What, when, how?
The framing of energy transition by Italian parties

Francesco Campolongo
Giulio Citroni
Valeria Tarditi
UNIVERSITY OF CALABRIA

Abstract

The climate crisis is a stress factor for democracies and a relevant issue within inter-party conflict. Besides environmental aspects, it involves the economic and national security dimensions of energy policy, as well as a wide range of social and political consequences of policy choices. This article analyses the framing of the energy transition by political parties, i.e., how they define the problem, propose and legitimise solutions, and identify and qualify the actors involved. Parties are central to the institutional system and the formation of the policy agenda, competing in the construction and transmission of frames while shaping conflict and policy solutions. The research questions of this article regard the articulation of frames along the left-right axis and the impact of the crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine. This work draws on the literature on energy policies and the framing of climate change and energy transition in order to first outline three main multidimensional frames: sustainability, eco-modernist and eco-nationalist. The empirical research consists in a qualitative analysis of Italian political party manifestos in the 2018 and 2022 (national) and 2019 (European) elections. Results confirm that parties frame the energy transition on the basis of their underlying ideology. External shocks, such as the Ukrainian crisis, lead to a rearticulation of frames, but the left-right alignment still holds as politicisation is reinforced.

1. Introduction

Scholars and commentators have used the term 'polycrisis' to describe the present state of constant challenge to political, social, institutional and economic equilibrium. The economic crisis of 2008-2011, the pandemic crisis of 2020-2021 and its economic and social consequences, and then, in 2022, the invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent energy crisis, have all contributed to an uncertain and volatile context. The climate crisis, described as the *super-wicked problem* of our times, has become one among many, and attempts to find solutions to it must now compete for priority within the policy agenda.

This article deals with a central pillar of ecological transition that has been particularly challenged by the polycrisis: the energy transition. This appeared to be underway and gathering increasing momentum, but was directly affected by the war in Ukraine and the halt to Russian gas supplies with long-term consequences that are still hard to gauge. A push to invest further in renewables, a pull to diversify to alternative gas and nuclear, and the constant pressure posed by increasing inequalities and the risks of poverty are all at play and significantly influence the pursuit of climate goals.

The article looks at how political parties define and make sense of the energy transition problem in these uncertain times. Within the given complexity, the way they

frame the issue may vary widely and determine the content, as well as the success or failure, of future climate and energy policies. Drawing on established literature that connects climate policy and politics (Jensen e Spoon 2011; Thonig et al. 2021), we adopt the method of framing analysis (cfr. Brondi et al. 2015). Our aim is to test a hypothesis on the alignment of discursive frames on the energy transition along the left-right axis, through an empirical analysis of Italian political party manifestos between 2018 and 2022, as well as to explore the impact of the war in Ukraine.

The article first discusses the concept of framing in reference to the energy transition (section 2), then presents the research hypothesis (section 3). The cases and method are then presented (section 4 and 5) and the findings are described (sections 6 and 8). The conclusions drawn in section 8 point to a significant alignment of discursive frames along the left-right political continuum and an equally meaningful reinforcement of this alignment after the Ukraine crisis.

2. Framing the energy transition

The energy transition, understood as a transformation of the energy system based on the shift away from climate-changing fossil fuels towards renewable and non-polluting sources, is the object of regulation, research projects and EU and national programmes of great significance in terms of economic investment and organisational commitment.

As in any agenda setting and policy formulation process, the communicative dimension and symbolic representations are not neutral, and contribute to the construction of social reality and the definition of possible solutions. The concept of framing (van Hulst and Yanow 2016) describes the processes by which actors 'select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation' (Entman 1993, 52). The framing process is strategically orientated: actors compete for hegemony over problem interpretation and solution articulation (Boin et al. 2009). In particular, political parties aim to build consensus and consolidate their competitive positions and have the means to orientate, select and aggregate demands, which makes them central actors in the formation of public opinion. Reacting to shocks with discursive turning points (Buschman and Oels 2019), parties 'make sense' of the complexity of social reality through framing and reframing activities and, for this reason, an analysis of the communicative dynamics established between parties during policy problem definition also entails examining their competitive logic in the light of pre-existing identity constraints and external influences.

These discursive dynamics appear particularly relevant when looking at the energy transition, a wicked problem that mixes technical complexities and uncertainties on one hand and conflicts of interests and values on the other (Alford and Head 2017). Fossil fuels continue to enjoy a structural advantage over alternative energy sources due to a technological, institutional and social 'carbon lock-in' (Unruh 2000) as well as a 'discursive' one made up of the dominant discourses that constitute and justify the status quo (Buschman and Oels 2019).

This complexity is further compounded by the fact that energy policy, and thus energy transition policy, is itself multilevel (spanning across international, EU, national

and local policy) and cross-sectoral (intersecting energy policy *strictu sensu* and other policies that affect – and are affected by – the energy sector) (McGowan 1996).

The further multi-dimensionality of energy policy is expressed in the 'trilemma' (Khan et al. 2022) that includes:

- energy security: an ambiguous concept (Sovacool 2011) that, in industrialised countries with limited fossil resources, generally concerns the security of supply and international and geopolitical strategies;

- the economic dimension, which includes the impact of energy prices on economic growth and competitiveness, as well as strategic choices in industrial policy;

- environmental sustainability and, most importantly, green-house gas emissions, pollution and the environmental risks posed by different technologies.

A further, cross-cutting scientific and political debate concerns the distribution of costs and benefits deriving from the energy transition, the democratic governance of transition processes and the different socio-technical power structures embodied in different technologies. For example, several authors see the transition as a paradigm shift towards more widely distributed and democratic economic and industrial systems (Imperatore and Leonardi 2023; Singh Garha et al. 2022).

Such complexity implies that the interpretive frames constructed by political actors may vary widely, and lead to diverse policy decisions and outcomes. These frames may change over time, depending on the technological and socio-economic context, sudden shocks and actor agency (Prontera 2018). Political parties have a pivotal role in the framing and re-framing processes in this field. They exercise great influence on the level of politicisation of environmental and energy issues (Carmichael and Brulle 2017), can foster or hinder support for an ecological transition based on the energy transition (Birch 2020; Carter et al. 2018; Schulze 2014; Jensen and Spoon 2011) and can influence the polarisation of public opinion on the issue (Birch 2020; Egan and Mullin 2017).

This essay aims to investigate how parties frame energy transition issues. More specifically, our research questions are: how is the energy transition framed in party manifestos? To what extent do the frames depend on given ideological orientations and how stable is this alignment in the face of critical shocks?

To answer these questions, we analyse the frames constructed by Italian political parties between 2018 and 2022, a timeframe which saw significant progress in the transition to renewables, but also a significant increase in the complexity of the energy issue due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict (Steffen and Patt 2022; Natili and Visconti 2023).

3. Research hypothesis: energy transition frames across the left/right divide

Starting from these premises, our first expectation is that the energy trilemma will translate into three frames centred on the environmental, economic and security dimensions. Based on the definition of framing proposed by Entman (1993), it is possible to identify a logical sequence of problem definition and moral evaluations on the one

hand, which constitute the problem-setting dimensions of the frame, and the subsequent identification of its content, actors and solutions on the other, which constitute the problem-solving dimensions of the frame. We use these dimensions of framing to conceptualise the articulation of the three frames – sustainability, eco-modernist and eco-nationalist.

