



## Climate action obstruction in the Spanish far right: The Vox's amendment to the Climate Change Law and its press representation

### *Obstrucción de la acción climática en la extrema derecha española: La enmienda de Vox a la Ley de Cambio Climático y su representación en prensa*

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#### **Abstract**

While we live in a crucial time when climate science urges us to take strong action to mitigate climate change, there is a countermovement obstructing the adoption of climate policies. In Europe, there are far right parties that have aligned their positions with the climate countermovement. This research seeks to examine the climate change discourse of the Spanish far-right party Vox, as well as the press reception of the party's ideas on the subject. This paper analyses the amendment to the whole *Law Project on Climate Change and Energetic Transition* (121/00019) presented by Vox on June 17, 2020, at the Spanish Parliament. The study consists of an examination of the climate action contrarian framings following the typology of Almiron et al. (2020). This enquiry is followed by a critical discourse analysis of the coverage of this amendment in the Spanish press. This press analysis provides an insight into whether journalists received Vox's proposal critically and aligned themselves with the scientific

#### **Resumen**

*Aunque vivimos un momento crucial en el que la ciencia del clima nos insta a tomar medidas contundentes para mitigar el cambio climático, existe un contramovimiento que obstaculiza la adopción de políticas climáticas. En Europa, hay partidos de extrema derecha que se han alineado con el contramovimiento climático. Esta investigación pretende examinar el discurso sobre el cambio climático del partido de extrema derecha español Vox, así como la recepción en la prensa de las ideas del partido sobre el tema. Este trabajo analiza la enmienda a la totalidad del Proyecto de Ley de Cambio Climático y Transición Energética (121/00019) presentada por Vox el 17 de junio de 2020 en el Parlamento español. El estudio consiste en un examen de los encuadres contrarios a la acción climática siguiendo la tipología de Almiron et al. (2020). A esta investigación le sigue un análisis crítico del discurso de la cobertura de esta enmienda en la prensa española. Este análisis de prensa permite conocer si los periodistas recibieron la propuesta de Vox de forma crítica y*

consensus, whether they reported it in a neutral way, or whether they supported its ideas. The results include a replication of hackneyed climate change denialist arguments as disseminated by European and North American climate action contrarian stakeholders. This paper also identifies a critical reaction from the Spanish press to this Vox amendment, despite the existence of some texts that report neutrally on the proposal.

**Keywords:** climate change, climate crisis, obstructionism, denialism, climate countermovement.

*se alinearon con el consenso científico, si informaron de forma neutral, o si apoyaron sus ideas. Los resultados incluyen una reproducción de los manidos argumentos negacionistas del cambio climático difundidos por grupos de interés contrarios a la acción climática en Europa y los Estados Unidos. Este trabajo también identifica una reacción crítica de la prensa española a la enmienda de Vox, a pesar de la existencia de algunos textos que informan de forma neutral sobre la propuesta.*

**Palabras clave:** cambio climático, crisis climática, obstruccionismo, negacionismo, contramovimiento climático.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

We have more and more evidence that human activity has already had an impact on the climate, producing a global warming at an unprecedented rate in the last two millennia (IPCC, 2021). This anthropogenic climate change is affecting the weather and thus producing climate extreme events around the globe (IPCC, 2021). This situation will get worse if the increment of the temperatures compared to the pre-industrial era exceeds 1.5°C, as it will happen if the current path of greenhouse emissions is not halted (IPCC, 2021). But climate change is a politicized issue, and the climate policies are not keeping up with the emergency described by the climate science. In this politicized arena, there are stakeholders trying to push towards the adoption of effective climate policies (or climate movement), and there are others obstructing those efforts (climate countermovement). In this scenario in which climate science has settled plenty of evidence on the physical basis of the human-induced climate change, humanities and social sciences must take the lead. Why humanity is not answering properly to such a threat is a complex issue that requires from all the social sciences disciplines, to examine the mechanisms that led to inaction.

In the Spanish context there is not a strong climate countermovement such as the one existing in the USA or the UK. Nevertheless, there are relevant stakeholders trying to shape climate policies so they are either aren't adopted or, if they are, in a soft and light version. One of these actors is the Spanish far-right party Vox. Despite the existence of research on the discourse and the political development of this party, there is a lack of knowledge on the specific issue of its climate change stance. The objective of this paper is to fill this gap by examining the climate contrarian frames showed by the party in the amendment to the whole Law Project on Climate Change and Energetic Transition (121/00019), presented by Vox on June 17, 2020, at the Spanish Parliament. This analysis is complemented with a critical discourse analysis of the press representation of this amendment of Vox's in the Spanish press.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The climate countermovement, often called "denial machine" (Piltz, 2008), is made up by corporations, opposition coalitions, PR firms, advocacy organizations, conservative foundations, think tanks, media, politicians, journalists, and bloggers (CSSN, 2021). As the

Climate Social Science Network (ibid. 2021) summarizes, this structure of opposition has three main goals: to influence the public agenda to assure that public opinion does not support climate action; to shape the media to cast doubt on the actions to address climate change, and to influence the policymaking process to obstruct the adoption of climate policies. The range of activities this countermovement develops is wide and range from knowledge creation and dissemination to more direct lobby.

