

Sweeping Shale Gas Under the Rug

Communicating Clean Energy Futures Through the
Caribbean Energy Security Initiative



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Abstract

Energy sector transformation will define our coming decade, as an unprecedented energy transition is required to keep the planet to 2°C warming. Despite this urgency, strong governmental resistance to low-carbon energy transitions is observed. Under the Obama administration, a Caribbean energy policy was pursued that exemplifies this resistance. Promoted as a clean energy policy, the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative (CESI), pursued an all-of-the-above energy approach that included unconventional shale gas as part of a sustainable energy baseload. Through a qualitative content analysis of speeches, press briefings, and white papers, this research explores the United States' political actors' imagining of Caribbean energy futures through examining dominant frames and core strategies. Dominant frames reveal the prominence of the market and energy security. Core framing strategies diagnosed the problem as one of energy insecurity, prescribed increased private sector investment, and motivated this by the achievement of a democratic, prosperous, and secure Caribbean. Delivering such a future was placed in the hands of private sector and market actors, mirroring the neoliberalization of energy governance. Thus, CESI leaves little room for imagining alternative energy pathways and instead delivers a business-as-usual energy policy wrapped in green and clean packaging.

Key words: energy policy, frames, U.S.-Caribbean, energy security, shale gas

Words: 9,881

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1 Introduction

In the coming decades, the energy sector will need to undergo an unprecedented transformation to keep our planet from warming more than 2°C (Lazarus et al., 2015:12). This transition is unprecedented not only in the time required, but also in the deep reimagining of energy infrastructure, fuel supplies, and societal patterns needed (Jasanoff and Kim, 2013, Hess, 2014:278). A cavernous rift exists between this alternative energy future and current business-as-usual practices, leading some to posit that we are living in an energy transition gap (Bryant et al., 2020:6). Thus, energy transitions can highlight “whether scientifically justifiable targets are economically and politically viable” (Gillard and Lock, 2017:649).

Politically, national leaders’ rhetoric often recognizes the urgency of climate change action, and many claim to be undergoing low-carbon energy transitions to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Warren et al., 2016). The Obama administration was one of the administrations that touted the importance of a clean energy transition (Munro, 2015:163, 174). Not only did this administration envision a clean energy future within its borders, but it also wanted to spread this vision to its neighbours, the Caribbean.

Under Obama “high-level political engagement with the Caribbean” was at an all-time high (Charles, 2015). One policy for this engagement was the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative (CESI). Announced by Vice-President Biden in 2014, this policy imagined a clean energy future for the Caribbean which relied on affordable, stable, and secure supplies of energy. To achieve these goals CESI pursued an all-of-the-above energy approach, which included US shale gas as part of a sustainable energy baseload (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015a). Thus, the clean energy future included renewable sources but also unconventional shale gas as a bridging solution meant to bridge the gap between current heavy fossil fuel reliance and a 100% renewable energy system (Ladd, 2017). Unconventional gas’s role as a bridging fuel has been increasingly questioned (Howarth et al., 2011:271, Ladd, 2017:26, Gürsan and de Gooyert, 2020). Furthermore, in order to realize the 1.5°C to 2°C warming scenarios, approximately

eighty percent of unconventional gas reserves must stay in the ground (McGlade and Ekins, 2015:190).

Despite this, in CESI's political communication shale gas is framed as a clean alternative and part of a sustainable energy transition for the Caribbean (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015a). As energy policy relies heavily on technical empirics and "hard data" (Ocelík and Osička, 2014:99), the interpretation of this data and how it is framed will reveal which "interpretations, values and worldviews" govern policymaking decisions (Williams and Sovacool, 2019:1). This is especially important as governments resist low-carbon transitions through employing communicative strategies to shape both *what* is discussed and *how* it is discussed (Geels, 2014). Using qualitative content analysis, this thesis explores dominant frames and framing strategies utilized by CESI political actors. In doing so, the twin prioritization of security and efficiency frames was revealed, confirming the neoliberalization of energy governance. Framing strategies also indicated that energy security, economic growth, and environmental protection could be pursued simultaneously, an assumption with worrying climate implications. Understanding the framing strategies and underlying messages cloaked in green and clean frames has never been so important as, in the words of Prime Minister Browne of Antigua and Barbuda, "we are literally teetering on the edge of despair" (Antigua Newsroom, 2021).

1.1 Scope and Aims

Drawing inspiration from Munro (2015) this paper will not aim to resolve the energy transition tensions within the Caribbean. Instead, this research aims to explore the frames and framing strategies utilized in political communication in CESI. Framing strategies and frames have been flagged as vital in energy policy as frames serve those who want to control the debate on the perception of an issue (Scanlan, 2017:1314). Essentially, frames can give empirics their meaning, a meaning which is often contested in the case of energy policy (Goldthau and Sovacool, 2016:51).

Political communication from 2014 to 2016 will be analysed to explore the frames and framing strategies utilized by CESI political actors. In doing so, the research hopes to explore values, motives, and norms that underlie the proposed policy. A secondary goal is to speculate on CESI's implications for the energy sector in the Caribbean and its impact on climate change

mitigation. The research will strive to answer the research question: *What dominant frames and core-framing strategies are present in political communication surrounding CESI?*

2 Background

2.1 Caribbean Energy Legacies: Between Shale Rock and a Hard Place

2.1.1 PetroCaribe

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) energy sectors are characterized by small fragmented markets with a heavy dependence on imported fossil fuels (Raghoo et al., 2018, Looney, 2020). In 2016, imported petroleum met 87 percent of Caribbean energy needs, except in Trinidad and Tobago where natural gas is plentiful (Looney, 2020:41). Since 2005 and the establishment of PetroCaribe, imported fuel needs have primarily been met by Venezuelan oil (Bryan, 2018). PetroCaribe represents an agreement where member states are supplied Venezuelan oil on advantageous terms (Restrepo, 2018:186). Members are not required to pay oil debts in hard currency, instead, they can pay in the primary good or service of their country (Petroleum Economist, 2014, Harrison and Popke, 2018:221). Exemplifying this rejection of “the prevailing ethos of neoliberalism” (Harrison and Popke, 2018:221), Dominica paid for forty percent of their oil imports with bananas (Bryan, 2009:152).

PetroCaribe’s legacy has not been all free-flowing oil camaraderie among South American and Caribbean neighbours. PetroCaribe stands accused of providing a mechanism for unchecked corruption, being a vehicle of ideological indoctrination, and a disruptor of market forces (Corrales and Penfold, 2015:99). A drop in global oil prices in 2014, and PetroCaribe’s founding father Chávez’s death in 2013, provided the perfect storm for PetroCaribe’s disintegration (Bryan, 2018:8). A vacuum was created in the Caribbean and new alternatives to PetroCaribe started to appear, most notably CESI.

2.1.2 Caribbean Energy Security Initiative

Against the backdrop of steadily declining oil prices, Vice President Biden announced CESI in June of 2014 (Office of the Vice President, 2014). The initiative aimed to boost energy security and promote sustainable economic growth in the region through attracting finance and increasing donor, government, and stakeholder coordination (U.S Department of State, 2016). To facilitate these goals, the US arranged two key energy summits and created a United States-Caribbean-Central American Task force (U.S Department of State, 2016, U.S. Caribbean and Central American Task Force, 2016). Through striving for Caribbean energy security, CESI would pursue the vision of creating a “secure, prosperous and democratic Western Hemisphere together” (English, 2018).

Allegedly, the policy aims for energy security to be derived from endogenous Caribbean energy sources namely, sun, wind, solar, and geothermal (U.S. Caribbean and Central American Task Force, 2016:3). However, CESI’s lack of energy source delimitation opens the door for other “clean” energy sources (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015b). Despite the Caribbean’s sizable renewable energy endowments and extreme vulnerability to climate change (Bryan, 2018:9), shale gas is proposed as part of a clean energy future. This could lock-in Caribbean countries into natural gas infrastructure’s lifetime of 20-50 years (Pérez et al., 2018 , Fitzgerald et al., 2019, Brauers et al., 2021). This timeline is incompatible with a 1.5°C or even a 2°C warming scenario (Carton, 2019:757-758). While lip service is paid to renewable energies, CESI’s heavy focus on clean energy paves the way for a foreign energy policy that remedies the fact that the US “produces more gas than it knows what to do with” (The Economist, 2012).

2.2 Shale Revolution

As Venezuelan oil influence seemed to be fading, the US was in the midst of an energy revolution (Blackwill and O'Sullivan, 2014). Since 2008, US production of unconventional shale gas has increased exponentially (Andreas, 2015). Innovative technology, coupled with falling global oil prices, meant that exploiting shale gas resources had become profitable (Gong, 2020:23-26). This explosion of unconventional gas exploration and exploitation is known as the shale revolution (Lee and West, 2014, Zhiltsov, 2017, Gong, 2020).

