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**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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Department of North American Studies

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**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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Department of North American Studies

**Rhetoric of U.S. Foreign Environmental Policy: Case  
Study of the Paris Agreement**

Master's thesis

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Year of the defence: 2023

## **Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on May 2, 2023

Tereza Štěpařová

## References

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## **Abstract**

The Paris Agreement represents a landmark international environmental agreement that received extensive political, journalistic, and academic attention, and the United States played a key role in the negotiation process. This thesis presents a comprehensive overview of determinants that can impact the U.S. approach to international environmental politics, and it focuses on a detailed discourse analysis of U.S. federal political elites' rhetoric on the Paris Agreement, comparing two time periods – the second term of the Obama presidency and the Trump administration. The analysis demonstrates a strong alignment of political ideology with partisanship, dividing the Democratic and Republican argumentation into rhetorical opposition, and proves the significant influence of the highly polarized two-party system on the U.S. environmental rhetoric. However, applying Putnam's two-level game framework, the case study also demonstrates that even Democratic politicians approached pragmatic rhetoric on topics such as the U.S. economy, economic growth, or U.S. leadership, and employed creative narratives that addressed the pragmatic concerns of the American public to gain support for their progressive foreign policy agenda represented by the Paris Agreement in the end result. The paper presents the rhetorical approaches in which the partisan and ideological polarization transforms into how the topics related to Paris Agreement are framed, not what topics are covered, because no matter if Democrat or Republican, presidents have to be responsive to the same audience – the American public. The thesis brings a new insight into the rhetorical strategies of the U.S. federal political elites on international environmental politics, pointing to the differences but also similarities between Democratic and Republican approaches.

## **Abstrakt**

Pařížská dohoda představuje přelomovou mezinárodní dohodu o ochraně životním prostředím, které byla věnována rozsáhlá politická, novinářská a akademická pozornost, a Spojené státy americké hrály v procesu vyjednávání klíčovou roli. Tato práce předkládá ucelený přehled faktorů, které mohou ovlivnit přístup USA k mezinárodní environmentální politice, a zaměřuje se na podrobnou analýzu rétoriky amerických federálních politických elit k tématu Pařížské dohody, přičemž srovnává dvě časová období – druhé funkční období presidenta Baracka Obamy, a období administrativy Donalda Trumpa. Analýza prokazuje silné propojení politické ideologie se stranickou příslušností a významný vliv vysoce

polarizovaného systému dvou politických stran na environmentální rétoriku USA. S použitím Putnamovy teorie two-level game však případová studie také ukazuje, že i demokratičtí politici přistupovali v určitých případech k otázce Pařížské dohody pragmaticky v tématech jako jsou americká ekonomika, hospodářský růst nebo vedoucí postavení USA v mezinárodní politice. Tato práce představuje rétorické přístupy, v nichž se stranická a ideologická polarizace odráží v tom, jak jsou témata související s Pařížskou dohodou rámována a prezentována, nikoliv jaká témata jsou vybrána a rétoricky pokryta, protože bez ohledu na to, zda jde o demokraty nebo republikány, prezidenti i kongresmani adresují stejné publikum – americkou veřejnost. Práce přináší nový pohled na rétorické strategie amerických federálních politických elit na téma mezinárodní environmentální politiky a poukazuje na rozdíly, ale i podobnosti mezi demokratickým a republikánským přístupem.

## **Keywords**

Paris Agreement, international environmental politics, rhetoric, the United States, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, U.S. Congress, discourse analysis

## **Klíčová slova**

Pařížská dohoda, mezinárodní environmentální politika, rétorika, Spojené státy americké, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, americký kongres, diskurzivní analýza

## **Title**

Rhetoric of U.S. Foreign Environmental Policy: Case Study of the Paris Agreement

## **Název práce**

Rétorika zahraniční environmentální politiky Spojených států amerických: Případová studie Pařížské dohody

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## Introduction

When the Paris Climate Agreement was adopted in December 2015, it was often presented by world leaders, politicians, media, or scholars as a historic and extraordinary international agreement, because 196 nations promised to commit their domestic political agenda to ambitious policies of climate change mitigation, and for the first time, states agreed to an international climate agreement that mixed voluntary and binding commitments. Although it set the goal to limit the increase in the global average temperature below 2 Celsius above pre-industrial levels with an effort to limit the increase even to 1.5 Celsius, the agreement did not command any specific emissions targets and states were left to decide their nationally determined commitments.

The United States has been presented as one of the key determinators of the success of the agreement in Paris in 2015, as well as of its accomplishments in the future, because it is the second-largest emitter in the world right after China, but also because of its significant position in international politics and its power to influence other states' behavior.<sup>1</sup> A lot of faith was put in the agreement, and when President Obama entered it, a lot of faith was put in the United States too. The environmental-friendly president that was sympathetic to the system of international environmental agreements and multilateralism was expected to lead the United States into a cleaner future with ambitious climate targets. However, how did President Obama convince his domestic audiences that U.S. participation in the agreement was a good idea? How did he justify his move and what opposition did he have to face? And what about the succeeding President Donald Trump, who decided to withdraw the United States from the agreement, how did he convince his audiences that the deal that was once presented as great for the United States, now had to be exited?

Rhetoric constitutes a significant part of politicians' strategies. Through thought-out rhetoric, policymakers can justify their actions, rationalize them, and get support for their policies. How the language is used can determine how politicians persuade audiences and mobilize popular support for their agendas, and the same applies to environmental policies too. Through rhetoric, policymakers shape and influence how the issue of climate change and

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth R. DeSombre, "United States International Environmental Policy," in *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Environmental Policy*, ed. Michael E. Kraft and Sheldon Kamienjecki (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 209, <https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/36310/chapter-abstract/318635587?redirectedFrom=fulltext>.

solutions to it are defined, and establish the legitimacy of their political choices.<sup>2</sup> Although rhetoric and actual behavior do not always align, the impact of rhetoric on both domestic and foreign policy is significant because it indicates the course of a politician's future steps, and the ways in which a politician addresses a certain topic or issue can determine how it will be perceived – both by other political actors and by the public.<sup>3</sup>

Actions matter, but rhetoric can have a great influence on how these actions will be perceived by domestic and international audiences. That is why this paper aims to analyze what were the rhetorical strategies of the federal political elites – the administration and the Congress - during the Obama and Trump presidencies of 2015 through 2020. The paper does not intend to analyze the connection between rhetoric and real actions but rather focuses on a better understanding of what narratives can be used to justify certain policies and how such narratives can vary and/or overlap for two different administrations or Congresses, when they cover the same topic – in this case the Paris Climate Agreement. Obama was expected to apply progressive multilateralism-friendly rhetoric of environmental protection, but does his rhetoric reflect also the conservative demands of the American public or businesses? To what extent did a rhetorical approach to the same subject vary between a Democratic and Republican administration or congressmen? And what does it tell us about the future of the U.S. participation in the system of international environmental deals? This paper aims to analyze the rhetorical strategies of the Obama and Trump presidencies and their respective incumbent Congress regarding the Paris Agreement, and how their narratives differed based on the partisanship of the speaker or whether some sort of rhetorical overlap can be determined. The results can help enlighten to what extent can Democratic and Republican rhetoric derive from the same reasoning, challenging the narrative of deep partisan polarization.

The paper stands on the theory of the two-level game by American political scientist Robert Putnam. According to this framework, every international negotiator has to balance the demands of other states in the international negotiations (Level I), and domestic political actors and the public (Level II).<sup>4</sup> Applied on the United States and the case of the Paris Agreement, the theory implies that the U.S. approach to international environmental politics

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<sup>2</sup> Craig K. Jones and Luke Fowler, "Administration, Rhetoric, and Climate Policy in the Obama Presidency," *Review of Policy Research* 39, no. 4 (March 7, 2022): 513-515, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ropr.12472>.

<sup>3</sup> Corina Lacatus and Gustav Meibauer, "Introduction to the Special Issue: Elections, Rhetoric and American Foreign Policy in the Age of Donald Trump," *Politics* 41, no. 1 (February 1, 2021): 6.

<sup>4</sup> Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (June 1, 1988): 434-436, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818300027697>.

has its roots in domestic politics, especially on the federal level: the U.S. Congress and the president. This is why the paper focuses on federal political elites represented in the analysis by both the president and the Congress. The first section of the paper presents the theoretical foundations of the U.S. approach to international environmental politics. The second section introduces the Paris Agreement and its legal challenges for the U.S. system first, and then it presents the results of the analysis of the rhetoric of the Paris Agreement. The analysis applies the research method of discourse analysis, presenting qualitative data about the rhetorical frameworks of the Obama and Trump administrations and federal congressmen regarding the Paris Agreement.

### Methodology

The paper analyzes and compares two closed presidential terms that dealt with the Paris Agreement – the second term of Barack Obama’s presidency of 2013-2016, and the presidency of Donald Trump in the years 2017-2021. However, the analysis does not cover Obama’s term entirely but focuses only on the period in which Obama directly addressed the Paris Agreement. Thus, for the purposes of the analysis, September 2015 was established as the beginning of the analysis, because in this month, two important events related to the Paris Agreement – the New York Climate Week and the UN General Assembly in New York – took place, marking the important starting events in the intensive run-up to the COP21 UN Climate Change Conference in Paris, France, that took place in first two weeks of December 2015. Additionally, in September 2015 the United States negotiated and signed a bilateral joint statement with China, announcing their shared ambition to face climate change, thus signaling to the world that the two largest emitters were committed to policies of climate change mitigation represented by the upcoming UN conference in Paris. The analysis concludes simultaneously with the end of the Trump presidency because the Paris Agreement discussions impacted Trump’s entire term. Although the rhetoric regarding the Paris Agreement continued also in the subsequent presidency of President Joe Biden, Biden’s term is not included in the analysis, because at the time this paper was written, the Biden presidency was still running. Thus, due to the unresolved character of the presidential term, which is still open to changes and developments regarding the topic, the term of Biden’s presidency is not included in the analysis.

The analysis focuses on the rhetoric of federal political elites, represented by the President, his administration, and the U.S. Congress, that constituted the federal political discourse on the topic of the Paris Agreement. Because the Paris Agreement represents an international

environmental deal subjected to the U.S. foreign policy on the federal level, the analysis does not include state or local political elites.

To examine rhetoric that constitutes a political discourse, the analysis applies the research method of discourse analysis. As a qualitative approach, discourse analysis enables a researcher to analyze ways in which language is used by politicians and for what reasons. Discourse represents ideas as well as specific displays of communication that are influenced by these ideas.<sup>5</sup> Applying discourse analysis, this paper could study what narratives were employed and how they were framed by the federal political elites regarding the Paris Agreement. Discourse analysis was applied to examine the ideas and arguments that were used by federal political elites to mobilize popular support, to indirectly influence other political actors in the discourse, and to shape and influence how the Paris Agreement and its effects were defined and promoted.

To analyze the discourses of two presidential terms, the analysis is structured by metanarratives that represent a topic and/or ideology that was covered rhetorically by both administrations regarding the Paris Agreement. These metanarratives were determined by the analysis as the dominant categories that were rhetorically covered in both presidential terms, and they refer to the theoretical sources of the U.S. approach to international environmental policies discussed in the first part of the paper. For each metanarrative, the analysis examines how these were approached and framed rhetorically during both presidential terms individually, then each section concludes with a short comparison examining the differences and/or similarities in the two respective presidential terms and their rhetoric regarding the metanarrative. The analysis is comprised of primary sources such as speeches, remarks, press conferences, interviews, or congressional records or hearings, all of which were addressed to the American public directly or published, thus publicly accessible.

## Literature Review

The literature on international environmental politics and the U.S. role in it is quite extensive and it mainly covers particular determinants of the U.S. approach to the international environmental politics more broadly. For example, the domestic sources of the U.S. international environmental politics are covered by the specialist on international environmental politics and law Elizabeth R. DeSombre in her book *Domestic Sources of*

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<sup>5</sup> Barbara, Johnstone. *Discourse Analysis*. John Wiley & Sons, 2018, p. 2-3.

*International Environmental Policy: Industry, Environmentalists, and U.S. Power*,<sup>6</sup> where DeSombre acknowledges the significant influence of the specific structure of the U.S. domestic politics on the U.S. approach to international environmental politics. In her chapter *United States International Environmental Politics* included in the book called *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Environmental Policy* edited by Michael E. Kraft and Sheldon Kamienjecki<sup>7</sup>, DeSombre sees the U.S. reluctance to multilateral cooperation on climate change in the U.S. general suspicion of multilateralism, fear of transfer of benefits or the economic costs of action, but again mainly focuses on the influence of domestic politics on the U.S. approach to international environmental politics. Arguments of DeSombre were used as one of the cornerstones of this paper, however DeSombre pays the main attention to the structure of the U.S. domestic politics and does not explain in detail other aspects such as question of national security or the role of neoliberal ideology.

Another book called *US Politics and Climate Change: Science Confronts Policy*<sup>8</sup> by Glen Sussman, an Old Dominion University professor specialized in environmental politics, and Byron W. Daynes, a professor of political science at DePauw University, also extensively covers the influence of the U.S. balance of power between the U.S. president and Congress on the American approach to international environmental politics, but does not analyze in more detail other aspects such as ideology of neoliberalism of American exceptionalism, question of security or economic interests. These aspects are covered by various journal articles, usually covering just one aspect or source influencing the U.S. approach to the international environmental politics such as the article *The Unbearable Lightness of Politics: Climate Change Denial and Political Polarization*<sup>9</sup> by Robert J. Antonio and Robert J. Brulle, analyzing the influence of neoliberalism on the U.S. environmental politics, or the article *Meeting the Enemy: American Exceptionalism and International Law*,<sup>10</sup> focusing on the role of American exceptionalism in international environmental law and the U.S. suspicion of multilateralism. Various sources used as the theoretical base for the paper also focused specifically on the case of Paris Agreement and the U.S. approach to it, such as the book

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<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth DeSombre, *Domestic Sources of International Environmental Policy: Industry, Environmentalists, and U.S. Power (American and Comparative Environmental Policy)*, 1st ed. (The MIT Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth R. DeSombre, "United States International Environmental Policy," in *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Environmental Policy*, ed. Michael E. Kraft and Sheldon Kamienjecki (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Glen Sussman and Byron W. Daynes, *US Politics and Climate Change: Science Confronts Policy* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Robert J. Antonio and Robert J. Brulle, "The Unbearable Lightness of Politics: Climate Change Denial and Political Polarization," *Sociological Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (March 1, 2011): 195-202, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2011.01199.x>.

<sup>10</sup> Natsu Taylor Saito, *Meeting the Enemy: American Exceptionalism and International Law* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

called *The Paris Agreement: Climate Change, Solidarity, and Human Rights*<sup>11</sup> by sociologist Judith Blau, which focused on the influence of the American exceptionalism and individualism on the U.S. approach to the agreement, or the article *The Paris Agreement on Climate Change – Made in USA?*<sup>12</sup> by Norwegian sociologist specialized in global environmental governance Manjana Milkoreit, analyzing the U.S. approach to the Paris Agreement and previous international agreements by the logic of the two-level game established by American political scientist Robert Putnam.

However, none of the sources presents the various sources of the U.S. approach to the international environmental politics in connection to each other. Thus, this paper aims to present a comprehensive overview of all the main variables influencing the U.S. approach to international environmental politics, putting each in the context of others.

The comprehensive overview of the potential determinants of the U.S. approach to international environmental politics serves as the theoretical ground for the analysis of the U.S. rhetoric on the Paris Agreement. One of the important sources here is the book *Framing Climate Change in the EU and US After the Paris Agreement* by Frank Wendler,<sup>13</sup> which acknowledges the importance of rhetoric on how the issue of climate change is framed and presented to the public, political partners and opponents, or to the international audiences. It focuses on how the climate change was rhetorically framed *after* the Paris Agreement was adopted, but it does not focus on the rhetoric on the Paris Agreement itself. Other various articles analyze the U.S. rhetoric on climate change on case studies of Presidents Barack Obama or Donald Trump, but never focus exclusively and more deeply on the case of the Paris Agreement in particular. Also, the articles miss the comparison of the two presidential administration or fail to comprise the rhetoric of congressmen too.

This paper aims to build on the existing literature on determinants of the U.S. approach to the international environmental politics and apply it on the case of the Paris Agreement. The paper enriches the existing scholarship by detailed discourse analysis of the U.S. federal political elites' rhetoric on the Paris Agreement on the case of Obama and Trump presidencies, established on the comparison of the two periods, analyzing rhetorical

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<sup>11</sup> Judith Blau, *The Paris Agreement: Climate Change, Solidarity, and Human Rights* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Manjana Milkoreit, "The Paris Agreement on Climate Change – Made in USA?", *Perspectives on Politics* 17, no. 7 (June 2019): 1019-37, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592719000951>.

<sup>13</sup> Frank Wendler, *Framing Climate Change in the EU and US After the Paris Agreement* (Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics), 1st ed. 2022 (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

differences and similarities in an attempt to find out what role the partisanship may play in the U.S. rhetoric on the international environmental politics.

## 1. Sources of the U.S. Approach to International Environmental Politics

The approach of the United States to international environmental politics has varied over time, reaching from active cooperation and climate change mitigation initiatives to climate change denial, non-cooperation, or isolationism. There were moments in history when the United States took leadership in actions challenging climate change, but also periods when it undermined these international efforts, such as were the cases of the presidency of Barack Obama, who promoted environmental multilateralism versus isolationism of George W. Bush, who refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, the predecessor of the Paris Agreement. However, the underlying causes for the U.S. approaches to international environmental initiatives were never easily trackable and there was no clear pattern. So, what are the reasons for the shifting U.S. approach to international environmental policies?

The answer to this question holds an important message not only to scholars of international relations but also to world leaders, legislators, and diplomats of the international political arena, as the United States determines the success of international actions on climate change more than any other developed state. Because of its market and population size, and the quantity of greenhouse gases it produces, the reluctance or willingness of the United States to act against climate change determines how successful an international environmental effort will be. First, any attempt to reduce world CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is doomed if the United States refuses to cut its emissions because it is the second largest CO<sub>2</sub> emitter in the world after China.<sup>14</sup> Second, the United States' positive environmental policies have the power to persuade other states to join. Again, the size and power of the U.S. market play a role, because if the United States adopts some regulatory ecological measures that have an impact on U.S. products, exporters would need to follow these measures. Eventually, not to find themselves in trade isolation, other states would follow the U.S. regulatory standards. Balancing economic harms versus gains is a common factor, by which states assess if they want to participate in international environmental regulations. This is a common reason why

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<sup>14</sup> Joint Research Center (European Commission), *CO2 emissions of all world countries - 2022 Report*, EUR 31182 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2022, accessed February 18, 2023, [https://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/report\\_2022](https://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/report_2022).



the United States supports international environmental actions when it predicts economic gains.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the U.S. leadership on international climate actions significantly determines what other states do or do not. No international attempt to reduce emissions without the U.S. participation, nor any unilateral American efforts possess the power to resolve the climate change issue themselves, thus multilateralism with the U.S. engagement is crucial for any climate policy to be successful.<sup>16</sup>

This chapter examines sources of the U.S. approach to international environmental efforts and helps to enlighten why its international policies do not follow a consistent pattern. The chapter one constitutes a significant base for the following discourse analysis of the U.S. rhetoric of the Paris Agreement because the sources of the American approach to international environmental politics explicitly or implicitly project into the U.S. rhetoric on the topic, as I will show in the case of the Paris Agreement in chapter two.

### 1.1 Domestic Politics: Relationship between the Executive and Legislative Branch

The core source of the U.S. inconsistency regarding international environmental policies derives from the rule of international politics, described by American political scientist Robert Putnam as a *two-level game*. According to this framework, every international negotiator (in this case a president) has to balance the demands of other states in the international negotiations (Level I) and domestic political actors and the public (Level II).<sup>17</sup> Based on this principle, presidents are facing a tricky challenge in which they have to balance domestic and international voices while trying to keep up to their promises and satisfy as wide audiences (both domestic and international) as possible. Because every president has to face different domestic and international challenges and demands over time, their approach to international policies may vary, even for the same president in their two terms. As DeSombre puts it, “[a] state is constrained internationally by the set of options its domestic political process will find acceptable (and may even choose to use those domestic constraints for bargaining leverage internationally).”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth DeSombre, *Domestic Sources of International Environmental Policy: Industry, Environmentalists, and U.S. Power (American and Comparative Environmental Policy)*, 1st ed. (The MIT Press, 2000), 10.

