Policy Framing Through Policy Branding: International Maritime Organization, Climate Change, and Twitter/X
Dikaios, George

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

ARTICLE

Policy Framing Through Policy Branding: International Maritime Organization, Climate Change, and Twitter/X

George Dikaios

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

Correspondence: George Dikaios (gdikaios@uoa.gr)

Abstract

Climate change, which nowadays is frequently framed as climate crisis in order to highlight the urgent need to take action to tackle it, has been studied extensively both in communication and political science disciplines. This contribution uses as an example the International Maritime Organization to highlight the utilization of its social media, and in particular its Twitter/X account, to frame that it supports climate action in the shipping sector and to brand itself as a green organization. The article offers an analytical framework which illustrates that policy branding is one of the most accurate tools to perform policy framing. It continues by showcasing that this is a procedure that governance institutions use to promote a deliberate message, even if this is not on track with what the institution is expected to do. The empirical data gathered, and processed through content analysis, paints a clear image of how this happens in the era of social media and leads to the conclusion that it is necessary to study policy framing and policy branding within the context they take place; otherwise, wrong conclusions might be drawn.

Keywords

climate change; climate crisis; International Maritime Organization; policy branding; policy framing; Twitter; X

1. Introduction and Context

In July 2023, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, in his opening remarks at a press conference on climate change, said that "the era of global warming has ended; the era of global boiling has arrived" (Guterres, 2023). A couple of years earlier, he had used the terms "climate crisis" and "climate emergency" to showcase the urgency for action to be taken by everyone in order to combat climate change.

Today, it is undeniable that climate change is a result of each and every anthropogenic activity that emits greenhouse gas emissions. This means that almost all human actions in the world, through the emissions produced, contribute to the problems caused by climate change, e.g., temperature rise, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events. One of the actions that has been attracting more and more attention during the past years, regarding its contribution to the problem, as well as to its solution, is transport. While transport includes all the modes of transportation (cars, bicycles, airplanes, ships, trains, etc.), some of those have been at the forefront of international discussions, mentioned usually separately from all the others. One of those is shipping.

The reason behind this distinction is simple: the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the international organization responsible for regulating all matters that concern shipping, in 1992, got an exemption from the international institutional framework for tackling climate change, i.e., the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (and its complements Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement). This exemption means that the emissions coming from all shipping activities are not taken into account in each country's emissions which include all other emissions coming from anthropogenic activities. For several years, therefore, shipping was expanding its activities without any of the rules that had been gradually starting to appear regarding emissions mitigation in several countries. However, when the timing was favorable, the international community achieved a deal and concluded the Paris Agreement in 2015 (which posed legal obligations to all states around the world to contribute their fair share in the efforts of emissions mitigation), and heavy pressures were finally put on the IMO to develop systems that would allow for emissions reduction from ships.

Although, and after heated negotiations, the IMO did adopt the *Initial Strategy on Reduction of Greenhous Gas Emissions From Ships* in 2018, the progress that has been made, namely the emissions reduction, is still limited (Dikaios, in press; Dikaios & Blavoukos, 2023). Conversely, the projections for shipping emissions seem to be heading towards a surge in the coming years, first, as it is expected that the transportation of goods will be expanded and, second, as no agreement on legally binding rules or technological developments on how the transition will take place has been put in place. Further, the International Energy Agency classifies international shipping as "not on track" regarding its progress in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, showing that significant changes are needed in order to hit the target (International Energy Agency, n.d.).

Nevertheless, the announcements of the IMO on its official website show a somewhat different picture. For example, the first paragraph on the IMO's website says: "IMO continues to contribute to the global fight against climate change, in support of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 13, to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts" (IMO, n.d.-a). Further down, it reads: "Although shipping was not included in the final text of the Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, IMO has set itself a long-standing mandate to contribute to the fight against climate change by addressing greenhouse gas emissions from ships" (IMO, n.d.-a).

Having the above as starting points, this article explores whether the IMO is/appears to be an avid supporter of climate action through using X (formerly Twitter); a medium that has been the subject of analysis of other studies regarding climate policy and international organizations (e.g., Goritz et al., 2022). It applies theoretical approaches that fall within the spectrum of policy framing and policy (or political) branding. The goal is to underline how the IMO depicts itself publicly about its climate action and, as a broader problematization, whether this picture aligns with what the IMO ought to do and what it actually does. By doing so, the article

introduces an unexplored case study in the literature and intertwines adjacent concepts that can better analytically explore and explain how actors frame their actions through branding them. Besides, climate change policy framing has attracted measurable scholarly attention (e.g., Bernauer & McGrath, 2016; Chen et al., 2023; Rossa-Roccor et al., 2021; Wendler, 2022). Climate change has been identified—already for a decade now—as an issue that is being framed in a particular way in order to influence the direction the climate policy debate will take (Nisbet, 2014), and recent studies have examined how climate change is framed in social media (Vu et al., 2021). Thus, this article falls also within this strand of literature.

Accordingly, and taking a step back to have a helicopter view of how social media is reshaping the era of information in unprecedented ways, research has delved into the subject showcasing how X has been shaping the agenda and how it has contributed to presenting actors as leaders in a large array of fields and policies (Collins et al., 2019; Rehm et al., 2019; Shapiro & Hemphill, 2016). Furthermore, X presents a unique tool to explore framing and branding as the limited characters per post make its users write in a concise and condensed manner and offers to the researchers abundant information for analysis.