Shale gas is extracted through a controversial process called fracking (Ladd, 2017). Controversy surrounds this extraction method due to its environmental impacts on both local and global levels (Howarth et al., 2011:272, Scanlan, 2017:1313). While shale gas does have a lower carbon output, it produces more methane, a GHG that has 72 times higher global warming potential than carbon dioxide (Gürsan and de Gooyert, 2020).

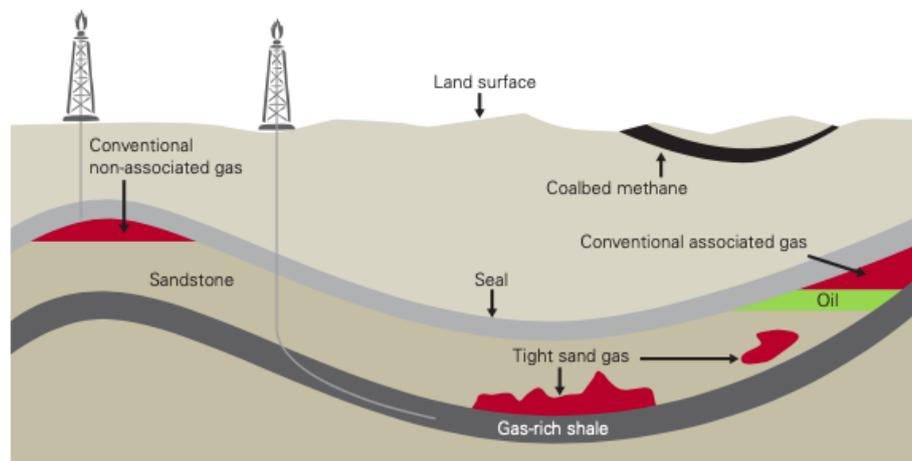


Figure 1: Simplified Geology of Natural Gas Extraction Processes (Source U.S Energy Information Administration (2011))

Despite its contested nature, by 2014 the US was living in the golden age of unconventional shale gas (Lee and West, 2014). Under the Obama administration, the US underwent the “largest domestic oil production increase during any presidency in US history” (Rapier, 2016). This was due largely in part to the administration’s all-of-the-above energy policy, which rebranded unconventional shale gas as clean energy (Ladd, 2017:28). Booming domestic oil and gas production meant that the US seemed poised to meet Nixon’s 1980 goal of US energy independence (Ladd, 2017:17). Inching closer towards energy self-reliance had enormous geopolitical ramifications (Nye, 2014). An energy-independent US could add energy to its foreign policy toolbelt, instead of focusing on traditional goals like securing stable energy supplies (Rossbach, 2018:114). This new tool was utilized to suppress the influence of “political opponents such as Russia, Venezuela, and Iran” (Gong, 2020:31). The shale revolution paved the way for the US to become a potential energy superpower (Rossbach, 2018) and allowed clean energy policies to be promoted in places like the Caribbean.

2.3 Justification and Relation to Previous Literature

Riding high on the clean energy revolution wave, the US signed onto the landmark Paris Climate Agreement (PCA) in 2015 (Denchak, 2021). Some of the most outspoken signatories were SIDS, stressing the importance of climate action needed to keep the planet well below 1.5°C warming (Burkett, 2015). As the PCA is non-binding the responsibility lies with signatory states to deliver on their commitments (Denchak, 2021). Currently, the energy policies of industrialised states are unviable under a 2°C warming scenario (Warren et al., 2016:1). Transforming the energy sector, which represents two-thirds of GHG emissions, will be crucial if states want to deliver on the PCA (Susskind et al., 2020:7).

Previous literature has examined how states can resist low-carbon energy transitions through employing policy-making tactics of bridging (Low and Boettcher, 2020:3), scalar shifting (Carton 2019), and strategic delay (Chailleux, 2020). By employing the politics of delay and bridging, energy policy can allow for the continued use of fossil fuels by relying on negative emissions in the future and allow for fossil fuels to play a bridging role in energy transitions (Carton, 2019:760, Ladd, 2017). Negative emissions are often promised to be delivered through carbon capture technologies or unforeseen technological advances that will “fix” climate change (Carton, 2019). While this doesn’t provide an exhaustive list of resistance strategies (Hess, 2014, Nyberg et al. 2018¹), these strategies coincide with the focus of this study; how communicative strategies are utilized by political actors to justify their energy policy (Geels, 2014). On a domestic level, political actors’ frames and framing strategies are attributed to the continued use of fossil fuels across the European continent (Hilson, 2015, Goldthau and Sovacool, 2016, Brauers et al., 2021).

The continued pursuit of fossil fuel-intensive energy policies in industrialized countries has been attributed to the phenomenon of carbon lock-in (Unruh, 2000, Seto et al., 2016). Extensive carbon-intensive infrastructure, technology, and lifestyles create path dependencies that can persist even when alternative energy sources, such as renewables, become cost-competitive (Arbuthnott and Dolter, 2013:9). Carbon lock-in can also occur on a discursive level (Metze, 2018, Buschmann and Oels, 2019, Kraushaar-Friesen and Busch, 2020), leaving little room for

¹ See the aforementioned sources for a political coalition and a bloc perspective.

imagining alternative transition pathways (Ampe et al., 2020:156). Frames will be analysed to discover these locked-in justifications as “frames are considered to mobilize actors and legitimize their activities” (Rasmussen et al., 2017:310). While it exceeds the scope of this study to discuss whether the US government suffers from a discursive carbon lock-in, the possibility justifies studying how energy policies with an explicit environmental focus are communicated.

What differentiates the proposed thesis from previous work is the focus on foreign energy policy as opposed to domestic (Isoaho and Karhunmaa, 2019). As the US is the largest producer of oil and gas globally, their energy policy will play a crucial role in climate change mitigation (Downie, 2019:2). US energy policy in the Caribbean can indicate what a self-declared clean energy positive administration envisions for the energy future, despite its potentially limiting scope (Ladd, 2017:23). Understanding the frames utilized by political actors when communicating about CESI can help reveal how clean energy policies are justified through dominant frames and core framing strategies.

3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework encompassing this study draws on previous frames identified in domestic energy policy communication (Scrase and Ockwell, 2010) as well as core framing strategies (Benford and Snow, 2000). Scrase and Ockwell's (2010) identification of primary energy policy goals will be substantiated through additional literature. Before delving into the core theoretical framework that will inform this thesis, key concepts will be defined.

3.1 Concepts

3.1.1 Frames and Framing

Frames and framing have been employed to understand social movements (Benford and Snow, 2000), political communication (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007), and controversial fossil fuel development (Nyberg et al., 2020), demonstrating the versatility of frame application. Frames are not inherently tied to an ideological camp, and thus both sides of the debate can mobilize the same frames (Polletta and Ho, 2006). This ambiguity allows for framing in energy policy to use “market competition; national energy security; environment and climate change” frames all at the same time (Greenaway, 2011:426). Throughout this study, following a much-cited interpretation, frames will be defined as something which selects:

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)

To ground this more abstract definition: if policymakers widely employ energy affordability frames, instead of environmental consequence ones, solutions that achieve low energy costs over environmental protection can be prioritized. Thus, policymaking is conceptualized as a

complex process where frames are “a central tool to shape representations of an issue and of its policy solution” (Chailleux, 2020:175).

3.1.2 Neoliberalization of Energy Governance

Following Furnaro (2020:952), the neoliberalization of energy governance refers to “a process of expanding the role of the market and the private sector in the organization of energy systems”. Essentially, neoliberal energy transitions are predicated on the assumption that market-led solutions will provide the best energy access and prices (Newell and Phillips, 2016, Furnaro, 2020). This phenomenon can be referred to as the “marketization of energy governance” (Warren et al., 2016:9). Under this agenda, competition is highly valued and technological innovations are crucial in delivering energy transitions. This follows the entrepreneurial nature that neoliberal values often emphasize, namely the paramount role of competition (Steger and Roy, 2010:12). In neoliberal energy governance, this entrepreneurial nature is not confined to private sector actors but can also extend to states themselves (Mazzucato, 2015). States spur technological innovation by taking on the initial risk that private sector actors would normally avoid (Mazzucato, 2015:2-3); although ultimately, the private sector and the market are prioritized in bringing energy transitions to fruition.

3.2 Key Frames in Energy Policy

Scrase and Ockwell (2010) have identified four major goals energy policy pursues – access, efficiency, security, and environmental. Through their analysis of domestic UK energy policy, they posit that “in industrial countries, however, all four goals are likely to have significant influence” (Scrase and Ockwell, 2010:2228). These four categories represent a departure point for identifying dominant frames utilized by political actors surrounding CESI.

3.2.1 Access

Access frames primarily work on two levels: affordability and efficiency of access (Scrase and Ockwell, 2010:2229). Affordability of access frames emphasize high energy costs and the need to lower these costs. Correspondingly, efficiency frames focus on lowering prices through

increased efficiency measures. Often, affordability frames can subsume efficiency frames. This occurs when affordability is framed as benefiting from free markets and competition (Scrase and Ockwell, 2010:2229). Therefore, access frames focus discussions on facilitating functioning markets and maximising economic growth (Mercer et al., 2014:284).