Despite the scientific evidence regarding the climate crisis, the political ground is polarized on how to address it. It is known that in the USA conservatives has tended to show more often climate contrarian stances, spreading what McCright and Dunlap (2010) called “anti-reflexivity”. This consists of the opposition to the environmental movement and science, promoting non-decision-making and inaction towards the climate crisis. This has produced a polarized political debate on climate issues (Fisher *et al.*, 2013) in which the conservatives have sought to defend the status quo, promoted by corporate funding earmarked for this purpose (Farrell, 2016). In general, there is a correlation between support for right-wing populist parties and climate scepticism or opposition to climate taxes (Lockwood, 2018). In Europe, with the rise of populist far right parties there is a growing academic interest in the climate positioning of these political groups, especially from the communication field (i.e., Forchtner, 2019; Forchtner et al., 2018; Hultman et al., 2019; Jylhä & Hellmer, 2020; Vowles & Hultman, 2021). Populist right-wing parties in Europe commonly present positions opposed to climate action, as reported by the think tank Adelphi (Schaller & Carius, 2019). Out of twenty-one populist right-wing parties in Europe, seven were sceptic about the climate consensus or denied it, eleven did not produce a stance on climate change, and just two supported the climate consensus (Schaller & Carius, 2019). In Spain, the hardest opposition to the adoption of climate policies has been represented by the far-right populist party Vox, which has taken a strong position against the existence of the climate emergency and the adoption of measures to deal with it. (i.e., González, 2021; Robaina, 2019).

The Spanish Congress was one of the last remaining European parliaments with no representation of radical right politics, alongside with neighbouring Portugal, until Vox, a far-right, Catholic, nationalist, and populist party, became the 3<sup>rd</sup> most voted in 2019 Spanish Elections (Gould, 2019). Vox has a strong nationalist discourse that places “Spaniards first”, combined with a low level of nativism, that is substituted by an important fixation and motivation surrounding the Catalan separatist process and the defence of Spain and Spanish traditions (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019). Vox has attracted research interest in the political sciences field regarding its origins, rise and ideology (i.e., Ferreira, 2019; Rama et al., 2021). Also, in the communication field Vox has been examined because of their rhetoric, in platforms such as social media (Aladro Vico & Requeijo Rey, 2020), or by their use of emotions like fear in the building of their discourse (Cárdenas-Rica & Lozano González, 2020). Nevertheless, despite the relevance of Vox's climate change ideas, there is a lack of research on the climate discourse of this party or how it is received by the media.

In this context in which a climate countermovement seeks to undermine climate policies, and even some political groups follow that path, journalism is a key piece in translating science and climate action effectively into the society (Boykoff, 2019; Boykoff & Farrell, 2020). But, although the climate change denialism does not have a considerable presence in the Spanish press (Martín-Sosa, 2021), it is indeed failing to give climate change the rigor and attention it

requires (i.e., Fernández-Reyes, 2014; Parratt Fernández et al., 2020) and is even making important greenhouse gas emitting sectors such as animal agriculture invisible (Moreno & Almiron, 2021). It is also important to note that the press coverage on climate change is subjected to structural pressure from those stakeholders involved in polluting companies or with an interest in obstructing climate action (Mancinas-Chávez, 2013). An example of this is the greenwashing that energy companies sponsoring the COP25 Chile-Madrid received in the Spanish press because of their investment in advertising and public relations strategies (Moreno & Ruiz-Alba, 2021). The multidisciplinary nature of this field of study and its relevance given the climate crisis encourages us to contribute to this line of research with empirical studies such as the one proposed here.

### 3. METHODS

The research objectives of this papers are two. First, to check if the amendment to the whole Law Project on Climate Change and Energetic Transition (121/00019), presented by Vox on June 17, 2020, at the Spanish Parliament, presents the most common climate action contrarian arguments as spread by European and USA climate contrarian think tanks. And second, to discover how the press covered the presentation of that amendment.

In order to respond to the first objective, a framing analysis has been carried out. A frame is a certain interpretation of reality, a definition, diagnosis, judgement, or solution for a problem (Entman, 1993). The list of climate change counterframes defined by Almiron et al. (2020) as showed in Table 1 has been used to identify the climate contrarian arguments used in Vox's amendment.

**Table 1**  
*Climate counterframes*

<b>A. General scientific claims:</b>
A1. Contesting IPCC legitimacy (implicitly or explicitly)
A2. Contesting scientific consensus & legitimacy (not IPCC)
A3. Contesting scientific dissemination (by politicians, media and other)
<b>B. Specific scientific claims:</b>
B4. It is not happening (climate change or global warming)
B5. It is happening, but we do not know how serious it is or it is not serious
B6. It is happening, but it is good/not bad (either global warming or particular issues of it)
B7. It is happening, but it is not us or it is not only us (other issues are also causes/main causes)
B8. It is happening, but we have other major problems
B9. It is happening, but any policy will be worse than warming
<b>C. Non-scientific claims:</b>
C10. Criticism of non-scientist defenders & messages & policies on a non-scientific basis
C11. The text includes a neoliberal or a neoconservative economic position (supporting economic growth as the solution, markets self-regulation, minimum government intervention, no taxation of pollution, etc.)
C12. The text includes a mention to human population as a problem
C13. The text includes a mention to animal protein diets or animal agriculture as a problem

C14. The text trust technology as a solution to climate change or its consequences

Source: Almiron *et al.* (2020).