<sup>16</sup> Barry Rabe, “Contested Federalism and American Climate Policy,” *Publius* 41, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 495, doi:10.1093/publius/pjr01.

<sup>17</sup> Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (June 1, 1988): 434-436, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818300027697>.

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth R. DeSombre, “United States International Environmental Policy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Environmental Policy*, ed. Michael E. Kraft and Sheldon Kamienjecki (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 224, <https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/36310/chapter-abstract/318635587?redirectedFrom=fulltext>.

In line with this concept, the U.S. approach to international environmental politics has its roots in domestic politics, especially on the federal level: the U.S. Congress and the president. For a climate policy to become successful, it depends on which party controls the Congress and from which party is the president and his administration. In the case of international environmental policies, it especially matters what party controls the Senate, as it has the sole power given by the Constitution to approve the ratification of international treaties by a two-thirds majority.<sup>19</sup> Thus, even if there would be a pro-climate president, who signed an international treaty, it would rather have a symbolic meaning without the Senate's ratification. Through ratification, the state bounds itself to international responsibilities prescribed by the treaty.<sup>20</sup> This was the case with the Clinton administration, which signed the Kyoto Protocol, but the Senate refused to ratify it. Eventually, the Kyoto Protocol remained time-barred and the succeeding president George Bush rejected Kyoto definitely. However, as I explain in more detail in subchapter 2.1, Obama's administration later found a way how to bypass Senate's approval, complicating the relationship between the executive and legislative branches even more.

It is the nature of the U.S. Congress, which is highly polarized, that causes disagreements over international environmental policies between the Congress and the President. The intensified polarization derives from the U.S. two-party system, which makes legislative agenda-setting highly competitive as the two major parties have progressively, particularly in the last few decades, come to a point where they refuse to support the other party's policy not to give them a political advantage. Therefore, party orientation represents a clear marker of positions and opinions on environmental issues.<sup>21</sup> Combined with ideology (discussed in more detail in subchapter 1.2), partisanship influences how congresspersons approach environmental policies. The intensified party polarization causes significant ideological disagreements, due to which it is complicated to promote some environmental policies in the U.S. Congress, and what is more, to make them successful. However, domestic legislative agreement on climate policies is crucial for international environmental treaties, because Congress suggests and approves concrete climate steps and policies to fulfill the promises of the international treaty.

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<sup>19</sup> „Advice & Consent,“ United States Senate, accessed January 17, 2023, [https://www.senate.gov/general/Features/Treaties\\_display.htm](https://www.senate.gov/general/Features/Treaties_display.htm).

<sup>20</sup> Glen Sussman and Byron W. Daynes, *US Politics and Climate Change: Science Confronts Policy* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 9.

<sup>21</sup> Frank Wendler, *Framing Climate Change in the EU and US After the Paris Agreement (Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics)*, 1st ed. 2022 (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 5.

It is also problematic to find an agreement on a piece of legislation between the House and the Senate, because House members are representing the interests of their congressional districts, while senators are representing demands of entire states.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, House members have only 2-year terms, thus they constantly prioritize their districts' short-term interests which can be in opposition to – usually long-term – interests of international environmental efforts. Cooperation on climate policies between the two parties is even more complicated by the competitiveness between them, as neither party wants to admit the validity of the other side's views to not give the other side an advantage. Thus, it is a common state that in Congress, the two parties insist on opposing climate change views.<sup>23</sup> Combined with the fact that the United States covers huge lands in which impacts of climate change and actions to mitigate it vary widely, it is problematic for policymakers to analyze the vulnerability of the United States to climate change. The most vulnerable to climate change are Arizona, Texas or Louisiana, but these states have not been recently politically responsive to their climate threats. On the contrary, states like California or New York are the most progressive on climate change, which points to the power of state efforts and the problem of state sovereignty, which is an untouchable concept for some states, further complicating legislative support for federal plans to protect the environment.<sup>24</sup> Thus, it is challenging for policymakers to listen to so many competing demands and interests and it causes frequent policy deadlocks.

In addition to that, legislative negotiations about climate policies are usually scattered between several House and Senate committees and subcommittees, discussing different aspects of a climate proposal. The committee system causes conflicts while discussing a proposal as a whole and it is more complicated for a bill to successfully make its way out of the committees, that make various amendments. As a result, some bills just die in the committees or stay there for many years. Taken together, these aspects “are a potential source of volatility and contestation of climate policy proposals” in the U.S. Congress.<sup>25</sup>

As Congress may reverse the president's climate policies, the U.S. president also has various tools how to push for his agenda in spite of the Congress' positions. One way, which was

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<sup>22</sup> Glen Sussman and Byron W. Daynes, *US Politics and Climate Change: Science Confronts Policy* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 55, <https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?nobk=y&vid=4&sid=051741ed-c11a-4111-aa95-0f51661dfec@redis&bdata=Jmxhbmc9Y3Mmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl#AN=1531626&db=nlebk>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>24</sup> Frank Wendler, *Framing Climate Change in the EU and US After the Paris Agreement (Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics)*, 1st ed. 2022 (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 13.

<sup>25</sup> Frank Wendler, *Framing Climate Change in the EU and US After the Paris Agreement (Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics)*, 1st ed. 2022 (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 19.

adopted in the past, is to simply ignore the Senate. That was the example of President Bill Clinton, who ignored the Senate opposition when he signed the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. At the time, the Senate was strongly opposing the protocol and it introduced a so-called Byrd-Hagel resolution, by which the Senate refused to ratify any international treaty that required the reduction of emissions from the United States if developing states were not obliged to do so too.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, Clinton decided to side with the international demands of the Kyoto Protocol and signed it in spite of the Senate's refusal. Later on, the Obama administration did the same when it bypassed the Senate and called the Paris Agreement ratified, though it lacked Senate's approval. Besides that, U.S. presidents may employ other tools such as executive orders (e. g. the case of the Paris Agreement) or presidential memorandums, which was the case for the majority of past U.S. climate regulations, that were adopted against the legislative opposition. However, unlike legislative actions, executive ones can be easily reversed by the next president, which has been a source of highly publicized litigations through courts.<sup>27</sup>

Speaking of litigations, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a federal government agency, has been a source of numerous lawsuits because of its varying degree of authority over U.S. climate policies. Through EPA, presidents can push for their climate agenda if they face Congress opposition. This authority of EPA was endorsed mainly by Democrats, while Republicans tried to limit EPA's powers through various bills. However, in the 2007 case of *Massachusetts v. Environmental Protection Agency*, EPA was granted its authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and introduce climate regulations.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, various attempts to restrict EPA's power have continued since, illustrated by the 2022 Supreme Court case of *West Virginia v. EPA*, which limited the EPA's tools how to regulate CO2 emissions. In reaction, President Joe Biden did not hesitate to stress the executive powers still available: "I will take action. My Administration will continue using lawful executive authority, including

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<sup>26</sup> Congress.gov. "S.Res.98 – 105th Congress (1997-1998): A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the conditions of the United States becoming a signatory to any international agreement on greenhouse gas emissions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change." July 25, 1997. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/105th-congress/senate-resolution/98>.

<sup>27</sup> Frank Wendler, *Framing Climate Change in the EU and US After the Paris Agreement (Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics)*, 1st ed. 2022 (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 11.

<sup>28</sup> „Massachusetts v. Environmental Protection Agency.“ Oyez. Accessed January 6, 2023. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2006/05-1120>.

the EPA’s legally-upheld authorities, to keep our air clean, protect public health, and tackle the climate crisis.”<sup>29</sup>

Besides executive authorities at home, U.S. presidents’ role in climate politics is significant on the international level too, as they have the power to push forward key climate demands in international negotiations. Being aware of the strong American impact on international climate politics, U.S. presidents can significantly influence the direction of international negotiations on climate policies and they have the power to request exceptions or climate rules in favor of American interests. However, not to make the U.S. electorate angry while also signaling to the world that the United States is willing to take action on climate change, presidents have to think through how progressive on climate change their policies should be in order to keep the balance of interests (viz the two-level game framework). As a result, U.S. presidents have had hard times deciding the dilemma of how much to promise internationally versus what can be realistically delivered domestically through legislation. Because the U.S. president is endowed with the ability to make an environmental issue a national priority, their role is essential for both domestic and international environmental politics.<sup>30</sup>

Another domestic aspect complicating climate proposals’ success rate is the system of funding. When considering which climate policies get the funding after they successfully made it through Congress, environmental issues have low priority, mainly because priorities usually expected to be responded by the president and Congress are the economy, employment, and national security.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, congresspersons represent different interests and priorities, and they are usually more reserved to long-term financial commitments, which makes it extremely complicated for a climate policy, which is usually long-term, to get sufficient funding.

When we consider all the aspects described above, what are the key reasons why the United States decided to adopt some international climate regulations? According to DeSombre, the creation and adoption of climate policies are driven by the rule of power and threat. Based on the premise, a state adopts a common climate regulation, because (1) it thinks it is the “right thing” to do regardless of self-interests or consequences, (2) it is in the state’s interest to

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<sup>29</sup> The White House, “Statement by President Joe Biden on Supreme Court Ruling on West Virginia v. EPA,” The White House, June 30, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/06/30/statement-by-president-joe-biden-on-supreme-court-ruling-on-west-virginia-v-epa/>.

<sup>30</sup> Glen Sussman and Byron W. Daynes, *US Politics and Climate Change: Science Confronts Policy* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 98-100.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

accept cooperation because of mutual gains, (3) it fears that it will be harmed by other states if it would not accept the regulation, (4) it wants to gain its credibility abroad. The author further stresses, that “[t]hese explanations rely upon theories that expect international cooperation to arrive only when driven and coerced by the powerful members of the international community” – in this case the United States.<sup>32</sup>

Considering all the domestic aspects together, their influence on international environmental politics is diverse. American presidents often face opposition from Congress, while they can choose to bypass Congress too. The party affiliation of a president is not exclusively determinant for the U.S. approach to international environmental politics, because a Democratic, pro-climate president can face resistance from Republican-majority Senate. However, presidents themselves have found ways how to challenge the resistance of Congress and how to promote their agendas regardless of Congress’s positions. Moreover, the American president is a significant negotiator in international environmental politics and through wise diplomacy, they can promote U.S. national interests, ask for exceptions or persuade other states to follow U.S. leadership. In conclusion, the complex dynamics of U.S. domestic politics always have to be taken into account when analyzing the U.S. approach to international environmental politics.

## 1.2 Ideology and Partisanship: When Political Ideology and Party Affiliation Align

Besides its specific structure and functioning, domestic politics influences the American approach to international environmental policies through its prevailing mindset too – by its values, beliefs, or ideas that are rooted in American politics and identity. Ideology is inevitably connected to politics in every country. For Americans, core beliefs in individualism, liberty, private property rights, or capitalism are part of their identity, thus questioning these beliefs – which climate change did – has become a source of argument over environmental policies in the American public realm and in politics.

In American environmental politics, ideology plays a significant role as it influences beliefs and attitudes toward climate change. Conflicting beliefs between liberals and conservatives often have fueled the political polarization of American opinions on climate change in the past. However, the United States has recently witnessed increased interconnection between party affiliation and political ideology, where Democrats are becoming predominantly liberal

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<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth DeSombre, *Domestic Sources of International Environmental Policy: Industry, Environmentalists, and U.S. Power (American and Comparative Environmental Policy)*, 1st ed. (The MIT Press, 2000), 12.

and Republicans increasingly conservative. As argued by Ballew and Leiserowitz, „[a]s party affiliation and political ideology align, the impact of partisanship on opinions and behavior becomes stronger, [...] which has important implications for understanding the political polarization of global warming responses.”<sup>33</sup> The reason for the intensified partisan disagreement over climate change is that it attacks the core ideological differences between Republicans and Democrats and it hits key values where Republican and Democratic views oppose – government regulations and business. Republicans usually oppose government regulations, including those addressing climate change, while Democrats tend to promote the expansion of government regulations to protect the environment. Also, Republicans tend to prioritize business interests over environmental protection more than Democrats.<sup>34</sup>

As a political ideology and party affiliation align, it has a significant influence on the U.S. approach to climate policies. According to recent research, conservatives and Republicans are predominantly more climate change skeptical, while liberals and Democrats tend to believe that climate change is a real issue, happening due to human activity. However, there is also a group of believers in climate change, who believe that it is induced rather by natural changes in the environment than by human activity.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, according to the recent Gallup research, Republicans’ worry about climate change varies significantly by age, indicating that young Republicans are significantly more worried about the effects of climate change than their older counterparts. Young Republicans in age 18 to 34 agreed by 32 % that they worry a great deal about the quality of the environment, in comparison to 14 % of Republicans over 55. For Democrats, the concern about climate change does not vary by age and evinces a higher concern about the quality of the environment (64 %) across all age groups.<sup>36</sup> However, a recent study by the Brookings Institution shows that even Republican voters do not share the same opinions on climate change as their representatives. The study indicates, that just before the 2020 elections, more than three-quarters of Republican voters would support government

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<sup>33</sup> Matthew T. Ballew and Anthony Leiserowitz et al., „Climate Change in the American Mind: Data, Tools, and Trends“, *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 63, no. 3 (April 2019): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00139157.2019.1589300>.

<sup>34</sup> Lazarus Adua, „U.S. states initiation of energy efficiency policies in the era of climate change: Throwing a searchlight on the influence of political partisanship”, *Environmental Science & Policy* 115 (2021), 134, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2020.09.021>.

<sup>35</sup> Brian Kennedy and Courtney Johnson. „More Americans see climate change as a priority, but Democrats are much more concerned than Republicans”, *Pew Research Center*, February 28, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/02/28/more-americans-see-climate-change-as-a-priority-but-democrats-are-much-more-concerned-than-republicans/>.

<sup>36</sup> Megan Brenan, “Republicans’ Environmental Worry Varies by Age,” *Gallup.com*, July 23, 2022, accessed February 18, 2023, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/394955/republicans-environmental-worry-varies-age.aspx>.

policies to reduce greenhouse emissions.<sup>37</sup> However, Republican legislators' opinions on climate change are not keeping up with the opinions of their voters. Although some Republicans have recently started to acknowledge that climate change is human-induced, they typically oppose climate regulations that propose a reduction of fossil fuel consumption and rather support investment in technological innovations to adapt to changing climate.<sup>38</sup>

The influence of the increased polarization can be seen in the political climate debates as a conflict between advocates versus opponents of policies to mitigate climate change or as a dispute between believers and deniers of climate change. The competing camps typically hold opposing views on what are the benefits and costs of actions on climate change. As described by Gray and Stites, “[w]hile skeptics emphasize the uncertainty of climate science, they have no doubt that the attendant economic loss from climate change would break the back of the US economy. Advocates, on the other hand, assert that [...] the economic costs of inaction could be far worse for both developing and developed nations.”<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the two camps have different opinions on scientific research regarding climate change. Believers trust scientific research more and believe that climate change is a human-caused phenomenon. On the other hand, deniers of climate change question the scientific accuracy and call into question or deny the human activity-caused argument. Additionally, there is a group of Americans, who believe that climate change is a real issue, but ascribe its causes to natural changes in the environment. This group might be more positive about climate change mitigation policies but deny the human-induced argument. Based on this division, climate change believers evince higher support for governmental regulations to mitigate climate change, and believe that these regulations can in effect benefit them with a better environment.<sup>40</sup>

Assessed with the two-party lenses, the alliance of party affiliation with beliefs about climate change determines how congresspersons approach climate policies. The partisan divide on environmental issues has been a continuously growing trend since the 1970s and resulted in

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<sup>37</sup> Samantha Gross, „Republicans in Congress are out of step with the American public on climate,“ Brookings, May 10, 2021, accessed February 18, 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/planetpolicy/2021/05/10/republicans-in-congress-are-out-of-step-with-the-american-public-on-climate/>.

<sup>38</sup> Lisa Friedman and Coral Davenport, „Amid Extreme Weather, a Shift Among Republicans on Climate Change,“ The York Times, September 3, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/13/climate/republicans-climate-change.html>

<sup>39</sup> Barbara Gray and Jenna P. Stites, “In search of integrative logics: Reframing the climate change debate,” *Strategic Organization* 9, no. 1 (February 2011): 86.

<sup>40</sup> Leyla D. Karakas and Devashish Mitra, „Believers vs. deniers: Climate change and environmental policy polarization,“ *European Journal of Political Economy* 65 (2020): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2020.101948>.



the current strong pro-environment versus pro-industry positions along party lines.<sup>41</sup> According to the League of Conservation Voters data from 1970 to 2016, while House Republicans and Democrats voted for pro-environment legislation respectively 30 and 60 percent of the time in 1970, the divide has changed respectively to 5 and 97 percent in 2016. The same trend can be tracked for the Senate too.<sup>42</sup> Because opinions on climate change transform into how politicians approach climate change policies, a Republican/Democratic majority in Congress can determine whether climate policies to protect the environment will be adopted or not, or how progressive they will be.<sup>43</sup>

Because of the recent extreme partisan division on environmental issues, it is intricate for environmental reforms to be accomplished. In the case of international environmental politics, the partisan and ideological division within U.S. politics complicates the state's negotiating position abroad. As it is difficult to find an agreement home on international environmental policies, the United States sometimes tends to adopt exceptional positions and policies in comparison to the rest of the international actors, to satisfy both domestic, and international audiences, while justifying its demands with the idea of American exceptionalism.

### 1.3 American Exceptionalism

American exceptionalism is an ideological concept, that is deeply rooted in American identity. The idea formed already in the beginnings of American history and evolved into an ideological concept, that seems inseparable from American cultural identity, with a significant influence on the U.S. foreign environmental politics too.

The idea of American exceptionalism is that the United States is unique because of its history, values, and exceptional commitment to a republican form of government. It holds beliefs that the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights are exceptional and that distinctively "American" values of freedom, democracy, and human dignity can be universally implemented anywhere in the world, securing human progress according to the U.S. example.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> David Karol, *Party Polarization on Environmental Issues: Toward Prospects for Change*, Niskanen Center Research Paper, May 2018, 15, [https://www.niskanencenter.org/wp-content/uploads/old\\_uploads/2018/05/Party-Polarization-on-Environmental-Issues.pdf](https://www.niskanencenter.org/wp-content/uploads/old_uploads/2018/05/Party-Polarization-on-Environmental-Issues.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Leyla D. Karakas and Devashish Mitra, „Believers vs. deniers: Climate change and environmental policy polarization,” *European Journal of Political Economy* 65 (2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2020.101948>.

<sup>43</sup> Lazarus Adua, „U.S. states initiation of energy efficiency policies in the era of climate change: Throwing a searchlight on the influence of political partisanship,” *Environmental Science & Policy* 115 (2021), 134-135, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2020.09.021>.

<sup>44</sup> Natsu Taylor Saito, *Meeting the Enemy: American Exceptionalism and International Law* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 2.

The idea of American exceptionalism has evolved over time, accentuating different aspects of American history, identity, or different values. Thus, it is important to say that there is not just one exceptionalism, but rather a family of concepts with various meanings, highlighting slightly different virtues. As Saito explains, American exceptionalism covers “different ideas under the same label. Sometimes it refers to matters of domestic affairs, at other times to matters of foreign affairs.”<sup>45</sup> Because there are more interpretations of the concept, when analyzing the discourse of American exceptionalism, one should pay attention to the context in which the term is being used. The origins of the idea date back to the 17th-century Puritan rhetoric of John Winthrop and his notion of the “city on the hill” and then run from the Revolution to the mid-19th-century doctrine of the manifest destiny of territorial expansion on the American continent, to the late 19th-century American imperialism, to Wilsonianism, to Cold War, up to George W. Bush’s unilateralism or the rhetoric of Donald Trump.<sup>46</sup>

The dominant view of American exceptionalism is found in the notion of a mission. It holds the idea that Americans have a higher-purpose mission of advancing liberty and democracy in the world, thus Americans tend to consider themselves as “chosen” people. The notion of mission has Puritan roots in the idea of a God-given mission but runs into the present in political form, with both religious and nonreligious justifications. The other views of exceptionalism refer to the certain unique qualities of the United States, such as liberty or republicanism. These usually serve to justify the American mission of advancing liberal democracy in the world according to the American example.<sup>47</sup> Nowadays, the idea of American exceptionalism seems inseparable from the American identity as American politicians self-consciously embrace the idea with examples from their history. In fact, one point of view of American exceptionalism argues that the United States *ceases* to be exceptional, highlighting cross-national differences and systematically looking for the ideals of its past, in a patriotic attempt to justify its exceptional role in the world.<sup>48</sup>

Recent surveys have shown that the idea of American exceptionalism is still a vivid concept in the United States. According to the 2022 report from the Eurasia Group Foundation, 42 % of Americans think that the United States is exceptional because of what it represents, and 18

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<sup>45</sup> Natsu Taylor Saito, *Meeting the Enemy: American Exceptionalism and International Law* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> James W. Ceaser, “The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism,” *American Political Thought* 1, no. 1 (May 2012): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1086/664595>.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10, 21.