3.2.2 Efficiency

Efficiency frames include both the efficiency of markets and energy infrastructure (Scrase and Ockwell, 2010). In a privatized and liberal environment, energy market efficiency is overwhelmingly delivered through free-market mechanisms (Helm, 2002:184). Therefore, market frames focus on providing economic growth through “opening up energy markets to competition” (Scrase and Ockwell, 2010:2231).

Efficiency of infrastructure frames focus on improving energy networks and increasing the modernity of existing infrastructure. Technological innovations can improve the performance of energy systems and maximize output (Scrase and Ockwell, 2010:2231).

3.2.3 Security

Scrase and Ockwell (2010) posit that energy security frames fall under two core imperatives of the state: promoting national security and securing the state in the face of international states’ volatility. This versatile frame has been widely identified in previous literature (Stephan, 2017, Ocelík and Osička, 2014). Its versatility stems from the fact that energy security is notoriously hard to define (Raghoo et al., 2018:94). Consequently, energy security frames are used in a variety of ways. Energy security has been brought up in debates about Russian renewable energy strategies (Salonen, 2018), shale gas politics in France and Québec (Chailleux, 2020), and recent liquified natural gas (LNG) expansion in Germany (Brauers et al., 2021). As it has been used by all parties in energy debates, from proponents of shale gas to renewable energy, energy security frames occupy a central role in energy policy (Scrase and Ockwell, 2010:2229).

3.2.4 Environmental

For Scrase and Ockwell (2010) environmental objectives fall under two main frames, eco-modernist and eco-radical. They derive this distinction from work by Dryzek (1997), and for eco-modernists, environmental impacts can be minimized through market intervention, and climate change is viewed as a market failure (Scrase and Ockwell, 2010:2231). As such, frames are focused on how energy policy can deliver both economic growth and environmental goals. This mirrors ecological modernization logic (Hajer, 1995) and for the purposes of this thesis, the two will be used interchangeably.

Contrastingly, eco-radical frames focus on a societal restructuring based on degrowth principles (Leipprand et al., 2015:3-4). An eco-radical frame would emphasise that environmental protection cannot occur when economic growth goes unchecked. It should be noted that even when eco-radicalism was previously present, it can be co-opted and subsumed by ecological modernization (Leipprand et al., 2015:16).

3.3 Core Framing Strategies

The second dimension of the theoretical framework is informed by theory on core framing strategies (Benford and Snow, 2000). Drawing inspiration from social movement theory, the three core framing strategies that will be examined are diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational (Benford and Snow, 2000). The distinction between the three strategies is outlined below:

Diagnosis refers to statements identifying the nature of the problem. Prognosis statements offer solutions for the identified problem. Motivational statements identify which goals are pursued with the proposed solution (Froehlich and Rüdiger, 2006:20)

These three strategies are clearly interlinked, and the identification of the problem is said to influence the range of solutions that can be prescribed (Benford and Snow, 2000:616). Furthermore, the pursuit of core framing strategies attempts to form “consensus mobilization” around an issue (Benford and Snow, 2000:615). Energy policy often grapples with contested meanings, such as environmental impacts of certain energy policies, so providing this consensus is paramount for political actors who aim to legitimize policy through their frames (Goldthau and Sovacool, 2016:51). Therefore, frames fall under core framing strategies and are heavily pursued by political actors to “reconstruct meaning” (Bomberg, 2017:75). Taken

together, frames and core framing strategies can be utilized by actors to shape what the issue is, what should be done about it, and why it should be done.

Framing strategies are key to shaping environmental debates, due to climate change's nature as a "wicked problem" that escapes definition (Kirby and O'Mahony, 2017:1). A salient example is if climate change is diagnosed in terms of a lack of energy-efficient light bulbs then the responsibility falls on citizens and a clear solution is provided (Eriksson and Reischl, 2019:70). Core framing strategies have been utilized to understand environmental and climate change counter-movements (Cormier and Tindall, 2005, Wahlström et al., 2013), domestic governmental resistance to energy transition (Geels, 2014), and Chinese and European Union evolving climate change policies (Gippner, 2014). Thus, this study aims to move beyond domestic energy policy to see if the same frames and framing strategies are present when regional energy policy is considered.

4 Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This research will employ a case study design focusing on political communication surrounding CESI under the Obama administration. Political communication is understood to be “all forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives” (McNair, 2003:4). Through examining political communication, communicative strategies that shape both *what* is being discussed and *how* it is being discussed can be revealed (Geels, 2014:29). Utilizing a case study design will enable in-depth analysis (Creswell, 2014:14) and will allow for the collection of contextual information (De Vaus, 2001:50). A thorough search of the literature revealed little research on CESI, so this thesis aims to aid in the description and exploration of the case (De Vaus, 2001).

4.2 Research Method

This study chooses to employ the method of qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is sensitive to the context in which a text is produced and helps reveal the “norms, values, motives and purposes” which underlie communication (Halperin and Heath, 2017:347). Communication is understood to convey meaning both implicitly and explicitly and these meanings can be categorized in textual data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005:1278). Inherently, the assumption is made that this method can help “expose the meanings, motives, and purposes embedded within the text, and to infer valid hidden or underlying meanings of interest to the researcher” (Halperin and Heath, 2017:347). Thus, ontologically, this study conceptualizes language as power-laden and as something that is utilized purposefully by actors to meet their goals (Munro, 2015:27).

4.3 Data Collection

Data was collected through the keyword search “Caribbean Energy Security Initiative” on US governmental web pages. Three sampling rounds occurred and the final sample consisted of thirty-eight data sources ranging from the announcement of CESI in 2014 to the end of the second Obama administration in 2016. All sources were communicated by politicians or political actors and thus deemed to constitute political communication (McNair, 2003:4). The data was then classified and the distribution can be seen below:

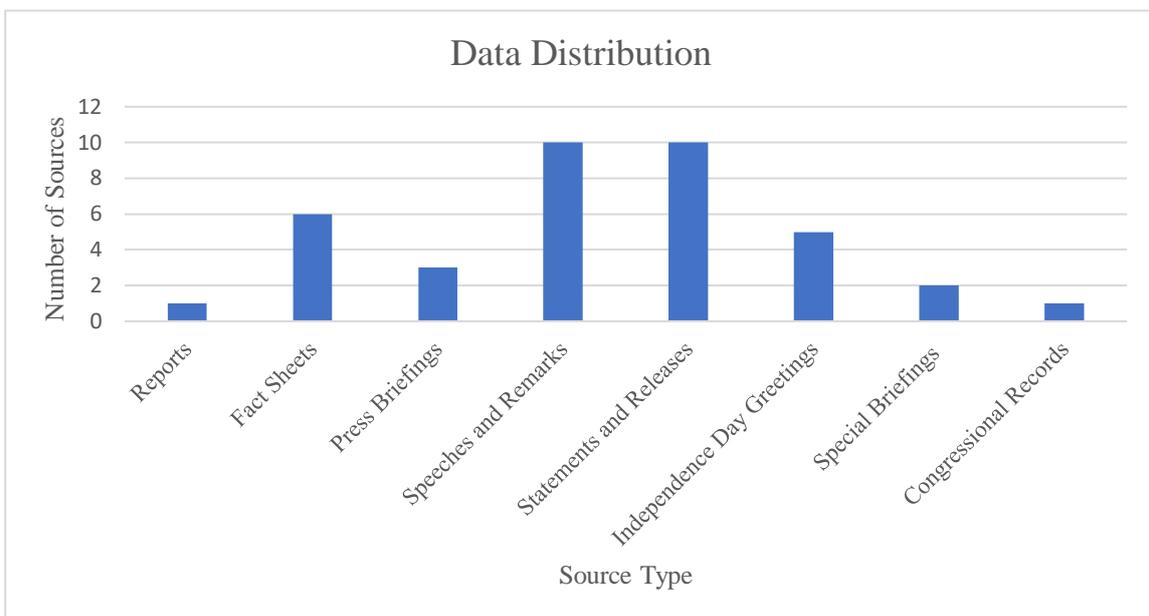


Figure 2: Empirical Data Distribution

A further summary of the data, including sources and key speakers, can be seen in Appendix A and B. As all data procurement occurred through widely available governmental open-source sites, no ethical issues were present in data collection.

4.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis will occur through the identification of frames and core framing strategies using qualitative content analysis. Analysis will be presented through key quotations from political actors, the favoured mode of data presentation for qualitative content analysis (Halperin and Heath, 2017:353). Through analysing frames and framing strategies, the study will “attempt to

inferentially link the textual data to the specific events, behaviour, or phenomena that are of interest” (Halperin and Heath, 2017:353).

