

# **Marketing Renewable Energy through Geopolitics: Solar Farms in Israel**

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# Research motivation

- National (mega) infrastructures are public goods that no-one wants in their backyard
- Energy and water ones are classical examples
- A need to market/communicate these contentious infrastructures to the public
- How contentious infrastructures are marketed to the public and decision makers?

# Study Assumptions

- ❑ Many technologies and policies compete for the agenda of decision makers (agenda setting)
- ❑ Language, textual representation, rhetoric and framing create material practices and policies
- ❑ Geopolitics is a discursive phenomenon grounded in and created from ideologies, power and politics.

# Geopolitics Simplemindedness

Jaws  
Moonraker

You Only Live Twice



'Casino Royale

# So, who needs another paper?

- ❑ Ample warnings in the constructivist literature about the potential instrumental use of rhetoric for promoting contested policies based on intangibles.
- ❑ No rigorous studies that examine how (or even whether) and by whom geopolitical argumentation is constructed
- ❑ How does it impact the decision making processes?

# Landmarks in Israeli renewables

- ❑ 80s: Local companies developing solar technology
- ❑ 2002: Cabinet decision to encourage renewable energy via 10% targets for 2020
- ❑ 2006: ordinances for caps and tariffs for medium and large facilities
- ❑ 2011: new caps and feed-in- tariffs for large facilities
- ❑ 2013: new tariffs for renewable energy
- ❑ 2016: new renewable targets

# A rush towards solar farms in the Negev

- ❑ 2011: a new master plan to speed up small/medium farms
- ❑ 70 local solar farms initiatives submitted for approval (430 MGW on 10,000 dunams (1000 hectares))
- ❑ Ten large farms initiatives (1000 MGW; 25,000 dunams)
- ❑ At least 70 initiatives were already approved

# Why marketing renewables via geopolitics ?

- ❑ Multiple uses for land in the Negev
  - ❑ Army (55%)
  - ❑ Ecological needs (30%)
  - ❑ Food requirements (8%)
  - ❑ Clean Energy needs (solar farms)
  