<sup>48</sup> Peter S. Onuf, “American Exceptionalism and National Identity,” *American Political Thought* 1, no. 1 (May 2012): 79-82, <https://doi.org/10.1086/664594>.

% believe it because of what it has done for the world. However, belief in American exceptionalism varies by age, with 27.9 % of respondents in age 18-29 believing that the United States is exceptional because of what it represents, in comparison to 50.3 % of respondents over 60.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, belief in exceptionalism has declined for young Americans the most in recent years. According to the Pew Research surveys of 2020 and 2021, 28 % of respondents in age 18-29 believed that the United States stands above all other countries, while only 10 % thought the same in 2021. For the older population, the decline in recent years was minimal.<sup>50,51</sup> Besides the variations by age, a significant difference can be noticed for party affiliation. In 2021, 43 % of Democratic respondents stated, that America is not an exceptional nation, compared to 20 % of Republican respondents who thought so.<sup>52</sup>

The ongoing presence of the exceptionalist idea intensifies polarization in U.S. politics, dividing liberals from conservatives. In recent years, more liberals than conservatives tend to turn to anti-exceptionalism or are more reserved to refer to exceptionalism, as they believe it halts international cooperation and makes the United States look arrogant. On the other hand, conservatives tend to be more passionate about American exceptionalism than liberals, and see their nation as the leading world power that has a right to subject itself to different rules than other states.<sup>53</sup> One example for all, President Obama provoked controversy in 2009 when he was asked by the Financial Times reporter whether he believed the United States was uniquely moral among nations, he replied: “I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism. [...] The fact that I am very proud of my country, and I think that we’ve got a whole lot to offer the world, does not lessen my interest in recognizing that we’re not always going to be right, or that other people may have good ideas, or that in order for us to work collectively, all parties have to compromise.”<sup>54</sup> Republicans hurried to condemn Obama’s speech, expressing a different opinion on American exceptionalism. As the former mayor of

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<sup>49</sup> Mark Hannah et al., “Rethinking American Strength,” *EGF*, November 12, 2022, <https://egfound.org/2022/10/rethinking-american-strength/>.

<sup>50</sup> Hannah Hartig, “Younger Americans Still More Likely than Older Adults to Say There Are Other Countries Better than the U.S.,” *Pew Research Center*, December 20, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/12/16/younger-americans-still-more-likely-than-older-adults-to-say-there-are-other-countries-better-than-the-u-s/>.

<sup>51</sup> Alec Tyson, “Most Americans Think the U.S. Is Great, but Fewer Say It’s the Greatest,” *Pew Research Center*, May 30, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/07/02/most-americans-think-the-u-s-is-great-but-fewer-say-its-the-greatest/>.

<sup>52</sup> Mark Hannah et al., “Rethinking American Strength,” *EGF*, November 12, 2022, <https://egfound.org/2022/10/rethinking-american-strength/>.

<sup>53</sup> James W. Ceaser, “The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism,” *American Political Thought* 1, no. 1 (May 2012): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1086/664595>.

<sup>54</sup> The White House, “News Conference By President Obama, 4/04/2009,” April 4, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/news-conference-president-obama-4042009>.

New York City Rudolph Giuliani argued: “To say, as the president has, that American exceptionalism is no more exceptional than the exceptionalism of any other country in the world, does not suggest a becoming and endearing modesty, but rather a stark lack of moral clarity.”<sup>55</sup> As the example indicates, the differing partisan opinions on American exceptionalism intensify the polarization of the American domestic political arena and can affect the environmental politics too.

In the case of international environmental initiatives, subscribing to American exceptionalism also causes troubles, as it impedes international cooperation. One reason for that is the American obsession with individualism, which is connected to the idea of American exceptionalism. Due to the ideology of individualism, Americans are reserved to collectivity, which is crucial for international environmental initiatives to be successful. As such, exceptionalism obstructs international cooperation. As American sociologist Judith Blau argues, “core American values are responsible for why Americans fail to grasp the implications of global warming. If Americans are not ready to cooperate on a global scale, [they] imperil the entire world.”<sup>56</sup>

According to Koh, the most problematic face of American exceptionalism is the use of double standard, when “the United States actually uses its exceptional power and wealth to promote a double standard” when it “proposes that a different rule should apply to itself than applies to the rest of the world.”<sup>57</sup> By implying the double standard on environmental agreements, the United States weakens its moral authority abroad, thus undermining its power to persuade others to follow the U.S. example.<sup>58</sup>

Another problematic aspect of promoting American exceptionalism in foreign policy is that it undermines the effectiveness of the global rule of law. In practice, the United States shapes or selectively rejects some international environmental agreements, asking for exceptions or exempting itself from compliance. For example, in the case of the Kyoto Protocol, the United States participated in the negotiations and helped to form the protocol, however, it eventually did not ratify the treaty because the obligations did not apply equally to developing states too. By signing, but not ratifying the treaty, the United States did not comply with the treaty,

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<sup>55</sup> Rudolph Giuliani, “Rudolph Giuliani: My Bluntness Overshadowed My Message,” *WSJ*, February 23, 2015, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/rudolph-giuliani-my-bluntness-overshadowed-my-message-1424646358>.

<sup>56</sup> Judith Blau, *The Paris Agreement: Climate Change, Solidarity, and Human Rights* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 45-47.

<sup>57</sup> Harold Hongju Koh, „On American Exceptionalism,“ *Stanford Law Review* 55, no. 5 (May 2003): 1485-1486.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1487.

protecting itself from alleged potential economic disadvantage.<sup>59</sup> Such practices cause a gap between the principle and the practice, when the United States does not stick to its moral ideals or promises, rationalizing the gap with the notion of exceptionalism.<sup>60</sup>

The underlying principle of the U.S. practices of non-ratification or ratification with reservations is the concept of “America First”, which prioritizes national interest over collective – international – interests. Although the principle of “America First” has always been present in American behavior on the international level, it peaked with the presidency of Donald Trump, whose version of American exceptionalism supposed that the United States could reject UN treaties, break trade agreements and turn to unilateralism whenever it chooses. However, according to the American economist Jeffrey Sachs, it no longer makes sense for the United States to go alone against international efforts, because American power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is too limited and it is losing its power at expense of the rising superpower, China.<sup>61</sup>

Scholars agree, that for any international initiative to be successful, cooperation is required. This also holds true for environmental actions, which rely on international collaboration and on a system of collectively imposed rules. As Sachs puts it, “the key task of American foreign policy [...] is to work with other nations to foster a multipolar world that is peaceful, prosperous, fair, and environmentally sustainable.”<sup>62</sup> However, the ongoing American obsession with exceptionalism reduces the U.S. capacity to cooperate and continues to impede the effectiveness of international actions against climate change.

#### 1.4 Suspicion of Multilateralism

Another aspect, that scholars present as a determinant of the U.S. approach to international politics, is the American suspicion of multilateralism. Again, the phenomenon is connected to the deep-rooted ideologies of individualism and exceptionalism, which fuels indifference to international cooperation and collective actions.<sup>63</sup> The American inclination to individualism is also rooted in the Bill of Rights which emphasizes individual (civil and political) over

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<sup>59</sup> Elizabeth Chalecki, “Exceptionalism as Foreign Policy: U.S. Climate Change Policy and an Emerging Norm of Compliance”. In *Climate Change and Foreign Policy: Case Studies from East to West*, edited by Paul G. Harris, (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 152-153.

<sup>60</sup> Natsu Taylor Saito, *Meeting the Enemy: American Exceptionalism and International Law* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 5.

<sup>61</sup> Jeffrey Sachs, *A New Foreign Policy: Beyond American Exceptionalism* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), p. 5-6.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Judith Blau, *The Paris Agreement: Climate Change, Solidarity, and Human Rights* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 48.

collective (cultural, social, and economic) rights. However, multilateral environmental agreements such as the Paris Agreement highlight the importance of shared rights, thus the American exclusive accent on individual rights impedes international cooperation on environmental issues.<sup>64</sup>

The American approach to multilateral environmental efforts has varied in the past. The United States has supported some multilateral treaties and actively took part in the negotiation process, but it also rejected some of them. In many cases, the United States proactively shaped a treaty or an agreement but eventually did not ratify it, usually due to domestic opposition. For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) of 1993, a protocol designed to protect species and biodiversity, was drafted with a significant U.S. imprint. Although the Clinton administration signed the treaty, it has never been ratified due to Republican opposition in the Senate.<sup>65</sup> The same irony happened in numerous other cases such as with the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of 1992 and the subsequent Kyoto Protocol of 1997, an important treaty committing industrialized economies to limit and reduce greenhouse emissions.<sup>66</sup> The United States was supportive of the Convention, which it ratified in 1992, but the Kyoto Protocol to the convention never made it to ratification, although the United States was very active in the negotiation process. Why is it, that the United States' approach to multilateral environmental treaties is so specific?

One of the reasons why the United States oftentimes rejects to ratify an environmental multilateral treaty is the precautionary principle and the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities, increasingly employed principles of the recent international environmental law. The precautionary principle presumes that the promotion of environmental protection is necessary even before the harms of human activity on climate are scientifically evident. The concept of common but differentiated responsibilities is based on the idea, that all states share the responsibility to act on climate change, but that the obligations of respective states may differ, based on their history of greenhouse emissions and their technological and financial resources. However, the United States sometimes refused to admit that it is legally responsible for global climate change due to its past contributions and it rejected the idea of international

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<sup>64</sup> Judith Blau, *The Paris Agreement: Climate Change, Solidarity, and Human Rights* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 8.

<sup>65</sup> Benji Jones, "Why the US Won't Join This Key Treaty to Save Nature," Vox, May 20, 2021, <https://www.vox.com/22434172/us-cbd-treaty-biological-diversity-nature-conservation>.

<sup>66</sup> "What is the Kyoto Protocol?" United Nations Climate Change, accessed February 2, 2023, [https://unfccc.int/kyoto\\_protocol](https://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol).

environmental law, that developing countries should have reduced climate obligations because they are financially and technologically weaker.<sup>67</sup> For example, this is the reason, why the Senate refused to approve ratification of the Kyoto Protocol with the Byrd-Hagel resolution.

Another reason, why the United States tends to be reluctant to multilateral environmental agreements, is the rise of the international environmental regime. In the last decades, international environmental politics transformed from the practice of single treaties to the creation of regimes, that constitute a broader legal and monitoring framework.<sup>68</sup> It is becoming a more common practice that an initial framework creates only broad commitments and establishes the structure of the decision-making process. Subsequently, the framework is followed by concrete protocols with binding environmental protection obligations and regulatory rules. This practice was first applied by the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer with its subsequent Montreal Protocol of 1987. Later, the principle was applied by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to the following multilateral agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol or the Paris Agreement.<sup>69</sup>

The United States has reservations about this system for various reasons. First, the international environmental regime complicates and limits the power of individual states to determine agendas according to their will. On the other hand, unilateral actions provide the United States with greater freedom to set the direction of environmental policies according to its will and in the line with its national interests. Moreover, the United States can use unilateral actions to change the behavior of other states to follow the U.S. standard.<sup>70</sup> However, by promoting American interests and values, while also exempting itself from standards applicable to others, the United States put itself in danger of losing credibility abroad. Only if we consider the most recent and the most significant multilateral environmental agreements like the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement, the world has witnessed various shifts in the U.S. approach to these international environmental efforts, moving from support to rejection and final withdrawal in the Kyoto case, and the celebrations

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<sup>67</sup> Jutta Brunnée, "The United States and International Environmental Law: Living with an Elephant," *EJIL* 15, no. 4 (2004): 628-630.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 636.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 637.

<sup>70</sup> One of the cases, that raised international debate, was the *Tuna-Dolphin case*, where the United States strived to extend the application of the U.S. species protection law outside of its territory while rejecting to cooperate on a multilateral agreement to address the issue. Through trade regulation, the US put an embargo on tuna imports from Mexico, because Mexican production did not meet the U.S. regulation. For more information, see: "Mexico etc versus US: 'tuna-dolphin'," World Trade Organization, accessed February 2, 2023, [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/envir\\_e/edis04\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/envir_e/edis04_e.htm).

of accepting Paris by Obama, withdrawing by Trump and getting back to the agreement as soon as Biden took office. It is reasonable enough for the international community to wonder, whether the United States is a credible actor in international environmental politics for the future. Certainly, the inconsistency in its approach to multilateral environmental agreements will be a continuing challenge for the United States in the upcoming years, when it will have to consolidate its position as a leader in international environmental politics again.

Another reason why the United States might be reluctant to some multilateral agreements is that the international environmental regime involves the transfer of technology and finances, mainly from the global North to the South. Thus, it is more common that the United States opposed environmental treaties like CBD or Kyoto Protocol, which required extensive redistribution of wealth, technology, and decision-making power. When assessing a multilateral agreement, the United States tends to analyze the benefits of such cooperation as it fears that the redistribution of benefits would harm U.S. interests. This proved to be the case of the Paris Agreement too because it required an extensive amount of wealth, technology, and decision-making power.<sup>71</sup>

On top of that, the American reluctance to environmental multilateralism originates in its deep-rooted suspicion of state interference and concern about U.S. sovereignty. For the United States, sovereignty resonates in two ways - the sovereignty of the United States as a nation in international law, and the sovereignty of the states within the United States, as anchored by the tenth amendment of the U.S. Constitution.<sup>72</sup> The international environmental regime poses a challenge to the concept of sovereignty because its regulatory agencies often require significant adjustments in domestic politics and its regulatory standards. This is the reason why the United States may be suspicious of international interference, as it is significantly attached to the rule of state sovereignty. The international environmental regime transfers authority to international agencies, interfering in domestic politics. Surely, this is a practice that the United States dislikes.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Natsu Taylor Saito, *Meeting the Enemy: American Exceptionalism and International Law* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 217.

<sup>72</sup> As the 10th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution says: „The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people“, viz “The United States Constitution”, National Constitution Center, accessed February 8, 2023, <https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/full-text>.

<sup>73</sup> Jutta Brunnée, “The United States and International Environmental Law: Living with an Elephant,” *EJIL* 15, no. 4 (2004): 638-641.



According to some Americans, the international environmental regime threatens the U.S. sovereignty, because the U.S. sovereign government is expected to give up part of its power to the international agencies created by the international environmental regime, challenging the traditional view of sovereignty as embedded in international law.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, the international environmental agreements and their regulatory agencies are seen as discouraging federalism and intensifying the role of the American federal government, because “[i]f the US or any other nation is to comply with directives from outside its borders, the national government will have to crack down on various competing state policies, so the one-size-fits-all international policy can be implemented.”<sup>75</sup>

Taking the arguments presented above, the United States sometimes prefers a unilateral over a multilateral approach for various reasons. Preference for a unilateral over a multilateral approach to climate policies has been fluid in the past, depending on party affiliation and ideological preferences of the incumbent administration. Moreover, suspicion of multilateralism does not apply equally to all sectors, as the United States does not oppose all multilateralisms the same. For example, it tends to oppose environmental multilateralism, while embracing trade multilateralism. One explanation for that is, that it depends on the level of multilateralism, which means how much is required and how extensive are the obligations. However, as DeSombre argues, this is not always the case because some international climate agreements with a high level of multilateralism, such as the Montreal Protocol, were supported by the United States, in comparison to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), or the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), that put a few specific obligations on states but were opposed by the United States. Another argument says, that different multilateral policies unequally challenge the American tendency to isolationism, or that the United States decides to oppose multilateral efforts if it feels strong enough so that it does not need international cooperation to achieve its goals.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Terry Anderson and J. Bishop Grewell, “It Isn’t Easy Being Green: Environmental Policy Implications for Foreign Policy, International Law and Sovereignty,” *Chicago Journal of International Law* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 435, <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cjil/vol2/iss2/15>.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 437.

<sup>76</sup> Elizabeth R. DeSombre, “United States International Environmental Policy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Environmental Policy*, ed. Michael E. Kraft and Sheldon Kamienjecki (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 220, <https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/36310/chapter-abstract/318635587?redirectedFrom=fulltext>.

However, the U.S. suspicion of multilateralism is not a concept standing alone. Taken together with the fact that the U.S. approach to international environmental policies is determined by more than one variable, such as the president's partisanship, ideological preferences of the current administration, and the current state of domestic politics, the argument of the U.S. suspicion of multilateralism is unique for every analyzed case. Nevertheless, suspicion of multilateralism is present in U.S. politics and it depends on the dynamics of domestic politics how intensive the suspicion would be, and how it would be addressed. Thus, it cannot be said that the United States rejects multilateralism unanimously, as we could see in the examples of the multilateralism-friendly Obama administration versus the Trump administration, which strongly promoted unilateralism or bilateralism over multilateralism.

Additionally, the U.S. attitudes toward multilateralism are further complicated by the rule of the two-level game. As discussed earlier, an international negotiator – the American president – has to take into account both domestic and international audiences when deciding about the course of American environmental politics, balancing domestic and international demands. Thus, even a multilateralism-friendly president in office does not imply, that the United States will go strictly in the direction of environmental multilateralism. For example, in the 2009 Copenhagen climate summit, Obama tried to push through a climate deal that would not require U.S. Senate's approval for ratification and proposed an agreement that could be treated as an executive agreement and would avoid any legally binding obligations. Thus, Obama thought of the Copenhagen agreement as a set of voluntary obligations with a review mechanism, that was later established in the Paris agreement as the pledge-and-review system. However, Obama failed to convince the international community of his idea because the United States at the time had weak credibility, due to the previous American negative stance on the Kyoto Protocol.<sup>77</sup> Eventually, the outcome of the Copenhagen summit was a disappointment, because it did not result in any collective agreement on cutting global emissions.<sup>78</sup> However, in the case of the Paris Agreement, Obama managed to get enough support for his idea. He managed to restore U.S. credibility abroad and signaled to the world that the United States is willing to reduce greenhouse emissions, as he proposed various

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<sup>77</sup> Manjana Milkoreit, "The Paris Agreement on Climate Change – Made in USA?", *Perspectives on Politics* 17, no. 7 (June 2019): 1027-28, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592719000951>.

<sup>78</sup> Adam Vaughan and David Adam, „Copenhagen climate deal: Spectacular failure – or a few important steps?“ *The Guardian*, December 22, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/dec/22/copenhagen-climate-deal-expert-view>.

domestic climate and energy policies in the years between Copenhagen and Paris. Thus, in the Paris Agreement, Obama addressed Level I and Level II, ensuring the success of Paris.<sup>79</sup>

Nevertheless, even a democratic and multilateralism-friendly president has to abide by rules of the economy and the idea of neoliberalism, a hegemonic economic narrative in the United States. Thus, every president regardless of their partisanship and ideology is obliged to consider the domestic economic demands, which often limit their environmental agendas. As I discuss in the next chapter, the rule of U.S. economic interests further complicates the analysis of the American approach to international environmental policies.

### 1.5 The Rule of Neoliberalism

Practically any international environmental agreement has economic implications on states, and as such the debate over economic impacts of an international environmental agreement on domestic policies can be influenced by the prevailing economic ideology of a respective state. For the United States, the belief in market capitalism has persisted as one of the core beliefs of American identity, although the concrete vision of capitalism has been changing over time.