This introductory part is followed by the theoretical underpinnings of policy framing and policy branding approaches and their combination. After that, the empirical part is presented, followed by the discussion and the conclusion.

2. Policy Framing

Policy framing is an issue of interest in several policy-related studies. The reason is that the way an issue is framed can influence how it is perceived or dealt with in the political arena. A seminal research agenda article by Daviter (2007) assembles a large part of the literature regarding policy framing and offers an interesting observation, on which several studies follow (either referencing Daviter or not, e.g., Eising et al., 2015; Nisbet, 2014; Princen, 2018). Daviter, as well as a volume of literature that revolves around framing, gives emphasis on the complexity of the issues that usually need framing. This complexity allows involved actors in the framing process to *select*, *emphasize*, and *organize aspects* of it in order to define how an issue will appear in the public sphere and ensure that it will contribute to their end goal. Thus, a policy framing process can betray the preferences of the framing actor (Vu et al., 2021).

Another pivotal work by van Hulst and Yanow (2014), based on the work of Rein and Schön that is also used extensively by Daviter (2007), attempts to create a concrete theoretical framework of policy framing. They complement what Daviter proposes by stressing the need to create narratives around the issue to be framed. More precisely, and apart from selecting the issue, they highlight what they call *sense-making* and *storytelling*. Sense-making is defined as the action of "collecting, analyzing and sharing information on the causes, dynamics and effects of a [situation], and its potential solution" (Boin et al., 2014, p. 119). Storytelling, similar to meaning-making, is the process where the viewpoint of the prevailing frame leads to the way an issue will be dealt with (Blondin & Boin, 2018). Through these terms, they attempt to show that in order to frame an issue (at the political level), a broader picture needs to be present and serve as the underlying logic of why the issue is framed in a specific manner and what will be the results of such framing.

Additionally to the above, a rather new strand of the literature has started to emerge. This strand has to do with policy framing on social media during crises, such as environmental disasters, climate change, and

health-related issues. This shows that the growing use of social media has consequences on how the public (and the public sector) perceives policy messages and what might this mean for policymaking.

In studies that come from a more political communication point of view, the prevailing definition used to a great extent for framing is this of Entman who states:

> Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (Entman, 1993, p. 52)

The above coincides significantly with what Daviter supports. Although Daviter (2007) refers to the EU, the increasing impact of immediate communication has affected policymaking through framing in all policy fields (Calnan, 2020), as in order for a decision to be taken it has to be framed—often publicly—in a way that it allows this decision to be made. Building on that, Thistlethwaite et al. (2019) claim that policymakers decide how they will approach a policy issue based on how urgently it appears in the media or they will choose a solution that seems more acceptable. They argue, further, that media with essential narratives can have more impact on policymaking.

Figure 1 assembles the process showing how a (policy) issue is framed. At first, one selects an issue that needs framing according to the actor's will; then the actor emphasizes specific aspects of the issue and organizes it in a manner that serves their goals; following, the actor creates one or more narratives (through sense-making and storytelling) in order to give the necessary context and the broader picture within which the policy issue is framed.
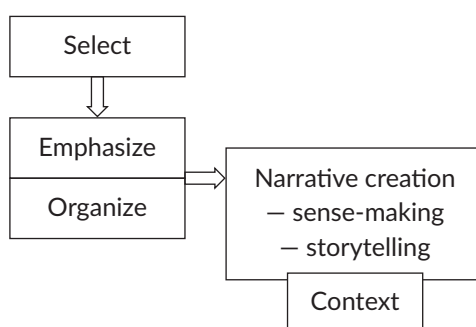

Figure 1. The process of policy framing. Source: Daviter (2007) and van Hulst and Yanow (2014).

3. Policy Branding

Policy branding refers to the "way political messages are communicated…and engages with methods of exploiting images and symbolism" (Tsagkroni, 2015, p. 240). Therefore, policy branding is the means to create a convincing narrative by using specific descriptions and ciphers. Branding, in the broader sphere of governance, is a premeditated and on-purpose selected "strategy that introduces calculated calm to the tsunami of competing stimuli" (Marland et al., 2017, p. 125). Thus, branding in policymaking is utilized (mainly) in order to help governments, key stakeholders, and actors to deal with crises.

Two scholarly articles have set the foundations for researching branding in governance and policymaking. In chronological order, the first is titled "Branding, Politics and Democracy" by Marsh and Fawcett (2011) and the second is "Governance in the Age of Digital Media and Branding" by Marland et al. (2017). Both articles attempt to consistently read the literature around policy branding and understand how it affects governance and policymaking, while developing some factors or mechanisms to explain how branding functions in their respective fields. Both articles also mention that there is a need for more empirical or exploratory research to take place in order to have a better understanding of how branding permeates (and possibly rules) governance and policymaking in a world of constant crises.

Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that policy branding and political branding have been mostly applied as concepts in investigating parliamentarians, prime ministers, and parties' actions in an attempt to create a specific image that is attractive to their consumers (or the public; e.g., Armannsdottir et al., 2020; Jain et al., 2018; Needham, 2006; Needham & Smith, 2015; Pich et al., 2020; Tsagkroni, 2015). This strand of the literature, pinpointing as well that policy branding is a rather under-researched topic, works as an initial basis of empirical research and offers some methodological tools. There are also scarce pieces of literature that approach policy branding from different perspectives, and reflect, e.g., on public branding (Karens et al., 2015) or nation branding (Anzera et al., 2019). As expected, the definitions and rationale used in this literature coincide, in rough lines, with what Marsh and Fawcett (2011) and Marland et al. (2017) assemble, allowing us to apply the latter's concepts to build our analytical framework.

