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The Discursive (De)Construction of Climate Change Advocacy

Framing the US Green New Deal Resolution

Abstract

This paper studies the climate-related discourses of two (sets of) actors with a significant following on the two poles of the current US climate debate: the climate advocacy of one of the most vociferous US environmentalists in office, House Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and the delegitimizing climate counternarratives fashioned by mainstream conservative media outlet Fox News. Specifically, it centres on the processes that govern the argumentative framing of the 2019 policy proposal known as the (US) Green New Deal Resolution (GND) within Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's tweets and news segments on the GND posted on the official Fox News YouTube site. Guided by the analytical framework delineated in Fairclough and Mădroane (2020), this paper seeks to lay bare the ways in which these two deliberating agents made selected premises salient and overriding, used linguistic devices to (re)define and (re)categorize phenomena, and had recourse to macro speech acts such as explanations and narratives to support their intended aims. In exposing the mechanisms that govern the framing of the critical issue of climate change and the debate of an environmental policy, it hopes to contribute to understanding how framing strategies are employed within policy debates that unfold in less formal contexts and to shed light on the communication of climate-related issues in ways that more effectively resonate with the public and counteract climate scepticism and denial.

Keywords: *climate activism, climate change, argumentative framing, policy debates, social media communication*

In January 2019, the same month in which she was sworn in as the youngest Congresswoman in American history, 29-year-old Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez affirmed during a New York City event that "the world is going to end in 12 years if we don't address climate change." She then added: "This is the war-this is our World War II." This remark, likely rooted in the findings from the 2018 global report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the United Nation's scientific authority on climate change (Lybrand and Miller 2019), demonstrated that Rep. Ocasio-Cortez would serve as one of the most resounding voices of

climate change advocacy in the American context. However, her words were received with great criticism by her conservative opponents who charged that Rep. Ocasio-Cortez spun a narrative littered with falsehoods for alarmist aims. This was one of the first of many instances in which Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's strong declarations on the climate crisis gave rise to a political debate about the environment and the implications of climate change.

The present paper studies the nature of the two sides of the political debate on the 2019 policy proposal known as the (US) Green New Deal (GND) Resolution, aimed at targeting the climate crisis. Specifically, it investigates the processes that govern the argumentative framing of Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's climate change advocacy and the delegitimizing climate counternarratives fashioned by Fox News, the most popular mainstream conservative media outlet in the US. Instead of focusing on more formal channels of political communication and reporting, it centres on the advocacy that the US Representative developed and shared on Twitter and the news segments about the GND posted on the official Fox News YouTube site to shed insights into how policy debates over the environment unfold within the more informal context of online media.

1. Climate advocacy: partisan polarization and (counter)narratives

In the US, discourses about climate change have been mediated by ideological and partisan divides. The Climate Change in the American Mind project, which has collected survey data on climate change beliefs since 2008, found that individuals who can be categorized as Alarmed, or who "are convinced global warming is happening, human-caused, an urgent threat, and strongly support climate policies" (Leiserowitz et al. 2021, 97), include a high proportion of liberals and Democrats. On the other hand, the Doubtful, who believe that climate change is either not happening or is merely a natural phenomenon, and the Dismissive, who tend to endorse climate-related conspiracy theories, are overwhelmingly politically conservative and Republican (Leiserowitz et al. 2021).

Since the modern US conservative movement first exhibited its anti-environmental orientation in the late 1970s (McCright and Dunlap 2010), the ways in which the two political poles have articulated pro- and anti-climate stances have been widely explored in the literature. McCright and Dunlap (2010) studied the techniques used by conservative think-tanks, Congressmembers and the George W. Bush administration in the 1990s to challenge climate science and policy. Among other strategies, they found that this countermovement obscured and manipulated the results of the climate science research that served as the basis for environmentalist claims, delegitimized individual scientists, and invoked an existing media bias. Guber, Bohr, and Dunlap's (2021) analysed speeches delivered on the floor of the US Congress between 1996 and

2015 to identify, among other things, differences in how Democrats and Republicans talked about climate change. They found that Democrats tended to accentuate evidence and the scientific consensus, impacts on public health and weather events, and the new 'green' economy. Instead, Republican speeches focused on opposition to legislation, general resistance to climate change, and science denial. They relied more on anecdotes and stories that fashioned a form of communication that, the authors argue, "is likely to be more persuasive and harder to contradict than the Democrats' factual and straightforward message-based approach" (Guber, Bohr and Dunlap 2021, 552).

This finding is consistent with other recent work on the discursive construction of climate scepticism. Lejano and Nero (2020) advance the notion that narrative is at the heart of the effort to convey climate denial. The stories that climate change sceptics tell, Lejano and Nero argue, are not only about climate "but also about who they are versus the 'other' […] about who and what is right and who and what is wrong" (2020, 18). They continue: "On the surface, these stories are about what people should believe as fact regarding climate. But why a story moves people goes beyond its factual accuracy, and sometimes stories resonate regardless of their basis in fact" (Lejano and Nero 2020, 18). Narratives created by climate sceptics can therefore serve as powerful tools to undermine climate chance advocacy.