Vox presented an amendment to the whole to the Law Project on Climate Change and Energetic Transition (121/00019) on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020, when this legislative text was open to discussion by the parties. The amendment was rejected, and the law was approved on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, becoming the first law on climate change approved in the Spanish parliament. Vox voted against for considering it to be “dogmatic”.

To address the second objective, we collected a corpus of texts from the Spanish press. We used the Factiva platform introducing the keywords “Vox AND Ley de cambio climático” for a date range from the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2020, until the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2020 (the amendment was rejected on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July). This search produced 149 hits of which, after removing duplicates and invalid texts, 67 were apt for analysis. To analyse these texts, we applied a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach. CDA can be used to analyse news texts in order to expose strategies that appear normal or neutral on the surface, but which may in fact be ideological and seek to shape the representation of events and persons for particular ends (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The CDA can be considered as a methodology committed to political and social change, since its aim is to reveal underlying ideologies and discourse through language (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). When applying a methodology that follows CDA, “categories and tools are not fixed once and for all. They must be elaborated for each analysis according to the specific problem under investigation” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 111). In this case, we used the following categories for the analysis:

- Category 1, addressing the way media discourse describe the action of Vox.
- Category 2, tackling the question of representation of social actors.
- Category 3, covering the equivalence and difference between the construction of the “in-group” and the “out-group”.

This combination of framing for the text and critical discourse analysis for the press coverage of the amendment allow us to understand which arguments are present in the document, and how the Spanish press reacted towards these arguments.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Frame analysis

Vox's amendment to the climate change law presents 11 out of 14 of the climate action contrarian frames used by Almiron *et al.* (2020). Table 2 shows the extracts from the amendment that fit in each counterframe both in the original text and translated into English. This categorization makes it clear that Vox's amendment is very much aligned with the climate action obstructionist discourses spread by the climate countermovement.

**Table 2**  
 Frame analysis of the amendment to the whole Law Project on Climate Change and Energetic Transition (121/00019) presented by Vox on June 17, 2020, at the Spanish Parliament

Frame	Excerpt (own translation)	Original text
A1. Contesting IPCC legitimacy (implicitly or explicitly)	"The alarmist forecasts of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (hereafter IPCC) are contradicted time and again by reality." (p.4)	«Las previsiones alarmistas del Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (en adelante IPCC) se ven desmentidas una y otra vez por la realidad». (p.4)
A2. Contesting scientific consensus & legitimacy (not IPCC)	<p>"Climate alarmism is becoming a new religion. Logically independent propositions (that the temperature is rising; that the rise is due to man-made greenhouse gases; that the rise will accelerate in this century; that the rise will be very damaging to humanity; that it will be accompanied by all sorts of catastrophes - hurricanes, droughts, etc. - lumped together in the catch-all of 'climate change') are lumped into a single inseparable package." (p.3)</p> <p>"VOX leaves science to the scientists, and has no position of its own on climate issues. It considers, however, that the debate is not closed, and that it is irrational to take the whole climate-catastrophist package as an article of faith. [...] scientists are not conclusive in seeing a clear correlation between the rate of thermal increase and human action." (p.3).</p>	<p>«El alarmismo climático está haciendo las veces de una nueva religión. Se agrupan en un solo paquete indisociable -para el cual se exige un asentimiento sin fisuras, so pena de ser anatemizado como "negacionista"- proposiciones lógicamente independientes (que la temperatura está subiendo; que la subida se debe a los gases de invernadero emitidos por el hombre; que la subida se va a acelerar en este siglo; que esa subida será muy perjudicial para la humanidad; que vendrá acompañada de todo tipo de catástrofes - huracanes, sequías, etc.- agrupadas en el cajón de sastre del "cambio climático")». (p.3)</p> <p>«VOX deja la ciencia a los científicos, y carece de una posición propia sobre cuestiones climatológicas. Considera, sin embargo, que el debate no está cerrado, y que es irracional asumir como artículo de fe el paquete climático-catastrofista en su totalidad. [...] los científicos no son concluyentes al apreciar una correlación clara entre el ritmo de incremento térmico y la acción humana» (p.3)</p>
A3. Contesting scientific dissemination (by politicians, media and other)	"[...] 'change' can be anything: any phenomenon (the rise of temperatures, but also their stagnation, as happened during 'the Pause' of 1998-2014, or that of 1945-75." (p.3)	«[...] 'cambio' puede ser cualquier cosa: cualquier fenómeno (la subida de temperaturas, pero también su estancamiento, como ocurrió durante 'la Pausa' de 1998-2014, o la de 1945-75)». (p.3)
B5. It is happening, but we don't know how serious it is or it is not serious	<p>"The imminent melting of the polar ice caps has been repeatedly predicted, but the Arctic ice sheet was thicker in September 2019 than it was in 2007 according to the US National Snow &amp; Ice Data Center, and a NASA study published in 2015 in the Journal of Glaciology certified that the Antarctic ice mass, rather than decreasing, is increasing." (p.4).</p> <p>"To claim that a temperature two or three degrees higher will lead humanity to disaster by the end of the 21st century denotes a degree of lucidity comparable to that of the futurologists who, around 1890, predicted that in thirty years London and Paris would lie under a mountain of dung, given the exponential growth in the number of horse-drawn carriages." (p.6)</p>	<p>«Se ha pronosticado repetidamente el inminente deshielo de los casquetes polares, pero la banquisa ártica era en septiembre de 2019 más gruesa que en 2007 según el National Snow &amp; Ice Data Center de EE.UU., y un estudio de la NASA publicado en 2015 en el Journal of Glaciology certificaba que la masa de hielo antártico, en lugar de disminuir, está aumentando» (p.4)</p> <p>«Asegurar que una temperatura dos o tres grados más alta llevará a la humanidad al desastre a finales del siglo XXI, denota un grado de lucidez comparable al de los futurólogos que, hacia 1890, pronosticaban que en treinta años Londres y París yacerían bajo una montaña de estiércol, dado el crecimiento exponencial del número de coches de caballos». (p.6)</p>