The course of American economic thought and capitalism can be described as a constant argument between two regimes – market liberalism and social liberalism – although the discourse has heavily tilted toward the former over the years. While market liberalism stresses unlimited capitalism, strong property rights, and minimal social safety net, social liberalism promotes state interventions, redistribution, and a welfare state. In the 1970s, as a reaction to business elites fearing that public opinion was turning against capitalism, a new version of market liberalism was launched – neoliberalism.<sup>80</sup> Since then, neoliberal ideology and its constant focus on economic growth managed to become a deeply rooted economic concept in American minds, and it became “more than ideas and policies; they compose a complex of institutions, habits, and attitudes, or a ‘habitus’ insouciant about social and ecological limits.”<sup>81</sup>

Neoliberalism is a free-market ideology that proposes government deregulation, privatization, welfare cuts, and reduced taxes. For neoliberals, democracy equals economic freedom and free enterprise, thus they oppose governmental regulations, declaring that it impedes economic growth. Since the beginnings of neoliberalism in the 1970s, anti-environmentalism

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 1030.

<sup>80</sup> Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. the Climate* (Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2014), 33.

<sup>81</sup> Robert J. Antonio and Robert J. Brulle, “The Unbearable Lightness of Politics: Climate Change Denial and Political Polarization,” *Sociological Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (March 1, 2011): 199, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2011.01199.x>.

was at the core of neoliberal antiregulatory politics, but the climate change threat intensified the neoliberal opposition, which sees environmental regulatory agencies of the international environmental system as intrusive or anti-business.<sup>82</sup>

Constant disagreement over global warming and climate change between social and market liberals fuels polarization over the issue and limits American efforts to combat climate change. For example, the Chinese political economist Minqi Li sees neoliberalism the reason, why the United States is failing to address climate change successfully.<sup>83</sup> The reason is the constant focus of the ideology on continuing economic growth, which has been historically based on massive consumption of fossil fuels, leading to the greenhouse emissions responsible for climate change.<sup>84</sup> Additionally, neoliberalism promotes individualism, thus it goes against collective actions which are necessary for any international climate policy to be successful.

There are three ideological variables of neoliberalism, that have been described by scholars as barriers to effective climate politics: democracy decentralization, public investment defunding, and deregulation of economy. American neoliberals promote democracy decentralization because they believe that limiting the power of the federal government promotes freedom, individual liberty, and market efficiency. Although climate initiatives occur on state and local levels in the United States too, it is not sufficient to combat the climate change crisis, which has a transboundary character. To contain climate crisis, national and international efforts are required, but decentralization of the U.S. democracy proposed by neoliberalism inhibits such efforts by shifting the climate policies to state and local jurisdictions that are short on resources to address the climate change issue.<sup>85</sup>

The second ideological variable of neoliberalism, which impedes effective actions on climate change, is defunding of public investments. Because neoliberals see public investments as wasteful and expensive, it obstructs the U.S. decarbonization efforts. However, public investment is a crucial component of an effective climate policy, because “it is vital to leveraging economies of scale, solving coordination problems, and operating the economy at

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 196-197.

<sup>83</sup> Minqi Li, „Anthropocene, Emissions Budget, and the Structural Crisis of the Capitalist World System,” *Journal of World-Systems Research* 26, no. 2 (August 19, 2020): 289-291, <https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2020.977>.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Anders Fremstad and Mark Paul, “Neoliberalism and Climate Change: How the Free-Market Myth Has Prevented Climate Action,” *Ecological Economics* 197 (July 1, 2022): 3-4, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2022.107353>

full employment.”<sup>86</sup> Third, neoliberals reject governmental regulations, which are crucial to meet environmental goals. The U.S. regulatory attempts such as clean energy standards, or fuel efficiency standards, have been rejected mainly by Republican administrations that have pushed for anti-regulatory agendas. For example, the Trump administration rolled back more than 100 environmental rules over four years in office, which according to Hana V. Vizcarra, a staff attorney at Harvard’s Environmental and Energy Law Program, left “a truly unprecedented legacy” of the United States’ approach on climate politics.<sup>87</sup>

The influence of neoliberalism impedes the American readiness to take part in international environmental policies also because of its focus on short-term economic growth, while most of the current international environmental agreements are rather proposing long-term effects and benefits. Under the neoliberal influence, the United States tends to focus rather on short-term material interests, assessing the balance between costs and benefits of actions to mitigate climate change. Besides, due to its size and large disparity between states, the U.S. material interests get fragmented. Based on how dependent a state is on fossil fuels and carbon-intensive industries, plus how affected the region is by climate change, decides how vulnerable it feels to climate change and mitigating policies. In conclusion, because the effects of climate change and the material interests of states are highly fragmented, it is difficult for a federal government to come up with an environmental policy, that would satisfy all.<sup>88</sup>

The influence of neoliberalism on American politics is significant and it gets especially loud when the state of the U.S. economy is in bad condition. In times of economic insecurity, Americans tend to turn to conservative views. Because climate change threatens core American beliefs in economic freedom, private property, and overall liberty, when the American economy finds itself in bad condition, the voice of neoliberalism gets louder, proposing that regulation of fuel efficiency or energy standards kills jobs and violates freedoms.<sup>89</sup> Economy and economic freedom are vulnerable topics for the American public, and the ideology of neoliberalism rules the discourse, where “Democrats fear being identified as ‘liberal’” because neoliberalism is usually associated with conservative views of

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>87</sup> Nadja Popovich, Livia Albeck-Ripka, and Kendra Pierre-Louis, “The Trump Administration Rolled Back More Than 100 Environmental Rules. Here’s the Full List,” *The New York Times*, January 21, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/climate/trump-environment-rollbacks-list.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Frank Wendler, *Framing Climate Change in the EU and US After the Paris Agreement (Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics)*, 1st ed. 2022 (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 13-15.

<sup>89</sup> Robert J. Antonio and Robert J. Brulle, “The Unbearable Lightness of Politics: Climate Change Denial and Political Polarization,” *Sociological Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (March 1, 2011): 197, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2011.01199.x>.

Republicans.<sup>90</sup> This indicates, that even a liberal, pro-climate president has to take pragmatic steps sometimes, submitting themselves to the pressure of the prevailing neoliberal discourse. In the economic questions, the balance of international versus domestic interests under the rule of the two-level game becomes especially tricky, as the incumbent administration has to balance international demands and competing domestic interests. As a result, a progressively appearing president oftentimes ends up in a compromise, that is unsatisfactory to the pro-environment domestic and international audiences. Thus, the reality of the rule of neoliberalism in the United States must be considered when one analyzes the American environmental discourse because it significantly impacts the U.S approach to international environmental policies and the U.S. environmental rhetoric.

## 1.6 National Security

Above all the criteria presented in the previous subchapters, the transboundary nature of global climate change has made environmental policies an issue of national security, which has an impact on the approach of the United States to international environmental policies and can affect the U.S. rhetoric on the topic.

American politicians often consider global climate change a threat to U.S. national security because of its indirect effects on critical infrastructure, the economy, and public health. Critical infrastructure is a group of systems and networks such as subways, electricity networks, and pipelines, that are essential to the United States, and if any of these would be destroyed, it could destabilize U.S. security and safety. However, the increased intensity and frequency of natural threats determined by scientists to be caused by climate change, such as tornados or floods, pose a threat to the U.S. critical infrastructure. Additionally, climate change causes faster degradation of critical infrastructure over time. If the critical infrastructure is disrupted, the United States becomes more vulnerable to domestic and foreign threats.<sup>91</sup>

Climate change also indirectly affects public health. One case is air pollution, which increases the number of individuals with respiratory diseases, thus weakening public health. Another case is the increased emergence of infectious diseases due to rising temperatures, which are ideal for infection carriers such as mosquitos, ticks, or fleas. For example, a new form of the West Nile virus, spread by mosquitos, was discovered across the United States in 2012, by

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<sup>90</sup> Robert J. Antonio and Robert J. Brulle, "The Unbearable Lightness of Politics: Climate Change Denial and Political Polarization," *Sociological Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (March 1, 2011): 199, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2011.01199.x>.

<sup>91</sup> Emilio Morales, "Global Climate Change as a Threat to U.S. National Security," *Journal of Strategic Security* 8, no. 3 (October 1, 2015): 135-137, <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.8.3s.1482>.

then the hottest year on record<sup>92</sup>, and the largest single outbreak of the disease was identified in Arizona in 2021 due to heavier rains than usual.<sup>93</sup> Cases like these indirectly impact U.S. national security, as any public health problem such as viral disease outbreaks or pandemics “severely diminishes the ability of the national security enterprise workforce to carry out their duties and, ultimately, weakens U.S. national security.”<sup>94</sup>

National security also means a strong and prosperous economy, but the effects of climate change can decrease productivity in some industries, especially in agriculture. More frequent weather deviations such as extreme droughts and lack of precipitation reduce agricultural productivity, thus reducing revenues. Additionally, reduced agricultural productivity implies higher food prices, which raises concerns about the availability of food to poor people.<sup>95</sup> Another economic sector indirectly affected by climate change is the energy sector, which registers huge revenue losses every time extreme weather leads to power outages. Subsequently, electricity outages lead to the closure of industries and businesses, that result in an additional loss in economic production. On top of that, the economy is loaded with an additional cost of repairs for damages caused by natural disasters.<sup>96</sup> The importance of a strong economy for U.S. national security lies in its ability to fund departments and agencies responsible for national security. Thus, an economy hit by climate change-related issues weakens U.S. national security.

Speaking of the energy sector, climate change and environmental policies also *directly* impact the industry. The international environmental regime and its agreements expect a change in the energy sources toward sustainability, affecting the national energy policies. However, the United States is politically polarized on the topic between “those who emphasize environmental security and the need for action to counter a long-term, existential threat; and those who emphasize energy security with vested interests in the near-term economic advantages of a fossil fuel-based economy.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Brian Vastag, “Hints of a More Virulent, Mutating West Nile Virus Emerge,” *Washington Post*, November 9, 2012, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/hints-of-a-more-virulent-mutating-west-nile-virus-emerge/2012/11/08/75e37776-2523-11e2-9313-3c7f59038d93\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/hints-of-a-more-virulent-mutating-west-nile-virus-emerge/2012/11/08/75e37776-2523-11e2-9313-3c7f59038d93_story.html).

<sup>93</sup> Karen Holcomb, “Worst-Ever U.S. West Nile Virus Outbreak Potentially Linked to a Wetter-than-Average 2021 Southwest Monsoon,” *NOAA Climate.Gov*, July 21, 2022, <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/features/worst-ever-us-west-nile-virus-outbreak-potentially-linked-wetter-average>.

<sup>94</sup> Emilio Morales, “Global Climate Change as a Threat to U.S. National Security,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 8, no. 3 (October 1, 2015): 135, <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.8.3s.1482>.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>96</sup> Emilio Morales, “Global Climate Change as a Threat to U.S. National Security,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 8, no. 3 (October 1, 2015): 146-47, <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.8.3s.1482>.

<sup>97</sup> J. Scott Hauger, “The U.S. Government & Climate Security: History and Prospects,” Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (2022): 8.

Additionally, U.S. national security is impacted by the environmental debates about renewable energy sources like solar and wind versus zero-carbon nuclear power. The two competing camps clash: those advocating for 100% renewable energy support growth in solar and wind, but those advocating for U.S. energy dominance support growth in natural gas and nuclear power. Nuclear power stands at the center of this debate because the U.S. position on nuclear power affects the U.S. geopolitical standing in international relations, where energy technologies and energy security play a key role.<sup>98</sup> Already in 1954, anchored by the Atomic Energy Act, the United States made a commitment to be a global leading power in nuclear research and development, while establishing a control system over the global nuclear system.<sup>99</sup> Since then, the United States sought to preserve its position as a leader in nuclear science and technology, but the current debates about a shift to 100% renewable energy, which by some politicians implies a shift away from nuclear power, would mean a loss of a global unique standing of the United States on nuclear energy. It is suggested that these efforts would shatter the liberal international order, as the U.S. leadership in the global nuclear system would be replaced by authoritarian regimes such as Russia or China. Such a scenario presents a threat to U.S. national security.<sup>100</sup>

Climate change entered the U.S. security sector in 1993 when President Bill Clinton created the Office of the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense of Environmental Security (as part of the Department of Defense). However, the first comprehensive U.S. security policy document that recognized the threatening potential of climate change to American national security was released in 2010 by the Obama administration. The Quadrennial Defense Review of 2010 recognized, that “[c]limate change and energy are two key issues that will play a significant role in shaping the future security environment. Although they produce distinct types of challenges, climate change, energy security, and economic stability are inextricably linked.”<sup>101</sup> The Obama administration started an era of securitization of climate change and has acknowledged the impacts that climate change would have on U.S. security in several official documents, such as the 2012 Department of Homeland Security Climate Change

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<sup>98</sup> J. Scott Hauger, „The U.S. Government & Climate Security: History and Prospects,” Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (2022): 2.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>100</sup> Sarah Ladislaw and Nikos Tsafos, “Race to the Top: The Case for a New U.S. International Energy Policy,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, July 6, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/race-top-case-new-us-international-energy-policy>.

<sup>101</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, Washington, February 2010, p. 84, [https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/quadrennial/QDR2010.pdf?ver=vVJYRVwNdnGb\\_00ixF0UfQ%3d%3d](https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/quadrennial/QDR2010.pdf?ver=vVJYRVwNdnGb_00ixF0UfQ%3d%3d).



Adaptation Roadmap<sup>102</sup> or the 2015 National Security Strategy.<sup>103</sup> The U.S.-China agreement of cooperation on climate change mitigation of 2014 presented climate change in the securitization context<sup>104</sup> and in the 2015 Conference on Global Leadership in the Arctic, Obama identified the security dimension of climate change as hurting both people and economies: “[T]here’s not going to be a nation on this Earth that’s not impacted negatively. People will suffer. Economies will suffer. Entire nations will find themselves under severe, severe problems. More drought; more floods; rising sea levels; greater migration; more refugees; more scarcity; more conflict.”<sup>105</sup> The comprehensive securitization policies of the Obama administration later resulted in the formation of the Paris Accord.

However, President Trump reversed the trend to desecuritization of climate policy, prioritizing economic security through energy independence. The change in the presidential office was followed by a major rhetorical shift from environmental security to energy security and climate skepticism. Trump reversed the security rhetoric, arguing that not climate change, but international environmental policies posed a threat to American security.<sup>106</sup> In the 2017 National Security Strategy, Trump highlighted energy security and economic growth over sustainability, stating that “[c]limate policies will continue to shape the global energy system. U.S. leadership is indispensable to countering an anti-growth energy agenda that is detrimental to U.S. economic and energy security interests.”<sup>107</sup> The 2018 National Defense Strategy did not mention climate change at all.<sup>108</sup> However, the Trump administration and its security agencies did not always mirror president’s rhetoric, but as described by Hauger, they tried to „lower their agencies’ political visibility with respect to the term „climate change”. At the working level, however, security practitioners in defense,

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<sup>102</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap*, June 2012, [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Appendix%20A%20DHS%20FY2012%20Climate%20Change%20Adaptation%20Plan\\_0.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Appendix%20A%20DHS%20FY2012%20Climate%20Change%20Adaptation%20Plan_0.pdf).

<sup>103</sup> U.S. Executive Office of the President, *National Security Strategy*, February 2015, [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015\\_national\\_security\\_strategy\\_2.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy_2.pdf).

<sup>104</sup> The White House. „U.S. – China Joint Announcement on Climate Change,” Beijing, China, November 12, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/11/us-china-joint-announcement-climate-change>.

<sup>105</sup> The White House, Press release: „Remarks by the President at the GLACIER Conference – Anchorage, AK,” September 1, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/01/remarks-president-glacier-conference-anchorage-ak>.

<sup>106</sup> J. Scott Hauger, „The U.S. Government & Climate Security: History and Prospects,” Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (2022): 5, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep39877>.

<sup>107</sup> Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

<sup>108</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, January 2018, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

development, and diplomatic agencies, under this cover, largely continued to address the issue of climate security and to engage with their international counterparts.”<sup>109</sup>

The question of national security remains vital in the climate change discussions in the United States and it impacts the American political rhetoric on the topic both at home and abroad. The American perception of climate change in the national security framework projects into how the United States approaches climate policies as such, thus having an impact on the U.S. rhetoric on international environmental policies in general.

Before moving to the results of the analysis, this section presents the Paris Agreement and its main objectives. It further examines the legal character of the agreement, because disputes about whether it is a treaty or an agreement, and whether it is legally binding, have fueled heated discussions in the United States. Hence, understanding the legal character of the agreement is essential to comprehend the U.S. political discourse on the topic of the Paris Agreement.

## 2. Paris Agreement: A Treaty or an Executive Agreement?

The Paris Agreement is an international environmental deal that was adopted in Paris, France on December 12, 2015, by 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference, also referred to as COP21. It entered into force on November 4, 2015, hailed as a historically „extraordinary achievement”<sup>110</sup> and “the world’s greatest diplomatic success”<sup>111</sup> because it was for the first time in history that so many parties of the international community unanimously agreed to a climate agreement that would change the global economy.<sup>112</sup> The main goal of the agreement is to hold “the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels“ and to pursue „efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.“<sup>113</sup>

One of the key principles of the agreement is the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, which acknowledges that developing countries might be slower in greenhouse emissions reduction. All the parties to the protocol recognized by their signature, as the

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<sup>109</sup> J. Scott Hauger, „The U.S. Government & Climate Security: History and Prospects,” Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (2022): 6.

<sup>110</sup> John Vidal et al., “World Leaders Hail Paris Climate Deal as ‘Major Leap for Mankind,’” *The Guardian*, October 19, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/13/world-leaders-hail-paris-climate-deal>.

<sup>111</sup> Fiona Harvey, “Paris Climate Change Agreement: The World’s Greatest Diplomatic Success,” *The Guardian*, August 25, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/13/paris-climate-deal-cop-diplomacy-developing-united-nations>.

<sup>112</sup> Daniel Klein et al., *The Paris Agreement on Climate Change: Analysis and Commentary*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2017), p. v.

<sup>113</sup> “Paris Agreement,” conclusion date: December 12, 2015, *United Nations Treaty Series Online*, registration no. I-54113, p. 90, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/No%20Volume/54113/Part/I-54113-0800000280458f37.pdf>.

agreement says, “the specific needs and special circumstances of developing country Parties, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change” and took „full account of the specific needs and special situations of the least developed countries with regard to funding and transfer of technology.”<sup>114</sup>

Additionally, central to the agreement is the principle of nationally determined contributions (NDCs). NDCs are national climate action plans through which the parties to the protocol communicate state efforts in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions to reach the goals set by the Paris Agreement. Articles 3 and 4 of the agreement require that the national efforts will progress in their ambitions over time, working on a five-year cycle.<sup>115</sup> Although the protocol itself is legally binding, the NDCs are non-legally binding obligations, thus it is up to the states to choose their NDCs and how they will achieve them, thus the agreement attempts to respect national sovereignty.<sup>116</sup> To overview nations’ activities, an enhanced transparency framework is included in the protocol. By regularly submitting information about the nation’s progress on climate change mitigating activities to the Conference of the Parties, known in the agreement as the global stocktake practice, the protocol holds countries accountable.<sup>117</sup> The system of NDCs on a voluntary basis, combined with the enhanced transparency principle that is legally binding, has since been referred to as a pledge-and-review system.

The question of the transfer of technology, and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities were the key arguments of the United States, why it eventually did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol, an international environmental agreement adopted in 1997, by which countries committed themselves to limit greenhouse gases emissions according to agreed individual targets. By then, the U.S. Senate refused to give approval to the agreement that did not require a reduction of emissions from the developing states too, making their stand with the Byrd-Hagel resolution.<sup>118</sup> Also, the Copenhagen conference of 2009 failed to offer satisfying results due to disputes over the bindingness of the agreement. How did it happen, that the Paris Agreement resulted in success? The system agreed upon in the Paris Agreement was a result of more than ten years of negotiations over the globally most acceptable version of an international environmental regime. Paris eventually embraced the pledge-and-review system, a system that was promoted by President Obama already in the 2009 Copenhagen

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 90-92.

<sup>116</sup> Fatima Maria Ahmad, Jennifer T. Huang, and Bob Perciasepe, “The Paris Agreement Presents a Flexible Approach for US Climate Policy,” *Carbon and Climate Law Review* 11, no. 4 (January 1, 2017): 284, <https://doi.org/10.21552/cclr/2017/4/4>.