Narratives have also been found to be central in climate change advocacy. A great deal of attention has been devoted to the apocalyptic rhetoric and metaphors that have been used with narratives developed to increase awareness of the current and future negative effects of the climate crisis (e.g. Foust and O'Shannon Murphy 2009). Risbey (2008) noted a shift in climate change discourse towards a greater sense of urgency that occurred at the start of the twenty-first century. In analysing how this more urgent narrative was framed, the author maintained that the climate narrative should be characterized by 'alarming' discourse that "sounds an alarm to alert the public to the need to change course" rather than 'alarmism,' which views the problem "as out of control or inevitable" (Risbey 2008, 34).

This article builds on this previous scholarship to examine the discursive, linguistic, and narrative aspects of the climate change discourses developed by Democratic Socialist Rep. Ocasio-Cortez and conservative news outlet Fox News within the debate over the implementation of the GND, which are discussed in more detail in the next section.

2. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the GND, and the 'Fox News effect'

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was elected to the US House of Representatives to represent New York's 14th district along with other diverse working-class progressive Democrats in the 2018

midterm elections. She swiftly became a household name and, just months after becoming the youngest Congresswoman in American history, she was defined by *Time* magazine as "the second most talked-about politician in America" after Trump. She gained recognition as a masterful user of social media and a source of witty retorts and clever comebacks, but her fervent environmental activism also contributed to boosting her notoriety. Indeed, Ocasio-Cortez has become the face[1] of the modern American climate movement, which has been largely emblemized by the GND.

The GND Resolution (*H.R. 109 Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal*) was introduced to Congress by Rep. Ocasio-Cortez and Sen. Edward Markey in February 2019. The 14-page document called for urgent action to counteract the threat of climate change and proposed that the US take a leading role in the global effort to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Rooted in a transformative climate justice movement, the GND invoked the Great Depression-era New Deal and proposed a Keynesian demand-side macroeconomic approach to task the US government with a 10-year plan of investment and mobilization to decarbonize the economy and to curb pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, while fostering economic equity and human rights (Boyle et al. 2021; Galvin and Healy 2020). The GND was the first comprehensive economic, social, and technical package of legislation endorsed by a major political force. As Galvin and Healy (2020, 2) explain, the GND "aimed to radically avert impending climate catastrophe, and to do so in a way that enhances rather than reduces the rights and wellbeing of the most vulnerable."

The proposed GND effectively placed climate change discourse on the public agenda. In the week after it was introduced, the three major US cable news outlets CNN, MSNBC and Fox News aired 45 primetime segments devoted to the resolution (Gustafson et al. 2019). In particular, conservative news network Fox News featured vehement opposition coverage to the GND in line with the network's tendency to propagate a comparably more critical and dismissive view of climate change (Feldman et al. 2012). The network's position had a clear impact. Viewership of Fox News was already found to predict climate sceptic views among its viewers, even when other factors such as demographics, ideological views and exposure to other news outlets were controlled, but Gustafson et al. (2019) isolated a 'Fox News effect' tied specifically to the GND. The four months between December 2018 and April 2019 witnessed a sharp rise in

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[1] Other lawmakers preceded Ocasio-Cortez with efforts to throw spotlight on climate change, including former Vice President Al Gore's global warming campaign captured in the 2006 Oscar-winning documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth* and Rhode Island Democratic senator Sheldon Whitehouse's weekly "Time to Wake Up" Senate speeches on the urgent need for climate action.

partisan polarization and Republican opposition to the GND, though the decrease in GND support was twice as large among Republicans who were frequent Fox News viewers (Gustafson et al. 2019). Fox News, cable's most-watched network and highest-rated news channel, exhibited a strong, negative influence on support of the GND.

The present paper uses this premise as a springboard and it analyses the discourses produced by two (sets of) social actors representing the two poles of the policy debate surrounding the implementation of the GND, the first policy proposal of its kind, who have a wide following and an impressive reach. The tweets posted by Rep. Ocasio-Cortez, one of the foremost climate advocates who has amassed over 13 million Twitter followers, represent support for the resolution. The other side of the debate is represented by the GND-dedicated content produced by Fox News hosts, anchors, pundits, and guests within selected news segments that were posted on the official Fox News YouTube page, which has over 10 million subscribers.

3. Policy debate and argumentative framing

According to Fairclough and Mădroane (2020), policy debates can be viewed as a form of deliberation, an argumentative genre that features two schemes: argumentation regarding the action plan that should be adopted (in view of desirable objectives) and argumentation regarding the action plan that should be avoided (in view of undesirable potential consequences). A given proposal, presented by deliberating agents to resolve problems and achieve intended effects, can be deemed reasonable if it withstands the test of criticism. A decisive critical objection to the proposal—such as those rooted in "institutional facts (obligations, rights, commitments) of the legal, political, moral domain" (Fairclough and Mădroane 2020, 128)—falsifies or rebuts the hypothesis that a proposal ought to be enacted. In this case, the party in favour of the proposal will work to minimize the other party's objections, aided by the fact that proposals refer to future scenarios (and consequences) that have not yet materialized. This process recurs continuously in public debates on controversial issues such as climate change and involves not only decisionmakers and actors directly affected by a given policy proposal but also the media and the general public (Fairclough and Mădroane 2020). Within these deliberations, different communication sources *frame* issues in different ways. This framing process, which "aims to define and diagnose problems, as well as suggest solutions" (Fairclough and Mădroane 2020, 131), is governed by actors' intended aims (in favour or against the proposed policy) and by their desire to lead their audience towards a particular conclusion.