4.4.1 Coding

A key component of qualitative content analysis is coding, which identifies text, labels it, and then categorizes it into a “thematic idea” (Halperin and Heath, 2017:349-350). In the case of frames, codes are identified through two methodological approaches, deductive and inductive coding (Djerf-Pierre et al., 2016:641). As noted by Halperin and Heath (2014:350) it is possible for researchers to move from one coding approach to another, so this research will use both coding approaches.

When analysing dominant frames, both deductive coding and inductive coding were utilized. A first round of coding occurred based on frames identified by Scrase and Ockwell (2010) and other previous literature. A second round of inductive coding then suggested new frames and was solidified through a final coding round which confirmed both deductive and inductive frames. The intended audience for the political communication was also inductively coded so as not to lose sight of the context in which communication was delivered (Scheyvens, 2014:99). Deductive coding was used exclusively when identifying core framing strategies, utilizing Benford and Snow’s (2000) categories.

Documents were studied in their entirety and then keywords and excerpts were identified (Halperin and Heath, 2017:348). Framing strategies’ recording unit was excerpts following Lindekilde (2014) recommendation. However, for frames, the recording unit was both excerpts and keywords as a paragraph can encompass competing ideas (Halperin and Heath, 2017:348). This ambiguity needed to be accounted for and as a result, the coding protocol includes both keywords and indicative examples of frames. As a result of this ambiguity, both in the recording unit and in the combination of inductive and deductive coding, the author recognizes it is essential to provide “explicit definitions, examples and coding rules” (Mayring, 2004:15). Therefore, a complete coding protocol is included in Appendix C.

4.4.2 Limitations

A limitation of qualitative content analysis, when no inter-coders are present, is replicability and verification (Mayring, 2004). To attempt to address this, a coding protocol can be accessed in Appendix C. This is done in the hopes of acknowledging the lack of external coder validity as well as pursuing transparency in coding practices (Halperin and Heath, 2017:355).

Due to practicality issues, this study can only examine one aspect of political communication (McNair, 2003). A more comprehensive study would include other dimensions of political communication, such as media coverage and citizen reactions within both the US and the Caribbean. As a result, generalizability from this case is limited (De Vaus, 2001:237). Nonetheless, it is important to note the aim of this study is not to suggest a better energy policy for the Caribbean but merely to challenge the green package CESI came wrapped in.

4.5 Reflexivity

As an undergraduate student with a strong interest in environmental and energy justice, my worldview posits the inherent interconnection between the environment, the market, and global capitalism. Importantly, a fundamental assumption underlies this study, inspired by political ecologist Robbins, and it is “there are better, less coercive, less exploitative and more sustainable ways of doing things” (Robbins, 2019:17).

5 Analysis

The following analysis will identify and interpret dominant frames and present the core framing strategies utilized by political actors in their CESI communications. First, dominant frames will be presented with the addition of the frame frequency that certain actors utilized while speaking to different audiences. The analysis finishes by examining the overlap between dominant frames and three core framing strategies: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational. The implications of these frames and framing strategies for the energy transition in the Caribbean will also be speculated upon.

5.1 Dominant Frames and Intended Audience

The frequency of frames and subframes and how often they are evoked to certain audiences can be seen below.

Frame	Subframe	Frequency	Total
Access	Energy Access	30	90
	Affordability	39	
	Energy Efficiency	21	
Efficiency	Infrastructure	59	281
	Institutions*	105	
	Markets	117	
Environment	Environmental	18	87
	Eco-Modernist	68	
	Eco-Radical	1	
Security	Energy Security	50	128
	National	9	
	Regional*	12	
	Shared Interests*	57	
Opportunity	New Opportunities*	65	75
	Imperative*	10	

*Table 1: Frequency of Dominant Frames and Subframes, * indicates discovered through inductive coding*

Frames	Intended Audience				
	<i>Press</i>	<i>Caribbean Leaders</i>	<i>Western Hemisphere Leaders</i>	<i>Congress</i>	<i>Energy Companies</i>
Access	27	19	7	2	3
Efficiency	92	45	27	0	5
Environment	21	10	13	1	5
Security	35	22	10	12	5
Opportunity	7	36	3	4	6

Table 2: Frequency of Dominant Frames and their Intended Audience

5.1.1 Efficiency, Efficiency, Efficiency

The overarching and versatile *efficiency frame* was the most dominant in CESI political communication. Efficiency frames operated on three levels, institutional, market, and infrastructure. The importance of market and infrastructural efficiency were complemented by the subframe of institutional efficiency and were all deemed to possess synergy (Scrase and Ockwell, 2010). Essentially, increased *efficiency in institutions* allows for improved *market efficiency*. Increased investments derived from unhindered markets are then invested in *efficient infrastructure* which lowers energy costs and stimulates economic growth. Thus, increased efficiency across the board will deliver CESI goals.

You need to update and modernize not just the physical infrastructure, but your institutions and regulations (Biden, 2015)

The private sector can play a critical role in providing much of the capital needed, with governments creating the conditions to attract that capital (U.S. Caribbean and Central American Task Force, 2016)

Market efficiency was the most prevalent of the subframes, following previous findings that US climate and energy policy heavily favours market mechanisms (Kirby and O’Mahony, 2017:152, 165). Thus, CESI complies with the values of the marketization of energy governance (Warren et al., 2016:9). Where CESI’s values differ is the addition of investment being framed as dependent on good governance principles and cooperation.

Investment depends on good governance in the sector, in the form of stable and transparent policy, regulatory, and legal regimes ... (Office of the Vice President, 2014)

5.1.2 Security Frames

When presenting CESI, political actors often invoke *security* frames. Emphasis is placed on CESI complementing both national security interests at home and the security of the regional neighbourhood. Caribbean energy security is innately tied to US national security and often the entire Western Hemisphere. Thus, security frames match the core imperatives of energy policy, promoting national security and security from international states' volatility (Scrase and Ockwell, 2010).

It's – frankly, it's in our own selfish self-interest to actually promote the security and economic prosperity of the countries of the Caribbean, because what happens in the Caribbean is, I think, important to the national security of the United States (Gonzalez, 2016)

With smart choices and investments in energy and infrastructure, we can seize the same opportunity for the region. We can lay the foundations for a secure energy future that will lift the fortunes of people throughout our hemisphere (Biden, 2016)

However, for CESI the most dominant security subframe was *shared interests*. Through this frame, the US and the Caribbean are presented as equal partners with a relationship based on mutual respect and friendship, a distinct break from past US-Caribbean relations (Biden, 2016). CESI provides a path forward for new engagement, where the US is a willing partner to help the Caribbean achieve their shared energy security goals.

You all have the interests of your people at heart. We share your desire. We're going to try our best to be the best partner we can possibly be in order to have you reach the objective that is within your reach, energy independence in the Caribbean (Biden, 2015)

We are bound by friendship and shared values, and by family. And we have a great stake in each other's success (Obama, 2015)

As it takes two to tango, the *shared interest* subframe was largely employed in political communication aimed at Caribbean leaders. When doing so, political actors employed the rhetorical strategy of scalar shifts where CESI was equated to simultaneously providing security for the region, the hemisphere, and the planet (Nyberg et al., 2018:2). This tactic is often employed in climate change framing, as climate change operates on a global level, yet solutions are tied to national and regional decision-making (Nyberg et al., 2018:2).

The United States and the Caribbean do all of this, and more, together, as partners, with no hidden agenda. We do it because of our shared goals and objectives; for the pursuit of affordable and cleaner energy is in our collective interest. The development of a variety of sustainable energy sources can only benefit the well-being of our citizens, and of our planet (Biden, 2015)

And I know that that this is going to serve the interest of the American people, the Caribbean people, and the planet at the same time (Hochstein, 2015)

The *shared interests* subframe mirrors the *cooperation rationale* identified by Fischhendler et al. (2015), where Israel framed solar farms as presenting an avenue for regional energy independence and achieving climate goals. Similarly, CESI is framed as a cooperative policy that provides energy security and environmental protection for the United States, the Caribbean, and the world. The *shared interests* frame constructs a global collective identity where rejecting CESI means rejecting saving the planet (Mang-Benza and Hunsberger, 2020).

5.1.3 Opportunity Knocking

This new chapter in US-Caribbean relations is further explored through the *opportunity* frame. Through this frame, the Caribbean and the US are standing at the precipice of a new energy paradigm (Nye, 2014). Historic shifts in global energy markets mean that CESI can present an “unprecedented opportunity” to the Caribbean.

Mexico, Canada and the United States is the new epicenter of energy -- not the Arabian Peninsula. It is the new epicenter of energy in the 21st century (Biden, 2015)

So taken together, these changes create a moment of energy opportunity that hasn't existed. Progress is possible. And it's possible to begin now -- not a decade from now, but now (Biden, 2015)

Previous literature has identified the salience of economic opportunity frames on national, industry, and household levels (Blackler and Chen, Goldthau and Sovacool, 2016, Djerf-Pierre et al., 2016). However, CESI's *opportunity* frame expands from a purely economic level as it also appeals to ideas of shared progress. Similar to the *shared interest* frame, *opportunity* frames place CESI as benefiting the entire hemisphere.