<sup>117</sup> “Paris Agreement,” conclusion date: December 12, 2015, *United Nations Treaty Series Online*, registration no. I-54113, p. 105, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/No%20Volume/54113/Part/I-54113-0800000280458f37.pdf>.

<sup>118</sup> As the thesis describes in subchapter 1.1.

negotiations. Back in 2009, Obama did not persuade the international community of his idea of voluntary obligations with a review system, because it challenged the traditional system of legally-binding obligations set by the Kyoto protocol. Proposing an agreement that could be treated as an executive agreement, Obama lobbied for the pledge-and-review system during the Copenhagen negotiations, because he strived to bypass dissenting Senate (as he later did in the case of the Paris Agreement too). The United States managed to lobby successfully for the pledge-and-review system in Paris only due to the careful and unyielding negotiation efforts of Obama, who worked for seven years between Copenhagen and Paris to convince the international community, that the international environmental regime is ready for a system of voluntary obligations.<sup>119</sup> As a result, the Paris Agreement represents “a carefully negotiated mix of approaches: the ‘top-down’, differentiated and enforcement-oriented approach of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and the parallel, ‘bottom-up’ voluntary framework established by the 2009 Copenhagen Accord. The end result is a common framework that commits all parties to put forward their best efforts and strengthen them over time.”<sup>120</sup>

The two key elements of the agreement – its legally binding nature with non-binding NDCs, and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities – caused controversial disputes in the United States. President Barack Obama signed the Paris agreement on September 3, 2016, in spite of the U.S. Senate’s refusal. By that time, the Obama administration celebrated a victory that it finally convinced the international community of the pledge-and-review system. However, the same battle had to be won at home. Because of the non-binding nature of NDCs, Obama found a loophole how to avoid the Senate obstacle, claiming the Paris Agreement was an executive agreement that did not need a Senate ratification. The Obama administration also defended its approach to the Paris Agreement with the U.S. ratification of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of 1992. Because the U.S. delegation to Paris made sure that the new agreement would not include any *new* legally binding obligations, the Paris Agreement was claimed by Obama only as an extension of promises ratified by the United States in the UNFCCC.<sup>121</sup>

Due to its mixture of legally binding transparency and review system with non-binding voluntary NDCs, what is it according to the U.S. legislature – binding or non-binding

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<sup>119</sup> Described in more detail in section 1.4.

<sup>120</sup> Fatima Maria Ahmad, Jennifer T. Huang, and Bob Perciasepe, “The Paris Agreement Presents a Flexible Approach for US Climate Policy,” *Carbon and Climate Law Review* 11, no. 4 (January 1, 2017): 284, <https://doi.org/10.21552/cclr/2017/4/4>.

<sup>121</sup> Manjana Milkoreit, “The Paris Agreement on Climate Change – Made in USA?,” *Perspectives on Politics* 17, no. 7 (June 2019): 1028, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592719000951>.

document? And what about Obama bypassing Senate then, was it constitutional? Law experts supported the legality of Obama's actions with the argument, that the agreement is using very careful, non-binding language, building on the language of the UNFCCC of 1992 that any party signing the Paris has already agreed to by UNFCCC. Where the Paris Agreement proposed anything new, such as the principle of NDCs, it used the soft language of 'shall', which is not considered a language that creates a legal obligation. Stating in Article 4 of the Agreement, that "[e]ach Party *shall* prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions that it intends to achieve" and that "[p]arties *shall* pursue domestic mitigation measures, with the *aim of achieving* the objectives of such contributions,"<sup>122</sup> the agreement admits that such an 'aim of achieving' can actually fail without consequences.<sup>123</sup> Although opponents of the agreement argue that the provision of NDCs has a binding character, even the NDC clause does not carry any new legal obligation, it is rather an extension of the goals defined in the UNFCCC of 1992. Thus, the NDC provision of the Paris Agreement does not create any new legally-binding obligations.<sup>124</sup>

What is the Paris deal then – a treaty or an agreement? As law and climate scholar Dan Bodansky puts it, the formulation of the Paris Agreement makes it confusing for the international community, but as he explains, on the level of international law, the Paris Agreement is a treaty, but according to the U.S. Constitution, that has a narrower meaning of a treaty, it is just an executive agreement. Thus, in the broader sense of international law, the Paris Agreement is legally binding as a treaty, but it cannot be declared a "treaty" under Article II of the U.S. Constitution, because it does not have a binding legal effect on the nation and it lacks the ability to bind future presidents. Thus, the Paris Agreement is not legally binding in the narrow sense of the U.S. legislature.<sup>125</sup>

In the sense of this interpretation, the Obama administration was careful to ensure that binding requirements, such as reporting and measurement, were already covered by the 1992 Framework convention (UNFCCC), and those that were new to the Paris Agreement (such as NDCs), to be voluntary in its nature.<sup>126</sup> This procedure demonstrates, how significant impact the United States had on the final form of the Paris Agreement, as Obama strived to negotiate

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<sup>122</sup> "Paris Agreement," conclusion date: December 12, 2015, *United Nations Treaty Series Online*, registration no. I-54113, p. 91, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/No%20Volume/54113/Part/I-54113-0800000280458f37.pdf>

<sup>123</sup> Jessica Durney, „Defining the Paris Agreement: A Study of Executive Power and Political Commitments,“ *Carbon & Climate Law Review* 11, no. 3 (2017): 238.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 238-239.

<sup>125</sup> Daniel Bodansky, "The Legal Character of the Paris Agreement: A Primer," *Opinio Juris*, December 2, 2015, <http://opiniojuris.org/2015/12/02/the-legal-character-of-the-paris-agreement-a-primer/>.

<sup>126</sup> Josh Busby, "The Paris Agreement: When Is a Treaty Not a Treaty?" *Global Policy Journal*, April 26, 2016, <https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/26/04/2016/paris-agreement-when-treaty-not-treaty>.

an international agreement that would not fall within the U.S. constitutional definition of a “treaty” and thus would not require the Senate’s approval because he knew that the U.S. Congress did not share his opinion on the agreement. Thus, the Obama administration declared the Paris agreement an executive agreement, where the signing authority falls within the executive branch only.<sup>127</sup> In conclusion, endorsed by the international and U.S. law experts analyses, the Paris Agreement can be declared a binding document with non-binding provisions, and as such, it falls within the definition of a treaty according to international law, but due to its voluntary language could be legally entered by Obama without the Senate’s approval as an executive agreement.<sup>128</sup>

However, the same political victory of the Obama administration, which entered the Paris Agreement by an executive agreement, made it easier for the succeeding President Trump to withdraw the agreement because an executive agreement lasts only until the next president decides to revoke it. Because of its non-binding nature, President Trump could announce the intention to withdraw from the Paris Agreement without advice or consent of the Senate, as he did on June 1, 2017. However, the Paris procedure of withdrawal does not allow any Party to leave the accord earlier than after three years since the document has gone into force. The Paris Agreement entered into force on November 4, 2016, thus Trump could formally ask for the withdrawal of the United States from the protocol on November 4, 2019. The withdrawal took effect one year later, on November 4, 2020. By then, the United States has become the first nation to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.<sup>129</sup>

Nevertheless, the U.S. step back from the international environmental agreement did not last long. Just hours after entering the office, the succeeding President Joe Biden signed an executive order to return the United States to the Paris Agreement on January 20, 2021. After the 30-day notice period, the United States officially rejoined the agreement on February 19, 2021.<sup>130</sup> Already since day one in the office, Biden demonstrated a clear cut from the Trump era, making a response to the climate crisis the U.S. priority again.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Valerie Richardson, “Obama Will Bypass Senate, Ratify Paris Climate Accord Himself during Trip to China: Report,” *The Washington Times*, August 30, 2016, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/aug/29/obama-will-bypass-senate-ratify-paris-climate-acco/>.

<sup>128</sup> Jessica Durney, „Defining the Paris Agreement: A Study of Executive Power and Political Commitments,“ *Carbon & Climate Law Review* 11, no. 3 (2017): 239-240.

<sup>129</sup> Matt McGrath, “Climate Change: US Formally Withdraws from Paris Agreement,” *BBC News*, November 4, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-54797743>.

<sup>130</sup> Anthony J. Blinken, „The United States Officially Rejoins the Paris Agreement,“ *U.S. Department of State*, February 19, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-officially-rejoins-the-paris-agreement/>.

<sup>131</sup> Oliver Milman, “Biden Returns US to Paris Climate Accord Hours after Becoming President,” *The Guardian*, August 25, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/20/paris-climate-accord-joe-biden-returns-us>.

The complicated legal nature of the Paris Agreement shows how tricky the document is and how sensitively it was negotiated by the Obama delegation to comply with U.S. law. Nevertheless, discussion over the bindingness of the agreement had a significant impact on the U.S. political discourse regarding the Paris Agreement and emerged both implicitly and explicitly in the Obama and Trump terms rhetoric.

### 3. Analysis: Rhetoric of the Paris Agreement

Numerous variables, as presented in the subchapters above, can have an impact on the final form of the American approach and rhetoric on international environmental policies. The same implies to the Paris Agreement, which sparked heated debates over the direction of the international environmental regime and the role of the United States in it. The following research focuses on six metanarratives of the Paris agreement rhetoric of the United States, as determined by the analysis, over the time of the second term of the Obama administration and the Trump administration. It strives to recognize what ideological and political determinants of the U.S. approach to international environmental politics were present in the American rhetoric of federal political elites represented by the presidential administration and the Congress rhetoric on the Paris Agreement and how.

The following sections present the findings of the discourse analysis, divided into groups by the metanarratives. First, each metanarrative is presented and supported by examples, then each section concludes with a comparison of similarities and/or differences in the rhetorical approaches of the Obama versus Trump administration.

#### 3.1 Ideology of Climate Change Meets Partisanship: How the Approach to the Paris Agreement Split by the Party Lines

Reactions of the federal political elites to the Paris Agreement were not unanimous and were almost exclusively divided into two ‘competing’ camps based on partisanship. As described earlier in the paper, ideology and partisanship have recently aligned in American politics to historically extraordinary unanimity when it comes to climate change. This trend was confirmed by the analysis, proving how opinion on climate change and the Paris Agreement in particular divided along party lines, accentuating the ideological contradictoriness of the U.S. two-party system.

##### 3.1.1 The Obama Administration Term

###### *I. Narrative: Is Climate Change an Issue Worth the Attention?*

One rhetorical pattern that was loyal to the party affiliation, typically for Republicans, was the one questioning climate change or its seriousness, speculating whether the Paris Agreement was necessary.

During the examined period of the Obama administration, the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress was ruled by the Republican majority both in the House of Representatives and the Senate. Thus, the views questioning the seriousness of climate change were coming from Congress, creating an



opposition to the science-based arguments of climate change prevailing in the administration. For example, the Republican Representative Lamar S. Smith (TX) stated that “the link between climate change and extreme weather is merely an opinion. The administration’s alarmism and exaggeration is not good science and intentionally misleads the American people,”<sup>132</sup> indicating that the Obama administration was exaggerating the impacts of climate change. He went further to claim that any attempts “to link extreme weather events to climate change are completely unfounded. The lack of evidence is clear: no increased tornadoes, no increased hurricanes, no increased droughts or floods.”<sup>133</sup> Such a statement questioned the reality of climate change, in an attempt to undermine one of the reasonings for the implementation of the Paris Agreement as employed by the administration. Another example of questioning scientific foundations of the climate change was an argument denying the human-activity cause of climate change. As argued by the Republican Senator James Inhofe (OK), a very active voice of opposition to the Paris Agreement, the argument of manmade climate change was a “highly contested theory”. He argued that “[t]he immediate threat to future generations is not climate change. The climate is always changing and will continue to do so regardless of who is in the White House.”<sup>134</sup> Through this kind of rhetoric, the Republican politicians tried to challenge Obama’s policy of Paris Agreement, questioning the credibility of his moves.

Besides questioning the scientific uncertainty, some politicians doubted whether climate change should be a high priority for the United States when there were more urgent issues that the administration should deal with and that “the American public actually are concerned about.”<sup>135</sup> For example, Republican Senator John Cornyn (TX) criticized Obama’s priorities, saying that “[a]mong all the other things that are going on in the world, he seems to be saying that climate change is the most urgent challenge facing the United States and the world. (...) I don’t share the President’s priorities when it comes to climate change because I think there are actually more urgent priorities, such as fighting terrorism both abroad and here at home.”<sup>136</sup> Such a rhetorical framework worked with an argument that Obama was

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<sup>132</sup> *The Administration’s Empty Promises for the International Climate Treaty*, Hearing Before the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, 114th Cong. 8 (2015) (statement of Hon Lamar S. Smith, Chairman).

<sup>133</sup> *Pitfalls of Unilateral Negotiations at the Paris Climate Change Conference*, Hearing Before the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, 114th Cong. 6 (2015) (statement of Hon. Lamar S. Smith, Chairman).

<sup>134</sup> 162 Cong. Rec. S1886 (April 12, 2016) (statement of Sen. James Inhofe), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2016-04-12/CREC-2016-04-12-pt1-PgS1886>.

<sup>135</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8655 (December 15, 2015) (statement of Sen. John Barrasso), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-15/CREC-2015-12-15-pt1-PgS8655>.

<sup>136</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8712 (December 16, 2015) (statement of Sen. John Cornyn), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-16/CREC-2015-12-16-pt1-PgS8712>.

exaggerating the urgency of climate change and only tried “to justify his actions by scaring people with worst-case scenarios and biased data.”<sup>137</sup>

On the other hand, the opposite rhetorical pattern, stressing the scientific research confirming the impacts of climate change and its human-made cause, was typical for Democratic congressmen and the members of the Obama administration. Especially members of the administration close to the Paris Agreement negotiations used the rhetoric to boost political support for the agreement. In the run-up to the agreement, the Secretary of State John Kerry argued, that “[d]ecades of science tell us beyond any reasonable doubt that human beings are directly causing and accelerating climate change.”<sup>138</sup> Kerry also used this narrative to disprove arguments, that the agreement was an ideological act: „Science is science. I keep trying to say this to people. I mean, this is not based on a supposition, what we’re doing. It’s not based on a theory. It’s not an ideology. It’s based on years and years of scientific analysis and study.”<sup>139</sup>

Besides arguments focusing on scientific evidence, the Obama administrators applied the narrative that the United States can already see the impacts of climate change, and it tried to explain the importance of the agreement. The special envoy for climate change and the chief U.S. negotiator in Paris Todd Stern argued in favor of the agreement, stating that “[w]e will either succeed in accelerating a fundamental transformation of the energy base of the global economy and avert the worst effects of climate change, or we will fail, to the benefit or detriment of our children and theirs.”<sup>140</sup> President Obama also made sure that he accentuated the urgency of climate change and its impact that “we can no longer avoid”, pointing to the “damage and problems that are already occurring as a consequence of climate change.”<sup>141</sup> To stress the need for immediate actions to mitigate climate change, especially Obama used the narrative of impact on future generations: “This is a problem that is going to get worse in the lifetime of our children and our grandchildren. And there is such a thing as being too late on

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<sup>137</sup> *Pitfalls of Unilateral Negotiations at the Paris Climate Change Conference, Hearing Before the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology*, 114th Cong. 5 (2015) (statement of Hon. Lamar S. Smith, Chairman).

<sup>138</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks on Climate Change and National Security,“ transcript of speech delivered at the Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, November 10, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/11/249393.htm>.

<sup>139</sup> John Kerry, „New York Times Energy for Tomorrow Event,“ transcript of interview delivered Paris, France, December 9, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250499.htm>.

<sup>140</sup> Todd D. Stern, „Remarks at Climate Week,“ transcript of speech delivered in New York City, NY, September 28, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/e/oes/rls/remarks/247418.htm>.

<sup>141</sup> The White House, „Press Conference by President Obama,“ December 1, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/01/press-conference-president-obama>.

this.”<sup>142</sup> In Obama’s words, climate change was a “massive” and “generational” problem that “by definition, is just about the hardest thing for any political system to absorb, because the effects are gradual, they’re diffuse; people don’t feel it immediately and so there’s not a lot of constituency pressure on politicians to do something about it right away, it kind of creeps up on you.”<sup>143</sup> Obama was using this narrative to put the climate change issue high on his agenda, a strategy that was criticized by the Republican opponents of the Paris Agreement. However, by admitting that the effects of climate change are difficult to grasp, Obama exposed a weak spot of the narrative of the urgency of the climate change, and that is the uncertainty of climate change effects, which later became one of the rhetorical tools of the opposition against the agreement.

The narrative of the urgency of climate change, which is already happening, was enhanced by Democratic Congressmen too, calling it “a major challenge to the world that is having impact in our home States every single day on our rural resources and more to come”<sup>144</sup>, and labeling the climate change impacts as “dangerous”<sup>145</sup> and “catastrophic”.<sup>146</sup>

The clear rhetorical division between the Democrats and Republicans shows how the ideology of climate change splits along the party lines and contributes to the rivalry of the two-party system.

## *II. Narrative: Partisan Disagreement Whether the Agreement Was a Success or Not*

The influence of partisanship aligned with ideology also proved very visible in the politicians’ rhetoric about the Paris Agreement itself and whether it was a success or not. Chief U.S. negotiator to Paris Todd Stern called Paris the “fundamental pivot (...) [to] a universal and durable climate regime, which we have never had before,”<sup>147</sup> Secretary of State John Kerry

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<sup>142</sup> Barack Obama, „Remarks to the National Governors Association and a Question-and-Answer Session,“ transcript of speech delivered at the White House, Washington, DC, February 22, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-national-governors-association-and-question-and-answer-session>.

<sup>143</sup> The White House, „Press Conference by President Obama,“ December 1, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/01/press-conference-president-obama>.

<sup>144</sup> *Road to Paris: Examining the President’s International Climate Agenda and Implications for Domestic Environmental Policy, Hearing Before the Committee on Environment and Public Works*, 114th Cong. 96 (2015) (statement of Sen. Jeff Merkley), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114shrg97557/pdf/CHRG-114shrg97557.pdf>.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, 3 (statement of Sen. Barbara Boxer).

<sup>146</sup> *2015 Paris International Climate Negotiations: Examining the Economic and Environmental Impacts, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Multilateral International Development, Multilateral Institutions, and International Economic, Energy, and Environmental Policy of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, 114th Cong. 4 (2015) (statement of Sen. Tom Udall), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114shrg35994/pdf/CHRG-114shrg35994.pdf>.

<sup>147</sup> Todd D. Stern, „Remarks at Climate Week,“ transcript of speech delivered in New York City, NY, September 28, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/e/oes/rls/remarks/247418.htm>.

talked about the agreement as of a “turning point in the fight against climate change”<sup>148</sup> and a “huge momentum” for an agreement “that has never before existed.”<sup>149</sup> Members of the administration were aware of the extraordinary nature of the agreement because more than 190 countries came together in Paris to commit themselves to mitigate climate change. This is why the White House did not hesitate to call the agreement “the most ambitious climate change agreement in history”<sup>150</sup> and Secretary Kerry called it “the strongest, most ambitious global climate change agreement ever negotiated.”<sup>151</sup> Obama was using a similar narrative, arguing that the Paris Agreement was “the most ambitious global agreement ever to fight climate change,”<sup>152</sup> and later claimed that “just as I believe the Paris Agreement will ultimately prove to be a turning point for our planet, I believe that history will judge today’s efforts as pivotal.”<sup>153</sup> The Assistant to the President and Senior Advisor Brian Deese explained that in the administration’s view, the Paris Agreement was extraordinary and historic because it “reflects a universal commitment by all countries to put forward increasingly ambitious targets. For students of climate diplomacy, this is what Vice President Biden would call a big deal.”<sup>154</sup>

In case of Congress, similar narratives hailing the agreement were coming from Democrats. For example, Democratic Senator Tom Udall (NM) called the agreement a “historic opening for a global effort to address climate change,”<sup>155</sup> and Democratic Senator Al Franken (MN) argued that “climate change is a complex issue, and bringing about a consensus action for any international issue is no small feat. That is why this agreement is truly, truly impressive.”<sup>156</sup> Similarly, the House Democrats spoke of Paris as of a historic achievement of environmental

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<sup>148</sup> John Kerry, „Opening Ceremony of the United Nations Signing Ceremony of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change,“ transcript of a speech delivered in New York City, April 22, 2016, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/04/256497.htm>.