<p>B6. It is happening, but it is good/not bad (either global warming or particular issues of it)</p>	<p>“Some experts claim CO2 as a fundamental element of life on Earth, as it is necessary for photosynthesis. CO2 is only responsible for 15% of the greenhouse effect (without the greenhouse effect, the temperature of the planet would be 30 degrees lower, and life would not have been possible). The increase of CO2 in the atmosphere has generated positive effects that climate catastrophism carefully conceals.” (p.5).</p> <p>“Professor Richard Tol of the University of Sussex has produced a model that computes the positive and negative effects of rising temperatures: he concludes that there will be net benefits (heating savings, increased crop yields, etc.) up to an increase of 2.2 degrees above the global temperature in 2009; above that threshold, the costs would outweigh the benefits.” (p. 5)</p>	<p>«Algunos expertos reivindican el CO2 como elemento fundamental de la vida en la Tierra, al ser necesario para la fotosíntesis. El CO2 solo es responsable de un 15% del efecto invernadero (sin efecto invernadero, la temperatura del planeta sería 30 grados más baja, y la vida no habría sido posible). El aumento de CO2 en la atmósfera ha generado efectos positivos que el catastrofismo climático oculta cuidadosamente» (p.5)</p> <p>«El profesor Richard Tol, de la Universidad de Sussex, ha elaborado un modelo que computa los efectos favorables y desfavorables de la subida de temperatura: concluye que habrá beneficio neto (ahorro en calefacción, aumento de cosechas, etc.) hasta un aumento de 2,2 grados respecto a la temperatura global de 2009; por encima de ese umbral, los costes superarían a las ventajas». (p. 5)</p>
<p>B8. It is happening, but we have other major problems</p>	<p>“The OECD already places Spain at the head of the world economic collapse; we are registering the greatest destruction of employment in Europe and the deterioration of the productive fabric is taking the number of companies back to the beginning of the century. The "climate emergency" must be compatible with the real economic and social emergency facing Spaniards. For elementary considerations of national survival, the PLCCTE must be returned to the government.” (p.12).</p>	<p>«La OCDE sitúa ya a España a la cabeza del desplome económico mundial; registramos la mayor destrucción de empleo de Europa y el deterioro del tejido productivo retrotrae el número de empresas a principios de siglo. La “emergencia climática” tiene que ser compatible con la auténtica emergencia económica y la social que enfrentan los españoles. Por consideraciones elementales de supervivencia nacional, el PLCCTE debe ser devuelto al Gobierno». (p.12).</p>
<p>B9. It is happening, but any policy will be worse than warming</p>	<p>“Spain must remain committed to the environment, but not at any cost.” (p. 1).</p>	<p>«España debe seguir comprometida con el medio ambiente, pero no a cualquier coste» (p. 1)</p>
<p>C10. Criticism of non-scientist defenders &amp; messages &amp; policies on a non-scientific basis</p>	<p>“The left, whose environmental sensitivity is very recent, needs pretexts to justify coercive state intervention in the economy and society: sometimes it is 'poverty' (which tends to multiply as a result of socialist policies); other times, 'gender oppression', or 'racial discrimination'. As all of these are phenomena that have been overcome - or are residual - in contemporary Spain, a new excuse for dirigisme has been sought in the 'climate emergency'.” (p.2).</p> <p>“By simultaneously rejecting fossil fuels and nuclear energy, the "energy and climate package" (PLCCTE + PNIEC) breaks with scientific rationality and economic realism, condemning Spain to energy poverty and impoverishment.” (p.11)</p>	<p>«La izquierda, cuya sensibilidad medioambiental es muy reciente, necesita pretextos para justificar la intervención coactiva del Estado en la economía y la sociedad: unas veces es ‘la pobreza’ (que suele multiplicarse como resultado de las políticas socialistas); otras, la ‘opresión de género’, o la ‘discriminación racial’. Como todos ellos son fenómenos superados -o residuales- en la España contemporánea, se ha buscado en la ‘emergencia climática’ una nueva excusa para el dirigismo» (p.2)</p> <p>«Al rechazar simultáneamente los combustibles fósiles y la energía nuclear, el “paquete energía y clima” (PLCCTE + PNIEC) rompe con la racionalidad científica y el realismo económico, condenando a España a la penuria energética y el empobrecimiento». (p.11)</p>