The most interesting observation of Marsh and Fawcett (2011) and Marland et al. (2017) is that branding is used to give the impression that the person or institution in charge has control over the issue they brand; or, in other words, that the brand user has solutions to the crises and the challenges the public has to deal with. Marland et al. (2017, p. 125) claim that this is the result of the "real-time media and image management," which leads people in governmental positions to manage social media in a way that draws a picture of authority through "simplicity and consistency." The ultimate goal, according to Marsh and Fawcett (2011) is to persuade the public about the value and the eminence of the policy (or the political message) promoted. Nevertheless, they highlight that branding seems to be "less a way of improving the quality of a product and more a way of marketing it to consumers" (Marsh & Fawcett, 2011, p. 516).

Additionally, the image that branding creates (or the brand that the respective stakeholders develop) aims to mitigate the noise around a topic and the possible tension surrounding it. This way, the message receiver gets information that is easier to absorb, forms a specific point of view, and decides on how to approach or deal with the subject at hand (Marland et al., 2017). Figure 2 shows how policy branding is performed.
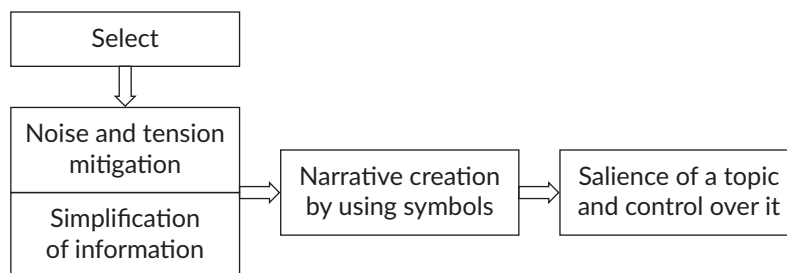

Figure 2. The process of policy branding. Source: Adapted from Marsh and Fawcett (2011) and Marland et al. (2017).

4. Policy Framing Through Policy Branding on the IMO's X Account

X—and in general social media—have opened a whole new world to policy framing, as the messenger can directly construct the information that wishes that its audience receive (Hemphill et al., 2013). As X is one of the main social media platforms that government institutions use to publicly communicate their strategies, policies, decisions, etc. (Parmelee & Bichard, 2012), this article explores how the IMO frames climate change action by branding it in a certain way.

Methodologically, X has been largely associated with content analysis, since its early years and up until today. This is apparent through an online search where voluminous articles apply this kind of method when researching X. Moreover, it is also associated with the analysis of specific crises, such as the appearance of posts (formerly tweets) during and after, e.g., bushfires, floods, and pandemics (Chew & Eysenbach, 2010; De Bussy & Paterson, 2012; De Falco et al., 2021; Small, 2011; Willson et al., 2021). Content analysis allows for the examination of bulk information retrieved from texts, especially from online sources, according to the literature, and concludes with valid research outcomes.

This article performs manual content analysis of all the posts that deal with climate change—and more generally with environmental protection (as IMO classifies climate change as an environmental challenge), that the IMO uploaded from August 1, 2022, until July 31, 2023. The selection of the date was made with three factors taken into consideration: First, July 2023 was the month that Guterres announced the era of global boiling; second, July 2023 was the month which the IMO adopted a revision of the aforementioned *Initial Strategy*, the *2023 IMO Strategy on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships* (IMO 2023 Strategy), which again does not include biding measures but rather lukewarm developments with uncertain implementation (IMO, n.d.-a); and, third, the period of time that X nowadays allows users to go back in time and find posts through scrolling. Nevertheless, a whole year of posts can provide rich data on how an organization approaches a topic and extract—at least—some trends, making general observations about policy framing and policy branding.

The mechanisms of policy framing and policy branding take place concurrently. While this cannot be depicted in a single figure, as the combination of the figures above would be on top of each other, Figure 3 can offer the closest portrayal of the mechanisms to be examined, when the subject of analysis is the ways a policy is framed through branding. To test the plausibility of this scheme, the case study of climate change at the IMO is going to be examined next.
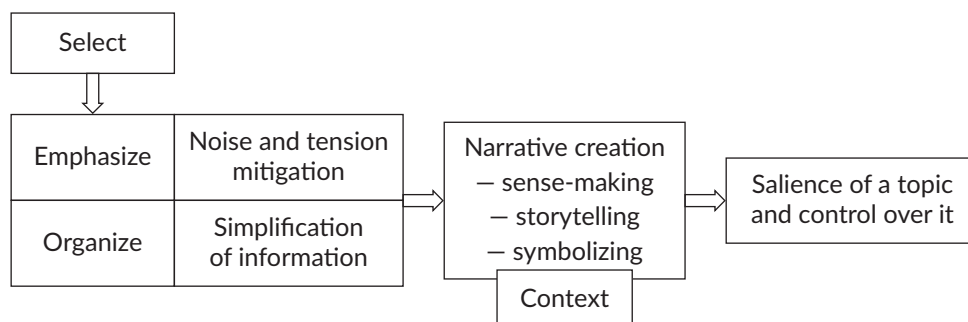
Figure 3. Composite model for policy framing through policy branding.