Table 1. Framing the energy transition

	Sustainability frame	Eco-modernist frame	Eco-nationalist frame
Dominant dimension of energy policy	Environmental dimension	Economic dimension	National security dimension
Problem definition	Transition as a necessity	Transition as an opportunity	Transition as a strategic option
Moral evaluations	Equity in the distribution of costs and benefits	Market efficiency for growth	Safeguarding national sovereignty
Content of the transition	Rapid decarbonisation through renewables	Pragmatic and incremental energy mix	Capitalising on national strategic resources
Actors and solutions	Grassroots innovation and catalytic state (Critical) EU cooperation International cooperation	Market regulation by the state EU cooperation International competition	Political authority EU competition International competition

Source: own elaboration.

As summarised in Table 1, the sustainability frame rests on a definition of energy policy as an environmental issue and therefore sees transition as a necessity to counteract the effects of the climate crisis. The proposed transition is based on renewable energy sources, the spread of which must be promoted and accelerated for rapid decarbonisation. Consistent with the Sustainable Development approach (Magnani 2012), great attention is paid to the distributive effects of the transition, which may involve inequalities between social classes, generations and territories, and must be governed to ensure a just transition. The protagonists of the transition are territorial communities, grassroots innovation and new decentralised, cooperative, multi-stakeholder models in which the state plays a 'catalytic' role, helping to coordinate, support and direct non-state actors (Wright and Kurian 2010; Prontera and Quitzow 2022). European and international cooperation is viewed positively, but with possible criticism for its market approach, which is insufficiently attentive to inequalities (Buzogany and Mohamad-Klotzbach 2022).

The 'eco-modernist', or 'ecological modernisation' frame (Magnani 2012; Wright and Kurian 2010) defines energy policy as an economic problem and thus sees the transition predominantly as an opportunity for growth within the existing capitalist model. The focus on equity issues is minimal, consistent with a trust in the market and economic growth to benefit the system as a whole. The transition process must ensure continuity of supply and is therefore incremental, pragmatic and closely linked to technological innovation: a mix of sources is proposed that guarantees security and stability in availability and prices. The state is entrusted with the role of regulator of competitive markets (Wright and Kurian 2010) and European cooperation is embodied in the single energy market concept. On the other hand, relations with global powers, again in a logic of economic policy, may be more competitive than collaborative.

The eco-nationalist frame (Aronczyk 2023) primarily poses the energy issue as a national security problem and thus defines transition as a potential obstacle or a strategic option to be exploited if and when it supports national interests. Rather than equity or market growth, it sets itself the primary and morally legitimising goal of protecting the sovereignty and self-determination of the nation. Hence it may breed distrust in private – and especially multinational – energy companies, EU and international organisations and any actor that threatens local resources or to take control of them away from the native population (Okpadah 2022). The transition will thus be pragmatically (or opportunistically) shaped around locally available resources over which sovereignty is claimed (de-Shalit 2006). Political authorities recognised as the legitimate expression of the nation/people are the designated agents of transformation.

As energy policy and energy transition have gained relevance in the debate on climate change over recent years, political parties have been under pressure to adopt them as a new political issue. We expect ideological orientation to be a central factor among the several that may influence how parties frame issues: strategic or ideological considerations, internal organisational equilibria or external influences. As Marks et al. (2002, 585) noted with reference to EU integration, political parties' pre-existing agendas influence their reaction to new challenges and induce them to incorporate and interpret new issues on the basis of their respective ideological orientations. The literature also confirms that the left/right divide influences the degree of party concern with climate change and with environmental transition policies (Birch 2020; Huber et al. 2021; Berker and Pollex 2021; Carter et al. 2018). Right-wing parties, and especially the populist right ones, generally minimise or even deny climate change, leading to very limited support for energy transition policies. This is also often the result of Eurosceptic attitudes that induce a "reluctance to 'sacrifice' national sovereignty for the benefit of international agreements and cross-country collaboration" (Gottenhuber and Mulholland 2019, 12). Sovereigntist and securitarian orientations help explain the adoption of more ambivalent stances by some of these parties (Huber et al. 2021; Lockwood 2018) in which climate scepticism is not necessarily accompanied by an outright rejection of renewable energy.

The left is generally more concerned with climate change and is particularly sensitive to the alarming messages of the scientific community (Neumayer 2004). It therefore generally proposes radical goals that become all the more ambitious with the populist left (Huber et al. 2021), which stresses the need for mitigation policies and point to specific elites as the culprits of climate change. They often criticise the neoliberal and market-oriented logic of the mainstream discourse on environmental transition as shown in its 'techno-managerial framing of the process' (Bouzarovski 2022, 1004) and its concern with the interests of large corporations rather than social issues and energy democracy (Riexinger et al. 2021). Proposed solutions include the strengthening of international cooperation, citizen participation (Lockwood 2018; Huber et al. 2021) and redistributive policies that compensate social groups who are the most vulnerable in transition processes.

Our first set of hypotheses is therefore that:

H1) a direct relationship exists between parties' ideological positioning and the frame adopted;

H1a) right-wing parties will tend to adopt the eco-nationalist frame;

H1b) centre parties will tend to adopt the eco-modernist frame;

H1c) left-wing parties will tend to adopt the sustainability frame.

What is more, the framing activity of parties is not immutable. Ample literature shows that external shocks can act as stimuli or focusing events (Kingdon 2003) which may alter dominant narratives, encourage discursive turning points and even act as catalysts for policy change. Focusing events draw attention to pre-existing but weakly politicised problems, opening windows of opportunity for political actors to advocate one or more explanations of the problem, its causes and solutions (Boin et al. 2009). However, the perceived complexity of the event often prevents the establishment of a dominant discourse (Hurka and Nebel 2013) to the point of generating competition between frames and counter-frames supported by opposing discursive coalitions (Hajer 1993).

With reference to climate and energy issues, a series of transformations and contextual factors have recently increased their centrality in the public debate: environmentalist mobilisations have multiplied nationally and internationally, sudden catastrophic climate events have occurred more frequently and the pandemic has fostered aspirations towards sustainable energy models, while there has also been a self-protective reaction of the fossil fuel industry and state support for it in a more general attempt at economic recovery (Zakeri et al. 2022). The Russian-Ukraine war is the latest shock to open a new phase of destabilisation, strengthening and expanding the polycrisis (Zeitlin et al. 2019). European democracies that were traditionally dependent on Russian gas supplies have been deeply affected (von Hoymer et al. 2021) and the EU approved the RePowerEU initiative in March 2022 to rapidly 'eliminate' its dependency on Russian fossil fuels (Prontera 2023). The various components of this initiative, as well as the specific measures of member states, are inconsistent when it comes to the previously established ambitious energy and climate goals because, while some of them aim to accelerate energy transition, others go in the opposite direction, i.e., they look for alternative fossil fuel suppliers and allocate funds to additional import infrastructure such as liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals (Siddi 2023).