Drawing on Entman's (1993) understanding of framing as selection and salience, Fairclough and Mădroane (2020) present an argumentative approach to framing to uncover the practical,

deliberative reasoning of agents who attempt to sway their audience towards favouring a proposal. Through this argumentative lens, framing "offer[s] the audience a salient and thus potentially overriding premise in a deliberative process that can ground decision (about what to believe and what to do) and action" (2020, 134). According to Fairclough and Mădroane (2020), the framing process within a deliberative process such as a policy debate involves three mechanisms, which can be summarized as: 1) giving selective salience to a premise; 2) using figurative language and linguistic devices to (re)define or (re)categorize facts; and 3) having recourse to macro speech acts such as explanations for and narratives in support of the intended aim. This theorization of framing provides insight into how deliberating actors strive to persuade their audience and influence their decision-making with respect to debated proposed policies. It is adopted in this study to examine and shed insight into the processes that govern the argumentative framing within the policy debate on the GND.

4. Methods

4.1 Summary of aims

Guided by the theoretical and methodological insights presented in Fairclough and Mădroane (2020), the purpose of this article is to explore the ways in which the main premises used in the construction of arguments in favour of and against the GND proposal were framed by both its advocate (i.e. Rep. Ocasio-Cortez) and its opponents (i.e. Fox News personalities). It intends to shed light on the construction of and challenge to (or deconstruction) of climate change advocacy. By analysing the less formal settings of discourses enacted on Twitter and on news show segments posted on YouTube by a cable network notorious for emotionally-expressive and tabloid-style reporting, rather than formal forms of political communication and news coverage, it hopes to further understandings of how policy debates and (anti-)environmentalist discourses unfold in bottom-up communication channels.

4.2 Data collection

4.2.1 @AOC tweets

The first set of data was extracted from the 3499 tweets (147,972 tokens) that Rep. Ocasio-Cortez posted on her personal, verified Twitter account @AOC during her first Congressional term, from November 2018 to her second election in November 2020. An initial analysis of the small corpus was performed employing the tools afforded by the text analysis software Sketch Engine (app.sketchengine.eu), including the N-gram tool, which was used to generate the most frequent three-to-four-term lexical bundles in the tweet corpus. Seeing as the focus of the study

was climate change advocacy, tweets that related to climate change were manually identified. These included posts that referred to 'climate change' and its facilitating agents (i.e. fossil fuels), the resolution ('Green New Deal' or 'GND'), the environment, and climate advocates and movements (e.g. Greta Thunberg, the Sunrise NYC movement of youth fighting for a GND, the Global Climate strike). This procedure resulted in the identification of 365 climate-focused tweets.

4.2.2 Fox News segments on YouTube

The second set of data was constituted by Fox News segments retrieved from the network's official YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/c/foxnews). The first ten search results of the words "Green New Deal" were selected, excluding two videos that were posted in 2021 and therefore did not coincide with the timeframe under study. Table 1 shows the titles assigned to the segments, the upload dates, the view counts (rounded to the nearest thousand as of September 2022), and the Fox News shows in which they were originally aired.

#	Title	Posted	Views	Show
1	Tucker grills Ocasio-Cortez adviser over 'Green New Deal'	09/02/2019	1,785K	Tucker Carlson Tonight
2	Charlie Kirk blasts Green New Deal: 'It's somewhat laughable'	13/02/2019	150K	Fox & Friends
3	Schumer blasts McConnell over Green New Deal vote	15/02/2019	56K	The Story
4	Gutfeld on Feinstein arguing the 'Green New Deal' with kids	26/02/2019	219K	The Five
5	Tucker reacts to Ocasio-Cortez's Green New Mess	26/02/2019	197K	Tucker Carlson Tonight
6	The cost of the Green New Deal for current and future taxpayers	26/02/2019	32K	Fox News @Night
7	A new report estimates the Green New Deal would cost $93 trillion	03/03/2019	39K	The Greg Gutfeld Show
8	Former president of Greenpeace Canada blasts Green New Deal	05/03/2019	177K	Hannity
9	Senate majority forces vote on 'Green New Deal' climate change proposal	26/03/2019	34K	Special Report
10	Tucker confronts AOC adviser on agenda behind Green New Deal	13/07/2019	1,226K	Tucker Carlson Tonight

Tab. 1: The ten Fox News YouTube videos about the GND

The machine-generated closed captions provided by YouTube were cleaned manually to generate a transcript for each segment.