5. Results and Discussion

The data consists of 361 posts that the IMO uploaded between August 2022 and July 2023, that are directly related to environmental protection and climate change combatting (all the posts used for this article can be found in the Supplementary File). The reason for collecting posts that referred to both themes is that, sometimes, environmental action is interconnected with climate action. Going through the posts, nine terms were identified to showcase how often the IMO opted to refer to climate change. These terms are, in alphabetical order, Biofouling, Climate Change, COP, Decarbonization, Emissions, GHG, Glofouling, Green, Temperature. From these terms, three can be characterized as mega-terms, meaning that they consist of not only the term as is, but adjacent terminology as well. For example, GHG also represents the terms CO2 and Greenhouse Gas. Respectively, Decarbonization also stands for Carbon and several derivatives, while Green is usually accompanied by a field that is supposed to become greener (e.g., Green Shipping, Green Technology).

One initial remark: In the list of terms, two terms that do not seem to have a direct relation with the tackling of climate change from shipping are included. These terms are Biofouling and Glofouling, which have to do with the purification of ships. According to the IMO, activities related to them are interrelated with the greening of the shipping sector and the climate efficiency of the ships, as their combatting will contribute to the mitigation of GHG emissions (IMO, n.d.-b, n.d.-c). Thus, one could also account for these terms belonging to the broader efforts of the IMO to tackle the challenges climate change poses.

It has to be mentioned here that it was purposefully decided to exclude the encompassing of terms related to Energy (although very close to decarbonization), because it can be argued that the focus on energy transition does not necessarily entail the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions (Dupont & Oberthür, 2012; Peterson & Rose, 2006), as solutions that are not entirely green (e.g., dual fuel engines) may be promoted under the umbrella of the so-called energy transition. Accordingly, terms such as Environment, Sustainable Development, and Biodiversity are not included in the analysis list as they refer to broader or different aspects of IMO's action. Thus, from the total of 361 posts, the terms of this analysis appear in 235 posts, i.e., 65.1%—a significant number (see Figure 4). If we also exclude the terms Biofouling and Glofouling as not directly related to climate change, what remains is 199 posts which represent 55.1% of the total number. Both percentages highlight a systematic *decision* on behalf of the IMO X account to showcase the organization's action that relates to climate change ("selection").

For the record, an analogous image to Figure 4 is depicted in Figure 5, where the appearance number of each term is counted. Within the posts, all the terms (except Temperature) pop up more frequently. This is to be expected as posts often contain more than one sentence or a series of hashtags. Respectively, they often contain more than one of the keywords.

Apart from the numbers which show that the IMO pays a lot of attention to climate action, a closer look at the content of the posts intensifies this impression. Two good examples are the periods of significant negotiations. The first has to do with the cornerstone of the international climate negotiations, the so-called Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, an annual meeting of all the countries around the world. During the period under examination, COP27 took place in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, between 6 and 18 November 2022. Although, as mentioned in Section 1, shipping emissions are not part of the formal negotiations, the last few years are always on the table of side negotiations. Thus, the IMO is present in COPs
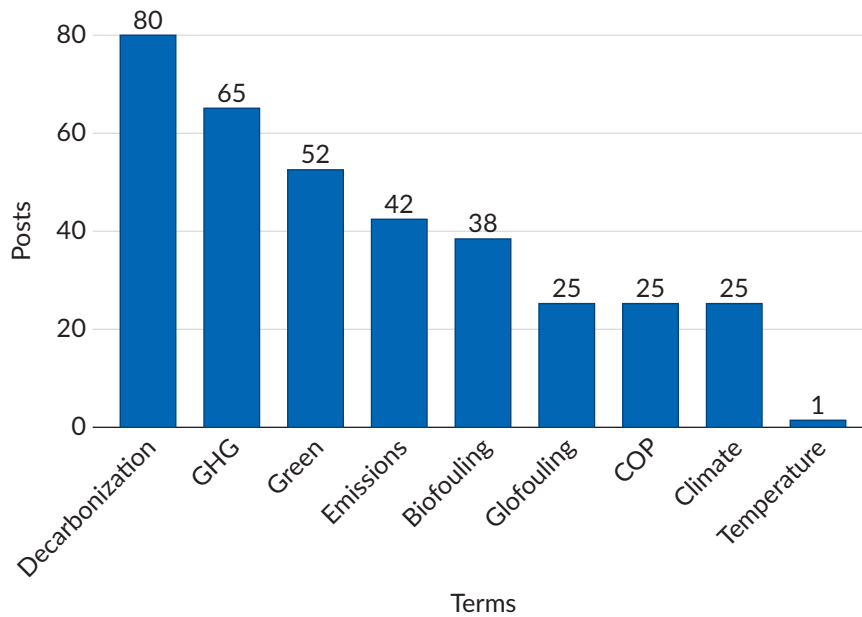
Figure 4. Number of IMO posts including terms relevant to climate change. Note: Some of the 235 posts include more than one term.
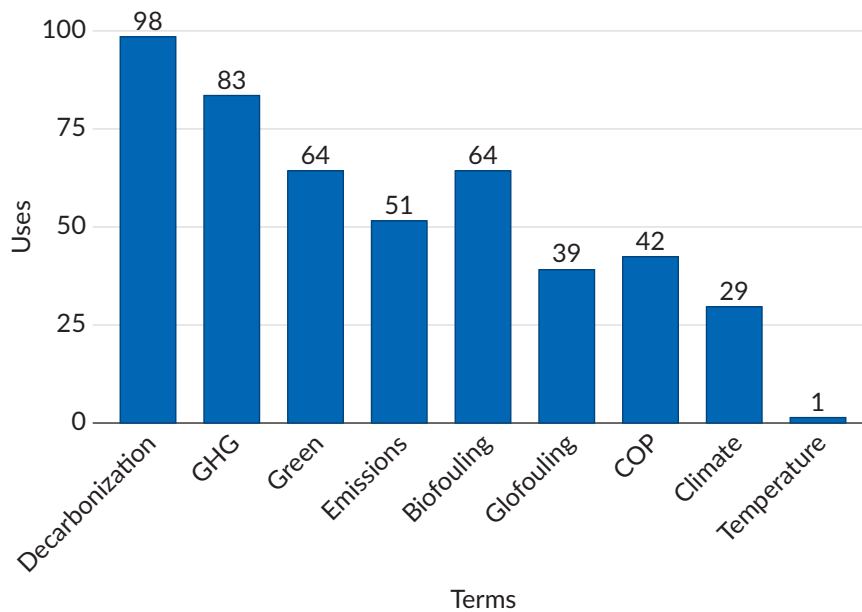
Figure 5. Number of terms' appearance in the IMO posts concerning climate change.