This incoherence demonstrates how the energy crisis triggered by the conflict constitutes a policy puzzle, given the need to balance the conflicting exigencies of the 'energy trilemma' (Natili and Visconti 2023; Wiertz et al. 2023). Acceleration of the transition and the difficulties of the rapid realisation of large-scale renewable energy infrastructures conflict with an immediate reduction in energy costs, so affecting the desirability of the transition in the eyes of at least part of the public (Steffen and Patt 2022; Dennison 2022). Based on these premises, we formulate a second hypothesis:

H2) the war and the energy crisis have increased the politicisation of energy issues among conflicting discursive coalitions, leading to a consolidation of the ideological anchorage and alignment of the parties' frames.

4. Case selection

There is still limited understanding of the conceptualisation of the energy transition in Italian political debate. Until a few years ago, the social construction of sustainable energy by policy makers and stakeholders in Italy was orientated to preclude public engagement (Brondi et al. 2015). Since then, however, much has changed, both domestically and internationally and, with reference to the Italian case, scholars have analysed transition processes at the local level (Magnani and Carrosio 2021), the social implications of transition-related change and aspects of policy design and capacity (Barroco Fontes-Cunha et al. 2021; Magnani and Carrosio 2021; Prontera 2021). However, the dynamics of political competition and power logics involved in the energy transition process, as well as in the forms of discursive legitimation of its advances or, on the contrary, its interruptions, still appear understudied.

Two further factors make analysis of the Italian case particularly relevant. First, just like other southern European democracies, the Italian political system has never included a significant Green party such as those that emerged as single-issue parties in northern European democracies in the 1980s and challenged other parties to adopt environmental and energy issues. This allows for analysis of the role of the left/right ideological variable by minimising the impact of contagion from single-issue parties (Marks et al. 2008), and may allow considerations to be extended to similar cases which are equally understudied. Secondly, Italy is among those industrialised democracies that have been most affected by the conflict in Ukraine, due to its longstanding dependence on Russian energy supplies. Fast diversification strategies have been a short-term buffer, but have also opened a debate on long-term changes of the energy system (Prontera 2023). This is expected to make the analysis of the possible impact of the international crisis on political debate particularly visible.

The empirical investigation of party framing of the energy transition is performed through the analysis of party manifestos for the national elections of 2018 and 2022 and the EU election of 2019. The decision to analyse electoral manifestos poses some analytical issues as they present less articulate communicative and discursive registers than other sources, such as parliamentary or public speeches, and the audience is more limited. While these limitations are acknowledged, as previous studies show (Kiratli 2016; Chaney 2014), the analysis of frames through manifestos has some advantages stemming, on the one hand, from the nature of the text as a basis for the strategic construction of identities and underlying values (a significant theme for framing studies) and, secondly, the possibility to investigate solutions and policy proposals – a fundamental element of any frame.

The chosen time-frame allows for analysis of the impact of the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. The parties selected for analysis include all those parties that won representation in both national elections of 2018 and 2022, and cover the full left-right ideological spectrum (Fig. 1).

Towards the left end lies Sinistra Italiana (SI), a democratic socialist party established in 2017 after various mergers and divisions among the radical left (Chiocchetti 2023). In 2018, it ran in a coalition called LEU (Liberi e Uguali) with other smaller groups whereas it was part of a new coalition called La Sinistra in the 2019 EU election and it formed a two-party alliance with the small Green Party in 2022. The main

party on the centre-left is the Partito Democratico (PD), established in 2007 from the merger of DS – Democratici di Sinistra and DL – La Margherita, which brought together parts of the post-communist and Catholic traditions into a new political project targeted at the 'reformist' electorate (Bobba and Seddone 2016, 68). Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S), a hybrid populist, anti-establishment protest party which came to the fore nationally in 2013, is located at the centre in the latest available data from Chapel Hill (Fig. 1), but has since developed a clearer, more leftist ideology (Russo and Valbruzzi 2022, 184); more consistently at the centre of the spectrum across elections is +Europa, a small liberal, pro-EU formation with its origins in the Radical party. On the right lie Forza Italia (FI), the liberal-conservative 'personal party' (Calise 2010) founded by Berlusconi in 1994, Lega per Salvini Premier, a radical right-wing populist party heir to the regionalist Lega Nord, and Fratelli d'Italia (FdI) a radical right-wing party with populist elements (Donà 2022) that has its origins in the post-fascist MSI.

Figure 1 - Left/Right ideological positioning of parties included in the study
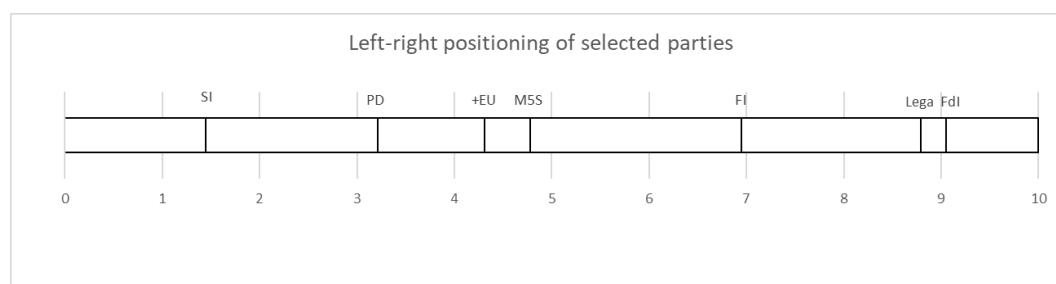
Source: Chapel Hill Expert survey 2019.

5. Research method

The party manifestos for each selected party at each of the three elections were collected. Every party must legally file an official manifesto, but whenever this was different from the one used for electoral communication, the latter was used in our study. A full list of the documents used and the direct web links to them is included in the Appendix (see Table A).

The initial phase of the empirical analysis consisted in identifying every section which contained references to energy, energy transition, and environmental transition. While only 3 out of 7 parties had a specific section on energy in 2018 and none did in the EU elections of 2019, 5 out of 7 did in 2022. Other parties included the energy issue in sections on the environment (SI, M5S, FdI) or on economic development, competitiveness and employment (PD and FI).

In a second phase, all the references to the energy transition were coded according to the frames described in section 3. The coding was done through the identification of 'units of meaning' consisting in segments of texts (sentences, parts of sentences, or small groups of sentences) that conveyed an idea or concept about energy transition (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2023, 46; Oswald, Fromm and Broda 2021). The resulting 495 units were classified as referring univocally to one of the categories of the five components of the various frames described in Table 1:
- dominant dimension of the energy issue: text units are included which directly connect energy policy with 1) environmental issues (e.g. climate change,

environmental catastrophes, the preservation of the planet or the landscape), 2) economic issues (e.g. economic development), 3) national security (e.g. energy independence, international conflict);

- problem definition: text units are included which explicitly refer to energy transition and justify its pursuit either 1) as a necessity (e.g. to stop environmental disasters), 2) as an opportunity (e.g. for employment or growth) or 3) as a strategic option (e.g. to be pursued only insofar as it protects national or local firms);

- moral evaluation: text units are included which express the ultimate values that energy transition should pursue and identify them as 1) equity, justice and democracy, 2) market competition and growth, or 3) national autonomy and sovereignty;

- content of the transition: text units are included which refer to the pace of energy transition and the energy mix it requires, varying from 1) rapid decarbonisation through renewables (e.g. excluding all 'bridge' solutions, to 2) a pragmatic mix (e.g. including nuclear and gas), or 3) capitalising on national resources (e.g. launching new mining and drilling programmes);

- actors and solutions: text units are included in which actors are identified that ought to decide on the energy transition (e.g. the international community, the EU, the sovereign state) with different levels of competition/collaboration; references to policy tools ranging from community to market to authority are also included in this component.