4.3 Data Analysis

The same procedure was followed for the analysis of the tweets and the news segment videos to explain the framing processes employed by both communication sources. It was guided by the six strategies delineated by Fairclough and Mădroane (2020) to illustrate the mechanisms that govern the framing process in support of a conclusion or line of action. Specifically, it involved the identification of: 1) aspects that Rep. Ocasio-Cortez and Fox News personalities rendered most salient and overriding, and how this was achieved; 2) the use of semantic frames— understood in Fillmore's (1985) terms as cognitive structuring devices and representations whose parts (frame elements) are indexed by words that evoke frames—to categorize phenomena; 3) the designation of definitions to key terms and concepts that are non-neutral or are biased; 4) the presence of metaphors, comparisons, or analogies; 5) the explanations provided to answer, in instrumental ways, why certain phenomena are occurring and who is to blame for unfavourable conditions; and 6) the nature of the narratives developed, including the narrative roles (i.e. villain) assigned to key actors.

This principal analytical approach was supported by the tools afforded by critical discourse analysis, which aims to capture the interrelationship between language, power, and ideology and is concerned with studying the (re)production and resistance of power, dominance, and inequality in text and talk in context (van Dijk 1993). Specifically, this analytical lens was applied via the identification of discursive strategies of positive self- and negative other-presentation (van Dijk 1998) and (de)legitimization (van Leeuwen 2007), and the roles played by the historical context, intertextuality, and recontextualization in the discourses and texts under study (Reisigl and Wodak 2000).

5. Framing processes in the construction of climate change advocacy

5.1 "People are going to die:" Salience, urgency, and risk

Climate change, the GND, and its deterrents constituted a prominent theme in Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's tweets, accounting for roughly ten percent of all the tweets she posted during her first Congressional term. In particular, 'Green New Deal' was the most frequent three-to-four-term

lexical bundle in all of her first Congressional term tweets, with a frequency of 62.[2] The lexical bundles 'the United States' and 'member of Congress,' which we would expect to occur frequently in communications posted by a Representative, both appeared roughly half as frequently, with only 32 occurrences, and 'Medicare for All', another pillar of Ocasio-Cortez's platform, only had 29 occurrences. Seeing as the frequency of lexical items can suggest what a given text is 'about' (Alexander 2018), the high occurrence of 'Green New Deal' suggests that Rep. Ocasio-Cortez made the resolution a salient protagonist of the narrative she constructed on Twitter.

Within Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's 365 climate-focused tweets, the premise in support of the GND that figured most prominently and frequently was that climate change is an urgent issue whose resolution requires the implementation of a particular policy action, the GND. Although the sheer recurrence of this premise makes it salient and overriding (Fairclough and Mădroane 2020), Rep. Ocasio-Cortez employed other strategies to achieve this effect in her tweets. One strategy is the definitions she chose for climate change—as a "serious,"[3] "existential threat," and one of the "most urgent issues of our time" and "greatest threats to humanity"—and the status of the Earth—as "dangerously imperiled," in "crisis," and on fire ("our planet burns"). These definitions, albeit aligned with the scientific consensus, are characterized by the language of danger, urgency, and risk.

Indeed, by utilizing lexemes "whose semantic descriptions share some reference to the possibility of an unwelcome outcome" (Fillmore and Atkins 1992, 79) such as "threat," "crisis," "dangerously," and "imperiled," Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's tweets invoke the 'risk' frame where climate change is the 'risky situation.' The harm resulting from climate change, at the heart of Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's support of the GND, was expressed not only as "a potential unwelcome development" (Fillmore and Atkins 1992, 82) such as when she predicted "cataclysmic climate disaster" and warned that "our lives" were "on the line" and "at stake," but also as adverse consequences that had already unfolded in the form of past and ongoing extreme weather events. Ocasio-Cortez established a strong sense of immediacy by citing negative events that had occurred and were therefore irreversible ("3,000 Americans died in Hurricane María") and, more frequently, using recency-focused temporal markers such as deictic expressions and the present progressive aspect, as seen in the following example tweet excerpts:

(1)   We are losing our homes & loved ones *now.*

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[2] This figure only includes recurrence of 'Green New Deal' and does not include other direct references to the resolution such as its acronym 'GND' for which there were 30 occurrences.
[3] Tweet excerpts are used in this paper in the interest of brevity.

(2)   The Midwest is drowning as we speak.

(3)   Our sea levels are rising. Droughts are worsening. Wildfires are spreading. Storms are coming.

As demonstrated in these examples, Rep. Ocasio-Cortez used language with the intent to mobilize her audience and give rise to an emotional response. The first-person plural creates a sense of community and group solidarity, and the impacts of climate change are framed in poignant terms as a loss, and not only loss of property but of "our homes," not loss of life but of our "loved ones." These devices, alongside markers that delineate a clear temporal dimension, pull at the heartstrings of readers and communicate the gravity and time-sensitive nature of the climate crisis.

The sense of urgency and immediacy, enacted linguistically and argumentatively, legitimized the GND on the grounds that the measure was designed to prevent harm and safeguard victims. It follows, therefore, that the language of danger, urgency, and immediacy was used with reference to the implementation of the resolution as well. In arguing in favour of expeditious policy action, Ocasio-Cortez evoked doom scenarios, already seen in her depiction of climate change effects, which would rapidly worsen in time if policy action is not taken:

(4)   Unless we act drastically now, it's only going to get worse.

(5)   We must dramatically draw down CO2 to save our livable planet.

(6)   People are going to die if we don't start addressing climate change ASAP.