We will only seize the incredible opportunities of this century. We will only realize the full potential of this hemisphere if we stay at it. We demand of our friends appropriate

behavior, and we commit -- based on our capacity, which is immense -- to help them meet their needs (Biden, 2016)

But I believe today we are at a dawning of a new era for the people of the hemisphere - our hemisphere (Biden, 2016)

Appeals to collective identity through “we” and “our” emphasize the collective nature of this opportunity. The utilization of collective identity has been deemed one of the most powerful tools of persuasion in political actors’ toolboxes (Mang-Benza and Hunsberger, 2020:520). Unlike domestic energy debates, CESI operates as a foreign energy policy and therefore will only be successful with the consent and sustained effort of Caribbean states. Strategies of persuasion thus, through the *opportunity* frame, are overwhelmingly targeted towards Caribbean leaders.

5.1.4 Environmental Frames

CESI’s relation to the environment is framed almost exclusively in ecological modernist terms (Hajer, 1995). *Eco-modernist* frames emphasized CESI’s ability to provide environmental protection well delivering energy security and market efficiency goals. Essentially, CESI relies on the ecological modernist belief that environmental protection and economic growth can go hand in hand (Munro, 2015:190).

An investment environment that is clear, stable, competitive, and fair, while protecting social and environmental interests, is a precursor for governments to deliver an energy future for citizens (U.S. Caribbean and Central American Task Force, 2016)

The United States ... joins to support efforts in the Caribbean and Central America to achieve a more secure energy future that supports economic growth and the environment (Office of the Vice President, 2016)

Eco-radical frames based on degrowth principles (Leipprand et al., 2015:3-4) were not present at all in CESI communication. Only one acknowledgement was made that the Caribbean is “a particularly vulnerable region to climate change” (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015a). A lack of eco-radical framing mirrors that when ecological modernization fully embraces capitalist logic radical environmentalism falls to the wayside (Munro, 2015:90).

5.1.5 Access Frames

Access, following Scrase and Ockwell's (2010) division, fell into two subframes: *affordability* and *efficiency*. These two subframes were not presented equally, and energy affordability was emphasized over efficiency. The prevalence of affordability frames reiterated energy policy's imperative of delivering economic growth to the region through access to an affordable, secure, and diverse energy supply (Scrase and Ockwell 2010).

The availability of affordable energy is viewed as a prerequisite for permanent transformational shift in the energy paradigm for both regions (U.S. Caribbean and Central American Task Force, 2016)

If we lower the energy prices in the Caribbean it has positive implications for the region's economic prosperity and opportunity (Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, 2016)

To achieve this affordable energy, a competitive and functioning market was deemed necessary, following neoliberal energy governance logic (Mercer et al., 2014:284, Furnaro, 2020). Without access to affordable energy, economic growth is framed as limited. Simply put by Biden:

Economies don't grow when you can't turn on the lights (Biden, 2016)

5.2 Dominant Frames Summary

While the dominant frames presented did confirm the existence of frames identified by Scrase and Ockwell (2010) they did not appear to hold equal significance as they predicted in the case of industrialized countries. Importantly, *efficiency* and *security* frames were dominant over all others. This denotes the priority placed on these two aspects by US political actors and reveals neoliberal energy governance mentalities (Furnaro, 2020). When speaking to Caribbean leaders and the press, *shared interest* and *opportunity* frames were emphasized. A collective identity was thus constructed through political communication (Mang-Benza and Hunsberger, 2020:520), where the US and the Caribbean were framed as sharing similar energy security goals. Through concentrating on these frames, CESI is framed as a policy that delivers affordable and secure energy in a way that is consistent with the shared interests of the Caribbean and the US.

Equally important are frames which were deemphasized. A strong emphasis on *eco-modernist* frames and a complete lack of *eco-radical* frames indicated the superiority of eco-modernist logic in CESI. This confirms Scrase and Ockwell’s (2010) argument that energy policy’s primary goal is to deliver economic growth. As frames are “developed and deployed to achieve a specific purpose” (Benford and Snow, 2000:624), dominant frames exhibit that CESI focused on the twin goals of efficiency and security, and environmental goals took a back-seat. Therefore, the US imagining of the Caribbean’s energy future seems consistent with a neoliberal emphasis on market and private sector solutions for delivering energy transitions.

5.3 Core Framing Strategies

The following section will present the core framing strategies and examine the implications CESI’s envisioned energy future could have for the energy transition in the Caribbean. To facilitate analysis dominant frames were overlapped with framing strategies. This crosstabulation can be seen below in Table 3.

Core Framing Strategies	Dominant Frames and Subframes			Frequency of Overlap
	Access			
	Energy Access	Access Affordability	Access Efficiency	<i>Total</i>
Diagnostic	14	23	8	45
Prognostic	5	9	9	23
Motivational	7	10	7	24
	Efficiency			
	Efficiency of Infrastructure	Efficiency of Markets	Efficiency of Institutions	<i>Total</i>
Diagnostic	11	33	19	63
Prognostic	34	58	78	170
Motivational	22	25	31	78
	Environment			
	Environmental	Eco-Modernist	Radical	<i>Total</i>
Diagnostic	5	14	0	19

Prognostic	1	25	0	26	
Motivational	5	37	0	42	
	Security				
	Energy Security	National Security	Regional Security	Shared Interests	<i>Total</i>
Diagnostic	29	6	8	14	57
Prognostic	3	0	1	5	9
Motivational	13	0	7	18	38
	Opportunity				
	New Opportunities	Imperative	<i>Total</i>		
Diagnostic	18	1	19		
Prognostic	9	4	13		
Motivational	11	0	11		

Table 3: Overlap Between Dominant Frames and Core Framing Strategies

5.4 Diagnostic

Diagnostic framing strategies were present in political actors' diagnosis of the problem as well as their diagnosis of the Caribbean context in which they were acting. Two dominant diagnoses appeared, the implicit, and sometimes explicit, role of Venezuela in perpetuating Caribbean energy insecurity and high energy prices hindering economic development. This was revealed through high overlaps between *security* and *access* frames and diagnostic strategies. The larger context was diagnosed through *opportunity* frames, where a historic energy moment for the Western hemisphere must be taken advantage of.

5.4.1 Imported Venezuelan Oil as a Source of Insecurity

Imported Venezuelan oil, through PetroCaribe, plays a predominant role in the Caribbean's energy supply (Bryan, 2018). As PetroCaribe attempts to envision a Caribbean with limited US influence (Cederlöf and Kingsbury, 2019:126), it may be no surprise that it is viewed antagonistically within the US. Venezuelan oil is framed as a bringer of insecurity which exposes the Caribbean to "disruptive energy shocks that result from fluctuations in imported oil prices" (Fitzpatrick, 2015). Through this *security* frame Venezuelan oil is unreliable, expensive and an undesirable energy supply for the Caribbean.

Subsidized Venezuelan oil has done nothing to help the Caribbean address their need for a diversified energy strategy and instead has kept much of the region beholden to the Venezuelan strongmen (House of Representatives, 2016)

Venezuela has used Petrocaribe as a scheme, a financial scheme, to leverage supply in oil and fuels with loans that indebt all of these countries in order to leverage that for political benefit, to exact their leverage for political decisions throughout the Caribbean-our neighbors (Hochstein, 2016)

By framing Venezuela as unstable and on the verge of collapse, the US is able to position itself as a “steadfast partner and friend” (Kerry, 2015). Despite Venezuela’s similar neighbour status Hochstein (2016) places emphasis on *our* neighbour. Thus, Caribbean countries are presented with a choice between an unreliable and authoritarian partner, and a neighbourly, dependable US that has extensive shared interests with the Caribbean. Not all political actors were as explicit in their communication surrounding Venezuela’s role in creating energy insecurity for the Caribbean. Instead, veiled references were utilized such as “flawed financing schemes” (Biden, 2015), and “the dependence you still have on a single supplier” (Biden, 2015). Despite not mentioning Venezuela by name, diagnostics centred around high energy costs that cripple the region and how this stems from a disruption of market forces, common in neoliberal critiques of PetroCaribe (Corrales and Penfold, 2015).

And a particular focus today is going to be one of the greatest barriers to development in the Caribbean, and that is expensive, often unreliable and carbon-intensive energy. (Obama, 2015)

The high cost of energy diverts resources away from economic development, reduces competitiveness, and renders the energy sectors of Caribbean nations vulnerable to supply shocks (Office of the Vice President, 2014)

By not mentioning Venezuela when speaking to external audiences, such as Caribbean leaders or the press, political actors were able to present CESI through the *shared interest* frame. This divergence when speaking to internal versus external audiences emphasizes the legitimacy that the *shared interest* frame can lend to US engagement in the Caribbean.