The rules for segmentation and classification were defined in advance of coding, and two of the authors proceeded collectively to code a number of texts until they agreed on a common standard for applying the rules. They then continued individually and compared and discussed outputs at regular intervals (Schreier 2012). Finally, they discussed results with the third author. Having adopted a consensual approach to coding, we did not calculate an intercoder agreement coefficient (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2023, 201). In a last phase, the three authors collectively proceeded to the organic analysis of emerging frames, which is required in order to understand the intrinsic complexity and consistency of frames (Entman 1993).
In the following paragraphs, a summary presentation of the results of the coding is given in tables, and the overall emerging frames are discussed. In order to highlight similarities and differences within our sample, we proceed in two steps of comparative analysis: we first compare how parties across the political spectrum have framed energy transition in the problem-setting dimensions (dominant dimension of energy policy, problem definition and moral evaluation). We then compare how they framed it in the problem-solving dimensions (content of transition, actors and solutions).

6. The energy transition in party manifestos: 2018-2019

The framing of energy transition in the manifestos of Italian parties for the elections of 2018 and 2019 are aligned along the three frames – sustainability, eco-modernist and eco-nationalist – reflecting each party's positioning from left to right. Specifically, SI is the only party that adopts a consistent 'sustainability frame' which systematically covers all the

dimensions. The centre-left PD, centrist +Europa and centre-right FI all employ an eco-modernist frame. The eco-nationalist frame is adopted by right-wing parties, Lega and Fdi, but lacks full articulation and coherence. M5S, consistently with its hybrid-populist positioning of the time, does not articulate the issue fully and adopts elements of both the eco-modernist and sustainability frames.

As can be seen in Table 2, with reference to the problem-setting components of the frame, SI mostly stresses the environmental dimension, proposing a 'big green plan' aimed at 'total decarbonisation' (SI 2018, 6) and based on full coordination – which was considered non-existent at the time – between the national energy strategy (SEN) and climate strategy. This is intended to guarantee an equitable distribution of costs and benefits, according to an energy democracy model (see below).

The economic dimension prevails instead for PD, +Europa and FI, although environmental concerns are also mentioned. In the PD 2018 programme, the topic of environmental and energy transition is discussed in two sections: one devoted to labour policy and the green economy and the other to European cooperation. In the former, environmental protection is related to 'beauty and quality' (PD 2018, 10), which are identified as assets of the Italian economy. Climate change is mentioned, but is an ancillary factor to economic necessity. In this sense, energy transition is an opportunity for economic stimulus, leading to the equation 'Energy: sustainability equals competitiveness' (PD 2018, 11).

In +Europa's manifestos the fight against climate change is supported, but is subordinate to the economic dimension and the transition is expected to ensure 'economic efficiency, energy independence, security of supply', and lastly 'environmental protection' (+Europa 2018, 26).

FI does not discuss energy extensively. It ties energy policy to the economic dimension by stating the goal of greater efficiency of networks and production in order to ensure 'security of supply' (FI 2018, 11). Consistently with its centre-right positioning, it describes the energy transition as an economic issue functional to national security and, only subordinately, an environmental issue 'because economic development, industrial competitiveness and climate policies are complementary' (FI 2019, 18).

Table 2. Classification of text units related to problem-setting dimensions of the frames

	2018 Problem-setting			2019 Problem-setting		
	Sustainability	Eco-modernist	Eco-nationalist	Sustainability	Eco-modernist	Eco-nationalist
SI	5	2	0	6	0	0
PD	6	15	0	1	1	0
+EU	3	6	1	2	3	0
M5S	0	2	0	0	0	0
FI	0	2	1	0	3	0
Lega	5	1	5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
FDI	0	0	1	1	0	1

Source: electoral manifestos of selected parties, own analysis.

M5S, then a hybrid populist party, hardly articulates any discourse in its manifesto and positions itself between the sustainability and the eco-modernist frames.

Finally, the right-wing parties emphasise the national security dimension, although they vary widely in the extent to which they discuss the energy issue: Lega is an exception among Italian right-wing parties since the energy issue is given much more relevance in its manifestos, while for FdI, the energy issue is marginal. In the Lega 2018 manifesto, the need to strengthen action against climate change is accompanied by the promotion of 'an entirely Made in Italy supply chain' of renewables to stop incentives flowing 'into the pockets of Chinese companies' (Lega 2018, 47). For FdI environmental concerns are subordinate to national pride: 'one cannot be a patriot without also being a defender of nature and the environment. Because homeland, fatherland, and environment are very closely related words and we strongly claim this identity of ours' (FDI 2019, 11).

Turning to the content, actors and solutions of the transition (Table 3), the manifestos of Lega and FdI lack full articulation and coherence. The eco-nationalist references to energy autonomy and to international competition found in the problem-setting dimensions of the frame are not consistently matched by fully developed proposals in the problem-solving dimensions.

Table 3. Classification of text units related to problem-solving dimensions of the frames

	2018 Problem-solving			2019 Problem-solving		
	Sustainability	Eco-modernist	Eco-nationalist	Sustainability	Eco-modernist	Eco-nationalist
SI	7	0	0	6	0	0
PD	4	7	0	1	3	0
+EU	2	8	0	1	9	0
M5S	2	0	0	1	1	0
FI	0	2	0	0	2	0
Lega	3	6	7	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
FDI	0	0	0	0	0	1

Source: electoral manifestos of selected parties, own analysis.

More specifically, Lega presents generic, but rhetorically ambitious targets (such as the end of internal combustion engines by 2030). To protect national sovereignty in energy production and renewables, it proposes a mix of market and public instruments, such as 'national planning' to improve energy efficiency and 'the establishment of a national energy transition fund to support concrete changes through reward mechanisms and incentives' (Lega 2018, 37). Lega proposes tax relief and energy production through waste disposal processes (waste-to-energy and biofuel production) for the reduction of energy costs.

FdI's proposals are even more vague: they combine generic support for renewables with the goal of taking Italy as close as possible to energy autonomy, calling for an environmentally-committed Europe through a generic 'promotion of clean and renewable energy' (FDI 2019, 11) without ever mentioning the fight against climate change.

FI, +Europa and PD are again consistent with the eco-modernist frame, but differ in the level of articulation of their proposals.

In the case of FI, the content of the transition clearly conveys a pragmatic approach, expressed in acknowledging the centrality of the fight against climate change in EU policy but 'without useless extremism' and 'by coupling development and the preservation of the planet' (FI 2019, 16). Very few, rather general solutions are proposed, including support for renewables and innovation and the need to coordinate with other southern European countries.