Each of these instances contain the inclusive first-person plural pronoun as a mobilization mechanism as well as markers including (semi-)modals and conditional constructions that signal a high degree of certainty on the part of the Representative that her proposal will mitigate negative consequences and thwart doom scenarios.

5.2 Waging "war," aiming high, and reclaiming historical heights

Several figures of speech were used within Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's climate-focused tweets. First, climate change advocacy—and, specifically, the movement in support of the GND—was framed as a heroic, war-like endeavour. One way in which this was achieved was with lexicon that evoked battleground activities such as "fight," "mobilize," and "charge" (in "We fight for a #GreenNewDeal;" "Will we mobilize reactively to destruction, or will we act proactively for

prevention?;" and "you're leading the charge," respectively). Another way in which this was accomplished was by using language that called to mind heroic qualities including honour and bravery to describe climate advocates, as in the following excerpts of tweets (emphasis added):

(7)   Thank you for *standing up* to protect [Maine's] land with *strong, courageous action*.

(8)   They are the *risk-takers*, the ones who *stand with the courage of their conviction*.

(9)   Thank you for […] taking the *brave step* of supporting the #GreenNewDeal.

By invoking this imagery,[4] the framing of her cause (climate change) and her policy proposal (the GND) aligns with the political rhetoric used by other US politicians to promote other prominent movements, including the "wars" waged on poverty, on crime, on drugs, and on terrorism. As Sacco (2005) maintains, war analogies prevail in political discourse because a declaration of war against a problem assigns weight and importance to the problem and communicates full commitment and high investment to tackling it. Seen through this lens, Rep. Ocasio-Cortez framed her climate advocacy as a declaration of war against climate change and the GND as the winning strategy to defeat it. Any other policy alternatives, which she described as mere "tweaks and shortcuts" and "middle ground" approaches, were in her view "unacceptable," "not enough to tackle climate change," and even "a form of climate denial." In her tweets Rep. Ocasio-Cortez defined the GND as "a common sense, moral solution," "conscious, just + prosperous," and "our plan for a world and a future worth fighting for," definitions that, like comparisons to war (Sacco 2005), elicit feelings of moral duty, obligation, and patriotism. Other analogies that were made in Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's tweets connected the GND to extraordinary feats in US history. The first equated the GND to the 1969 moon landing. She enacted this comparison both explicitly, as when she wrote "A Green New Deal will take a level of ambition + innovation on the scale of the moon landing," and implicitly, by using expressions such as "lift-off," emoji such as " 🚀 ,"[5] and terms such as "moonshot[s]"[6] that evoke this historical event. The second analogy linked the GND to the New Deal, the package of governmental reforms put in place in the 1930s by FDR to stabilize the nation's economy during the Great Depression. Albeit activated most palpably by the name of the policy proposal itself, this analogy

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[4] Importantly, Rep. Ocasio-Cortez used similar means to characterize climate inaction: "My generation & future ones will have to contend with the horrifying mess that the *cowardly leadership* of previous ones left us. It's a *betrayal*" (emphasis added).

[5] "and we have #GreenNewDeal lift-off 🌍 🚀 "

[6] "We need moonshots."

was reinforced in Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's tweets with intertextual uses of socio-political texts such as FDR's 1944 State of the Union and New Deal-era posters.

Fig. 1: GND poster shown alongside a New Deal poster in a tweet by Rep. Ocasio-Cortez

With respect to the latter, as seen in Figure 1, Rep. Ocasio-Cortez created a verbal comparison with reference to "the original New Deal" and a project "FDR launched" as well as a visual comparison in the juxtaposition of the two similarly styled posters. This analogy was accentuated further with a subsequent tweet in which she stated: "the retro posters nudge viewers to recall that big, federal-government-led plans have a long history in the U.S." In so doing, Rep. Ocasio-Cortez characterized the GND as politically and historically consistent with other noteworthy measures implemented by US politicians who preceded her.

These historical analogies, which include the aforedescribed war language and imagery that also activate strong historical connections, served to situate climate advocacy as a (potential) esteemed political attainment in American history. Although she declared that supporters of the GND were "radical," "[pushing] the limits of what's possible," and "creating a watershed moment for the planet," and two of the "five principles in the Green New Deal" were "Go Big" and "Make Floors, Not Ceilings," she also maintained that the GND movement "is a return to the Democratic Party that went to the moon, passed the Civil Rights Act, + strove for the Great Society. It's the politics of courage vanquishing fear; aspiration over desperation." Thus, these analogies assign to climate change the weight of war and other crises that have affected the US (e.g. the Great Depression) and they provide evidence to counteract the decisive objection that the GND was unimplementable insofar as it was "too much, too soon" or "too unconventional."

5.3 The villains of the climate advocacy narrative

With respect to narrative framing, in addition to the stories that Rep. Ocasio-Cortez fashioned of the urgent need for the GND to halt the perilous march of climate change and of the coherence of her proposal with great historical moments in US history, the Representative's tweets also ascribed character, and specifically villainous, roles. Some of these roles were occupied by those to whom she assigned responsibility for the climate crisis, including fossil fuel executives, lobbyists, and even specific oil companies.[7] Additional explanations provided for why the crisis was occurring and who was to blame, an enactment of Fairclough and Mădroane's (2020) fifth framing strategy, were rooted within a discourse of inter-generational justice where America's youth bear the burden of past inaction (see footnote 4).