- ❑ Solar farms have a negative aesthetic and possibly health impact

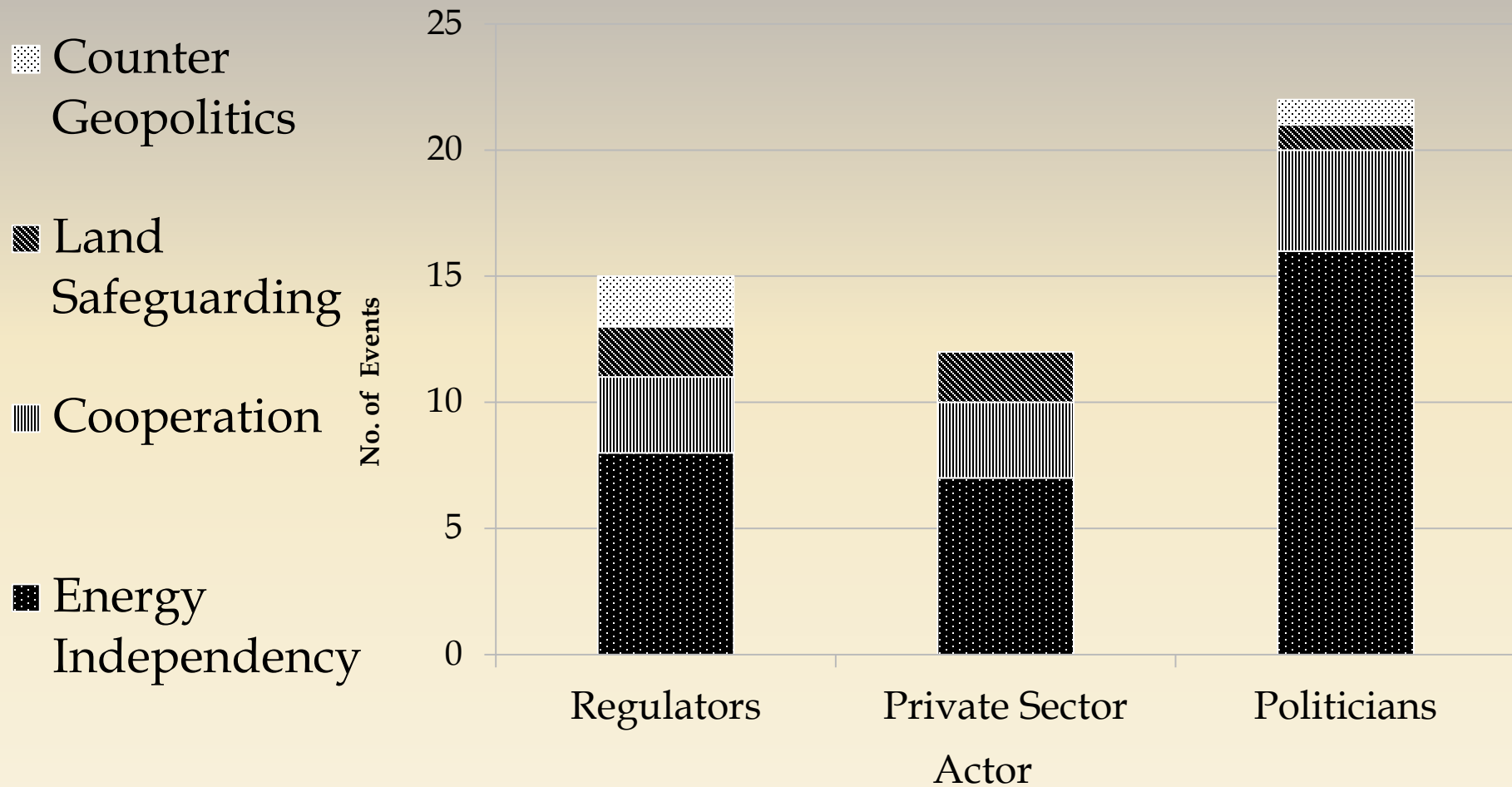




# Methodology

- ❑ Content analysis of 98 protocols covering solar farms between 2002-2013
  - Parliamentary, local, regional and national Planning and Construction Councils
- ❑ Identify “events” in which a decision maker was promoting (or condemning) solar RET by stressing the effect on geopolitics
- ❑ Breakdown of geopolitical rationales
- ❑ Identification of external and internal events that trigger geopolitical justification
- ❑ Identification of the language that depict geopolitics

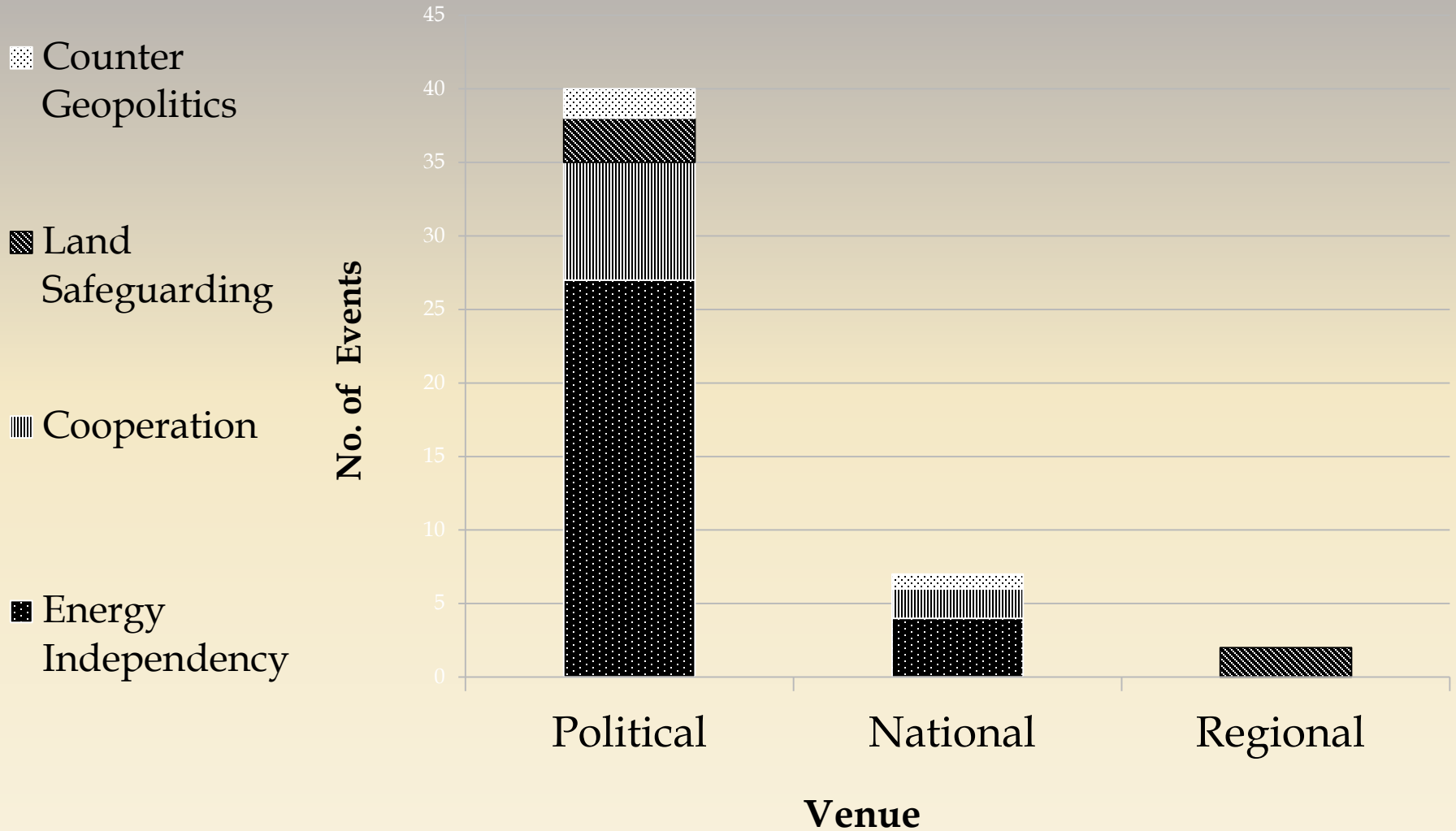
# Breakdown of geopolitical discourse by Actor