+Europa advocates a need for a 'market transition in the energy sector', as pollution and poverty are closely linked, and the solution for both problems is seen as 'development, growth and technological innovation' (+Europa 2018, 13). The whole transition discourse in the manifesto revolves around increasing the efficiency of market instruments to make the economy more sustainable and achieve ambitious decarbonisation targets. The energy mix and targets are in line with EU policy: the total phasing-out of coal by 2025 and zero net emissions by 2050, to be achieved through a mix of renewables and gas (+Europa 2019, 5). To achieve these goals, +Europa proposes 'liberalisation of the internal energy market and strengthening of the trans-European network' (+Europa 2019, 10).

Finally, PD claims merit for the drafting, in the 2013-2018 legislature, of the SEN (national energy strategy), which aims to have 55% of electricity produced from renewable sources by 2030 and achieve overall decarbonisation by 2050 (PD 2018, 11). Gas, however, is mentioned as a key resource in the transition phase, hence the need to improve the interconnection infrastructure, guaranteeing security of supply (PD 2018, 11). In the European election programme, the link between economic recovery and energy transition appears further strengthened and is accompanied by a proposal for an extraordinary investment plan (EUR 290 billion) through the issuing of European debt (Eurobonds) to achieve 'ambitious' targets and the decoupling of green investment from national deficit limits set in Brussels (PD 2019, 7). As early as 2018, energy was mentioned as the first sector for completion of the internal European market (PD 2018, 13). The role of market instruments is emphasised among the proposed solutions to ease the energy transition, and the party proposes more incisive liberalisation of the national and European energy market (PD 2018, 11).

M5S, consistently with its vague and ambiguous framing of the problem-setting dimensions, proposes a few ambitious and generic programmatic points or short slogans: energy production based exclusively on renewables and 'exit from oil by 2050', and the positive impact of investment in renewables on the economy and employment (M5S 2018, 3).

A much more articulated development of problem-solving dimension is offered by SI, which holds true to the sustainability frame. The party outlines a project of 'energy democracy' (SI 2018, 6) that guarantees equity through the convergence of state economic intervention and the protagonism of communities and citizens as producers and distributors of energy to reduce the power of 'oligopolists' (SI 2018, 6). The energy goals are also ambitious at the European level and the elections are seen as an opportunity to build a common space receptive to the demands of social and environmentalist movements to build a Europe based on 'social, environmental and fiscal justice' (SI 2019, no page numbers). With a view to strengthening democratic decision-making processes, an incisive role of the EU Parliament is also advocated in

facilitating 'public intervention in the economy, in order to steer it towards conversion' (SI 2019).

7. The energy transition in party manifestos: 2018-2019

The 2022 election manifestos (Table 4) indicate an overall increase in the relevance given to the energy issue. Election manifestos present significant changes in content too, which partially reflect the tactical choices of individual parties, but also a shift in overall discursive strategies. Most significantly, the eco-nationalist frame develops to a level of articulation that parallels the other two: references are made by both Lega and FdI to all the relevant dimensions of the frame: national security, opportunities for national advancement, defence and use of national resources, and the safeguarding of national sovereignty in a context of international competition.

There is also significant change on the left, where SI is joined by M5S and PD, which, however, maintains some elements of its former eco-modernist frame. The eco-modernist frame is still adopted by +Europa and FI; the latter, however, makes some concessions to the eco-nationalist frame as far as the energy mix is concerned.

More specifically, and again comparing first the problem-setting dimensions of the framing, SI, in coalition with the Greens, further stresses the emergency posed by climate change and the need for swift solutions (SI 2022 - no page numbers). The Ukrainian crisis is indicated as a further element demanding rapid decarbonisation. As in the past, the moral evaluation at the base of this conception is the achievement of energy democracy, that is, the affordable and stable access to energy for all citizens without financial speculation and negative environmental consequences.

The party that comes closest to SI is M5S which, as was mentioned earlier, has evolved over the years to a more leftist identity, following the governing coalition with PD in 2020-2021, the new leadership under Giuseppe Conte and the departure of some of the more right-wing members. This ideological change is reflected also in its full adherence to the sustainability frame: energy policy is defined as an environmental priority (M5s 2022, 208) and the Ukraine crisis and its effects on prices is described as a stimulus to pursue rapid decarbonization at the European level (M5S 2022, 204).

With reference to the problem-setting dimensions of the frame, PD moves away from the eco-modernist frame towards the sustainability frame. This partial shift is in line with a more general strategy by the party leadership to radicalise conflict with the right wing, proposing a dichotomy between its 'determination to make the fight against climate change a great engine for the relaunching of the country' and the short-sightedness of the right that 'continues to choose the black of fossil fuels and thus condemn us to disaster' (PD 2022, 5). The justification for the energy transition is expressed in all three aspects of the trilemma, but greater attention to the environmental drive is now discernible: environmental disasters are repeatedly mentioned and the transition is no longer just an economic opportunity but a necessity, and must take social sustainability into account especially in light of the increase in energy prices following the war in Ukraine (PD 2022, 6).

In the centre, +Europa emphasises the economic dimension by linking the transition to the achievement of a 'fair and efficient' society (+Europa 2022, 12).

Within the centre-right coalition, FI grants the least space to the energy issue and confirms the adoption of the economic frame, although with increased emphasis on security aspects. National security is rather the characterising feature of the manifestos of Lega and FdI.

Table 4. Classification of text units related to problem-solving dimensions of the frames

	2022 Problem-setting			2022 Problem-solving		
	Sustainability	Eco-modernist	Eco-nationalist	Sustainability	Eco-modernist	Eco-nationalist
SI	10	2	0	32	1	1
PD	16	10	1	10	7	0
+EU	1	2	0	2	18	1
M5S	19	4	2	47	0	0
FI	1	0	1	3	7	4
Lega	4	5	54	5	27	32
FDI	1	1	3	2	3	10

Source: electoral manifestos of selected parties, own analysis.

The former claims that energy policies must guarantee 'the security of the energy system' and the supply of energy 'in necessary quantities and accessible to households and businesses in a continuous and stable manner' (Lega 2022, 45). Moreover, interweaving national and territorial dimensions which are relevant to the party's identity, it claims that energy policies must 'return value to the inhabitants of the territories' (Lega 2022, 43). While not denying the need to combat climate change, it states that a transition should not be pursued 'with the environmentalist ideologism' of EU policies, 'but gradually, with a pragmatic approach' to ensure its economic and social sustainability, avoiding dependence on producers of renewables technology external to Italy and Europe (Lega 2022, 45).

FdI presents a more articulated manifesto than in the past, strengthening its adhesion to the eco-nationalist frame. FdI, like Lega, believes that the impact of the energy transition as envisaged by the EU must be further investigated through a commission to design a sustainable strategy for 'our production system' and to 'prevent possible crises' (FdI 2022, 26-27). The symbolic adherence to the eco-nationalist frame is reinforced by references to relevant figures in Italian history: 'the homeland of Alessandro Volta, of Enrico Mattei and of innovation, must once again play a leading role in the energy field, promoting environmental sustainability and simultaneously lowering energy costs for companies, local governments and households' (FdI 2022, 26).