However, much more recurrently the Republican Party (GOP) was cast as the 'villain' of the GND project. Rep. Ocasio-Cortez achieved this positioning of the other by assigning blame to the GOP for the doubt they sowed in climate science and the harm they caused by neglecting to intervene in the climate crisis (e.g. "The GOP's climate delaying is costing us lives + destroying communities."). She also depicted the GOP as regressive ("The GOP wants to send us back"), dishonest ("The people who tell you we DO have war money but DON'T have […] Green New Deal money are playing games with you"), and misleading ("When Republicans talk about the Green New Deal being 100 trillion dollars, please know they're doing that Dr. Evil thing where they shout random, escalating numbers to sound ominous"). Rep. Ocasio-Cortez charged that the GOP made light of (e.g. "GOP thinks this is a joke. They choose to laugh+delay") and did not care about (e.g. "GOP doesn't even care enough to try") the serious problem of climate change. These attributions undermine the GOP's legitimate authority (van Leeuwen 2007) because they suggest that members of the GOP are bereft of qualities associated with respected authorities, including seriousness, altruism, and virtue.

The accusation of callousness was stressed further in a tweet the Representative posted on May 17, 2019:

(10)   The GOP doesn't care about babies at all - especially brown, black, or poor ones. If they did, they'd:
   - cosponsor the Green New Deal or at LEAST have a real climate plan
   - guarantee healthcare so ALL can get prenatal care
   - not stand for the death+caging of babies on our border

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[7] In reply to a 02/11/2020 tweet by Shell, she wrote: "I'm willing to hold you accountable for lying about climate change for 30 years when you secretly knew the entire time that fossil fuels emissions would destroy our planet 😇."

As seen in (10), Rep. Ocasio-Cortez used emotive language to characterize the GOP's failure to support climate policy and declared that Republicans are apathetic not only to babies, one the most vulnerable groups of society, but to minority babies, thereby laying racist and classist sentiments bare. Thus, inaction on climate change was equated to the denial of prenatal healthcare and the detention of immigrant families, which evoke pro-life and anti-immigrant ideologies respectively.

In summary, with reference to Fairclough and Mădroane's (2020) framing strategies, in the tweets she posted during her first Congressional term, Rep. Ocasio-Cortez foregrounded the climate crisis and its adverse effects above all other premises in her GND advocacy. She made these premises the most salient and overriding by occasioning them frequently, categorizing them with specific semantic frames including the risk frame, and by using recency-focused temporal markers and emotionally-tinged language to accentuate urgency and danger. The tweets also devised and developed a series of powerful comparisons between GND activism and war, the moon landing, and the original New Deal by means of war language and imagery, historical analogies, and (multimodal) intertextuality to designate the GND as a moral and extraordinary yet achievable solution. Those whose actions and behaviour counteract the GND proposal—primarily the GOP—were cast as villains in Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's narrative with depictions that situated them as callous, irresponsible, deceptive, infantile, and immoral, thereby delegitimizing their authority and falsifying their objections to her policy proposal.

6. Framing in the deconstruction of climate change advocacy

6.1 The GND as costly, damaging, and unnecessary

Fox News anchors, guests, and hosts made the high cost of the GND the most salient and overriding argument against its implementation by means of frequent use of lexical units that activated the 'expensiveness' frame (including "cost," "dollar" amounts, and "expensive"). To accentuate its immoderate price tag, they often cited the projected cost using exorbitant numbers—such as "a GND would cost $91 trillion dollars […] over 600,000 per household" in segment 7,[8] and the GND "would cost trillions a year to implement" in segment 9—or in comparative terms: "The plan if enacted would cost, some estimate, more than the entire global GDP" in segment 5; "This would be the most expensive thing that the US has ever undertaken including rural electrification, the Second World War" in segment 1. The argument that the government and US households would have to disburse a prohibitive amount of money was one

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[8] Segment numbers correspond to the numbers used in the first column of Table 1.

of several negative consequences of the GND to which Fox News personalities referred in the counternarrative they fashioned. Fox News coverage suggested that, if implemented, the policy could incur harm on the US and on the American people. On the network, the GND was defined as a "regressive" policy that threatened the international status of the US (it would make the country "less competitive internationally" and destroy its "energy superiority"—segment 2) and the wellbeing of its people by causing unemployment[9] and even death.[10]

Fox News coverage also framed the GND as unnecessary. It referred to climate change with scepticism or outright dismissal, thereby refuting one of the primary premises in favour of the GND. The most salient means by which this was achieved was via instancing specific climate-based warnings that had (allegedly) not transpired. For instance, on segment 6, politician and talk show host Mike Huckabee stated: "in 1989,[11] there were people who said that if we didn't take immediate and drastic action to get rid of fossil fuels by the year 2000 the whole world would turn into a great big complete ball of fire. Well, guess what? We somehow got to the year 2000." Similarly, on segment 4, co-host Jesse Watters declared: "Al Gore said all the polar ice caps were gonna melt by 2014. Well, they're still there." On the same segment, co-host Katie Pavlich cited a prediction by Nobel Prize-winning scientist Paul Ehrlich that "never happened," which led her to conclude, "and so, this is indoctrination." The effect of these references is to position the scientific consensus as not only alarmist but also unreliable, to insinuate that scientists and climate advocates have nefarious aims, and ultimately to eradicate the need for any climate action, not least the GND.