and its X account focuses almost only on that subject. At COP27, from 2 to 18 November, 25 out of 27 IMO posts referred directly to the COP.

The second example has to do with the period around the adoption of the 2023 IMO Strategy, i.e., from 26 June to 12 July 2023. In this case, the density of the posts referred on this subject is less compact, as in the Marine Environment Protection Committee (which discusses also emissions reduction) several other

environmental issues concerning maritime affairs are also discussed. Therefore, 19 out of 35 refer directly to the 2023 IMO Strategy, which—nevertheless—is still above 50%.

Taking stock of these two examples, what one can extract out of the "organization" of the themes entailed in those posts and the "emphasis" given to them—in combination with the numbers presented at the beginning of this section—is that the IMO attempts to present itself as an institution with climate change high on its agenda. The posts of the two examples used here present a differentiation in their approach. While in the first example, the IMO posts are mostly informative, concentrating on procedural aspects (such as the announcement of events) and on what key people announced during the COP27, in the second one the posts are characterized by more in-depth and to-the-point information content-wise, concentrating on the new edition of the 2023 IMO Strategy.

For instance, during COP27, the IMO wrote on X:

> Happening today: #MTCCAfricaAtCOP27 side event on 'Mobilizing global support for #green maritime transition in #Africa' in collaboration with @IMOHQ, @OceanHubAfrica, @AfDB_Group & @MaritimeKE. Live from 16:00 (Egypt time): [link] #COP27 #shipping. (on 16.11.2022)

> Join us today at 6:30pm @COP27P time or (4:30pm London Time) for an exciting event: Producing Future Marine Fuels. You can also livestream the event. All details can be found here: [link] #COP27. (on 11.11.2022)

> Today #IMOatCOP27 IMO Secretary-General provided opening remarks at the 'Just Transition in Global Shipping' event, saying that "Climate change is a global issue that requires a global response. We must use every tool available to decarbonize the maritime sector." #COP27. (on 09.11.2022)

> "Decarbonizing international shipping is a priority for IMO, and all of us involved in this sector are committed to act together in achieving the highest possible level of ambition." Said IMO SG during #IMOatCOP27 event. (on 10.11.2022)

> Speaking at #COP27 IMO's Gyorgyi Gurban said: "Many developing countries have abundant access to renewable energy sources, so there is a lot of potential for these countries to play a key role in the production and supply side of renewable fuels for the global shipping industry." (on 15.11.2022)

During the meeting that adopted the 2023 IMO Strategy, the style remains similar, but the posts have more essence:

> #MEPC80 adopts historic 2023 IMO #GHG Strategy to reduce GHG emissions from international shipping. Details to follow.

> VISION—IMO remains committed to reducing #GHG emissions from international shipping and, as a matter of urgency, aims to phase them out as soon as possible, while promoting, in the context of this Strategy, a just and equitable transition. #MEPC80

Levels of ambition: carbon intensity of the ship to decline through further improvement of the energy efficiency for new ships.

Ambition: to reduce CO2 emissions per transport work, as an average across international shipping, by at least 40% by 2030, compared to 2008.

Ambition: uptake of zero or near-zero #GHG emission technologies, fuels and/or energy sources to represent at least 5%, striving for 10% of the energy used by international shipping by 2030.

Ambition: #GHG emissions from international shipping to reach net zero to peak GHG emissions from international shipping as soon as possible and to reach net-zero GHG emissions by or around, i.e., close to 2050, taking into account different national circumstances...

...whilst pursuing efforts towards phasing them out as called for in the Vision consistent with the long-term temperature goal set out in Article 2 of the Paris Agreement. (this and the above on 07.07.2023)

Quotes from key people were also included in the posts:

«This is a historic moment in which all of you have a role to play. The 2023 IMO GHG Strategy will be your legacy, for your children and grandchildren. The time for IMO to demonstrate its global leadership is now.» Said IMO SG. Full remarks: [link] #GHG #MEPC. (on 03.07.2023)

"It is a monumental development that I believe opens a new chapter towards maritime #decarbonization." Said IMO Secretary-General in his closing remarks at IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee #MEPC80 Read full speech here: [link]. (on 07.07.2023)

The majority of the 361 posts follow a similar rationale. Thus, some conclusions can be drawn regarding the research goal of the article, i.e., whether the IMO appears to be an avid supporter of climate action by using X, based on the analytical framework unwrapped in the previous parts.