<sup>149</sup> John Kerry, „New York Times Energy for Tomorrow Event,“ transcript of interview delivered Paris, France, December 9, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250499.htm>.

<sup>150</sup> The White House, „U.S. Leadership and the Historic Paris Agreement to Combat Climate Change,“ December 12, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/12/us-leadership-and-historic-paris-agreement-combat-climate-change>.

<sup>151</sup> John Kerry, „Press Availability,“ transcript of remarks delivered in Paris, France, December 12, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250590.htm>.

<sup>152</sup> Barack Obama, „Remarks at the Department of State’s Global Chiefs of Mission Conference,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, March 14, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-department-states-global-chiefs-mission-conference>.

<sup>153</sup> Tanya Somanader, „President Obama: The United States Formally Enters the Paris Agreement,“ The White House, September 3, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/09/03/president-obama-united-states-formally-enters-paris-agreement>.

<sup>154</sup> Brian Deese, „The Paris Agreement and Beyond,“ The White House, April 15, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/04/15/remarks-senior-advisor-brian-deese-prepared-delivery>.

<sup>155</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8576 (December 10, 2015) (statement of Sen. Tom Udall), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-10/CREC-2015-12-10-pt1-PgS8576-2>.

<sup>156</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8697 (December 16, 2015) (statement of Sen. Al Franken), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-16/CREC-2015-12-16-pt1-PgS8697>.

politics and praised Obama for entering “the largest international agreement the world has ever known.”<sup>157</sup> However, the Republicans did not share the enthusiasm for the agreement as I prove later in this section.

Although very optimistic about the agreement, one rhetorical narrative penetrated the glorifying narrative of the success of the agreement, a category named for the purposes of the analysis the **sober positivity**. It demonstrates how the supporters of the agreement made it clear to their audiences, that the agreement itself does not solve climate change and should be celebrated mainly as the bold starting point. By such a narrative, the Obama administration tempered its emotional statements of ‘victory’ and ‘historic turning point’, showing to the audiences that it is aware of the incredible challenge that the agreement brings. For example, as Senior Advisor Deese explained, “[t]he Paris Agreement is, at the same time, humanity’s best chance to save the one planet we have and, on its own, wholly insufficient to solve the climate threat.”<sup>158</sup> President Obama endorsed this narrative in numerous statements, pointing out that “even if all the initial targets set in Paris are met, we’ll only be part of the way there when it comes to reducing carbon from the atmosphere. (...) The problem is not solved because of this accord,”<sup>159</sup> and admitting that “we know that even with an optimistic outcome here in Paris, that we’ll still have more work to do in order to ultimately achieve the goals that scientists say we need to achieve to avert catastrophic damage.”<sup>160</sup> Obama also admitted that the United States does not know what approach to mitigate climate change will be finally chosen because “we don’t yet know exactly what’s going to work best.”<sup>161</sup>

The important argument that framed this narrative, was one that accentuated the importance of the agreement because it built a common framework, which the world promised to follow. As the Press Secretary Josh Earnest described it, there was “some optimism that once you get the ball rolling, that you can start moving momentum in a positive direction in terms of cutting carbon pollution. And essentially that is the crux of the Paris agreement, is trying to

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<sup>157</sup> 162 Cong. Rec. H1837 (April 19, 2016) (statement of Rep. Paul Tonko), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2016-04-19/CREC-2016-04-19-pt1-PgH1837-2>.

<sup>158</sup> Brian Deese, „The Paris Agreement and Beyond,“ The White House, April 15, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/04/15/remarks-senior-advisor-brian-deese-prepared-delivery>.

<sup>159</sup> Barack Obama, „Statement by the President on the Paris Climate Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in the White House, Washington, DC, December 12, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/12/statement-president-paris-climate-agreement>.

<sup>160</sup> Barack Obama, „Remarks during a Meeting with Leaders of Small Island Nations in Issy-les-Moulineaux, France,“ transcript of speech delivered at the OECD Development Center in Issy-les-Moulineaux, France, December 1, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-during-meeting-with-leaders-small-island-nations-issy-les-moulineaux-france>.

<sup>161</sup> Barack Obama, „Remarks Announcing the Mission Innovation Initiative in Le Bourget, France,“ transcript of speech delivered in Le Bourget, France, November 30, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-the-mission-innovation-initiative-le-bourget-france>.

get movement in a positive direction.”<sup>162</sup> In Congress, the narrative of sober positivity was a frame employed usually by Democrats, again showing the ideologic loyalty to partisanship. The rhetoric of ‘sober positivity’ signaled to the audiences that the United States was ready to fulfill the Paris promises because, as the Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz argued, “[w]hile the Agreement’s entry into force is cause for celebration, our work has just begun.”<sup>163</sup>

At this point of analysis, another two findings are worth noting. One of them is the rhetorical pattern typical especially for President Obama, who was often stressing the impact of the agreement on health of people and future generations. In his remarks, he often accentuated positive impacts the agreement could have on future generations in a “world that is worthy of our children,”<sup>164</sup> calling Paris a tool of “our most important mission, to make sure our kids and our grandkids have at least as beautiful a planet, and hopefully more beautiful, than the one that we have.”<sup>165</sup> On the day the Paris Agreement was adopted, Obama said:

*“And that’s what I care about. I imagine taking my grandkids, if I’m lucky enough to have some, to the park someday, and holding their hands, and hearing their laughter, and watching a quiet sunset, all the while knowing that our work today prevented an alternate future that could have been grim; that our work, here and now, gave future generations cleaner air, and cleaner water, and a more sustainable planet. And what could be more important than that?”*<sup>166</sup>

Obama clearly stated that he cared about the people’s and future generations’ health first, which is especially worth noting in contrast to Secretary Kerry, who was very often using rhetoric focused on the future of the U.S. economy instead of people. For example, Secretary Kerry once said, that with the Paris Agreement in force, it “would provide better health for people, less particulates in the air, less cancer. Greatest cause of children going to the hospital in America during the summer is environmentally induced asthma. It costs us

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<sup>162</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing by Press Secretary Josh Earnest,“ delivered in Washington, DC, December 11, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-press-secretary-josh-earnest-126>.

<sup>163</sup> U.S. Department of Energy, „Secretary Moniz Statement on Reaching Threshold for Paris Agreement’s Entry into Force,“ *Breaking Energy*, October 12, 2016, <https://breakingenergy.com/2016/10/12/secretary-moniz-statement-on-reaching-threshold-for-paris-agreements-entry-into-force/>.

<sup>164</sup> The White House, „Remarks by President Obama at the First Session of COP21,“ transcript of speech delivered in Le Bourget, France, November 30, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/30/remarks-president-obama-first-session-cop21>.

<sup>165</sup> The White House, „Remarks by the President on the Paris Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in Rose Garden, the White House, Washington, DC, October 5, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/10/05/remarks-president-paris-agreement>.

<sup>166</sup> Barack Obama, „Statement by the President on the Paris Climate Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in the White House, Washington, DC, December 12, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/12/statement-president-paris-climate-agreement>.

billions.”<sup>167</sup> With such a statement, Kerry suggested that health problems caused by climate change are a problem for the United States mainly because it hurts their economy financially. These rhetorical nuances show that even within one administration, the rhetorical approaches did not always follow the same pattern.

Quite unsurprisingly, voices critical of the agreement and its content were coming from the congressional Republican majority. The critique focused mainly on two topics: unrealistic targets of the agreement and the credibility of the Obama administration. One of the strongest Republican voices who were criticizing the agreement was Senator James Inhofe (OK), who argued that “[t]he COP21 conference has nothing to do with saving the environment. With no means of enforcement and no guarantee of funding as developed countries had hoped, the deal will not reduce emissions and it will have no impact on global temperatures. (...) [T]he only guaranteed outcome from the Paris agreement is continued growth in emissions.”<sup>168</sup> He was also the one who repeatedly called Paris and its goals unrealistic, unattainable, and of “no chance of succeeding in the United States.”<sup>169</sup> Together with other Republican Congresspersons, he criticized the Obama administration for failing to explain to the American public how the administration planned to fulfill its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 26-28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025.<sup>170</sup> Republican Senator John Cornyn (TX) went further when he argued: “The President and some of his supporters frequently like to say: Well, people who don’t regard climate change as a priority are anti-science. I actually think people who think agreements such as this are going to provide the answer are anti-science.”<sup>171</sup> Others questioned if the goal set by Paris to limit the increase in the global temperatures to 2 Celsius above pre-industrial levels is even feasible, like Representative Lamar S. Smith (TX), who argued that “[t]he U.S. pledge to the U.N. is estimated to prevent only one-fiftieth of one degree Celsius temperature rise over the next 85 years. Incredible. This would be laughable if it weren’t for the tremendous costs it imposes on the American people.”<sup>172</sup> Additionally, the concurrent House Resolution, signed by thirty-one

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<sup>167</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks on Climate Change and National Security,“ transcript of speech delivered at the Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, November 10, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/11/249393.htm>.

<sup>168</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8715 (December 16, 2015) (statement of Sen. James Inhofe), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-16/CREC-2015-12-16-pt1-PgS8715-2>.

<sup>169</sup> 162 Cong. Rec. S1886 (April 12, 2016) (statement of Sen. James Inhofe). <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2016-04-12/CREC-2016-04-12-pt1-PgS1886>.

<sup>170</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, „Inhofe Statement on Final COP 21 Deal,“ December 12, 2015, <https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2015/12/inhofe-statement-on-final-cop21-climate-deal>.

<sup>171</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8712 (December 16, 2015) (statement of Sen. John Cornyn). <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-16/CREC-2015-12-16-pt1-PgS8712>.

<sup>172</sup> *Pitfalls of Unilateral Negotiations at the Paris Climate Change Conference, Hearing Before the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology*, 114th Cong. 6 (2015) (statement of Hon. Lamar S. Smith, Chairman).

Republican representatives, expected the Paris Agreement to fail just like other international climate agreements in the past, stating: “[T]he Paris Agreement, adopted in December 2015, is another attempt by the Convention’s “Conference of Parties” to globally address climate change, similar to the Kyoto Protocol, the Durban Platform, the Copenhagen Accord, and the Cancun Agreements, all of which have failed to meaningfully slow global carbon emissions.”<sup>173</sup> With such a resolution, Republicans made it clear they did not consider the Paris Agreement anything special or historic, like the Obama administration or supporting Democrats did.

The critics of the agreement also hit the weak spot of the agreement, which is the uncertainty of success. For example, Republican Senator Roger Wicker (MS) argued:

*“[i]f we spend all of this money, trim our GDP by \$154 billion a year, and actually achieve this impractical 2 degrees Celsius, where will humankind be then? How much will the sea level not rise? No one can say. How much thicker will the icecap be in the Arctic or Antarctic? No one knows. (...) All of this to be done, all of this money to be spent, and experts cannot say how much it will help, if at all.”*<sup>174</sup>

The opposition led by Senator Inhofe used the agreement’s weak spots to question the Obama administration’s credibility, arguing that Obama’s international climate agenda was built of “hollow commitments” and empty promises.<sup>175</sup> For example, Senator Inhofe argued that the U.S. adoption of the agreement will not be fulfilled because “[w]hile the President has been working to solidify his legacy on global warming, he has chosen to ignore the reality that the United States will not keep his carbon promises. The document that will be signed (...) will soon be added to the president’s stack of empty promises on global warming.”<sup>176</sup> Critics blamed Obama for not listening to the American public, scientists, and even environmentalists, signing in an agreement that did not reflect the U.S. wishes.<sup>177</sup>

The rhetorical shoot-out between the supporters and opponents of the Paris Agreement once again proved the theory of partisanship and ideology aligning into one, because the agreement

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<sup>173</sup> Expressing the sense of Congress regarding the "Paris Agreement" announced on December 12, 2015, at the 21st session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, H.Con.Res.105, 114th Cong. (2015).

<sup>174</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8230 (December 1, 2015) (statement of Sen. Roger Wicker), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-01/CREC-2015-12-01-pt1-PgS8230>.

<sup>175</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, „Inhofe Statement on the Future of U.S. Commitments to the Paris Agreement,“ November 9, 2016, <https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2016/11/inhofe-statement-on-the-future-of-u-s-commitments-to-the-paris-agreement>.

<sup>176</sup> 162 Cong. Rec. S1886 (April 12, 2016) (statement of Sen. James Inhofe). <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2016-04-12/CREC-2016-04-12-pt1-PgS1886>.

<sup>177</sup> Jim Inhofe, „Beware of Empty Climate Promises,“ *CNN*, published November 30, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/30/opinions/inhofe-obama-climate-talks/index.html>.



was criticized as a failure by Republicans, while Democrats strived to enhance its standing with positive rhetoric of success and historic momentum.

### *III. Narrative: Legal Struggle between President and Congress: The Agreement Lacks a Senate Approval*

The Paris Agreement approval process sparked a heated debate over whether the agreement required Senate approval or not, and a significant part of the discourse was centered around this topic.

Especially Republican opposition got very emotional on the topic, arguing that the agreement had no legal standing without Senate’s approval and that Obama was exceeding its authority. Senator Cornyn (TX) argued, that “[t]his agreement represents the President once again trying to claim authority he simply does not have. We don’t have a king. (...) [B]ut the President seems to act like a monarch and claim authorities from some source other than the Constitution.”<sup>178</sup> Senator Jeff Sessions (AL) called Obama’s attempt to bypass the Senate a “disturbing trend” where the Senate has to deal “with an Administration that seeks to impose its will by any means possible, whether through unauthorized administrative fiat or international negotiations which usurp the Senate’s advice and consent role provided by the Constitution.”<sup>179</sup> Republican Representative Steve King (IA) argued that bypassing Senate just because the Administration awaited resistance, was “outrageous” and “unlawful”, and called it “a clear example of the executive overreach in the area of foreign affairs.”<sup>180</sup>

The opposition especially accentuated that Obama was “exaggerating what his authority is under Constitution”<sup>181</sup> and that without Senate approval, the agreement “lacks constitutional legitimacy.”<sup>182</sup> The common narrative of the opposition presented the agreement as a legally-binding treaty because it includes U.S. emissions targets and pledges that “appropriate taxpayer dollars.”<sup>183</sup> Republican Senator Shelley Moore Capito (WV) also pointed out that

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<sup>178</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8712 (December 16, 2015) (statement of Sen. John Cornyn).

<https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-16/CREC-2015-12-16-pt1-PgS8712>.

<sup>179</sup> *Road to Paris: Examining the President’s International Climate Agenda and Implications for Domestic Environmental Policy*, Hearing Before the Committee on Environment and Public Works, 114th Cong. 94 (2015) (statement of Sen. Jeff Sessions), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114shrg97557/pdf/CHRG-114shrg97557.pdf>.

<sup>180</sup> *Executive Overreach in Foreign Affairs*, Hearing Before the Executive Overreach Task Force of the Committee on the Judiciary, 114th Cong. 1 (2016) (statement of Rep. Steve King), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114hhr20106/pdf/CHRG-114hhr20106.pdf>.

<sup>181</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8712 (December 16, 2015) (statement of Sen. John Cornyn),

<https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-16/CREC-2015-12-16-pt1-PgS8712>.

<sup>182</sup> *Paris Climate Promise: A Bad Deal for America*, Hearing Before the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, 114th Cong. 5 (2016) (statement of Sen. Lamar S. Smith), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114hhr20827/pdf/CHRG-114hhr20827.pdf>.

<sup>183</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8230 (December 1, 2015) (statement of Sen. Roger Wicker).

<https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-01/CREC-2015-12-01-pt1-PgS8230>.

without Senate, the administration will not receive the money it needs to fulfill its nationally determined commitments of the agreement: „The President has pledged to send \$3 billion to the Green Climate Fund. He included a \$500 million request in his Fiscal Year 2016 budget. The House and the Senate, State and foreign appropriators (...) have allocated zero dollars. It is important to make clear, I think, to the rest of the world, as climate talks approach, that Congress has the power of the purse.”<sup>184</sup> Thus, Obama’s attempt to bypass Senate approval was according to the Republican opposition standing on “shaky legal ground” and was expected to fail due to a lack of congressional support.<sup>185</sup>

The Obama administration tried to confront the Republican opposition with a narrative supporting the legality of Obama’s entry into Paris without the approval, centering its arguments around the non-binding nature of the Paris commitments. The climate envoy Todd Stern argued that the U.S. support for the combination of legally binding (pledge-and-review system) and non-binding commitments (NDCs) was promoted to attract more countries to join in the agreement because “there are other countries around the world, probably quite a few, that would be uneasy and even unwilling to take legally binding targets themselves.”<sup>186</sup> Stern made it clear in his statements that the hybrid system of non-legally and legally binding commitments, that became the core of the agreement, did not originate in Washington, but was brought up by New Zealand,<sup>187</sup> although the United States was a very vocal promoter of the hybrid pledge-and-review system. President and his administrators were careful to stress that the agreement is not a treaty in the sense of the U.S. Constitution and that “although the targets themselves may not have the force of treaties, the process, the procedures that ensure transparency and periodic reviews, that needs to be legally binding, and that's going to be critical in us having high ambitions and holding each other accountable for those ambitions.”<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> *Examining the International Climate Negotiations, Hearing Before the Committee on Environment and Public Works*, 114th Cong. 5 (2015) (statement of Sen. Shelley Moore Capito), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114shrg98708/pdf/CHRG-114shrg98708.pdf>.

<sup>185</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, „Inhofe Statement of U.S., China Announcement on Paris Agreement,” September 1, 2016, <https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2016/9/inhofe-statement-on-u-s-china-announcement-on-paris-agreement>.

<sup>186</sup> U.S. Department of State, „COP21 Press Availability with Special Envoy Todd Stern,” December 7, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/s/climate/releases/2015/250425.htm>.

<sup>187</sup> U.S. Department of State, „COP21 Press Availability with Special Envoy Todd Stern,” December 4, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/s/climate/releases/2015/250363.htm>.

<sup>188</sup> Barack Obama, „Remarks during a Meeting with Leaders of Small Island Nations in Issy-les-Moulineaux, France,” transcript of speech delivered at the OECD Development Center in Issy-les-Moulineaux, France, December 1, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-during-meeting-with-leaders-small-island-nations-issy-les-moulineaux-france>.

The administration backed the constitutionality of Obama's ratification via the executive order arguing that it was the President's legal authority "that has been used in dozens of executive agreements in the past" as a „process that is quite well-established in our existing legal system.”<sup>189</sup> The constitutionality of the executive order to enter Paris without the consent of Senate was also endorsed by Democratic congressmen. For example, Senator Ben Cardin (MD) pointed out, that the Paris Agreement is just an extension of the 1992 UNFCCC to which the United States became a party through Senate ratification,<sup>190</sup> and Senator Brian Schatz (HI) argued that Obama's course of action was nothing exceptional in the U.S. system because “[t]here have been more than 18,000 such agreements that our President and Presidents in the past have entered into over time not requiring Senate approval.”<sup>191</sup>

The administration was also very careful not to label the resenting U.S. Congress as the explicit reason why the U.S. delegation to Paris fought for the pledge-and-review system, and rather used a rhetoric of hints. Climate Envoy Todd Stern talked about the “extraordinary” work that Obama was able to accomplish “within the political reality on climate change that exists in Washington,”<sup>192</sup> Obama insinuated the complicated bipartisan situation at home stating that [s]ometimes it may be hard for Republicans to support something that I'm doing, but that's more a matter of the games Washington plays.”<sup>193</sup> Nevertheless, an open critique of Congress and especially Republican opposition appeared. For example, Secretary Kerry said he regretted “that the Senate is as gridlocked as it is today and as troubled as it is. And therefore our nation is challenged by that,”<sup>194</sup> and criticized that climate change became a partisan issue because “the science tells us unequivocally: Those who continue to make climate change a political fight put us all at risk.”<sup>195</sup> Obama justified his executive actions by stating that the administration “didn't get any help from Congress” because Republicans “are not even organized enough to get their own stuff down. And as a consequence, things that

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<sup>189</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing by Press Secretary Josh Earnest, Deputy NSA for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes, Senior Advisor Brian Deese and Deputy NSA for International Economics Wally Adeyemo,“ August 29, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-press-secretary-josh-earnest-deputy-nsa-for-strategic-communications-ben>.

