature. Translation of French, German, Italian, Polish, and Spanish material was supported by DeepL Pro and researcher language skills, as detailed in the Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies at the end of this article.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings should be interpreted with an important limitation in mind: each country is represented by a single outlet. Differences may therefore reflect editorial orientation, article selection, and time-period composition as much as broader national media culture. The results are presented as an exploratory comparison of five selected publications, not as representative estimates for national press systems.

Figure 3. Frame distribution by outlet (n = 112)



Values are the proportion of articles within each outlet for which a given frame was coded as the primary frame. Source: Author's analysis.

Figure 3 compares the distribution of five primary frames across the 112-article corpus: scientific urgency, economic risk, national sovereignty, energy security, and just transition. Values represent the proportion of articles within each outlet for which a given frame was identified as the primary frame.

Across the corpus, national sovereignty is the most frequent primary frame (39 of 112 articles, 34.8%), followed by scientific urgency (29, 25.9%), economic risk and energy security (16 each, 14.3%), and just transition (12, 10.7%). *Der Spiegel* is led by national sovereignty (8 of 22, 36.4%), followed by scientific urgency and energy security (5 each, 22.7%). *Le Monde* is also led by national sovereignty (10 of 23, 43.5%), with scientific urgency second (9, 39.1%). *La Repubblica* shows the strongest concentration of any outlet, with national sovereignty accounting for 12 of 22 articles (54.5%). *Gazeta Wyborcza* is the only outlet where just transition is the leading primary frame (9 of 22, 40.9%), followed by national sovereignty (5, 22.7%). *El País* is led by scientific urgency (8 of 23, 34.8%), followed by energy security (7, 30.4%), and has the lowest national-sovereignty share of the five outlets (4, 17.4%).

The central descriptive result is therefore not a simple north-west/south-east divide. National sovereignty is the leading primary frame in *Der Spiegel*, *Le Monde*, and *La Repubblica* and the

second-most frequent frame in *Gazeta Wyborcza*. *Gazeta Wyborcza* stands apart for its emphasis on just transition, while *El País* is the only outlet in which scientific urgency is the leading primary frame. These differences are examined qualitatively below.

4.1 Dominant Frames Across the Five News Outlets

Scientific urgency is especially prominent in *Le Monde* and *El País* and is also present in *Der Spiegel* and *La Repubblica*. In these articles, climate change is framed as an empirically established problem requiring policy action, often through references to climate science, the IPCC, or European institutions (IPCC, 2023). The frame is nevertheless not dominant everywhere: in the final corpus, national sovereignty is more frequent overall and is the leading primary frame in three outlets.

National sovereignty is the most common primary frame across the corpus (39 of 112 articles, 34.8%). Its meaning differs by outlet. In *Der Spiegel*, it appears in coverage of the Energiewende and coal-exit timetable as questions of German policy autonomy; in *Le Monde*, it appears in debates over nuclear energy, EU policy, and French energy independence; in *La Repubblica*, it is closely linked to gas dependence and national vulnerability to external supply; and in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, it appears in coverage of coal transition and EU compliance. *El País* shows a lower share of sovereignty framing and more often foregrounds scientific urgency or energy security. Economic risk, by contrast, is a comparatively minor primary frame in every outlet (8.7–18.2%), so the final data do not support treating it as the dominant frame across the corpus.

4.2 Cross-National Variation and Media-System Context

The observed differences are broadly compatible with the idea that media-system context, editorial identity, and national policy debates shape the repertoire of frames available to journalists. *Le Monde* and *El País* carry the largest shares of scientific-urgency framing, *La Repubblica* the highest concentration of national-sovereignty framing, and *Gazeta Wyborcza* the highest concentration of just-transition framing.

The distribution does not, however, align with a simple contrast between Northern and Western outlets that emphasise science and Southern or Central European outlets that emphasise autonomy. National-sovereignty framing is in fact more frequent in *Le Monde* (43.5%) and *Der Spiegel* (36.4%) than in *Gazeta Wyborcza* (22.7%), and *Der Spiegel* and *La Repubblica* record identical scientific-urgency shares (22.7% each). What distinguishes the Polish sub-corpus is therefore its emphasis on the distributional costs and social consequences of transition rather than a heavier reliance on autonomy claims, while what distinguishes the Italian sub-corpus is the concentration, not the mere presence, of sovereignty framing. These patterns should not be interpreted as direct “media-system effects”: with one outlet per country, the design cannot separate national-level structure from outlet identity or article selection.