<p>C11. The text includes a neoliberal or a neoconservative economic position (supporting economic growth as the solution, markets self-regulation, minimum government intervention, no taxation of pollution, etc.)</p>	<p>“The pursuit of these objectives will require exhaustive state interventionism in economic life and a brutal increase in public spending.” (p.2).                  “On the contrary, we at Vox believe that this approach could have adverse effects on investment, consumption, employment and the competitiveness of the Spanish economy.” (p.2).                  “Spanish CO2 emissions represent 0.7% of the world total. If, after fleecing Spaniards with green taxes and condemning fossil fuel-dependent industries to bankruptcy or relocation, the targets set by the PLCCTE (23% reduction in emissions) were achieved, our positive impact on the global volume of emissions would be 0.17%.” (p.7).                  “The various energy sources must be able to compete freely with each other, and companies must be allowed to choose the most profitable ones. [...] If renewables become truly cost-effective, they will take over on their own, just as light bulbs displaced quinqués and automobiles displaced horse-drawn carriages”. (p.7)</p>	<p>«La búsqueda de esos objetivos requerirá un intervencionismo exhaustivo del Estado en la vida económica y un incremento brutal del gasto público» (p.2).                  «En Vox consideramos, por el contrario, que este planteamiento puede tener efectos adversos para la inversión, el consumo, el empleo y la competitividad de la economía española» (p.2).                  «Las emisiones españolas de CO2 representan un 0'7% del total mundial. Si después de esquilmar a los españoles con impuestos verdes y condenar a la quiebra o la deslocalización a las industrias dependientes de combustibles fósiles, se alcanzaran los objetivos marcados por el PLCCTE (reducción del 23% en las emisiones), nuestra incidencia positiva en el volumen mundial de emisiones sería de un 0'17%». (p.7)                  «Las diversas fuentes de energía han de poder competir libremente entre sí, y debe permitirse a las empresas optar por las más rentables. [...] Si las renovables llegan a ser realmente rentables, se impondrán por sí mismas, de la misma forma que las bombillas eléctricas desplazaron a los quinqués y los automóviles a los coches de caballos.» (p.7)</p>
<p>C12. The text includes a mention to human population as a problem</p>	<p>“The neo-Malthusian predictions of Paul Ehrlich (The Population Bomb, 1968) or the Club of Rome (The Limits to Growth Report, 1972), which predicted a rapid depletion of essential resources due to overpopulation, were similarly ridiculous. They all forgot that the most important resource is, as Julian Simon theorised, human intelligence, which makes it possible to do more and more with less”. (p. 6)</p>	<p>«En ridículos similares incurrieron las predicciones neomaltusianas de Paul Ehrlich (The Population Bomb, 1968) o el Club de Roma (Informe "Los límites del crecimiento", 1972), que auguraban un rápido agotamiento de recursos esenciales debido a la superpoblación. Todos ellos olvidaron que el más importante de los recursos es, como teorizara Julian Simon, la inteligencia humana, que permite hacer cada vez más con menos». (p. 6)</p>
<p>C14. The text trust technology as a solution to climate change or its consequences</p>	<p>“In 2080, if the rate of economic growth of recent decades continues, we will be three times richer than we are now, and technology will be capable of feats we cannot even dream of now”. (p.6)                  “The PLCCTE, in its lack of balance to eradicate fossil fuels, neglects other technological horizons that would allow CO2 reduction without harming business competitiveness. For example, the new Carbon Capture, Use and Storage (CCUS) techniques for capturing CO2”. (p.9)                  “Nuclear energy is clean energy. It does not emit CO2, and that is why it has been defended by great leaders of the environmental movement, such as James Lovelock (the father of the 'Gaia hypothesis'); James Hansen, Ken Caldeira, Tom Wigley and Kerry Emanuel, prophets of climate-catastrophism”. (p.10)</p>	<p>«En 2080, si se mantiene el ritmo de crecimiento económico de las últimas décadas, seremos tres veces más ricos que ahora, y la tecnología será capaz de proezas que ahora no podemos ni soñar». (p.6)                  «El PLCCTE, en su falta de equilibrio por erradicar los combustibles fósiles, desatiende otros horizontes tecnológicos que permitirían reducir CO2 sin perjudicar la competitividad empresarial. Por ejemplo, las nuevas técnicas Carbon Capture, Use and Storage (CCUS) de captación de CO2». (p.9)                  «[...] la energía nuclear es una energía limpia. No emite CO2, y por eso ha sido defendida por grandes referentes del movimiento ecologista, como James Lovelock (el padre de la "hipótesis Gaia"); James Hansen, Ken Caldeira, Tom Wigley y Kerry Emanuel, profetas del clima-catastrofismo». (p.10)</p>

Source: own elaboration.