Turning to the problem-solving dimensions of the framing, the full internal consistency of the frames elaborated by the more radical parties – Lega and FdI on the right, SI on the left – is evident.

Lega advocates the development of a national supply chain for the production of renewable energy and the extraction of raw materials (Lega 2022, 52). A mix of state and market instruments is envisaged: on the one hand, entrusting the exploration for and extraction of critical minerals to state-owned companies (Lega 2022, 61) while, on the other, increasing market competition through further liberalisation (Lega 2022, 48). As a consequence of the war, the hasty, massive development of renewables and the EU-

imposed ban on endothermic engines in 2035 are stigmatised as they would facilitate Italian and European dependence on China. Therefore, the emphasising of the eco-nationalist frame leads to a radical change of position on electric cars compared to previous manifestos (Lega 2022, 44). The party indicates nuclear power as the long-term solution to combine environmental goals and national sovereignty (Lega 2022, 44).

According to FdI, energy policies must pursue 'maximum diversification of foreign supply sources' (FDI 2022, 27) to ensure greater national energy security. In addition, the construction of an 'Italian and European production chain for renewables, grids and storage' must be promoted (FDI 2022, 27). The proposed energy mix includes renewables, the exploitation of Italian fossil resources and nuclear power. Very few, rather general solutions are formulated but, in order to ensure greater independence from Russia, the party expresses consensus for the strengthening of RepowerEU (FDI 2022, 27).

On the opposite side of the political spectrum, SI claims that Italy must 'triple' its efforts to reduce GHG emissions and reach carbon-neutrality by 2045 (SI 2022, no page numbers). The realization of energy democracy requires convergence between top-down policy and bottom-up prosumerism and a resilient system free from fossils. A temporary price-cap on gas is proposed, but no investment in oil or gas extraction or nuclear plants is envisaged. European and international cooperation is promoted through partnership in the 'Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance'.

Internal coherence also characterises the frames of M5S and +Europa. For M5S, the Ukrainian crisis contributed to the development of a discourse on energy fully consistent with the redefinition of its ideological profile and of its competitive strategy. Its 2022 manifesto indeed includes proposals similar to those of SI and the Greens: the realisation of the transition through renewables, excluding both gas and nuclear power as bridging solutions, decentralised energy production by communities coupled with expansive state support for renewables and a review of environmentally harmful subsidies (M5S 2022, 83-87), and a European Green Deal to promote decarbonisation, as well as an Energy Recovery Fund based on EU-bond (M5S 2022, 204).

For +Europa, the interpretation of energy policy within a classic neoliberal economic approach is further legitimised: according to their manifesto, indeed, 'a fair and efficient transition must be achieved by making the market work better' (+Europa 2022, 12). Therefore, the 'variety of instruments' needed constantly refers to market efficiency, whether to incentivise the use of renewables or to fight energy poverty. The time targets for the transition are in line with European proposals, and the party's energy mix includes nuclear power (+Europa 2022, 13). The European dimension is particularly relevant: proposals include greater integration of the European grid, the adoption of a European cap on gas prices and the strengthening of the energy partnership with Africa to prevent the growing influence of China and Russia (+Europa 2022, 23).

Some inconsistencies are found in the frames adopted by PD and FI.

The former, while adhering to the sustainability frame in the problem-setting dimensions analysed above, is more cautious with reference to the problem-solving dimensions, and especially concerning the timing of the transition which – following a more centrist economic outlook – is anchored to a pragmatic energy mix. A partial shift towards the sustainability frame is signalled by the exclusion of slowing down the

transition and by the proposal of a national plan for energy efficiency and decentralised production through renewables and energy communities. Like SI and M5S, PD refuses nuclear power, but, unlike the two other parties, it promotes LNG terminals and proposes an 'anti-NIMBY fund' (PD 2022, 14) to counter local opposition. The EU's role is seen as central and positive for the transition, but a reform of treaties is envisaged to reduce veto power by individual member states (PD 2022, 11).

FI on the other hand, faced with the energy crisis after the invasion of Ukraine, maintains the eco-modernist frame but emphasises national security significantly more than in the past. Such positioning reflects the attempt to balance its liberal ideological stand with the competitive pressure coming from its allies on the right. It emphasises that environmental protection is exclusively achieved through 'support for research and innovation' (FI 2022, 24). Coherently, the proposed energy mix is varied and includes 'clean' nuclear power, biofuels, renewables and the doubling of domestic gas production to compensate for reduced imports from Russia. FI advocates market instruments and simplified bureaucracy for the implementation of renewables and, unlike the other right-wing parties, proposes a windfall tax on energy companies.

8. Concluding remarks

Our analysis demonstrates that the left-right divide was decisive in determining the frame adopted by political parties and that each of the frames we have identified is consistently associated with a specific segment of the political spectrum. Since the energy issue gained salience in 2022 and new problems arose, all parties have been forced to articulate a full, consistent discourse that once again fits the expected frames.

Energy transition is today a relevant issue in the Italian party debate. In recent years and, in particular, since the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war, it has become the object of a discursive clash, assuming increasing space in parties' proposals. The analysis shows that there is no single hegemonic frame, but that the conflicting aspects of the energy trilemma underpin competing frames centred on environmental, economic or security priorities. This diachronic comparison shows that the energy issue has been progressively integrated within proposals reflecting each party's position and ideological profile (H1). This issue is not external to the classic left-right conflict, but touches upon the value structure of society (the environment, the economy, security), the distribution of costs and benefits between social groups, and the role of the state and EU and international institutions.

No party, even on the far right, opposes energy transition as such, but each defines its urgency and desirability by placing it within a broader political project inspired by different principles. The ideological anchoring of the frames proposed by the parties, already discernible in the first two elections, was consolidated in 2022, when the external shock of the war increased the complexity of the problem, forcing parties to further articulate and define their frames, which, in turn, led to ever greater coherence between the various internal dimensions. The energy crisis thus constitutes an impulse to politicisation by encouraging the greater ideological aggregation of conflicting discursive coalitions (H2).

The analysis presented here contributes to the increasing of knowledge about a case in which the discursive dynamics and symbolic representation of energy issues have

hardly been looked at. The proposed reflections may provide the basis for future comparisons with other southern European democracies with similar political and energy policy characteristics.

Acknowledgements

References

Alford, J., & Head, B. W. (2017). Wicked and less wicked problems: a typology and a contingency framework. *Policy and Society*, 36(3), 397-413.

Aronczyk, M. (2023). Branding the nation in the era of climate crisis: Eco-nationalism and the promotion of green national sovereignty. *Nations and Nationalism*, 29(1).

Barroco Fontes Cunha, F., et al. (2021). Transitioning to a low carbon society through energy communities: Lessons learned from Brazil and Italy. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 74, 101994.

Berker, L. E., & Pollex, J. (2021). Friend or foe?—comparing party reactions to Fridays for Future in a party system polarised between AfD and Green Party. *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*, 15(2), 1-19.

Birch, S. (2020). Political polarization and environmental attitudes: a cross-national analysis. *Environmental Politics*, 29(4), 697-718.