El País illustrates this limitation particularly clearly. Although Spain is commonly discussed within the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist tradition, the outlet’s corpus combines a relatively strong scientific-urgency orientation with substantial energy-security framing. This suggests that national

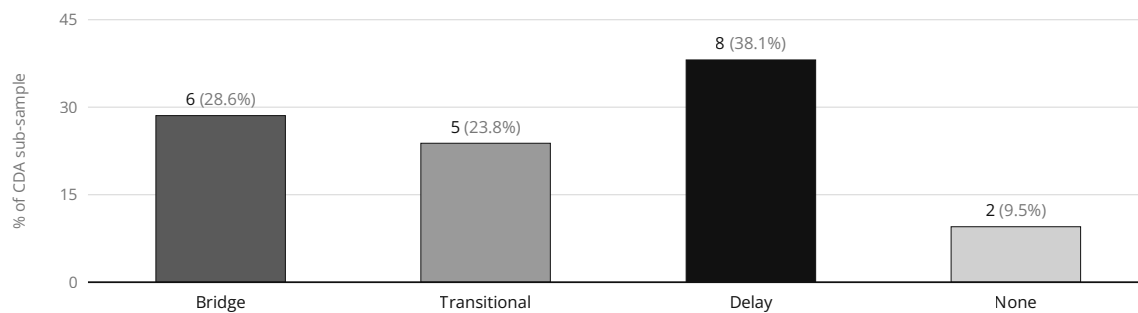
policy context and outlet identity may mediate or complicate broad media-system expectations. The typologies are therefore most useful here as comparative reference points rather than predictive models.

4.3 Energy Security Bridge-Delay Patterns in the CDA Sub-Corpus

The 21-article CDA sub-sample is used to examine how Bridge, Transitional, and Delay arguments operate discursively across the five outlets. These close-read cases, rather than the exploratory full-corpus labels in the corpus appendix, form the evidentiary basis for the framework discussion. The Italian and Polish cases receive closer discussion because their climate and energy debates are strongly entangled with questions of dependence, coal, industrial adjustment, and EU policy; this is a qualitative focus rather than a claim that those two outlets contain the highest numerical prevalence of Delay framing.

A low or zero count for energy security as a primary frame does not mean that energy-security argumentation is absent from an outlet. *La Repubblica*, for example, records no articles whose primary frame is energy security, because its coverage of supply and dependence is predominantly organised around national vulnerability and is therefore coded as national sovereignty. Energy-security reasoning nevertheless runs through those articles. This is one reason the Bridge-Delay classification is applied to the argument structure of the close-read cases rather than to the primary-frame distribution.

Figure 4. Bridge/Transitional/Delay distribution in the CDA sub-sample (n = 21 articles)



Source: Author's analysis.

Figure 4 reports the Energy Security Bridge-Delay classification of the 21 CDA articles. Delay framing is the most common category in the sub-sample, occurring in eight articles (38.1%), followed by Bridge framing in six (28.6%), Transitional framing in five (23.8%), and two articles (9.5%) classified as None. Because each outlet contributes only four or five CDA cases, these counts are descriptive and should not be interpreted as statistically significant outlet-level differences.

The distinction among the three categories rests primarily on the relationship between energy security and the transition timetable. Bridge framing links strategic autonomy to renewable-energy

expansion, diversification, and long-term decarbonisation. Transitional framing accepts a short-term compromise, including temporary fossil-fuel use, but specifies a credible pathway or endpoint for transition. Delay framing identifies an energy-security rationale for open-ended postponement, burden shifting, technological deferral, or continued fossil dependence without a credible exit timetable. The classification captures the dominant argument type represented in the article; the CDA then distinguishes whether the outlet adopts, neutrally relays, challenges, or reframes that argument. A Delay classification therefore does not, by itself, mean that the outlet endorses delay.

Bridge example

EP008 (*El País*, 27 January 2023). The article reports Spain's proposal to Brussels for "a grand pact for a green economy," linking electricity-market reform and REPowerEU to strategic autonomy and accelerated green investment. This fits the Bridge category because energy security and autonomy are connected directly to renewable-energy expansion and decarbonisation.

Transitional example

LM009 (*Le Monde*, 26 February 2025). The article describes measures to "support the decarbonization of industry" while preserving the Green Deal's path to carbon neutrality by 2050. It fits the Transitional category because affordability and competitiveness adjustments are presented within, rather than as a substitute for, a defined long-term decarbonisation pathway.