The IMO posts that refer to climate change show a consistent occupation of the international organization with the role of shipping in combating climate crisis. This can be attributed to "noise and tension mitigation" as in the last few years there have been several voices calling for the IMO to put forward a more stringent agenda on greening the shipping sector (Bach & Hansen, 2023). Therefore, utilizing X as the means of public communication, the IMO attempts to convince its audience that its environmental actions entail a significant part that is dedicated to climate change. Moreover, the language used in the posts is mostly simple and easy to understand by everyone. There are some acronyms and technical terminology that are used, but usually are accompanied by a link that leads to a webpage with all the relevant information. Nevertheless, the majority of the posts "simplify the information" distributed, either by presenting the main points of an agreement or by quoting simple and general phrases that highlight the work done and its significance.

The goal, as might be expected, is to transfer a simple message to the followers: the IMO does everything possible to mitigate GHG emissions from ships. To make sure that this goes through, there is a coherent

"narrative" unfolding, which attempts to create the "context" within which all actions take place. It is observed that through the posts, the IMO attempts to underline its broader collaborations either with other international institutions or specific initiatives that strive for the same cause. By "telling the story" that the IMO is not alone in these efforts or by "selecting to emphasize" that these efforts are for the greater good ("The 2023 IMO GHG Strategy will be your legacy, for your children and grandchildren"; see penultimate posts above), it attempts to brand its actions as essential in a common goal and give the impression that what it does will contribute to the solution of the problem ("sense-making"). A post on 05.05.2023 read: "2023 is the year in which IMO has to demonstrate to the world its global leadership by defining the pathway for international shipping to phase out their greenhouse gas emissions."

Having done the above, the IMO makes clear that it is the most competent organization to work on the mitigation of GHG emissions from shipping. This comes as a necessity, as within the context in which these efforts take place, the IMO is considered relatively slow and incapable of adopting effective policies and regulations to combat climate change (Bach & Hansen, 2023). By pursuing a relatively active presence on its official social media account, it attempts to, first, be the one that makes the issue of greening the shipping sector "salient" and, second, (and interrelated to the first) to show that it "has control over" that matter. In that way, the IMO tries to maintain the image that its framework is still relevant and has to be taken into account when negotiating international measures to mitigate GHG emissions from ships. The goal is for the IMO to remain the institution under whose auspices all climate developments concerning shipping take place and leave no space for other international actors to interfere with its operation and alleged competence. As another post characteristically stated, during COP27, on 10.11.2022: "Live from #COP27 IMO' Secretary-General: 'IMO is the leading global forum for shipping and will support the energy transition, leaving no one behind.'"

Nevertheless, a closer reading of the IMO decisions also makes clear that the measures that are adopted at the IMO level are insufficient and inadequate to contribute effectively to reducing GHG emissions; that might be also the reason for intertwining "energy transition" with climate action. Thus, one can make the hypothesis that the IMO on purpose channels information that frames the issue of climate change as something that has to be dealt with within its framework and brands this framework as the most appropriate of such action. Consequently, the analytical framework developed in this article to explain whether the IMO uses X to highlight its position as an avid supporter of climate action accomplishes its purpose and explains how a governmental institution frames a policy issue by using (policy) branding techniques. It might make one, who may not be aware of the context, to believe that the IMO successfully promotes policies and regulations to reduce GHG emissions from ships.

6. Concluding Remarks

The composite model for policy framing through policy branding employed in this article comes in a straightforward and simple manner to unbox additional perspectives of the existing knowledge in political/policy agenda-setting and (crisis) communication. While policy framing is inextricably interrelated with the latter concepts, policy branding has remained rather unexplored, both in terms of theorization and empirically. Today, when the image—or images in general—dominate the public sphere, and social media play a crucial role in communicating those images, branding has become a tactic utilized at the political level, as well as the policymaking process level, playing an important role in policy framing and—consequently—in policy development. Thus, the model proposed here, entangling policy framing with policy branding,

contributes to further research in the abovementioned scholarly fields, in which additional nuances of its parts can be examined.

Moreover, the article covers a part of the empirical gap pinpointed in the relevant studies presented earlier. Based on that, future research can also include the stance of other international organizations, governments, and/or (non)governmental actors regarding climate change, in an attempt to unpack their goals and possible greenwashing or best practices. Through the above exercise, results aspire to lead to more efficient challenging of poor or misleading actions and highlight implementable solutions. The model can also be applied to other policies that are subject to framing and branding, as well as to examine private sector and business activities, as nowadays, they increasingly influence policymaking (especially for climate change).

In conclusion, in the early 2010s, Jaeger et al. argued that "government agencies have begun using social media without sufficient consideration of this larger policy environment" (2012, p. 11). It might be fair to say that today those agencies have understood very well how branding functions and, through it, they attempt to frame their work as significant, especially within a world of constant crises and information overload. Policy branding, which is a more frivolous way compared to policy framing (as its goal is more superficial), is utilized in order for a specific goal to be achieved. Policy branding is one of the tools to perform policy framing, and this is a procedure that governance institutions use to promote a deliberate image or message, even if this image/message is not on track with what the institution is expected to do. That is why it is necessary to study policy framing and policy branding within the context they take place; otherwise, wrong conclusions might be drawn.