6.2 Casting the antagonists in the GND counternarrative

Rep. Ocasio-Cortez was placed at the helm of the GND counternarrative crafted by Fox News personalities. Although the GND was co-sponsored, Fox News coverage assigned ownership of the GND almost exclusively to Rep. Ocasio-Cortez (e.g. "Ocasio-Cortez's 100-trillion-dollar Green New Deal boondoggle," segment 3), who, defined as "the leader" and "the boss" of the Democratic Party, "showed up with" the GND and "imposed it on her party" (segment 5). By assigning GND ownership to Rep. Ocasio-Cortez alone, the network devalued the resolution because of the Representative's (political) inexperience (Ocasio-Cortez was defined as "a 29-

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[9] "Do you know how many jobs will be lost if we get rid of the fossil fuel industry?" (segment 2).
[10] "[Rep. Ocasio-Cortez] is […] saying that we have to eliminate all fossil fuels, coal, oil and natural gas in 10 years, this would basically be a suicide pact" (segment 8).
[11] Interestingly, Huckabee defines this year as "the year before Ocasio-Cortez was born," even though her birth year was 1989. This was an attempt to underscore her young age, a recurrent delegitimizing tactic by Fox News pundits.

year-old bartender" in segment 5, see also footnote 11) and because the GND could be established as a product of an uncollaborative and therefore undemocratic process.

Furthermore, in segment 10, host Tucker Carlson charged that Rep. Ocasio-Cortez, supported by her adviser Saikat Chakrabarti, manufactured the climate crisis for nefarious ends, or "to exert control of the country" and to "stupefy the masses with fearmongering." The suggestion that climate change was being orchestrated and climate proposals were being advanced for villainous purposes occurred in other segments as well. For example, Fox News personalities depicted climate change as a partisan issue and climate activists as scheming characters who spun a false "narrative" in which "Republicans and Trump don't love the climate or the environment" (segment 2). On segment 5, the GND was defined as the "perfect plan" that would "shut down the entire American economy except for the hedge funds that fund Democratic campaigns." Fox News coverage therefore implied that the climate activism functioned to support the secretive, economic aims of one political party at the detriment of the political opposition.

Another and arguably more poignant way in which climate advocates including Rep. Ocasio-Cortez were cast as villains on Fox News was achieved by means of instancing children and childbearing. One of the child-related references, which recurred in several segments, related to Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein's dismissive reaction to a visit from schoolchildren advocating for the GND. On segment 4 from *The Five,* Greg Gutfeld accused Democrats of using children as "propagandized pawns" for "their untenable political positions." On segment 8, *Hannity* guest and former Greenpeace Canada president Patrick Moore stated that Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's attempts to sensitize people to the climate crisis was on par with "recruiting," and "telling these children that there is going to be an apocalypse in 10 years if they don't save the climate" constituted "child abuse." On that same segment, WeatherBell.com chief meteorologist Joe Bastardi commented that climate advocates "are indoctrinating kids." The underlying implication was that climate advocates were manipulating and (ab)using children in order to advance their (political) agenda.

The second child-based reference stemmed from an Instagram Live Q&A that Rep. Ocasio-Cortez held in February 2019, in which she stated the following:

> Our planet is going to be a disaster if we don't turn this ship around and so it's basically like there's scientific consensus that the lives of children are gonna be very difficult and it does lead—I think—young people to have a legitimate question, you know, should- is it okay to still have children?

After airing a brief excerpt of this Q&A on segments 4 and 5, the Fox News hosts reframed the Representative's original emotional appeal related to the adverse consequences of climate change to a literal request for people to not have children. Greg Gutfeld and Tucker Carlson stated, respectively: "she's saying [to] all of her peers 'don't have kids'" (segment 4) and "Is it okay to still have children? Well, I don't know Alexandria. Can we? You're the boss now. If you say we can't reproduce the species of course we won't. It's your call" (segment 5). The way in which this message was excerpted and its subsequent discussion on Fox News reveals an insidious mechanism that wholly erased Representative's environmental message and replaced it with the deeply entrenched conservative ideology of fear of the spectre of 'big government.' Within this vilification targeted principally at Rep. Ocasio-Cortez, Fox News personalities on the one hand cast her and climate advocates as untrustworthy masterminds who have acted deceitfully in their misrepresentation of Republicans as uncaring[12] and have fabricated a false crisis to scare, manipulate, and indoctrinate the people—including children—into complying with their economic and political masterplan. On the other hand, by suggesting that nefarious reasons underpin the global climate advocacy movement, they create and spread climate sceptical views and conspiratorial beliefs.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