Delay example

LR001 (*La Repubblica*, 26 September 2022). The article foregrounds Fratelli d'Italia's argument that, in the short term, energy independence may also require fossil sources and that moving too rapidly toward zero-CO₂ targets could impose severe social and economic costs. This is a clear delay-oriented rationale because energy-security and economic concerns are used to question the pace of emissions reduction. The classification captures the delay argument represented in the article; the CDA separately assesses the outlet's stance toward that argument.

4.4 Energy-Crisis Context and Framing Dynamics

The corpus is not balanced longitudinally: all *Gazeta Wyborcza* articles in the final sample are from 2022, while *Le Monde* has no 2022 articles. The study therefore does not claim to measure changes in frame prevalence over time. Instead, this section considers how energy-security and sovereignty arguments appear in material published in the context of the post-invasion energy crisis. In the selected *Gazeta Wyborcza* material, questions of coal dependence, EU compliance, and security of supply are particularly visible. In *La Repubblica*, dependence on imported gas frequently appears as a question of national vulnerability. Across the corpus more broadly, some articles present immediate economic or security pressures as reasons for temporary policy adjustment, while others connect reduced fossil-fuel dependence to faster decarbonisation. These contrasting uses of energy-security language motivate the Bridge-Delay distinction developed in this study.

4.5 The Role of the Green Deal as a Framing Device

The European Green Deal (European Commission, 2019) functions as a recurring policy reference across the corpus, but its meaning varies by outlet and national context. In *Der Spiegel* and *Le Monde*, selected articles often treat the Green Deal as an established policy framework and focus debate on implementation, political durability, or competitiveness. In *La Repubblica* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Green Deal-related material more often intersects with questions of sovereignty, transition costs, industrial adjustment, or EU obligations. *El País* more frequently connects the transition to renewable-energy opportunity and energy security. Given the uneven temporal composition of the corpus, these patterns should be read as differences within the selected material rather than as controlled comparisons of specific events across outlets.

Taken together, the findings show that energy-security framing is not homogeneous. In some articles, it supports decarbonisation by presenting renewable energy and diversification as sources of strategic resilience. In others, it legitimises a bounded transitional compromise. In still others, it becomes a rationale for open-ended delay. The Energy Security Bridge-Delay Framework is intended to make these distinctions explicit and analytically usable.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

Across the 112 articles, national sovereignty is the most frequent primary frame, followed by scientific urgency, while economic risk, energy security, and just transition appear less often as primary frames overall. The distribution nevertheless varies substantially by outlet: *Gazeta Wyborcza* is distinctive for just-transition framing, *El País* is the only outlet led by scientific urgency, and *La Repubblica* shows a particularly high concentration of national-sovereignty framing. These results show that climate coverage in the selected outlets combines scientific, economic, geopolitical, and social concerns in different proportions. Because the design includes one outlet per country and an uneven temporal distribution, these patterns should be interpreted as characteristics of the selected corpus rather than representative national or longitudinal effects.

The energy-security material also demonstrates why a more differentiated conceptual vocabulary is useful. Energy security can be linked to renewable expansion and strategic autonomy, to temporary fossil-fuel measures within a defined transition pathway, or to indefinite postponement. Treating all three as a single “energy security” frame risks obscuring politically important differences in how climate action is enabled, constrained, or deferred.

5.2 Theoretical Contributions

The study makes three contributions. First, it uses comparative media-systems research as a contextual lens for climate journalism while avoiding the assumption that media-system types mechanically determine content. Second, it combines framing analysis with CDA to connect corpus-level patterns to the rhetorical structure of individual texts. Third, and most importantly, it introduces the Energy Security Bridge-Delay Framework, which builds on climate-delay theory to distinguish energy-security discourse that accelerates transition (Bridge), accommodates a temporary compromise within a defined pathway (Transitional), or postpones action without a credible endpoint (Delay). The framework therefore focuses attention on the structure and temporality of an argument, not merely on the presence of energy-security language.