The IMO uses X to frame its action as climate-friendly and brand itself as a climate actor. The problem in this case is that the IMO's progress towards tackling climate change is—at its best—lukewarm and insufficient. The IMO has been traditionally characterized as an "unfriendly" institution regarding climate measures (Oberthür, 2006) and recent literature shows that IMO's action is not moving in an effective direction (Dikaios, in press; Doelle & Chircop, 2019). Thus, conjuring up convincing climate action through social media, seems a convenient way for the IMO to perform the fine art of stalling in order to avoid implementing a—for the time being—dead letter. Through policy branding, thus, the IMO performs a kind of greenwashing of its action. As put eloquently by the UN Secretary-General, for example:

> Humanity is in dangerous waters on climate change. [The IMO] must move much faster. (Corbett, 2023)

> Let's be honest. While member states have made some initial steps through…the International Maritime Organization to address emissions from shipping…current commitments are not aligned with the 1.5-degree goal of the Paris Agreement. In fact, they are more consistent with warming way above 3 degrees. (Lo, 2021)

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

Data Availability

All the posts used for this article can be found in the Supplementary File.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

References

Anzera, G., Gianturco, G., & Mass, A. (2019). Security branding and digital narrations: Security issues representation on Twitter. *International Review of Sociology*, *29*(1), 80–101.

Armannsdottir, G., Carnell, S., & Pich, C. (2020). Exploring personal political brands of Iceland's parliamentarians. *Journal of Political Marketing*, *19*(1/2), 74–106.

Bach, H., & Hansen, T. (2023). IMO off course for decarbonisation of shipping? Three challenges for stricter policy. *Marine Policy*, *147*, Article 105379.

Bernauer, T., & McGrath, L. F. (2016). Simple reframing unlikely to boost public support for climate policy. *Nature Climate Change*, *6*(7), 680–683.

Blondin, D., & Boin, A. (2018). Managing crises in Europe: A public management perspective. In E. Ongaro & S. van Thiel (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of public administration and management in Europe* (pp. 459–474). Palgrave Macmillan.

Boin, A., Ekengren, M., & Rhinard, M. (2014). Sensemaking in crises: What role for the EU? In P. Pawlak & A. Ricci (Eds.), *Crisis rooms: Towards a global network?* (pp. 117–128). European Union Institute for Security Studies.

Calnan, M. (2020). *Health policy, power and politics: Sociological insights*. Emerald.

Chen, K., Molder, A. L., Duan, Z., Boulianne, S., Eckart, C., Mallari, P., & Yang, D. (2023). How climate movement actors and news media frame climate change and strike: Evidence from analyzing Twitter and news media discourse from 2018 to 2021. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *28*(2), 384–413.

Chew, C., & Eysenbach, G. (2010). Pandemic in the age of Twitter: Content analysis of tweets during the 2009 H1N1 outbreak. *PLoS ONE*, *5*(11), Article e14118.

Collins, S. D., DeWitt, J. R., & LeFebvre, R. K. (2019). Hashtag diplomacy: Twitter as a tool for engaging in public diplomacy and promoting US foreign policy. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, *15*(2), 78–96.

Corbett, A. (2023). UN head Guterres says IMO must "move much faster" as climate talks kick off. *TradeWinds*. https://www.tradewindsnews.com/regulation/un-head-guterres-says-imo-must-move-much-faster-as-climate-talks-kick-off/2-1-1479419

Daviter, F. (2007). Policy framing in the European Union. *Journal of European Public Policy*, *14*(4), 654–666.

De Bussy, N. M., & Paterson, A. (2012). Crisis leadership styles–Bligh versus Gillard: A content analysis of Twitter posts on the Queensland floods. *Journal of Public Affairs*, *12*(4), 326–332.

De Falco, C. C., Punziano, G., & Trezza, D. (2021). A mixed content analysis design in the study of the Italian perception of Covid-19 on Twitter. *Athens Journal of Social Sciences*, *8*(3), 191–210.

Dikaios, G. (in press). *EU Climate Diplomacy towards the IMO and ICAO*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Dikaios, G., & Blavoukos, S. (2023). Influencing the international transport regime complex: The EU's climate action in ICAO and IMO. *Politics and Governance*, *11*(2), 62–71.

Doelle, M., & Chircop, A. (2019). Decarbonizing international shipping: An appraisal of the IMO's Initial Strategy. *Review of European, Comparative & International Environmental Law*, *28*(3), 268–277.

Dupont, C., & Oberthür, S. (2012). Insufficient climate policy integration in EU energy policy: The importance of the long-term perspective. *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, *8*(2), 228–247.

Eising, R., Rasch, D., & Rozbicka, P. (2015). Institutions, policies, and arguments: Context and strategy in EU policy framing. *Journal of European Public Policy*, *22*(4), 516–533.

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, *43*(4), 51–59.

Goritz, A., Schuster, J., Jörgens, H., & Kolleck, N. (2022). International public administrations on Twitter: A comparison of digital authority in global climate policy. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, *24*(3), 271–295.

Guterres, A. (2023). Secretary-General's opening remarks at press conference on climate. *United Nations*. https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2023-07-27/secretary-generals-opening-remarks-press-conference-climate

Hemphill, L., Culotta, A., & Heston, M. (2013). *Framing in social media: How the US Congress uses Twitter hashtags to frame political issues*. SSRN. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2317335

International Energy Agency. (n.d.). *International shipping*. https://www.iea.org/energy-system/transport/international-shipping

International Maritime Organization. (n.d.-a). *2023 IMO strategy on reduction of GHG emissions from ships*. https://shorturl.at/cCDXZ

International Maritime Organization. (n.d.-b). *Biofouling*. https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Environment/Pages/Biofouling.aspx#:~:text=Therefore%2C%20biofouling%20management%20can%20be,(SEEMP)%20(resolution%20MEPC

International Maritime Organization. (n.d.-c). *GloFouling partnership project*. https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/PartnershipsProjects/Pages/GloFouling-Project.aspx

Jaeger, P. T., Berto, J. C., & Shilton, K. (2012). Information policy and social media: Framing government–citizen web 2.0 interactions. In C. G. Reddick & S. K. Aikins (Eds.), *Web 2.0 technologies and democratic governance: Political, policy and management implications* (pp. 11–25). Springer.