<sup>190</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8576 (December 10, 2015) (statement of Sen. Ben Cardin), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-10/CREC-2015-12-10-pt1-PgS8576-2>.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, (statement of Sen. Brian Schatz).

<sup>192</sup> U.S. Department of State, „COP21 Press Availability with Special Envoy Todd Stern,“ December 4, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/s/climate/releases/2015/250363.htm>.

<sup>193</sup> The White House. „Press Conference by President Obama.“ December 1, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/01/press-conference-president-obama>.

<sup>194</sup> John Kerry, „New York Times Energy for Tomorrow Event,“ transcript of interview delivered in Paris, France, December 9, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250499.htm>.

<sup>195</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks on Climate Change and National Security,“ transcript of speech delivered at the Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, November 10, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/11/249393.htm>.

previously were never considered ideological—like rebuilding our roads, our bridges, our ports; putting people back to work; making our economy more productive—stalled.”<sup>196</sup>

The rhetoric covering the legal struggle between the President and Congress was yet another very visible example of the significant influence the bipartisan system has on U.S. foreign environmental politics.

### 3.1.2 The Trump Administration Term

#### *I. Narrative: Questioning Climate Change*

The rhetoric questioning the reality of climate change or its seriousness continued during Trump’s term too, only with the difference that the narrative of doubts about the scientific accuracy of the dangers of climate change was now coming from the administration itself.

Trump and his administrators were very careful not to openly deny climate change or that it is human-made, but there were hints saying that the administration was skeptical of some prognoses that climate change is a dangerous issue that will only become worse. For example, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt polemized over the seriousness of climate change and the extent to which humans contributed to it when he said: “I indicated that in fact, global warming is occurring; that human activity contributes to it in some manner. Measuring with precision from my perspective, the degree of human contribution is very challenging. But it still begs the question what do we do about it? Does it pose an existential threat, as some say? People have called me a climate skeptic or a climate denier -- I don't even know what it means to deny the climate. I would say that there are climate exaggerators.”<sup>197</sup> Energy Secretary Richard Perry confronted the alleged prognoses that the world without any action on climate change is coming to an end, saying: “I mean, what is the other side? The people who say the science is settled, it's done -- if you don't believe that you're a skeptic, a Luddite. I don't buy that.”<sup>198</sup> In comparison to the campaign rhetoric, Trump and his administrators were very cautious not to directly call climate change a hoax. On the contrary, as shown later in the analysis, Trump repeatedly claimed he cared about the environment and wanted to help Americans have cleaner air and cleaner water. Questions from journalists on the press

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<sup>196</sup> Barack Obama, „Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in La Jolla, California,“ October 23, 2016, *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-democratic-congressional-campaign-committee-fundraiser-la-jolla-california>.

<sup>197</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer and Administrator of Environmental Protection Agency Scott Pruitt,“ June 2, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-press-secretary-sean-spicer-and-administrator-the-environmental-protection>.

<sup>198</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing of Secretary of Energy Rick Perry and Principal Deputy Press Secretary Sarah Sanders,“ June 27, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-secretary-energy-rick-perry-and-principal-deputy-press-secretary-sarah>.

briefings suggest that Trump repeatedly refused to answer questions about whether he believed in climate change and when this question was directed at EPA Administrator Pruitt, he also refused to answer directly whether President believed that climate change is a hoax, and just responded that

*“the discussions that the President and I have had over the last several weeks have been focused on one key issue -- is Paris good or bad for the country. The President and I focused our attentions there. He determined that it was bad for this country. It hurt us economically, it didn't achieve good environmental outcomes. And he made the decision to reject the Paris deal.”*<sup>199</sup>

The example shows how delicate the topic for the administration was and that it was aware of the negative effects it could have if the administration would openly call climate change a hoax.

On the Congress floor, Republican Senator Inhofe (OK) remained the leading voice of climate skepticism, denying the manmade cause of climate change and arguing that climate has always changed, thus the recent changes in the environment were nothing to worry about.<sup>200</sup> Arguments in opposition to Trump, claiming climate change is a serious issue and real, limited to Democratic congressmen only. The narrative remained the same as for the Obama administration, summarized by Senator Charles Schumer (NY), that “[c]limate change is real. It is driven by human activity. It is happening right now. These are facts. They are not in dispute.”<sup>201</sup>

The analysis suggests, that the Trump administration did not wholly believe in the human-made cause of climate change, but it was very careful not to openly deny that climate change was happening, which suggests that the administration was aware of its limitations in order not to antagonize the electorate.

## *II. Narrative: The Agreement is a Failure*

Whereas the narrative of the Paris Agreement being a successful step in international environmental policy was intensive during Obama's term, during Trump's era the narrative of defamation of the agreement was more apparent. The Trump administration called the

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<sup>199</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer and Administrator of Environmental Protection Agency Scott Pruitt,“ June 2, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-press-secretary-sean-spicer-and-administrator-the-environmental-protection>.

<sup>200</sup> 163 Cong. Rec. S3543 (June 15, 2017) (statement of Sen. James Inhofe), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2017-06-15/CREC-2017-06-15-pt1-PgS3543>.

<sup>201</sup> 163 Cong. Rec. S2787 (May 8, 2017) (statement of Sen. Charles E. Schumer), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2017-05-08/CREC-2017-05-08-pt1-PgS2787-2>.

agreement a failure and not effective, thus useless for the United States. Such narratives were resonating bountifully in the administration, and in the case of Congress these were pronounced by Republicans.

The narrative framed the agreement as a failure because its targets were not achievable. As President Trump argued on the day, he announced the United States will withdraw from the agreement, “[e]ven if the Paris Agreement were implemented in full, with total compliance from all nations, it is estimated it would only produce a two-tenths of one degree—think of that; this much—Celsius reduction in global temperature by the year 2100. Tiny, tiny amount.”<sup>202</sup> The same argument was supported by EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, who argued that “Paris set targets of 26 to 28 percent. With the entire agenda of the previous administration, we still fell 40 percent short of those targets. It was a failed deal to begin with.”<sup>203</sup> The administration argued, that the Agreement would have only minimal environmental benefits and that its targets were not enforceable.<sup>204</sup>

The administration promoted an argument, that the agreement did not provide a sufficient framework to combat climate change, and that Trump’s administration could do better without it because, as articulated by the State Department Director of Policy Planning Brian Hook, Trump did not believe that the agreement “is the best vehicle to achieve the priorities around protecting the environment because it advantages other countries, especially China, more than it helps the United States.”<sup>205</sup> State Secretary Michael Pompeo called the agreement unrealistic because “the nonbinding commitments in the Paris agreement weren’t the right approach”, adding that “[a]greements only matter insofar as they deliver actual results.”<sup>206</sup> Pompeo also questioned the legitimacy of foreign agreements, when he said: “If there is no compliance, or if the agreements were flawed, you’ve got to get out of them. They’re just ink and paper,” in effect saying that the United States does not have to keep its word and can leave any

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<sup>202</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks Announcing United States Withdrawal from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement,“ June 1, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-united-states-withdrawal-from-the-united-nations-framework-convention>.

<sup>203</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer and Administrator of Environmental Protection Agency Scott Pruitt,“ June 2, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-press-secretary-sean-spicer-and-administrator-the-environmental-protection>.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sarah Sanders and State Department Director of Policy Planning Brian Hook in New York City,“ September 18, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-press-secretary-sarah-sanders-and-state-department-director-policy-planning>.

<sup>206</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, „Interview with Carmina Constantino from ABS-CBN,“ *U.S. Department of State*, March 1, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/interview-with-karmina-constantino-of-abs-cbn/index.html>.

agreement easily if it wants because it is just ‘ink and paper’.<sup>207</sup> However, by such a statement, Pompeo jeopardized the U.S. credibility for future international negotiations.

Later in his term of office, Trump celebrated that the United States was doing a great job on environmental protection, no Paris Agreement needed: “Since 2000, our Nation's energy-related carbon emissions have declined more than any other country on Earth. Think of that. Emissions are projected to drop in 2019 and 2020. (...) Every single one of the signatories to the Paris climate accord lags behind America in overall emissions reductions. Who would think that is possible?”<sup>208</sup> Republican Congressmen supporting the administration’s rhetoric argued similarly, saying that the agreement „has little efficacy” and “[i]t will not save the world”<sup>209</sup> or that it was “negotiated badly and signed out of desperation.”<sup>210</sup>

The Democratic opposition to the Trump administration’s rhetoric tried to remind its congressional colleagues of the importance of the agreement, and the positive impacts it could have, arguing that the agreement was a success. For example, Representative Frank Pallone (NJ) argued that “[t]he Obama administration’s plan to meet the goals of this agreement were reasonable, achievable, and balanced”<sup>211</sup> and Senator Ben Cardin (MD) called the agreement “an ambitious global goal.”<sup>212</sup> However, opposition voices of that time did not focus that much on the arguments why the agreement was a successful step back in 2015 anymore but rather created opposition to voices praising Trump’s withdrawal from the agreement, as announced in June 2017.

### *III. Narrative: Partisan Divide over the Withdrawal*

Whereas during Obama’s term, the most visible ideological and partisan divide was over whether the agreement was a success or not, in Trump’s term the rhetoric in favor of withdrawal versus against it constituted the discourse. This category focuses mainly on the bipartisan divide in Congress and not so much specifically on President Trump because in

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<sup>207</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, „The State Department is Winning for America,” transcript of speech delivered at Gaylord National Resort and Conference Center, in National Harbor, Maryland, February 28, 2020, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/the-state-department-is-winning-for-america/index.html>.

<sup>208</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks on the Environment,” transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, July 8, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-environment>.

<sup>209</sup> 165 Cong. Rec. H3323 (April 30, 2019) (statement of Rep. Andy Biggs), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2019-04-30/CREC-2019-04-30-pt1-PgH3323-7>.

<sup>210</sup> John Barrasso, „Paris climate agreement should be nixed,” *The Washington Times*, March 28, 2017, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/mar/28/paris-climate-agreement-should-be-nixed/>.

<sup>211</sup> *We’ll Always Have Paris: Filling the Leadership Void Caused by Federal Inaction on Climate Change, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change of the Committee on Energy and Commerce*, 116th Cong. 8 (2019) (statement of Rep. Frank Pallone), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-116hhrg36534/pdf/CHRG-116hhrg36534.pdf>.

<sup>212</sup> 163 Cong. Rec. S6128 (September 26, 2017) (statement of Sen. Ben Cardin), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2017-09-26/CREC-2017-09-26-pt1-PgS6128>.

effect, all his rhetoric could be described as a justification for the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement. Thus, this section presents a clear partisan divide on the topic of withdrawal between Democrats and Republicans to shed a light on the continued issue of partisanship aligned with ideology.

Narratives in favor of withdrawal, typical for Republicans, argued that staying in would be against Trump's campaign promises, or that it was an agreement lacking congressional support. Senator Inhofe encouraged Trump to withdraw the agreement "to avoid a lot of confusion. (...) If the President stays in the Paris agreement, he will be putting at risk our ability to accomplish his campaign goals; namely, ending the war on fossil fuels and rescinding the Clean Power Plan. (...) The EPA is currently on solid legal footing. But we must not limit the effectiveness of these key steps by remaining in the Paris Agreement,"<sup>213</sup> arguing that the Paris Agreement would hamper Trump's steps to protect the environment and the American people. However, what it really meant was that the agreement tied President's hands in regard to the fossil fuel industry, thus he could not help the related businesses as he intended to and promised to in his campaign. Inhofe also did not forget to mention that Republicans still considered the Paris Agreement a treaty, thus if Trump would not exit it, it would still require Senate's approval because "the Paris Agreement meets seven out of eight criteria established by the State Department to determine what constitutes a treaty."<sup>214</sup> Republican Representative Greg Walden (OR) argued that Trump should withdraw the agreement because it did not contain any real plan on how to meet its commitments and it lacked "broad bipartisan support in Congress."<sup>215</sup>

On the other hand, congressional Democrats saw Trump's attempt to withdraw from the agreement as a "huge mistake" that will jeopardize the American "unique position to be the leader of the clean energy revolution."<sup>216</sup> Representative Paul Tonko (NY) pointed out that the U.S. withdrawal stripped the United States of the chance to lead on clean energy and that "the world is now making plans to move ahead without us. Jobs will be created without us. New industries will be born and new innovative technologies manufactured without us. If we

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<sup>213</sup> 163 Cong. Rec. S3196 (May 25, 2017) (statement of Sen. James Inhofe), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2017-05-25/CREC-2017-05-25-pt1-PgS3196-2>.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> *We'll Always Have Paris: Filling the Leadership Void Caused by Federal Inaction on Climate Change, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change of the Committee on Energy and Commerce*, 116th Cong. 8 (2019) (statement of Rep. Greg Walden), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-116hhrg36534/pdf/CHRG-116hhrg36534.pdf>.

<sup>216</sup> 163 Cong. Rec. S2798 (May 8, 2017) (statement of Sen. Jeanne Shaheen), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2017-05-08/CREC-2017-05-08-pt1-PgS2798>.



stick with this President's decision, America will be on the outside looking in."<sup>217</sup> Others pointed to the harm the withdrawal could make to U.S. international relations, as articulated by Senator Durbin (IL), who said: "last year President Trump decided that the United States would step away from the rest of the world, step away from our allies and trading partners, and leave this agreement. When I think about the decisions being made by this Trump administration, this may be one of the most longterm, disastrous decisions he has made. To think that this great Nation, with its great economy, its great technology and innovation, would step away from an agreement that every country in the world has signed to deal with our climate challenges is unthinkable,"<sup>218</sup> clearly articulating that many Democrats did not believe that Trump could really leave the agreement.

However, regarding the congressional opinion on Trump's decision to leave the agreement, the ideology did not stick to the party lines exclusively. In the case of the House letter urging Trump to stay in Paris, also four Republicans signed the address arguing that "[i]t is imperative that we maintain our seat at the table in global discussions of how to address the threats posed by climate change,"<sup>219</sup> thus expressing fears the withdrawal might have on future climate negotiations and that the United States might be left out. This letter represents an ideological deviation not typical for the Paris Agreement case, where usually politicians stuck to the ideological positions of their respective parties.

### 3.1.3 Comparison

This section examined examples of the strong alignment of climate change ideology to partisanship, where Democrats were supportive of the agreement, believed that it was a historic moment for the future of the planet, and supported Obama's step to enter the agreement without Senate ratification. Where the Obama administration argued that Paris was an agreement not requiring Senate approval because it was based on voluntary non-binding nationally determined commitments, Republicans disagreed, calling Paris a treaty that requires Senate approval based on the U.S. Constitution. When Trump came to office, the arguments centered around whether the United States should withdraw the agreement or not, but the partisan division remained. The only departure from the rhetorical pattern in the

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<sup>217</sup> 163 Cong. Rec. H4712 (June 8, 2017) (statement of Rep. Paul Tonko), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2017-06-08/CREC-2017-06-08-pt1-PgH4712-7>.

<sup>218</sup> 164 Cong. Rec. S6787 (October 11, 2018) (statement of Sen. Richard J. Durbin), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2018-10-11/CREC-2018-10-11-pt1-PgS6787>.

<sup>219</sup> Devin Henry, „Four Republicans sign letter urging Trump to stay in Paris deal,“ *The Hill*, April 26, 2017, <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/330747-four-republicans-sign-letter-urging-trump-to-stay-in-paris-deal/>.

analyzed documents was the case of four Republicans joining the letter that urged Trump to stay in the agreement.

The rhetoric also varied on the issue of scientific data regarding climate change, where the Obama administration and Democrats favored scientific research and argued that climate change is real and thus dangerous, while the Trump administration and Republicans questioned the scientific accuracy of environmental research or denied the dangerous impacts climate change might have into the future.

In conclusion, this section proves the theory of last years that in U.S. politics, ideology and partisanship are increasingly becoming one intertwined factor that divides political debate on environmental issues into two competing teams.

### 3.2 U.S. Leadership

Another metanarrative indicated by the analysis covers the rhetoric of U.S. leadership. Both administrations argued that the U.S. leadership was crucial for an international global fight against climate change to be successful, however, they offered their audiences different reasonings and tools to reach and maintain U.S. leadership.

#### 3.2.1 The Obama Term: United States Leads by Example

During the Obama term, the narrative of U.S. leadership was presented by the administration as the turning point in the Paris negotiations, leading the agreement to a successful end. The administration promoted an argument, that by leading by example, the United States' role was crucial for the adoption of the agreement and will be important in the future to stick to the Paris promises.

After he came back from Paris, Obama stated that “[t]oday, the American people can be proud -- because this historic agreement is a tribute to American leadership. Over the past seven years, we’ve transformed the United States into the global leader in fighting climate change,”<sup>220</sup> arguing that “nearly 200 nations forged an historic agreement that was only possible because of American leadership”.<sup>221</sup> Later in his presidency, Obama argued that “[k]ey to reaching the Paris Agreement was principled American leadership,”<sup>222</sup> and his

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<sup>220</sup> Barack Obama, „Statement by the President on the Paris Climate Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in the White House, Washington, DC, December 12, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/12/statement-president-paris-climate-agreement>.

<sup>221</sup> The White House, „Press Conference by the President,“ December 18, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/18/press-conference-president-121815>.

<sup>222</sup> Proclamation no. 9426, 81 Fed. Reg. 24453 (April 26, 2016), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/04/26/2016-09826/earth-day-2016>.

Senior Advisor Brian Deese argued that global community's approach to climate change "didn't happen overnight" as it was "the result of a very consistent and steady diplomatic effort that the President prioritized year after year, working to restore U.S. credibility on climate issues through our Climate Action Plan, demonstrating to the world that we actually could make progress in reducing emissions."<sup>223</sup> In his exit memo, Secretary of State Kerry praised Obama for showing that "with U.S. leadership, climate change is a challenge that can be met,"<sup>224</sup> thus suggesting that the United States is crucial for any environmental agreement to be successful.

As one of the key events the Obama administration used to frame its leadership role was the series of joint statements with China of 2014 through 2016 on their shared ambition to fight climate change, thus signaling to the world that the two largest emitters are committed to mitigate climate change. Secretary of State Kerry argued that when the United States and China came together to act on climate, it "moves the needle in a way that no two other nations can accomplish,"<sup>225</sup> and that "bringing China on board was critical to being able to change the entire paradigm, and with that change other countries began to come aboard."<sup>226</sup> Senior Advisor Breese argued that the U.S.-China joint commitments represented "the seeds of how the Paris agreement itself actually came together"<sup>227</sup> and the National Security Council Senior Director for Energy and Climate Change Paul Bodnar stated that the "landmark U.S.-China joint announcement (...) marked a new era in climate diplomacy."<sup>228</sup>

Although the examples above indicate that the Obama administration claimed credit for the successful result of the Paris negotiations, it also argued that the final success was possible only thanks to multilateral cooperation, thus admitting that the United States is not powerful enough to face climate change alone. As argued by Obama, "with our historic joint announcement with China last year, we showed it was possible to bridge the old divides

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<sup>223</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing by Press Secretary Josh Earnest, Deputy NSA for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes, Senior Advisor Brian Deese and Deputy NSA for International Economics Wally Adeyemo,“ August 29, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-press-secretary-josh-earnest-deputy-nsa-for-strategic-communications-ben>.

<sup>224</sup> John Kerry, „Exit Memo: Department of State,“ *the White House*, January 5, 2017, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/administration/cabinet/exit-memos/department-state>.

<sup>225</sup> John Kerry, „U.S. and China Joining the Paris Agreement,“ transcript of statement delivered in Hangzhou, China, September 3, 2016, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/09/261567.htm>.

<sup>226</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks at Georgetown University,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, September 16, 2016, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/09/262025.htm>.

<sup>227</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing by Press Secretary Josh Earnest, Deputy NSA for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes, Senior Advisor Brian Deese and Deputy NSA for International Economics Wally Adeyemo,“ August 29, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-press-secretary-josh-earnest-deputy-nsa-for-strategic-communications-ben>.