5.3 Practical Implications

The framework can be translated into a simple editorial audit for journalists, editors, and climate communicators. Three questions are particularly useful: (1) Does an energy-security argument specify a credible endpoint for temporary fossil-fuel measures? (2) Does it link security to diversification and low-carbon supply, or to continued fossil dependence? (3) Does it assign responsibility and a timetable for transition, or defer action to other actors, future governments, or unspecified technological breakthroughs? Applying these questions can help distinguish reporting that critically examines climate delay from reporting that inadvertently reproduces delay narratives. For policymakers and communicators, the same framework provides a way to assess whether appeals to energy security are being used to support a transition pathway or to displace it.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be recognised. First, one outlet represents each country, so the findings are not representative of national media systems as a whole. Second, temporal representation is uneven across outlets: all *Gazeta Wyborcza* articles in the final corpus are from 2022, while *Le Monde* has no 2022 articles. Cross-outlet differences therefore cannot be separated cleanly from period composition, and the study does not claim a controlled longitudinal design. Third, the qualitative approach prioritises interpretive depth over statistical generalisability. Fourth, translated texts inevitably involve some interpretive judgement. Finally, the Energy Security Bridge-Delay Framework should be tested on larger and more diverse samples, including multiple outlets within each country, digital-native media, broadcast journalism, and social-media content. Larger quantitative studies could then assess the framework's reliability and generalisability more systematically.

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Appendix

Supplementary Table S1. CDA sub-sample (n = 21 articles)

The 21 articles below form the critical discourse analysis sub-sample discussed in Section 4.3 and reported in Figure 4: six Bridge, five Transitional, eight Delay, and two None.

No.	Article ID	Outlet	Date	Classification
1	EP008	<i>El País</i>	27 Jan 2023	Bridge
2	EP014	<i>El País</i>	4 Oct 2023	Bridge
3	EP001	<i>El País</i>	15 May 2022	Transitional
4	EP004	<i>El País</i>	22 Aug 2022	Delay
5	EP002	<i>El País</i>	7 Feb 2022	None
6	DS003	<i>Der Spiegel</i>	15 Jan 2025	Bridge
7	DS004	<i>Der Spiegel</i>	6 Dec 2024	Transitional
8	DS001	<i>Der Spiegel</i>	14 Jun 2024	Delay
9	DS022	<i>Der Spiegel</i>	10 Mar 2022	None
10	LM007	<i>Le Monde</i>	28 May 2024	Bridge
11	LM009	<i>Le Monde</i>	26 Feb 2025	Transitional
12	LM001	<i>Le Monde</i>	27 Jan 2024	Delay
13	LM002	<i>Le Monde</i>	28 Jan 2024	Delay
14	GW021	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	3 Feb 2022	Bridge
15	GW004	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	29 Jun 2022	Transitional
16	GW001	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	11 May 2022	Delay
17	GW002	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	2 Nov 2022	Delay
18	LR002	<i>La Repubblica</i>	25 Oct 2022	Bridge
19	LR006	<i>La Repubblica</i>	4 Dec 2023	Transitional
20	LR001	<i>La Repubblica</i>	26 Sep 2022	Delay
21	LR004	<i>La Repubblica</i>	10 Jul 2023	Delay

Source: Author’s analysis.

The full corpus appendix covering all 112 included articles, together with the screening audit trail, is published as Supplementary File S1.

Declarations

Ethics Declaration

This study analyses publicly available news articles and does not involve human participants. On this basis the research did not require review by an institutional ethics board. Ethical considerations nevertheless include accurate attribution of source material, careful treatment of translated passages, and reflexivity about the researcher's interpretive role. Particular care is required in critical discourse analysis because lexical nuance and the distinction between an outlet's own framing and arguments attributed to quoted actors can affect classification.

Funding Declaration

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

Data Availability

The corpus appendix documenting the final 112 articles, their coding, and the screening audit trail is published alongside this article as Supplementary File S1. The analysed news articles are publicly available from the outlets named in the appendix. No other datasets were generated.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

In accordance with MJRC's AI-use policy, this study discloses the use of AI and AI-assisted tools. DeepL Pro was used to translate non-English source articles into English, with the researcher checking translations against the original text, particularly where politically or ideologically sensitive wording affected interpretation. During revision, Claude (Anthropic) was used to audit corpus links, identify duplicate or off-topic entries, compile researcher-provided coding into descriptive statistics, generate Figures 3 and 4 from those data, flag inaccurate references, and assist with language revision. The researcher supplied and manually verified the primary and secondary frame codes for all 112 articles and the exploratory Bridge, Transitional, Delay, and None labels recorded in the corpus appendix; Claude did not independently code the source articles. The framework findings reported in the article rely on the 21 close-read CDA cases rather than on full-corpus prevalence estimates. Approximately 15% of the corpus was recoded manually as an internal consistency check, and the Energy Security Bridge-Delay Framework was developed by the researcher. The author reviewed and edited all content and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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