#### 4.2. Critical discourse analysis

Through CDA we will be looking at the three aforementioned categories, as well as the use of nationalist, ethnocentric and traditionalist discourse overall.



#### 4.2.1. Category 1. Representation of political discourse and ideology

This analysis category of political discourse and ideology is inspired by the work of Fairclough (2003). We will be looking at agency (who does what to whom) and action (what gets done), paying special attention to participants (does and done-tos), process (verbal groups), and circumstances (adverbial groups, prepositional phrases). Table 3 shows this examination.

**Table 3**  
*Analysis of the representation of political discourse and ideology (Category 1)*

Categories	Example excerpt (translation)	Example excerpt (original)
Far-right party (participant)	“Climate is changing and has evolved during decades’ assured far-right party minister Mireia Borràs.” ( <i>El Periódico de Catalunya</i> , 14/7/2020)	«“El clima es cambiante y ha evolucionado durante siglos”, ha asegurado la diputada del partido de ultraderecha Mireia Borràs» ( <i>El Periódico de Catalunya</i> , 14/7/2020).
Underlined (process)  Far-right (participant)	“The PSOE representative, Helena Caballero Gutiérrez, underlined that Vox hadn’t even bothered writing an alternative text. The far-right’s approach, said Caballero, ‘goes against scientific rationality’.” ( <i>Sur Online</i> , 14/7/2020)	«La representante del PSOE, Helena Caballero Gutiérrez, subrayó que Vox ni siquiera se ha tomado la molestia de redactar un texto alternativo. Los planteamientos de la ultraderecha, dijo Caballero, “atentan contra la racionalidad científica”» ( <i>Sur Online</i> , 14/7/2020)
Ridiculed (process)	“‘Lets see if we have things clear!’, ridiculed Juanxo López de Uralde, MEP of Unidas Podemos.” ( <i>La Vanguardia</i> , 14/7/2020).	«“¡A ver si nos aclaramos!”, ridiculizó esa postura Juanxo Lopez de Uralde, diputado de Unidas Podemos» ( <i>La Vanguardia</i> , 14/7/2020)

Source: own elaboration.

#### 4.2.2. Category 2. Representing social actors

It’s impossible to represent political actors, or people generally, in a neutral manner, and how we characterize someone can serve psychological, social and political purposes (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001). The aim of this category is to establish how the media represents the political actors from Vox and their surrounding circles (voters, supporters, etc.). Table 4 gathers the main social actors in these texts.

**Table 4**  
*Analysis of the representing social actors (Category 2)*

Social actor represented	Example excerpt (translation)	Example excerpt (original)
Vox’s Spokesperson Mireia Borràs (16 mentions)	“Vox deputy Mireia Borràs Pabón, in charge of presenting this amendment to the totality, said during her speech that the bill means an ‘exhaustive interventionism of the State in economic life and a brutal increase in public spending’.” ( <i>EFE/Diario de Sevilla</i> , 14/7/2020)	«La diputada de Vox Mireia Borràs Pabón, encargada de presentar esta enmienda a la totalidad, ha asegurado durante su intervención que el proyecto supone un “intervencionismo exhaustivo del Estado en la vida económica y un incremento brutal del gasto público”.» ( <i>EFE/Diario de Sevilla</i> , 14/7/2020)
Vox (as the party / the far-right party / Santiago Abascal’s party) (81 mentions)	“The party led by Santiago Abascal also denounces the declared ‘hostility’ of the Executive in this law to fossil fuels.” ( <i>Europa Press</i> , 17/6/2020)	«El partido que preside Santiago Abascal, también denuncia la “hostilidad” declarada del Ejecutivo en esta ley a los combustibles fósiles.» ( <i>Europa Press</i> , 17/6/2020)

Vox's supporters (4 mentions)	"Their response contrasts with that of Vox voters, of whom only one in five say they oppose hydrocarbon exploration." ( <i>El Mundo</i> , 8/6/2020)	«Su respuesta contrasta con la de los votantes de Vox, entre los cuales solo uno de cada cinco se declara contrario a la exploración de hidrocarburos.» ( <i>El Mundo</i> , 8/6/2020)
Teresa Ribera (deputy Prime Minister, PSOE, in charge) (19 mentions)	"In her speech, Ribera rejected the main arguments used by Vox in its amendment to reject the government's text." ( <i>Europa Press</i> , 14/7/2020)	«En su intervención, Ribera ha rechazado los principales argumentos que Vox utiliza en su enmienda a la totalidad para rechazar el texto del Gobierno.» ( <i>Europa Press</i> , 14/7/2020)
Juantxo López de Uralde (deputy, Unidas Podemos) (7 mentions)	"Juantxo López de Uralde, asked what 'patriotism' Vox defends when it denies the 'damage' that climate change is doing to its territory." ( <i>Europa Press</i> , 14/7/2020)	«Juantxo López de Uralde, se ha preguntado qué "patriotismo" es que el defiende Vox cuando niega el "daño" que el cambio climático está haciendo a su territorio» ( <i>Europa Press</i> , 14/7/2020)
Spanish citizens, mainly farmers, hunters and stockbreeders (7 mentions)	"Vox does not buy these dogmas that 'blame the Spaniards', especially cattle breeders, farmers and hunters." ( <i>Europa Press</i> , 14/7/2020)	«Vox no compra estos dogmas que "culpan a los españoles", especialmente a los ganaderos, agricultores y cazadores» ( <i>Europa Press</i> , 14/7/2020)

Source: own elaboration.