# The discourse of energy geopolitics

- ▣ **Land Safeguarding:** “The Bedouin have claims of ownership over land...We are trying to convince them to reach an agreement with the state...to release land for other purposes, including ..  
...photovoltaic facilities”.
- ▣ **Independency:** “We are a state enclosed by enemies and need to have many different [energy] reserves”.
- ▣ **Cooperation:** “In the Negev Desert there is hidden potential in the execution of solar projects with Jordan”

# Breakdown of geopolitical discourse by Venue



# Geopolitical discourse (motivated by contextual factors) by Actors

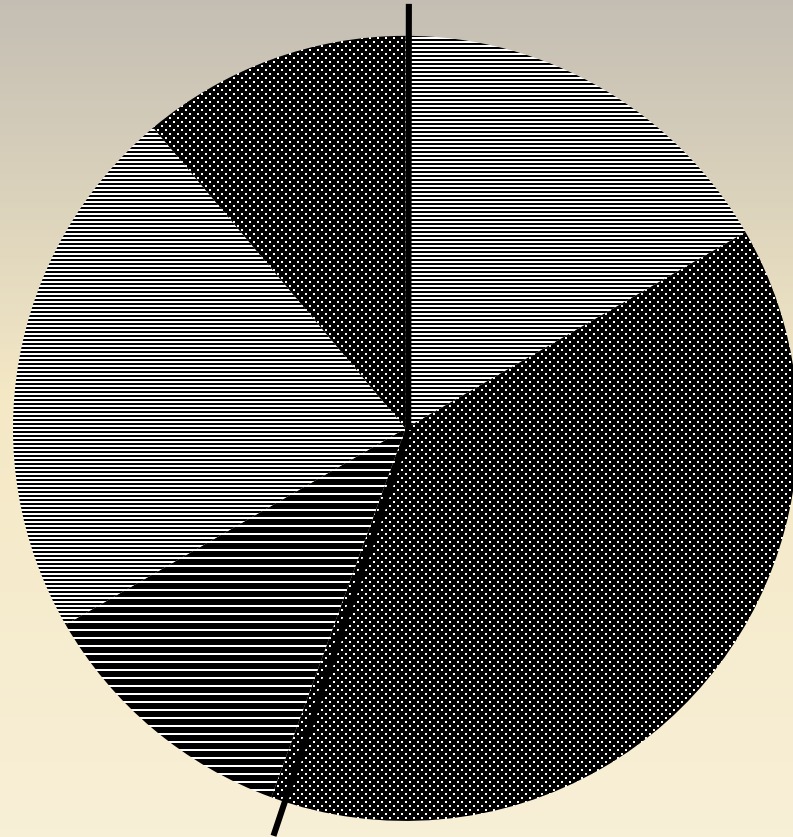
Private sector

Politicians

Governmental regulators

Internal

External



# Take-home points

- ▣ Renewables fall prey to the rhetoric of geopolitics rather than marketed via their environmental and economic benefits
- ▣ Geopolitics was the core for an alliance between players utilized for the purpose of diffusing favored energy policies
- ▣ Some players and venues are more prone to geopolitics than others
- ▣ Emblematic events give weight to geopolitical argumentations
- ▣ A range of rhetorical devices were used to justify geopolitics

# Food for thought

- ▣ Are these intangibles real?
- ▣ How do they affect policy makers?
- ▣ Do these intangibles materialize?
- ▣ Are the results of this study transferable?