Jain, V., Chawla, M., Ganesh, B. E., & Pich, C. (2018). Exploring and consolidating the brand personality elements of the political leader. *Spanish Journal of Marketing—ESIC*, *22*(3), 297–320.

Karens, R., Eshuis, J., Klijn, E. H., & Voets, J. (2015). The impact of public branding: An experimental study on the effects of branding policy on citizen trust. *Public Administration Review*, *76*(3), 486–494.

Lo, J. (2021). UN boss calls for stronger aviation and shipping climate goals in line with 1.5C. *Climate Home News*. https://www.climatechangenews.com/2021/10/14/un-boss-calls-stronger-aviation-shipping-climate-goals-line-1-5c

Marland, A., Lewis, J. P., & Flanagan, T. (2017). Governance in the age of digital media and branding. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, *30*(1), 125–141.

Marsh, D., & Fawcett, P. (2011). Branding, politics and democracy. *Policy Studies*, *32*(5), 515–530.

Needham, C. (2006). Brands and political loyalty. *Journal of Brand Management*, *13*, 178–187.

Needham, C., & Smith, G. (2015). Introduction: Political branding. *Journal of Political Marketing*, *14*(1/2), 1–6.

Nisbet, M. C. (2014). Framing, the media, and risk communication in policy debates. In H. Cho, T. Reimer, & K. A. McComas (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of risk communication* (pp. 216–227). SAGE.

Oberthür, S. (2006). The climate change regime: Interactions with ICAO, IMO, and the EU Burden-Sharing Agreement. In S. Oberthür & T. Gehring (Eds.), *Institutional interaction in global environmental governance synergy and conflict among international and EU policies* (pp. 53–77). MIT Press.

Parmelee, J. H., & Bichard, S. L. (2012). *Politics and the Twitter revolution: How tweets influence the relationship between political leaders and the public*. Lexington Books.

Peterson, T. D., & Rose, A. Z. (2006). Reducing conflicts between climate policy and energy policy in the US: The important role of the states. *Energy Policy*, *34*(5), 619–631.

Pich, C., Armannsdottir, G., & Dean, D. (2020). Exploring the process of creating and managing personal political brand identities in nonparty environments: The case of the Bailiwick of Guernsey. *Journal of Political Marketing*, *19*(4), 414–434.

Princen, S. (2018). Agenda-setting and framing in Europe. In E. Ongaro & S. van Thiel (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of public administration and management in Europe* (pp. 535–551). Palgrave Macmillan.

Rehm, M., Cornelissen, F., Notten, A., Daly, A., & Supovitz, J. (2019). Power to the people?! Twitter discussions on (educational) policy processes. In D. E. Froehlich, M. Rehm, & B. C. Rienties (Eds.), *Mixed methods social network analysis: Theories and methodologies in learning and education* (pp. 231–244). Routledge.

Rossa-Roccor, V., Giang, A., & Kershaw, P. (2021). Framing climate change as a human health issue: Enough to tip the scale in climate policy? *Lancet Planet Health*, *5*(8), 553–559.

Shapiro, M. A., & Hemphill, L. (2016). Politicians and the policy agenda: Does use of Twitter by the U.S. Congress direct *New York Times* content? *Policy & Internet*, *9*(1), 109–132.

Small, T. A. (2011). What the hashtag? A content analysis of Canadian politics on Twitter. *Information, Communication & Society*, *14*(6), 872–895.

Thistlethwaite, J., Henstra, D., Minano, A., & Dordi, T. (2019). Policy framing in the press: Analyzing media coverage of two flood disasters. *Regional Environmental Change*, *19*(8), 2597–2607.

Tsagkroni, V. (2015). *Political communication in perspective: Identifying the message of radical right parties in Europe during the first decade of the 21st century—A comparative case study* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Queen Mary University of London.

van Hulst, M., & Yanow, D. (2014). From policy "frames" to "framing": Theorizing a more dynamic, political approach. *The American Review of Public Administration*, *46*(1), 92–112.

Vu, H. T., Blomberg, M., Seo, H., Liu, Y., Shayesteh, F., & Do, H. V. (2021). Social media and environmental activism: Framing climate change on Facebook by global NGOs. *Science Communication*, *43*(1), 91–115.

Wendler, F. (2022). *Framing climate change in the EU and US after the Paris Agreement*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Willson, G., Wilk, V., Sibson, R., & Morgan, A. (2021). Twitter content analysis of the Australian bushfires disaster 2019–2020: Futures implications. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, *7*(3), 350–355.

About the Author

George Dikaios is an adjunct lecturer and a postdoctoral researcher at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA). He is affiliated with the Department of Political Science and Public Administration and the Department of Ports Management and Shipping. He is a senior research fellow of the UNESCO chair on Climate Diplomacy, a SYLFF fellow and a research fellow of the Institute of European Integration and Policy (NKUA) and the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP). His first book is *EU Climate Diplomacy Towards the IMO and ICAO* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024).