Here we can see a clear case of functionalization: the most affected Spanish citizens are defined based on their job, and, apart from the party, the main actors are related due to their role in the process. The most interesting aspect is, however, the last category, and the use of traditional vision of Spanish agriculture ("citizens, farmers, hunters, stockbreeders") and the indirect use of this category in the discourse. This fits perfectly into the far-right discourse frame of using certain tropes, such as this functionalization, relating to national and traditional values, in order to focus their discourse and actions as an act of preservation ethno-national culture and tradition.

#### 4.2.3. Category 3. Equivalence and difference

The aim of this category is to understand the construction of the "in-group" and the "out-group", and the difference between positive and negative representations of each. To do this we have used an adaptation of Wodak's (2009) equivalence and difference strategies.

**Table 5**

*Analysis of equivalence and difference through referential/nomination (Category 3)*

Equivalence and difference	Example excerpt (translation)	Example excerpt (original)
In-group (according to Vox): Patriots, farmers, livestock breeders  Vs. Out-group / the others (according to Vox): PSOE / Government / Left-wing	"Mireia Borrás Pavón, spokesperson for Vox, assures that the department directed by Teresa Ribes aims to 'blame farmers and livestock breeders' for climate change." ( <i>La Verdad</i> , 15/7/2020).	«Mireia Borrás Pavón, portavoz de Vox, aseguró que el departamento que dirige Teresa Ribera pretende "culpabilizar a agricultores y ganaderos" del cambio climático.» ( <i>La Verdad</i> , 15/7/2020).
In-group (according to Vox): The Spanish people, who are going through socioeconomic crisis  Vs. Out-group / the others (according to Vox): The implied elite who care about climate change	"Vox considers that the text isn't compatible with 'the real social and economic emergency that the Spanish are going through' and for that reason it endangers 'national survival'." ( <i>Europa Press</i> , 17/6/2020)	«Vox (...) al considerar que se trata de un texto que no es compatible con "la auténtica emergencia económica y social a la que se enfrentan los españoles" y, por tanto, pone en peligro la "supervivencia nacional".» ( <i>Europa Press</i> , 17/6/2020)

Source: own elaboration.

#### 4.2.4. Analysis of nationalistic, traditionalistic and Eurosceptic discourses

To end with, we have addressed the appearance in the press of Vox's discourses anchored in nationalism, traditionalism and Euroscepticism while discussing the climate change law. Table 6 summarizes some examples.

**Table 6**  
*Analysis of equivalence and difference through referential/nomination (Category 3)*

Excerpt examples (translated)	Excerpt examples (original)
"Negative effects on investment, consumption, employment and <u>Spanish economic competitiveness</u> ." (Europa Press, 17/6/2020)	«efectos adversos en la inversión, el consumo, el empleo y en la competitividad <u>económica española</u> ».» (Europa Press, 17/6/2020)
"Endangers ' <u>national survival</u> '." (Europa Press, 17/6/2020)	«pone en peligro la " <u>supervivencia nacional</u> ".» (Europa Press, 17/6/2020)
Vox believes that these goals are designed to (...) " <u>radically transform</u> " (...) " <u>even the Spaniard's way of life</u> ". (Europa Press, 18/6/2020)	«Vox cree que estos objetivos están diseñados para (...) " <u>transformar radicalmente</u> " (...) " <u>hasta el modo de vida de los españoles</u> ".» (Europa Press, 18/6/2020)
"The energy lobbies are the ones marking the <u>European agenda</u> ". (Europa Press, 4/6/2020)	«Son los lobbys energéticos los que están marcando la <u>agenda europea</u> ."» (Europa Press, 4/6/2020)
"Vox has called the Government's Climate Change Law ' <u>repressive</u> ', and claims that ' <u>it aims to change the economy and the lives of Spanish people</u> '. (Europa Press, 14/7/2020)	«Vox ha criticado la " <u>liberticida</u> " ley de Cambio Climático del Gobierno que, a su juicio, " <u>quiere cambiar la economía y la vida de los españoles</u> ."» (Europa Press, 14/7/2020)

Source: own elaboration.

These results are the representation of Vox's legitimization of their posture through the use of nationalist terminology, proof of how far-right parties seek to transmit traditionalist, ethnonationalist and even economic-protectionist (less common) values through their arguments in any field, including climate change.