So I’ve been asked before is this something that’s aimed at Venezuela? And the reality is that this isn’t an anti-Venezuela strategy; it’s a pro-Caribbean strategy (Gonzalez, 2016)

Through the diagnosis of high-cost Venezuelan oil causing energy insecurity in the region, CESI can pursue solutions that are consistent with a neoliberal imagining of energy governance

(Harrison and Popke, 2018:226). Harmful Venezuelan engagement in the Caribbean should thus be replaced with competitive, free markets that deliver the best energy prices to the region.

5.4.2 We Are Living in a Historic Time

Diagnostic framing was also used by political actors to situate CESI's context. The collapse of Venezuelan oil and the shale revolution provided a unique moment for the US to enter the energy vacuum left in the Caribbean.

The drop in energy prices really has led a lot of countries in the Caribbean to look to the stock market right now rather than rely on PetroCaribe for their financing needs (Gonzalez and Lynch, 2016)

Through presenting a diagnosis of Caribbean countries actively searching for alternative energy solutions, US engagement is legitimized as well as welcomed in the region. The position of the US, standing on the back of the shale revolution, is also subject to diagnostic framing. *Opportunity frames* are heavily emphasised, where *environmental frames* are utilized the least in diagnostic framing. From this, the eco-modernist logic is implied that the opportunity that the energy revolution presents simply outweighs the potential environmental implications (Dryzek, 1997). This is solidified in the fact abundant shale gas is framed as something to be taken advantage of.

We're in the midst of a seismic shift in the global economy: the ascendancy of the Americas as the epicenter of energy production in the world (Biden, 2015)

We should help our neighbors take advantage of abundant and cheap natural gas and new, advanced, clean wind and solar technologies (House of Representatives, 2016)

The construction of the context in which CESI operates reveals which solutions are seen as possible. Thus, as the shale revolution is framed to present a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, solutions will be prescribed where this context must be taken advantage of.

5.5 Prognostic

In line with the diagnosis of an overreliance on high-cost imported Venezuelan oil, solutions focused on diversifying energy sources and making energy more affordable. These goals are delivered through a strong reliance on institutional and market efficiency, as observed in the incredibly high overlap between prognostic strategies and *efficiency* frames. Increasing these two efficiencies is framed as complementary where an increase in institutional, regulatory, and policy reform is said to create a more attractive investment climate. A second solution is indicated through the high presence of *eco-modernist* frames, which is observed when CESI solutions are grounded in an all-of-the-above approach.

5.5.1 Complementing Market Efficiency

The paramount role of the private sector in providing a vehicle for energy transition through CESI is explicitly stated by political actors. Financing needs are seen as too great to be met through government finance and international institutions alone so, naturally, the private sector must be utilized to fill this gap.

The point that we're making is that that is way beyond any one donor to address (Gonzalez and Lynch, 2016)

Government money and targeted international aid can and must be available -- is helpful, but the private sector is where the money is (Biden, 2015)

As solutions are based on private sector funding, creating the conditions to attract this type of investment are needed to realize CESI's vision of an energy secure Caribbean. Emphasis on stripping down barriers to investment, through institutional reform is seen as "key to unlocking private sector investment" (Gonzalez and Lynch, 2016). Solutions are thus consistent with a neoliberal reimagining of energy governance in the Caribbean, one that is delivered through private sector mechanisms and regulatory reform (Harrison and Popke, 2018:226). This accentuation of economic frames can have concerning climate implications as short-term gain is often prioritized when climate change solutions are inherently long-term (Gillard and Lock, 2017:639).

The conditions to create investment are imagined in terms of policy, legal and regulatory reforms. Therefore, *institutional efficiency* frames are also alluded to in prognostic framing

strategies. A strong political will is deemed essential for CESI's solutions to create a sustained energy transition in the Caribbean.

At the end of the day for any of these energy solutions to be successful you need to see the political will of the host country in pursuing the reforms, the regulatory changes and the legal structures... (Nakagawa, 2016)

It takes hard work and it takes smart policies. It takes responsible leadership, people who have a vision who are willing to articulate that vision and take the risk of going out and running for office, which is not easy in today's world (Kerry, 2016)

Hinging solutions on political reform is reminiscent of good governance agendas which express approval "for a type of government (usually democracy) and its related political values (Smith, 2007:4). Therefore, as market and institutional efficiency are key pushing points for CESI's solutions, it can create narrow conceptualizations of energy transitions where no radical alternatives are available (Ampe et al., 2020:156).

5.5.2 An all-of-the-above Caribbean Energy Policy

The approach that we've taken has been to actually support an all-of-the-above approach. ... So for some countries, the solution is potentially natural gas. It's not going to be for others. (Gonzalez, 2016)

The all-of-the-above energy rhetoric that surrounded the Obama administration (Ladd, 2017:28) bled into CESI. CESI's solutions include shale gas as part of a sustainable energy baseload which reduces current dependencies on "dirty fuel oil" (Hochstein, 2016). Shale gas meets affordability criteria due to the comparative advantage the US holds in international gas prices (Auping et al., 2016:390). It is therefore framed as part of a bridging solution to help wean the Caribbean off high-cost, unreliable Venezuelan oil.

There's also LNG exporters in the United States with licenses to export to any of your countries, whether you have a free trade agreement or not. If you want gas, go talk to them. (Biden, 2015)

The U.S. Department of Energy supports the Caribbean in establishing a market and supply chain for natural gas to assist the region in moving away from a heavy reliance on petroleum for power generation and towards cleaner-burning natural gas (Office of the Vice President, 2016)

Pursuing this all-of-the-above approach can potentially disrupt true alternative energy pathways and results in them being sidelined politically and by policymaking bodies (Geels 2014:31). To utilize the words of a Caribbean utility executive “Natural gas being touted as a clean energy transition is just – it’s just nonsense” (Harrison and Popke, 2018:227).

Ultimately though, it isn’t CESI that is framed as delivering this all-of-the-above solution. Instead, CESI will facilitate the conversations needed between Caribbean and private sector leaders to deliver energy transition results (Gonzalez and Lynch, 2016). Thus, neoliberal energy governance mentalities are seen in the prioritization of private sector investment and the belief in the success it will provide for the Caribbean energy transition.

That’s why the primary goal of this summit isn’t to put up another solar panel, or sign another gas contract. It’s to help you create the conditions where your countries can attract private-sector investment (Biden, 2015)

Clearly, the US’ “full-throated endorsement of free markets” lives on in prognostic framing strategies in CESI (Jasanoff and Kim, 2013:190).

5.6 Motivational

Motivational framing strategies relied heavily on *eco-modernist* and *security* frames. *Security* frames were mobilized not only in energy security terms but also in economic prosperity terms. Once again, prosperity was framed as benefiting the entire hemisphere. CESI was also motivated by providing democracy to the Caribbean and helping deliver on sustainability goals. A final critical motivation was focused on *opportunity* frames which asserted that lessons learned from CESI could be applied to other SIDS energy transitions.

5.6.1 A Secure, Prosperous and Democratic Hemisphere

Through increasing institutional capacity and private sector investment, CESI is framed as being able to provide democracy and prosperity throughout the hemisphere. If Caribbean leaders follow CESI’s proposed solutions, CESI will root out corruption, provide transparency and instill the political will required for strong democracies (Kerry, 2016). Just like the political reform prognosis, motivations are consistent with good governance values (Smith, 2007:4).

Solving the challenge of energy will clearly strengthen the link between democracy and development in the Americas and it will contribute to the long-term success of democracy (Fitzpatrick, 2015)

For the first time in history, in my view, it's possible to imagine a hemisphere that is middle-class, democratic, and secure from northern Canada to the tip of Chile (Biden, 2016)

Democracy is not the only form of prosperity to be called on as motivation for engagement. Political actors also motivate CESI through its ability to deliver economic prosperity to the region. This is consistent with findings in the UK and Canada where economic opportunity frames have been utilized to spur motivation for energy policy (Goldthau and Sovacool, 2016, Blackler and Chen).

And it means that we will have a much better, brighter more prosperous future for the Caribbean (Hochstein, 2015)

But more importantly and I think our main motivation here is that by addressing the regions energy security we're actually promoting prosperity (Gonzalez and Lynch, 2016)

5.6.2 Energy Security and Environmental Goals: A Match Made in Heaven

The strongest presence of *eco-modernist* frames was seen in motivational framing strategies. CESI was framed as simultaneously pursuing two equally weighted goals – economic growth and environmental sustainability (Hajer, 1995). Thus, economic growth can be achieved sustainably and represents a crucial element in the US imagining of the Caribbean's energy secure future.