Bobba, G., & Seddone, A. (2016). Partito personale o personalizzato? L'evoluzione del Partito Democratico: 2007-2015. *Ragion pratica*, 1, 57-84.

Boin, A., 't Hart, P., & McConnell, A. (2009). Crisis exploitation: political and policy impacts of framing contests. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16(1), 81-106.

Bouzarovski, S. (2022). Just Transitions: A Political Ecology Critique. *Antipode*, 54(4), 1003-1020.

Brondi, S., Sarrica, M., Caramis, A., Piccolo, C., & Mazzara, B. M. (2015). Italian parliamentary debates on energy sustainability: How argumentative 'short-circuits' affect public engagement. *Public Understanding of Science*, 24(6), 737-753.

Buschmann, P., & Oels, A. (2019). The overlooked role of discourse in breaking carbon lock-in: The case of the German energy transition. *WIREs Climate Change*, 10(3), e574.

Buzogány, A., & Mohamad-Klotzbach, C. (2022). Environmental populism. In M. Oswald (Ed.), *The Palgrave handbook of populism* (pp. 321-340). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Calise, M. (2010). *Il partito personale*. Laterza, Roma-Bari.

Carmichael, J. T., & Brulle, R. J. (2017). Elite cues, media coverage, and public concern: an integrated path analysis of public opinion on climate change, 2001–2013. *Environmental Politics*, 26(2), 232-252.

Carter, N., Ladrech, R., Little, C., & Tsagkroni, V. (2018). Political parties and climate policy: A new approach to measuring parties' climate policy preferences. *Party Politics*, 24(6), 731-742.

Chaney, P. (2014). Mixed-methods analysis of political parties' manifesto discourse on rail transport policy: Westminster, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish elections 1945–2011. *Transport Policy*, 35, 275-285.

Chiocchetti, P. (2019). 'Make way for the people!'. Left-wing populism in the rhetoric of Jean-Luc Mélenchon's 2012 and 2017 presidential campaigns. In G. Charalambous & G. Ioannou (Eds.), *Left radicalism and populism in Europe* (pp. 106-128). Routledge, London.

de-Shalit, A. (2006). Nationalism. In A. Dobson & R. Eckersley (Eds.), *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge* (pp. 73-90). Cambridge University Press.

Donà, A. (2022). The rise of the Radical Right in Italy: the case of Fratelli d'Italia. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 27(5), 775-794.

Dennison, S. (2022). Green Peace: How Europe's Climate Policy Can Survive the War in Ukraine. European Council on Foreign Relations, Policy Brief.

Egan, P. J., & Mullin, M. (2017). Climate change: US public opinion. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20, 209-227.

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51-58.

Gottenhuber, S., & Mulholland, E. (2019). Addressing European Populism from a Sustainability Policy Perspective. ESDN Quarterly Report, 53.

Hajer, M. (1993). Discourse Coalitions and the Institutionalization of Practice. In F. Fischer & J. Forester (Eds.), *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning* (pp. 43-76). Duke University Press, Durham.

Huber, R. A., Maltby, T., Szulecki, K., & Ćetković, S. (2021). Is populism a challenge to European energy and climate policy? Empirical evidence across varieties of populism. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28(7), 998-1017.

Hurka, S., & Nebel, K. (2013). Framing and policy change after shooting rampages: a comparative analysis of discourse networks. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20(3), 390-406.

Imperatore, P., & Leonardi, E. (2023). *L'era della giustizia climatica*. Orthotes, Napoli.

Jensen, C. B., & Spoon, J.-J. (2011). Testing the 'Party Matters' Thesis: Explaining Progress Towards Kyoto Protocol Targets. *Political Studies*, 59(1), 99-115.

Khan, I., Hou, F., Irfan, M., Zakari, A., & Le, H. P. (2021). Does energy trilemma a driver of economic growth? The roles of energy use, population growth, and financial development. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 146, 111157.

Kingdon, J. W. (2003). *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* (2nd ed.). Longman, New York.

Kiratli, O. S. (2016). Political discourses on Europe and European integration in national election manifestos and party programmes. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 29(2), 636-659.

Kuckartz, U., & Rädiker, S. (2023). *Qualitative content analysis: methods, practice and software*. Sage, London.

Lockwood, M. (2018). Right-wing populism and the climate change agenda: exploring the linkages. *Environmental Politics*, 27(4), 712-732.

Magnani, N. (2012). The Green Energy Transition. Sustainable Development or Ecological Modernization? *Sociologica*, 2, 1-24.

Magnani, N., & Carrosio, G. (2021). *Understanding the Energy Transition: Civil society, territory and inequality in Italy*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Marks, G., Wilson, C. J., & Ray, L. (2002). National Political Parties and European Integration. *American Journal of Political Science*, 46(3), 585-594.

McGowan, F. (1996). Energy Policy in the EU - Diversity or Convergence? In F. McGowan (Ed.), *European Energy Policies in a Changing Environment* (pp. 1-20). Physica-Verlag HD, Heidelberg.

Natili, M., & Visconti, F. (2023). A different logic of polity building? The Russian invasion of Ukraine and EU citizens' demand for social security. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 30(8), 1699-1713.

Neumayer, E. (2004). The environment, left-wing political orientation and ecological economics. *Ecological Economics*, 51(3), 167-175.

Okpadah, S. O. (2022). Ethnonationalism and Econationalism in the Age of Carbon Democracy. In D. Biswas, P. Eliopoulos, & J. C. Ryan (Eds.), *Global Perspectives on Nationalism: Political and Literary Discourses* (pp. 295-308). Routledge.

Oswald, M. T., Fromm, M., & Broda, E. (2021). Strategic clustering in right-wing-populism? 'Green policies' in Germany and France. *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*, 15(2), 185-205.

Prontera, A. (2018). The new politics of energy security and the rise of the catalytic state in southern Europe. *Journal of Public Policy*, 38(4), 511-551.

Prontera, A. (2021). The dismantling of renewable energy policy in Italy. *Environmental Politics*, 30(7), 1196-1216.

Prontera, A. (2023). Winter is coming: Russian gas, Italy and the post-war European politics of energy security. *West European Politics*, 46(1), 1-26.

Prontera, A., & Quitzow, R. (2022). The EU as catalytic state? Rethinking European climate and energy governance. *New Political Economy*, 27(3), 517-531.

Riexinger, B., Becker, L., Dahme, K., & Kaindl, C. (2021). *A Left Green New Deal: An Internationalist Blueprint*. NYU Press.

Russo, L., & Valbruzzi, M. (2022). The impact of the pandemic on the Italian party system. The Draghi government and the 'new' polarisation. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 14(2), 172–190.

Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. Sage, London.

Schulze, K. (2014). Do parties matter for international environmental cooperation? An analysis of environmental treaty participation by advanced industrialised democracies. *Environmental Politics*, 23(1), 115-139.

Siddi, M. (2023). Europe's Energy Dilemma: War and the Green Transition. *Current History*, 122(841), 83-88.

Singh Garha, N., Garcia Mira, R., & González-Laxe, F. (2022). Energy Transition Narratives in Spain: A Case Study of As Pontes. *Sustainability*, 14(18), 11177.