#### 4.2.5. Vox's climate change law amendment in the Spanish press: an overview

The Spanish press' portrayal of the amendment to the climate change law tabled by Vox is predominantly critical. The analysis of the participants in the journalistic discourse (political actors cited) and the processes that are reflected, show that Vox's amendment represents a minority position and is not aligned with the scientific consensus. Thus, the proposal of the extreme right-wing party is ridiculed and shown as lacking argumentative support.

For its part, the analysis of the social actors involved reflects an over-representation of Vox. Despite the nuance of Vox's discourse and the inclusion of actors who reject the amendment proposed by the party, there are shortcomings in the inclusion of other voices (from fields such as science, activism, or civil society) that counteract the extreme right-wing discourses issued by the party and picked up by the press.

Vox's discourse delimits an in-group formed by the party and its supporters, leaving the progressive politicians in government in an out-group. This representation and dichotomization contribute to the polarization of an issue as sensitive as climate change, on which it is necessary to reach consensus and agreements that facilitate the adoption of climate policies.

Finally, this analysis shows how Vox's ideals (nationalism, traditionalism and even a bit of Euroscepticism) are intertwined with its climate discourse, underpinning its reactionary position towards the adoption of climate change mitigation policies.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This research fills a knowledge gap on Vox's discourse on climate change issues. Specifically, it analyses Vox's discourse with respect to the Spanish climate change law passed in 2021 through an amendment made by the party in 2020. This amendment is clearly aligned with the most common climate action contrarian discourses in the US and Europe, as it includes the main denialist and obstructionist arguments most used by organizations in this line. These discourses employ rhetorical mechanisms that have already been analysed and dismantled on numerous occasions (e.g., Cook *et al.*, 2018; McKie, 2019). This analysis shows a similarity between the frames used by Vox in its amendment and those issued by the main European think tanks against climate action studied by Almiron *et al.* (2020). In fact, it is worth noting here that Vox cites in its amendment Richard Tol, one of the authors collaborating with the Global Warming Policy Foundation, a popular English think tank known for its opposition to climate action (Black, 2018). Furthermore, the former director of the Juan de Mariana Institute (another of the obstructionist think tanks studied by Almiron *et al.* 2020), Eduardo Fernández Luiña, is deputy director of Vox's think tank, Fundación Disenso.

As for the press reception of Vox's amendment to the climate change law, the coverage is eminently critical. However, shortcomings have been detected in terms of the inclusion of voices to counter Vox's discourse in the press, which is marked by polarization and the use of nationalist elements to defend its position against climate action. In this sense, it would be useful for the press to provide the public with more tools to identify the climate countermovement and to avoid loopholes that cast doubt on the scientific consensus on climate change (van der Linden *et al.*, 2017).

Vox's discourse thus also aligns with the positions opposed to climate action of other European far-right parties described by Schaller and Carius (2019). In this regard, Forchtner and Lubarda (2021) indicate that far-right parties are focusing their positions on obstructing climate policies and not so much towards denying climate science; in other words, they are more obstructionist than denialist. In the case of the amendment to the climate change law presented by Vox, there are frames of denial of the scientific consensus on climate change, rejection of scientific projections and criticism of climate science, without the frame of literal denial of the existence of climate change appearing. But, despite the importance of this type of misleading arguments that adduce an alleged lack of scientific consensus, the framings against climate policies based on different ideological and economic arguments stand out, which is consistent with what Forchtner and Lubarda (2021) stated. In this regard, Forchtner and Lubarda (2021) warn that far-right parties may use arguments against climate action “to mainstream its ‘othering’ of, for example, migrants, liberals and leftists, ‘the elite’ and international organizations”, a situation that other authors such as Lockwood (2018) have also pointed out. The critical discourse analysis conducted in this article corroborates this dynamic, as processes of dichotomization and otherness of this style have been detected in the Vox discourse picked up by the press on the amendment to the climate change law.

At the journalistic level, the existence of actors with such obstructionist discourses as the one analysed in this article makes the already complicated task (Boykoff, 2019; Mancinas, 2013) of communicating the climate crisis even more difficult. Thus, at this point, it would be of interest to revise Lakoff's work (2010), who indicates that there is a hypocognition regarding the frames that explain the climate crisis, that is, there is a lack of arguments and frameworks to understand what is happening. Given the journalistic responsibility to effectively communicate the climate problem to the public in an effective way (Boykoff, 2019), it is worth reflecting here on the extent to which attention should be paid to political parties, interest groups and organizations whose aim is to obstruct climate action, rather than to those stakeholders who seek solutions in line with climate science and the emergency situation.

This research is just one more empirical contribution to the line of study on the climate countermovement, specifically in the Spanish political context. Future studies can focus more on the obstructionist discourses of political parties on climate action and how these are represented in the press, in other media or even how they are performed in social media. It would also be interesting to carry out studies on the reception of these discourses, to see whether the political polarization around climate change portrayed by Vox is also transferred to the audience, or whether the latter is more aligned with the climate consensus and rejects the party's postulates. In any case, research into the obstruction of climate action is now more necessary than ever, especially in the field of communication, which has become a battleground where multiple interests come into play to influence public opinion and decision-making on how to act to tackle the climate crisis.

## NOTES

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