The Caribbean Energy Security Initiative ... aims to boost sustainable economic growth and diversity of energy sources throughout the region (Warlick, 2016)

... to achieve a more secure energy future that supports economic growth and the environment (Office of the Vice President, 2016)

Through this imagining US political actors reveal their *eco-modernist* slant: that environmental goals can be achieved through increased economic efficiency (Scrase and Ockwell, 2010:2231). Consequently, political actors utilize frames that have both environmental and economic

motivations to provide legitimacy to CESI. In doing so, political actors can motivate CESI as providing a new path forward for the energy security paradigm.

Our goal is to create a new paradigm for energy, one that provides the Caribbean with greater energy security through reliable access to affordable supply (Fitzpatrick, 2015)

Ultimately though, by basing a new paradigm on affordability of access and energy security frames, CESI holds up the two pillars of energy policy “security of supply and affordability” (Warren et al., 2016:9). Thus, no alternative eco-radical reimagining of energy policy is envisioned through CESI.

5.6.3 CESI Without Borders: Exporting Lessons to Other SIDS

One of the most surprising motivational finds was that lessons could be learned from CESI and exported to other SIDS. In particular, the Pacific Islands were targeted as a potential recipient of the CESI model.

Now take the Caribbean experience to the Pacific islands and what model does this region set for the Pacific islands and other types of SIDS? (Nakagawa, 2016)

So we can look at a lot of things that these island nations are doing - diversification and investment etc. Perhaps they can be models for other places around the world. (Gonzalez and Lynch, 2016)

The dangerous implication for this motivational strategy is that CESI has pursued an all-of-the-above energy policy. Consequently, if shale gas is promoted as a solution in SIDS some of the most vulnerable countries to climate change could be locked into natural gas infrastructure (Pérez et al., 2018). Therefore, the exportation of neoliberal energy governance practices could have worrying impacts for the climate and energy futures of SIDS.

5.7 Core Framing Strategies Summary

Through core framing strategies US political actors attempted to form consensus mobilization (Benford and Snow, 2000:615) in their diagnosis of the problem, proposed solutions, and

motivations for these solutions. In doing so, political actors utilized dominant frames such as *market efficiency*, *eco-modernist*, and *shared interests*. From the intense overlap of *market efficiency* frames and prognostic framing strategies, it became clear that US political actors favour competition, efficiency, and market solutions for energy transitions. Clearly, neoliberal energy governance values were heavily pushed (Furnaro, 2020). From a motivational standpoint, *eco-modernist* frames were embraced when asserting that energy security, environmental protection, and economic growth are mutually reinforcing. Economic prosperity was also promised through motivational framing strategies showing a clear emphasis on economic growth. From this assertion, it can be derived that despite CESI's clean energy rhetoric, its bottom line is delivering energy security and economic growth.

The implications for such uneven frame emphasis are energy transitions which prioritize affordability and efficiency over environmental goals. Therefore, renewable energy solutions can be crowded out due to the affordability of natural gas as a bridge fuel (Gürsan and de Gooyert, 2020, Brauers et al., 2021). Ultimately, CESI's core framing strategies leave little room for imagining alternative energy futures that don't involve the dominance of the market.

6 Conclusion

Dominant frames and framing strategies utilized surrounding CESI revealed how US political actors imagined the Caribbean's energy future. This future depended on access to secure, affordable, and diverse supplies of energy and necessitated a move away from dependence on a single supplier. Thus, an energy transition for the Caribbean relied on lowering energy costs through increased market efficiency and increasing private sector investment through institutional reform. According to political actors' framing, CESI could deliver all this while still protecting the environment and providing security and prosperity for the Western hemisphere. Frames and framing strategies were crucial in articulating this vision, as well as providing justification and legitimacy for why such a future should be pursued.

Thus, CESI political actors accorded with framing theory where salient aspects were selected in communication to mobilize and provide legitimacy to their actions (Entman, 1993:52, Rasmussen et al., 2017:310). The dominant frames utilized were *efficiency* and *security* frames. Efficiency frames emphasized the need for institutional reform to create conditions to attract private sector investment. Similarly, security frames worked on multiple levels, where energy security for the Caribbean was equated to energy security for the entire hemisphere. Through the emphasis placed on these frames, US political actors' norms, values, and underlying motives were displayed, primarily the dominance of neoliberal energy governance thinking (Furnaro, 2020). Two new key frames identified in this thesis were *shared interest* and *opportunity* frames. These frames were the most prevalent when speaking to Caribbean leaders and the press and served to create a collective identity. This indicates that US political actors' frames take into account the "resonance with the values and beliefs of target groups" (Hess, 2019:39).

Core framing strategies also acknowledged this resonance, with *security* and *opportunity* frames emphasized in diagnostics. Diagnostic framing strategies served to diagnose high-cost Venezuelan oil as a source of insecurity and thus delegitimize Venezuelan activity

in the region. A context was then described where the US was a steadfast partner to the Caribbean who was willing to share the opportunities presented by the shale revolution.

Solutions followed this description and *efficiency* frames were overwhelmingly utilized in the prognoses to bring down the cost of energy and increase access and reliability. Shale gas was also prescribed as part of an all-of-the-above energy solution, allowed for due to its affordable nature when contrasted with the diagnosis of high-cost Venezuelan oil. Motivational framing strategies were consistent with neoliberal energy governance logic and *eco-modernist* frames emphasized the importance of CESI delivering economic growth goals over environmental ones. Summed up by CESI's commander-in-chief Biden, CESI provides the Caribbean with "a chance at the supply of energy that's more resilient, more sustainable, cleaner, more affordable than [the Caribbean] you have ever, ever had" (Biden, 2015).

One of the implications that this research has not been able to explore is the potential of a discursive carbon lock-in in the US. Therefore, future research could examine the newly elected Biden administrations' use of dominant frames and framing strategies with regards to energy policy. A preliminary search of campaign communication has identified the potential presence of an eco-modernist belief in technological innovation as a "fix" for climate change (Carton, 2019). This can be seen in promises such as: "Biden will make the largest-ever investment in clean energy research and innovation" (Biden and Harris, 2021). The Caribbean was also mentioned by name, with the campaign promise to "provide low-cost financing to these countries for American clean energy exports. An initial focus will be small island states in the Pacific and Caribbean" (Biden and Harris, 2021). If clean energy has the same working definition as under the Obama administration, we could see the same sort of energy future promoted in the Caribbean all over again.

On a more positive note, a clear difference between the administrations is presented in a new explicit focus on energy and climate justice. This comes with the recognition that certain marginalized groups will suffer more from the effects of climate change (Biden and Harris, 2021). Whether or not these promises, and potentially new frames, will translate into tangible policy changes remains to be seen. Hopefully, whether the rationalization to use an energy source is political, environmental, or economic, the term clean energy will be reserved for sources that are really, truly clean.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Appendix A: Final Data Sources

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8.2 Appendix B: Final Data Classification

Source Type	Title	Date Released	Speaker
Speeches & Remarks	Keynote Remarks by Vice President Biden on the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative	January 26 2015	Vice President Joe Biden
	Remarks by President Obama in Meeting with CARICOM	April 9 2015	President Obama
	Caribbean Renewable Energy Forum Conference (CREF) Opening Remarks	October 19 2015	Amos Hochstein Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs
	Remarks by Interim U.S. Permanent Representative Michael J. Fitzpatrick on U.S.-Caribbean Energy Cooperation	November 19 2015	Interim US Permanent Representative Michael J. Fitzpatrick
	Remarks at the Energy Council 2016 Federal Energy and Environmental Matters Conference	March 4 2016	Mary Bruce Warlick Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Energy Resources
	Remarks at the Inter-American Dialogue	March 15 2016	Robin Dunnigan Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Energy Resources
	Remarks at the Council of the Americas' 46th Annual Washington Conference of the Americas/ U.S.-Caribbean-Central American Energy Summit Reception	May 3 2016	Secretary of State John Kerry
	Highlights of Remarks U.S.-Caribbean-Central American Energy Summit	May 4 2016	Vice President Joe Biden, Dan Birns, Amos Hochstein, Juan Gonzalez, John Kerry,

	Dentons 2016 Energy Outlook Event	August 2 2016	Amos Hochstein Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs
	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the 20th Annual CAF Conference	September 7 2016	Vice President Joe Biden
Fact Sheets	Fact Sheet: U.S Caribbean and Central American Energy Summit	May 4 2016	Office of the Vice President
	Fact Sheet: Promoting Energy Security in the Caribbean	June 19 2014	Office of the Vice President
	Fact Sheet: President Obama Announces New Actions To Strengthen Global Resilience To Climate Change And Launches Partnerships To Cut Carbon Pollution	September 23 2014	Office of the Press Secretary
	Fact Sheet: Fostering a Cleaner and More Sustainable Energy Future in the Caribbean	January 26 2015	Office of the Press Secretary
	Fact Sheet: US.-CARICOM Summit - Deepening Energy Cooperation	April 9 2015	Office of the Press Secretary
	FACT SHEET: Obama Administration Announces New Policies to Promote Conservation and Build Resilience to Climate Change, with a focus on Pacific Islands	September 1 2016	Office of the Press Secretary
	United States and Grenada Sign Memorandum of Understanding on Energy Security	September 3 2014	Office of the Spokesperson