Just as the GND received copious coverage on Fox News (Gustafson et al. 2019), Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's tweets displayed a concerted effort to place climate and in particular the GND resolution at the foreground of her social media presence. Roughly ten percent of her total tweets mentioned climate-related issues and the GND was the most frequent lexical bundle. Within her climate-related tweets, Rep. Ocasio-Cortez argued in favour of her proposed legislation with language that situated climate change as urgent and dangerous, and her proposal as pressing and moral. Her warnings were based on the scientific consensus, but Rep. Ocasio-Cortez opted to use emotional appeals with highly charged language rather than bare scientific facts and evidence which approached the "more persuasive and harder to contradict" communicative style employed in the past by Republicans (Guber, Bohr and Dunlap 2021, 552). Her discourse constructed a state of urgency, which is an instrumental strategy to sway public opinion towards policy action (van Wijk and Fischhendler 2017). Her framing, albeit apocalyptic, did not diminish "the range of human agency possible in influencing the inevitable march of global warming" (Foust and Murphy 2009, 161). Human action was in fact central to her message,

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[12] Instead, Rep. Ocasio-Cortez was not "bother[ed]" by the potential cost to the US of the GND and therefore she is the one who "doesn't care" (segment 5).

although it hinged exclusively on the GND as the sole moral solution to the climate crisis. Insofar as this caveat was in place, Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's discourse was alarming, not alarmist (Risbey 2008), and kept the resignation to which ultimatums may give rise at bay (Foust and Murphy 2009).

Fox News opposition coverage of the GND undercut the validity of the very premise that Rep. Ocasio-Cortez made overriding by sowing doubt on the climate crisis with climate sceptic beliefs. Fox News personalities achieved this principally by homing in on flaws in scientific claims and expert predictions, even using emotive discounting strategies (Ereaut and Segnit 2006), with terms such as "indoctrination" and "propagandized pawns." They strove to nullify the need for the GND on the basis that a sweeping solution was unnecessary without a crisis. Moreover, they argued that adopting the resolution would have detrimental effects on the nation. Both groups in fact framed their arguments in terms of an underlying concern for harm avoidance. While Rep. Ocasio-Cortez used rousing language to depict the present and future cost of climate change on human life and property, Fox News personalities accentuated the cost of the GND on the US, its economy, its international role, and the wellbeing of its people.

Rep. Ocasio-Cortez explicitly and implicitly compared GND advocacy to momentous moments in US history, including wars, the moon landing, and the New Deal. Comparisons in discourse have a strong legitimatory function (van Leeuwen 2007), and they also serve to provide comfort. As Angstrom (2011) maintains, "using an analogy implies that the situation is not unprecedented, and however difficult it is perceived to be, it is fundamentally something that has occurred before and has been dealt with in a particular way before" (225). Thus, the use of historical analogies downplayed or refuted the argument made by GND opponents that its implementation was economically and politically unfeasible. Given that such grand endeavours had been done before with noteworthy outcomes, it was not only possible but also advantageous for the GND to be implemented.

In terms of narrative framing, both groups cast the opposition as the villain. Rep. Ocasio-Cortez described the GOP in terms of its backwardness, dishonesty, and disregard for human life. On Fox News, hosts, anchors, and guests fomented conspiracy theories when they suggested that the climate-focused aims held by Rep. Ocasio-Cortez and other activists were nefarious. Both parties connected their argumentation to larger ideologies in line with their political views: the Representative strongly condemned the GOP by situating its climate inaction alongside anti-immigration, pro-life, and anti-healthcare ideologies, and Fox News personalities advanced anti-Liberal and anti-big government sentiments, which give rise to fear of the threat to freedom and liberties.

This phenomenon, reflective of the politicization of climate change, is particularly pivotal because it presents a predominant hurdle for the advancement of environmental advocacy. Recourse to ideologies deepens existing divisions in the American sociopolitical landscape and unduly assigns a political meaning to a global issue that sees no party lines. The risk is that so long as the climate issue remains partisan, then it will be dismissed by conservatives and/or viewers of Fox News. Seeing that, as maintained by Fairclough and Mădroane (2020, 131), frames must "ring true" or "resonate" with the public's beliefs and values to motivate people to move to action, for audiences on the right of the political spectrum partisan associations can act as impediments to the reception of the communication of climate advocacy and to the adoption of actions that can reverse the course of climate change, including environmentally friendly behaviours. In this light, it may be more effective for climate activists to avoid drawing on discursive mechanisms that exacerbate partisan divisions and instead, following Stibbe's (2018, 165) recommendation, "search for positive new discourses to live by that work better in the conditions of the world we face." Future research should endeavour to uncover such new discourses that may act as more powerful competitors in the battle against narratives of climate scepticism and denial.

Lastly, although this study drew data from an elected official and an established cable news network, it sought to tap into less formal domains in which policy debates unfold, which undoubtedly impacted on the ways in which the debate was framed. Rep. Ocasio-Cortez developed and disseminated the climate platform discussed in this paper while abiding by Twitter's affordances (e.g. emoji, wide reach) and constraints (e.g. character limit). Fox News personalities who expressed their opposition to the GND adhered to the network format, which prioritizes emotions over neutral reporting, and performed within news segments that would be posted on social media. This paper only scratched the surface of what can be uncovered through the analysis of (anti-)environmentalist discourses developed on and for bottom-up communication channels. Future research should proceed to examine the effects of such channels on communicative styles, advocacy uptake, and frame resonance to gain more nuanced understandings of how contemporary environmentalist discourses can be more effectively constructed and defended.

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