Sovacool, B. K. (Ed.). (2011). *The Routledge Handbook of Energy Security*. Routledge, Oxon/New York.

Steffen, B., & Patt, A. (2022). A historical turning point? Early evidence on how the Russia-Ukraine war changes public support for clean energy policies. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 91, 102758.

Thonig, R., Del Río, P., Kiefer, C., Lázaro Touza, L., Escribano, G., Lechón, Y., Späth, L., Wolf, I., & Lilliestam, J. (2021). Does ideology influence the ambition level of climate and renewable energy policy? Insights from four European countries. *Energy Sources Part B: Economics, Planning, and Policy*, 16(1), 4-22.

Unruh, G. C. (2000). Understanding carbon lock-in. *Energy Policy*, 28(12), 817-830.

van Hulst, M., & Yanow, D. (2016). From Policy "Frames" to "Framing": Theorizing a More Dynamic, Political Approach. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 46(1), 92-112.

von Hoymer, I., Oberthür, S., & Jordan, A. J. (2021). EU climate and energy governance in times of crisis: towards a new agenda. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28(7), 959-979.

Wiertz, T., Kuhn, L., & Mattissek, A. (2023). A turn to geopolitics: Shifts in the German energy transition discourse in light of Russia's war against Ukraine. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 98.

Wright, J., & Kurian, P. (2010). Ecological modernization versus sustainable development: the case of genetic modification regulation in New Zealand. *Sustainable Development*, 18(6), 398-412.

Zakeri, B., et al. (2022). Pandemic, War, and Global Energy Transitions. *Energies*, 15(18), 6114.

Zeitlin, J., Nicoli, F., & Laffan, B. (2019). Introduction: the European Union beyond the polycrisis? Integration and politicization in an age of shifting cleavages. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26(7), 963-976.

9. Appendix

Table A. List of party manifestos used in the research

Party	Election year	Title of the political manifesto and web link
Sinistra Italiana (SI)	2018	Programma Liberi e Uguali https://dait.interno.gov.it/documenti/trasparenza/politiche2018/Doc/47/47_Prog_Elettorale.pdf
	2019	Programma elettorale della lista 'La Sinistra' https://web.archive.org/web/20190524090234/https://www.sinistraeuropea.eu/index.php/manifesto/
	2022	Programma alleanza Verdi e Sinistra https://verdisinistra.it/programma-alleanza-verdi-e-sinistra/ https://web.archive.org/web/20220920143906/https://verdisinistra.it/programma-alleanza-verdi-e-sinistra/
Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S)	2018	Programma elettorale Movimento 5 Stelle https://dait.interno.gov.it/documenti/trasparenza/politiche2018/Doc/4/4_Prog_Elettorale.pdf
	2019	Continuare X Cambiare. Anche in Europa https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/ilblogdellestelle/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/02120249/contxcambiare.pdf https://web.archive.org/web/20190504193523/https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/ilblogdellestelle/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/02120249/contxcambiare.pdf
	2022	Dalla parte giusta. La persona al centro. Programma per un nuovo Umanesimo https://www.movimento5stelle.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Programma-M5S-completo-2022-09-12.pdf https://web.archive.org/web/20220915143745/https://www.movimento5stelle.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Programma-M5S-completo-2022-09-12.pdf
Partito Democratico (PD)	2018	Più forte, più giusta. L'Italia. https://web.archive.org/web/20180226011329/http://ftp.partitodemocratico.it/programma2018/PD2018-programmaA4_5feb.pdf
	2019	Una nuova Europa. Per un'Italia migliore, che cresce, che cambia, più giusta, più forte e più verde https://web.archive.org/web/20190524045910/http://europa.partitodemocratico.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/programma_corto_PD_Europa_2019-1.pdf
	2022	Insieme per un'Italia democratica e progressista https://partitodemocratico.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/AGGIORNAMENTO-PROGRAMMA_INSIEMEPERUNITALIADEMOCRATICAEPROGRESSISTA_250822-1.pdf https://web.archive.org/web/20240516144548/https://partitodemocratico.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/AGGIORNAMENTO-PROGRAMMA_INSIEMEPERUNITALIADEMOCRATICAEPROGRESSISTA_250822-1.pdf
+Europa	2018	Programma elettorale di '+Europa con Emma Bonino - Centro Democratico' https://dait.interno.gov.it/documenti/trasparenza/politiche2018/Doc/63/63_Prog_Elettorale.pdf
	2019	Un'altra Italia c'è. Più coraggiosa, più libera, più europea

		https://web.archive.org/web/20190524080625/https://piueuropa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/PROGRAMMA-EUROPA-2019-1.pdf
	2022	Una generazione avanti. Il programma di +Europa dei prossimi 5 anni per i prossimi 30 anni https://assets.nationbuilder.com/piueuropa/pages/1728/attachments/original/1661536519/PROGRAMMA__EUROPA_2022_%284%29.pdf?1661536519
Forza Italia (FI)	2018	Un programma per l'Italia. Per la crescita, la sicurezza, le famiglie e la piena occupazione https://dait.interno.gov.it/documenti/trasparenza/politiche2018/Doc/52/52_Prog_Elettorale.pdf
	2019	Una nuova Europa con Berlusconi Forza Italia per cambiare l'Europa https://web.archive.org/web/20190418080050/https://italiasvegliati.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Vademecum-Europee-2019.pdf
	2022	Oggi più che mai una scelta di campo https://web.archive.org/web/20220923001540/https://forzaitalia.it/speciali/Programma_Elettorale_Forza_Italia.pdf
Lega	2018	Salvini premier. La rivoluzione del buonsenso https://www.leganord.org/component/phocadownload/category/5-elezioni?download=1514 https://web.archive.org/web/20220616122259/https://www.leganord.org/component/phocadownload/category/5-elezioni?download=1514
	2019	MENL Programma politico https://web.archive.org/web/20190505104612/https://www.leganord.org/europee-2019/217-notizie/16540-menl-programma-politico
	2022	Programma di governo Lega Salvini premier https://static.legaonline.it/files/Programma_Lega_2022.pdf https://web.archive.org/web/20220922114804/https://static.legaonline.it/files/Programma_Lega_2022.pdf
Fratelli d'Italia (FdI)	2018	Il voto che unisce l'Italia. Il programma. Le priorità in 15 punti https://web.archive.org/web/20180226021828/http://www.fratelli-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PROGRAMMA_A4_REV2.pdf
	2019	Programma elezioni europee https://web.archive.org/web/20190508163900/https://europee.fratelli-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/programma_europee.pdf
	2022	Il programma. Pronti a risollevare l'Italia https://web.archive.org/web/20220906234822/https://www.fratelli-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Brochure_programma_FdI_qr_def.pdf

Source: (1) dait.interno.gov.it (Ministry of the Interior): available for national elections only; this link was used when the manifesto officially deposited with the Ministry was used for electoral communication; (2) party websites were used when still available when the manifesto used for electoral communication was different from the one deposited with the Ministry; (3) web.archive.org links are provided for all non-institutional websites, and are the only option available when the page on the party website is no longer online.