Statements & Releases	Vice President Biden to Host Caribbean Energy Security Summit	January 12 2015	Office of the Vice President
	Caribbean Energy Security Summit	January 25 2015	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
	Caribbean Energy Security Summit Joint Statement	January 26 2015	The Governments of Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Colombia, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, United States, together with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, Caribbean Development Bank, European Union, Inter-American Development Bank Group, International Renewable Energy Agency, Organization of American States, and the World Bank Group
	Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's Travel to Jamaica and Panama	March 18 2015	Office of the Press Secretary
	State Department Applauds Model Geothermal Power Purchase Agreement Signed in Nevis	November 25 2015	Office of the Spokesperson
	U.S.-EU Energy Council Media Note	May 4 2016	Office of the Spokesperson
	North American Climate, Clean Energy, and Environment Partnership Action Plan	June 29 2016	Office of the Press Secretary
	Vice President Joe Biden	2016	Office of the Vice President
	Caribbean Energy Security Initiative (CESI)	2016	Bureau of Energy Resources

Special Briefings	US- Cuba Policy Testimony	May 20 2015	Roberta S Jacobson, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Western Hemisphere affairs
	Caribbean Security Call	October 18 2016	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
Independence Day Greetings	Jamaica's Independence Day	August 5 2015	Secretary of State John Kerry
	St. Vincent and the Grenadines Independence Day	October 27 2015	Secretary of State John Kerry
	Grenada Independence Day	February 6 2016	Secretary of State John Kerry
	Saint Lucia Independence Day	February 22 2016	Secretary of State John Kerry
	Dominican Republic Independence Day	February 27 2016	Secretary of State John Kerry
Press Briefings	Briefing with Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy Transformation Nakagawa	May 4 2016	Melanie Nakawaga
	U.S.-Caribbean Central American Energy Summit Press Briefing	May 4 2016	Juan Gonzalez and Sarah-Ann Lynch
	Foreign Press Center Briefing with Juan Gonzalez,: U.S Engagement with the Caribbean	September 9 2016	Juan Gonzalez
Congressional Record	United States Caribbean Engagement Act of 2016	June 13 2016	Congressional Record
Reports	Report From the U.S- Caribbean and Central American Task Force for Energy Security	May 4 2016	U.S-Caribbean Central American Task Force

8.3 Appendix C: Coding Protocol

Frames	Subframes	Definition	Keywords	Indicative Example
Access	Energy Access	When access to energy is referred to in terms of the availability and flexibility of the current system as well as securing access to more accessible forms of energy.	availability, flexibility, interconnections, energy access, securing access	The second key ingredient for economic growth depends on securing access to energy that is affordable and reliable (Biden 2016)
	Affordability	When affordability of energy access, be it electricity or energy in general, is mentioned. Mentions of both high and low energy costs were coded under affordability.	affordable, high energy costs, expensive, economic burden, cost-effective, energy prices	The high cost of energy diverts resources away from economic development, reduces competitiveness, and renders the energy sectors of Caribbean nations vulnerable to supply shocks (Office of the Vice President 2014)
	Energy Efficiency	When the efficiency of energy is mentioned and specifically the importance of high energy efficiency standards or more efficient use of energy.	increasing energy efficiency, high energy efficiency standards, secure energy supplies	You can leverage energy efficiency in every sector, shrinking the amount of energy you need to keep your economy humming (Biden 2015)

Efficiency	Infrastructure	When the infrastructure associated with energy use is referred to in a technical capacity. This can be in the capacity of requiring a diversity of energy supply, which requires an infrastructural investment shift, or simply an upgrade of the pre-existing infrastructure in place. The importance of innovative technology to accomplish this infrastructural shift was also coded for.	technical assistance, energy diversification, cleaner, more diverse, more modern energy infrastructure, robust energy systems, system stability	There is broad consensus that the regional energy system, despite the progress already made, has to undergo significant additional changes to urgently meet the demands for modern, secure, reliable, efficient, cost-effective energy services (U.S. Caribbean and Central American Task Force, 2016)
	Institutions	When public institutional efficiency is mentioned, encompassing both institutions on a regional and national level as well as development institutions (Inter-American Development Bank, OPIC, USAID). Focus is placed on instances mentioned such as enhanced governance, donor and regional coordination, regulatory	technical assistance, energy diversification, cleaner, more diverse, more modern energy infrastructure, robust energy systems, system stability	And since investment depends on good governance in the sector, in the form of stable and transparent policy, regulatory, and legal regimes, the United States will work in close cooperation with other donors to support and accelerate regional efforts to develop and implement new regulatory models (Office of the Vice President 2014)

		and policy reforms and the political will required for institutional enhancement.		
	Markets	When the efficiency of markets and the private sector is mentioned. This includes access to finance, the role of the private sector, investment climate and the importance of fostering competitiveness in the market.	finance access, investment, capital, private sector, economic prosperity, business, competitive markets, investment barriers, targeted loans	You have to put in place the right kind of incentives that do not discourage investment (Dunnigan 2016)
Environment	Environmental	When environmental issues were referred to including the future of renewable energy technology, sustainability concepts and environmental goals which were being pursued.	Paris Climate Agreement, climate change, environmental sustainability, extreme meteorological events, renewable energy potential, low carbon electricity	... increased energy efficiency and more diversified, and clean energy sources can lead to improved energy security, increasing self-sufficiency, economic growth, and climate resilience as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Office of the Press Secretary 2015a)
	Eco-Modernist	When the relationship between the protection of the environment and economic growth was assumed to be mutually beneficial. Climate change is envisioned as a market failure and one	sustainable economic growth, cleaner and more sustainable energy future, low-carbon economic growth, more efficient fossil fuel use, cleaner-burning natural gas,	We've been able to marry both a growth in hydrocarbon, where we are creating far more growth in oil and gas, at the same time, that we are creating growth in renewable energy- and they go together (Amos 2016)

		which can be fixed through innovative private sector technologies which will allow economic growth and prosperity to occur unchecked. Fossil fuels are seen as a fuel that can continue to be used if they become more efficient and something which can complement the use of renewables.	competitive, independent and environmentally sustainable energy markets	
	Eco-Radical	When the environment is envisioned as finite and growth must slow or cease to tackle the problems of climate change. Climate change effects will not be felt equally, and certain countries are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change.	vulnerable to climate change	Caribbean countries are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and we have to act now (Obama 2015)
Security	Energy Security	When energy security and energy independence were referred to in broad terms.	energy security, energy independence, geopolitics, political leverage, secure energy future	The State Department's Bureau of Energy Resources leads U.S. diplomatic initiatives all around the world to strengthen energy security while promoting access to secure, reliable, and ever cleaner sources of energy (Warlick 2016)

	National	When Caribbean energy security is equated to US national security and something that should be sought after to achieve said national security.	United States benefits, self-interest, interconnection of energy and national security, security and prosperity	It's – frankly, it's in our own selfish self-interest to actually promote the security and economic prosperity of the countries of the Caribbean, because what happens in the Caribbean is, I think, important to the national security of the United States (Gonzalez 2016)
	Regional	When energy security in the Caribbean is framed as improving the security of the entire region.	shared energy security, secure energy future that will lift fortunes throughout our hemisphere, energy security as a major asset for the entire hemisphere, a hemisphere that is middle-class, democratic, and secure	An integrated North America, working to promote energy security beyond our borders can be a major asset for the entire hemisphere (Biden 2015)
	Shared Interests	When achieving energy security is framed as equally in the Caribbean and the US's interest. The Caribbean and the US are viewed as partners who share the same goals and will equally benefit from achieving energy security in the Caribbean.	mutually beneficial, collaboration, rise together, mutual respect, friendship, shared values and interests, international energy partnerships, strong bonds, partners	The United States and the Caribbean do all of this, and more, together, as partners, with no hidden agenda. We do it because of our shared goals and objectives; for the pursuit of affordable and cleaner energy is in our collective interest (Fitzpatrick 2015)

Opportunity	New Opportunities	When CESI was framed as presenting an opportunity for the Caribbean. The ongoing context of the energy revolution in the US allows for this opportunity.	incredible opportunity, dawning of a new era, paradigm shift, we've got a chance, poignant time, stars are aligned, energy epicentre, enormous potential	With smart choices and investments in energy and infrastructure, we can seize the same opportunity for the region. We can lay the foundations for a secure energy future that will lift the fortunes of people throughout our hemisphere (Biden 2016)
	Imperative	When an imperative is employed to persuade actors to take advantage of the opportunity that is being presented.	necessary, critical, need to grab onto this, they yearn for our leaderships, we have to act now	Last year, for the first time in history, more money was invested in clean energy projects than in fossil fuel development. So we all need to grab onto this (Kerry 2015)