<sup>228</sup> The White House, „Press Call Briefing on the Paris Climate Change Summit,“ November 24, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/24/press-call-briefing-paris-climate-change-summit>.

between developed and developing nations that had stymied global progress for so long. (...) And that was the foundation for success in Paris. Because no nation, not even one as powerful as ours, can solve this challenge alone.”<sup>229</sup> The administration favored multilateralism with American leadership, arguing that “our role is central, but on large international issues like this, it’s not going to be sufficient - at least not if we want it to take, if we want it to sustain itself. We’ve got to have partners. And that’s the kind of leadership that we should aspire to.”<sup>230</sup> President justified its claimed position of a leader by the narrative of leadership by example. As Obama argued, the United States was “leading by example—our levels of carbon pollution remain at historic lows. We must continue demonstrating that a country can simultaneously strive for a cleaner environment and a stronger economy,”<sup>231</sup> thus suggesting that the United States had the right to lead on climate change mitigation thanks to its climate achievements.

Similar comments promoting American leadership as crucial for the international environmental regime were coming from the Democratic part of Congress. For example, Senator Barbara Boxer (CA) argued that “[t]he U.S. has always been a leader. We don’t sit back and let other countries lead the way,”<sup>232</sup> and Representative Suzanne Bonamici (OR) stated that the American commitment “to a cleaner future is what allows the United States to lead by example and galvanize the international community to take meaningful steps to address the issue of carbon emissions and climate change.”<sup>233</sup>

One narrative, that was often used in relation to U.S. leadership, was the narrative of **moral duty**, arguing that it is the United States’ obligation to lead on the climate change agenda, given its power, size, and its share of global emissions. For example, Secretary of State Kerry argued the United States has “a moral responsibility to protect the future of our nation and our world. That is our charge. That is our duty,”<sup>234</sup> and warned that if the world failed to adopt the

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<sup>229</sup> Barack Obama, „Statement by the President on the Paris Climate Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in the White House, Washington, DC, December 12, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/12/statement-president-paris-climate-agreement>.

<sup>230</sup> The White House, „Press Conference by President Obama,“ December 1, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/01/press-conference-president-obama>.

<sup>231</sup> Proclamation no. 9511, 81 Fed. Reg. 69377 (September 30, 2016), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/10/06/2016-24367/national-energy-action-month-2016>.

<sup>232</sup> *Road to Paris: Examining the President’s International Climate Agenda and Implications for Domestic Environmental Policy*, Hearing Before the Committee on Environment and Public Works, 114th Cong. 4 (2015) (statement of Sen. Barbara Boxer), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114shrg97557/pdf/CHRG-114shrg97557.pdf>.

<sup>233</sup> *The Administration’s Empty Promises for the International Climate Treaty*, Hearing Before the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, 114th Cong. 11 (2015) (statement of Rep. Suzanne Bonamici), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114hhr97769/pdf/CHRG-114hhr97769.pdf>.

<sup>234</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks on Climate Change and National Security,“ transcript of speech delivered at the Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, November 10, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/11/249393.htm>.

Paris Agreement, it would mean “a collective moral failure of historic consequence.”<sup>235</sup> Obama repeatedly explained his conviction that it is the United States’ responsibility to take action on climate change and argued that “because we’re the largest country, because we have the most powerful military, we should welcome the fact that we’re going to do more and oftentimes we’re going to do it first.”<sup>236</sup> By employing the moral argumentation of what is the *right* thing to do, the administration attempted to justify the U.S. involvement in the Paris Agreement.

A similar argument of the moral responsibility of the United States to act and lead on climate change agenda was also promoted by Democratic congressmen, supporting the administration’s policy on the Congress floor. For example, Representative Ruben Gallego (AZ) argued that it is the U.S. obligation to lead on Paris Agreement, saying: “We can and must lead into this new energy future. Our innovations and our leadership are going to fuel a cleaner and safer environment and economy, and our policies must reflect these realities.”<sup>237</sup> Senator Jeanne Shaheen (NH) argued that “[a]s one of the world’s largest emitters of carbon emissions, we have a responsibility to the world on climate change,”<sup>238</sup> supported by the statement of Senator Tom Udall (NM), that “[i]t is an opportunity and an obligation and one that history will show was the right thing to do.”<sup>239</sup> The Democratic rhetoric of moral responsibility presents another way that the administration and aligned Democrats used to justify the U.S. involvement in the Paris Agreement and to gain support for its agenda.

### 3.2.2 The Trump Term: America Does Not Need the Paris Agreement to Be a Leader

The Trump administration also argued that it wanted to continue the tradition of U.S. leadership on environmental policies, but it refused to do so under the Paris Agreement. Trump was repeatedly convincing his audiences that he wants to protect the environment and will keep the United States on the track to a cleaner future but argued that the agreement would not allow America to do so.

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<sup>235</sup> John Kerry, „New York Times Energy for Tomorrow Event,“ transcript of interview delivered Paris, France, December 9, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250499.htm>.

<sup>236</sup> The White House, „Press Conference by President Obama,“ December 1, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/01/press-conference-president-obama>.

<sup>237</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. H9085 (December 9, 2015) (statement of Rep. Ruben Gallego), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-09/CREC-2015-12-09-pt1-PgH9085-2>.

<sup>238</sup> 162 Cong. Rec. S2488 (April 27, 2016) (statement of Sen. Jeanne Shaheen), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2016-04-27/CREC-2016-04-27-pt1-PgS2488>.

<sup>239</sup> *2015 Paris International Climate Negotiations: Examining the Economic and Environmental Impacts, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Multilateral International Development, Multilateral Institution, and International Economic, Energy, and Environmental Policy of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, 114th Cong. 4 (2015) (statement of Sen. Tom Udall), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114shrg35994/pdf/CHRG-114shrg35994.pdf>.

However, Trump's rhetoric of leadership on environmental protection was much more limited than Obama's, because he centered the narrative that he seeks to protect the environment, on the notion of having clean air and clean water for Americans. For example, he stated: "I want crystal clean water. I want the cleanest air on the planet, which, by the way, now we have. (...) That doesn't mean that we can't compete or we're not allowed to compete with other nations that aren't doing what we're doing,"<sup>240</sup> thus arguing that the Paris Agreement would not allow the United States to grow economically while protecting the environment too. As argued by Trump in defense of U.S. withdrawal, the Paris Agreement failed "to live up to our environmental ideals," adding that "[a]s someone who cares deeply about the environment, which I do, I cannot in good conscience support a deal that punishes the United States."<sup>241</sup> Thus, Trump repeatedly assured his audiences that he wants the United States to stay a leader in a clean environment, while "keeping our industry, not closing it because of the ridiculous parrot, Paris Climate Accord."<sup>242</sup> For Trump, staying in Paris would mean a zero-sum game.

However, in the administration's view, the U.S. leadership was not approached the same as in the case of the Obama administration, because Trump and his administrators accentuated the U.S. leadership on innovations and export of clean technologies, thus pursuing the economic benefit of the technological export. EPA administrator Pruitt argued that the United States needs to "export clean coal technology. We need to export the technology in natural gas to those around the globe -- India and China -- and help them learn from us on what we've done to achieve good outcomes. We've led with action, not words,"<sup>243</sup> thus criticizing the previous administration for failing to transform its promises into reality. The administration tried to signal to both Americans and foreign partners, that withdrawal from Paris does not mean U.S. disengagement and that the United States did not need the Paris Agreement to lead the world

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<sup>240</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks in a Briefing on Hurricane Michael Response Efforts and an Exchange with Reporters in Macon, Georgia,“ transcript of statements delivered on October 15, 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-briefing-hurricane-michael-response-efforts-and-exchange-with-reporters-macon>.

<sup>241</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks Announcing United States Withdrawal from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, June 1, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-united-states-withdrawal-from-the-united-nations-framework-convention>.

<sup>242</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at a „Merry Christmas“ Rally in Battle Creek, Michigan,“ transcript of speech delivered on December 18, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-merry-christmas-rally-battle-creek-michigan>.

<sup>243</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer and Administrator of Environmental Protection Agency Scott Pruitt,“ June 2, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-press-secretary-sean-spicer-and-administrator-the-environmental-protection>.

on emissions lowering. As Secretary of Energy Perry argued, “we've done this through innovation and technology, not by signing agreements.”<sup>244</sup>

Although Trump was criticized for harming the U.S. credibility, the administration believed the opposite, as argued by the U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Nikki Haley, who commented that by withdrawing the United States reasserted its strong voice in the UN and “[p]eople know what the United States is for, they know what we're against, and they see us leading across the board. And so I think the international community knows we're back.”<sup>245</sup> The administration was sure that the withdrawal won't hurt the U.S. standing in future negotiations and that it will not shatter its position as a leader in environmental improvement.<sup>246</sup> Such an opinion was also supported by Republican congressmen. For example, Senator Inhofe (OK) argued that “even if we pull out of the agreement, we will still have a seat at the table. (...) [L]et's keep in mind that the seat at the table was established way back in 1992,” pointing out to the fact that the United States is a party to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of 1992, thus even when the United States withdraws from the Paris Agreement, it will still remain a party to UNFCCC and will have the power to influence future climate negotiations.<sup>247</sup>

However, the Democratic opposition did not share the opinion. Democratic congressmen argued that by withdrawing from the agreement, the United States “abdicates U.S. leadership on global climate action—an issue where America has always been a leader—and breaks our promise to all nations who joined the historic agreement”, thus harming its credibility.<sup>248</sup> Additionally, it was argued that by the withdrawal the United States risks a possibility of the world moving without America because if the United States “steps aside from this responsibility, others will step into our place—starting with China—leading the rest of the world outside of the United States into new technology innovations to deal with climate

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<sup>244</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing of Secretary of Energy Rick Perry and Principal Deputy Press Secretary Sarah Sanders,” June 27, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-secretary-energy-rick-perry-and-principal-deputy-press-secretary-sarah>.

<sup>245</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Remarks During a Cabinet Meeting,” transcript of a meeting in Washington, DC, June 12, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-during-cabinet-meeting>.

<sup>246</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, „Interview with E.J. and Ellen of KMBZ Kansas City's Morning News,” *U.S. Department of State*, March 18, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/interview-with-e-j-and-ellen-of-kmbz-kansas-citys-morning-news/index.html>.

<sup>247</sup> 163 Cong. Rec. S3196 (May 25, 2017) (statement of Sen. James Inhofe), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2017-05-25/CREC-2017-05-25-pt1-PgS3196-2>.

<sup>248</sup> *We'll Always Have Paris: Filling the Leadership Void Caused by Federal Inaction on Climate Change, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change of the Committee on Energy and Commerce*, 116th Cong. 8 (2019) (statement of Rep. Frank Pallone), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-116hhrg36534/pdf/CHRG-116hhrg36534.pdf>.

change”, thus America also loses the economic opportunity of green technologies.<sup>249</sup> Democratic congressmen argued, that by withdrawal the United States gave up its leadership, while countries like China or India will take the lead, writing international rules of emissions reduction while leaving America to “sit and watch from the sidelines.”<sup>250</sup> In general, Democrats believed that by withdrawal, the United States was ceding its leadership to other countries. As Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (RI) evaluated it, “this is not leadership; this is its corrupted opposite. (...) Trump and his pals haven’t drained the swamp; they have jumped right in with the biggest swamp monsters of all.”<sup>251</sup>

### 3.2.3 Comparison

As the analysis demonstrates, both administrations believed in U.S. leadership on environmental policies and both were convinced they employed their best tools to continue to lead the world. However, for the Obama administration, the leadership was implemented *through* the Paris Agreement, while Trump argued, that the agreement limited U.S. powers and stripped the nation of its abilities to lead. For the Trump administration, the continuing U.S. leadership could be accomplished *without* the agreement too. Whereas the Obama administration presented the U.S. leadership as an opportunity how to persuade other to follow the U.S. example, the Trump administration framed the importance of U.S. leadership by economic argumentation of the export of green technologies. Nevertheless, both administrations presented U.S. leadership on the issue of climate change as an opportunity to advance U.S. interests.

This section of analysis proves how important the question of U.S. leadership was for both administrations and although by different means, both administrations expressed their wish to keep the U.S. leading position into the future. Leadership presents opportunities for the United States to impose its influence on others in accordance with American interests, thus maintaining the power advantage that the United States is used to. Thus, the analysis suggests that regardless of party affiliation or opinion on the efficiency of the international environmental regime, U.S. presidents recognize U.S. leadership on the issue of climate change as crucial for the maintenance of a generally strong U.S. position in international politics. Thus, although having different opinions on climate change and the authority of the

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<sup>249</sup> 164 Cong. Rec. S6787 (October 11, 2018) (statement of Sen. Richard J. Durbin), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2018-10-11/CREC-2018-10-11-pt1-PgS6787>.

<sup>250</sup> 164 Cong. Rec. S1656 (March 13, 2018) (statement of Sen. Charles Schumer), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2018-03-13/CREC-2018-03-13-pt1-PgS1656-2>.

<sup>251</sup> 164 Cong. Rec. S13 (January 3, 2018) (statement of Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2018-01-03-v164/CREC-2018-01-03-pt1-PgS13>.



international environmental regime, both Obama and Trump shared the opinion of the importance of U.S. leadership.

### 3.3 American Exceptionalism

The ideology of American exceptionalism represents another narrative that appeared during both administrations regarding the rhetoric of the Paris Agreement. Although not one of the key narratives, the notion of U.S. exceptionalism or subtle references to it appeared in both terms.

#### 3.3.1 The Obama Term: Exceptional Leadership versus Anti-Exceptionalism

The Obama administration used a very nuanced language of the exceptional position of the United States to lead on climate change battle, mixed up with statements questioning the ideology of U.S. exceptionalism.

When using exceptional language, Obama focused on the position of the United States in the international climate politics negotiations and its power to lead. For example, he argued that “American strength and American exceptionalism is not just a matter of us bombing somebody. More often, it’s a matter of us convening, setting the agenda, pointing other nations in a direction that’s good for everybody and good for U.S. interests, engaging in painstaking diplomacy, leading by example.”<sup>252</sup> Such rhetoric suggests, that Obama was convinced that the United States had due to its size and diplomatic history a position of a leader to fight climate change and to “lead by example”. In his words, thanks to its “history of environmental progress”, the United States possessed a unique position to export the knowledge to the world.<sup>253</sup>

Secretary of State Kerry saw the United States’ exceptional position to lead in its innovative capacity when he argued that the United States is a “technologically innovative entrepreneurially gifted country, and we have the freest flow of capital of anyplace in the world. And I am convinced that the combination of American ingenuity and our allocation of capital are going to combine to help America to be able to lead the world to a better economy.”<sup>254</sup> He presented the United States as “the world’s greatest innovator”, thus entitled to lead on “enormous breakthroughs in battery storage, new frontiers of renewable energy” to

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<sup>252</sup> The White House, „Press Conference by the President,“ December 18, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/18/press-conference-president-121815>.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> John Kerry, „New York Times Energy for Tomorrow Event,“ transcript of interview delivered Paris, France, December 9, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250499.htm>.

“send a clear message to the rest of the world that we are committed to solving this problem.”<sup>255</sup>

Obama’s rhetoric referred to America’s mission and moral duty to fight climate change, because “there’s nobody to fill the void” if the United States fails to be “on the side of what’s right”. Obama presented the United States’ exceptional position to lead on the fight against climate change as a “burden that we should carry proudly” because it’s “not only a burden, but it’s also an extraordinary privilege.”<sup>256</sup> Such rhetoric was also coming from Democratic congressmen, given the example of Senator Schatz (HI) who argued that the United States remains “the indispensable Nation”, and that with the Paris Agreement, it “finally reasserted ourselves and reclaimed the moral high ground and the political high ground that put us in a position to stitch together an international agreement.”<sup>257</sup> Thus, such rhetoric represents a belief that the United States has a unique moral authority to lead the world thanks to its unique political qualities.

Although referring to its exceptional position to lead by example, in other instances Obama refused the explicit ideology of the U.S. exceptionalism that America is somehow unique and thus should be treated as such. For example, when speaking of clean innovation, he said: “the thing about human ingenuity -- I was going to say American ingenuity, but there are other smart folks around too, don’t want to be too parochial about this -- the thing about human ingenuity is, is that it responds when it gets a strong signal of what needs to be done,”<sup>258</sup> arguing that other country’s ingenuity is just as appreciated as the American. He also rejected the idea, that the United States’s model of governance is the best, arguing: “I do not think that America can -- or should -- impose our system of government on other countries,”<sup>259</sup> and denied the narrative of unique US history when he argued that “my belief that governments serve the individual, and not the other way around, is shaped by America’s story. Our nation began with a promise of freedom that applied only to the few. But because of our democratic Constitution, because of our Bill of Rights, because of our ideals, ordinary

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<sup>255</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks on Climate Change and National Security,“ transcript of speech delivered at the Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, November 10, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/11/249393.htm>.

<sup>256</sup> Barack Obama, “The President’s News Conference in Lima, Peru,” transcript of speech delivered on November 20, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-lima-peru>.

<sup>257</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8576 (December 10, 2015) (statement of Sen. Brian Schatz), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-10/CREC-2015-12-10-pt1-PgS8576-2>.

<sup>258</sup> The White House, „Press Conference by President Obama,“ December 1, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/01/press-conference-president-obama>.

<sup>259</sup> Barack Obama, “The President’s News Conference in Lima, Peru,” transcript of speech delivered on November 20, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-lima-peru>.

people were able to organize, and march, and protest. (...) So, yes, my views are shaped by the specific experiences of America, but I do not think this story is unique to America.”<sup>260</sup>

Thus, Obama’s rhetoric was a well-played mixture of a narrative of the U.S.’s exceptional position to lead by example on climate change mitigation, and an anti-exceptional rhetoric appreciating others’ differences and contributions. By such a narrative, Obama could justify the U.S.’s leading position in Paris negotiations, while avoiding exaggerated arrogance.

### 3.3.2 The Trump Term: Asking for Exceptions

The rhetorical style of American exceptionalism changed with the Trump administration, which expressed a conviction, that the United States is powerful enough to **ask for exceptions** regarding the Paris Agreement.

In his speech announcing the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement, Trump stated that the administration was “willing to immediately work with Democratic leaders to either negotiate our way back into Paris, under the terms that are fair to the United States and its workers, or to negotiate a new deal that protects our country and its taxpayers”, thus signaling that the United States was willing to reenter the agreement only on exceptional terms serving American interests. He added that by withdrawal, the United States reasserted its sovereignty and protected the American Constitution that “is unique among all the nations of the world.”<sup>261</sup> Energy Secretary Richard Perry praised Trump’s decision to withdraw, arguing that “the future of America is brighter because we have a President who believes in American exceptionalism, American competition, and making America great again.”<sup>262</sup>

The rhetoric of Trump and his administration suggests that they felt very confident that the withdrawal would not harm U.S. credibility, thus it should not be a problem to renegotiate a deal according to American terms. As Trump argued, “I could get back in anytime I wanted to at a much better deal. But I'm not particularly anxious.”<sup>263</sup> The administration’s rhetoric was signaling to the world, that the United States is very confident to renegotiate a ‘better’, more ‘fair’ deal and that the leaders should be ready for it. As expressed by Secretary of State

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks Announcing United States Withdrawal from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, June 1, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-united-states-withdrawal-from-the-united-nations-framework-convention>.

<sup>262</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing of Secretary of Energy Rick Perry and Principal Deputy Press Secretary Sarah Sanders,“ June 27, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-secretary-energy-rick-perry-and-principal-deputy-press-secretary-sarah>.

<sup>263</sup> Donald Trump, „Interview with Mike Gallagher of the Salem Radio Network,“ transcript of interview delivered on October 17, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/interview-with-mike-gallagher-the-salem-radio-network>.

Tillerson, the administration was “willing to work with partners in the Paris climate accord if we can construct a set of terms that we believe is fair and balanced for the American people,”<sup>264</sup> and the Department of State spokesperson Heather Neuert confirmed Trump’s intention to stay out of the agreement “unless he’s able to identify terms of engagement that he feels are more favorable to American businesses, workers, and taxpayers.”<sup>265</sup> As reinforced also by Trump’s second Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the United States was rejecting multilateral organizations that were “mandated on what the United States does or that infringes on the American people,”<sup>266</sup> stating that the United States claimed the right to tell the international climate regime how it will treat the United States, not the other way around. Thus, the administration acted very confident about asking for exceptions regarding the Paris Agreement. In essence, some statements expressed a belief that foreign leaders *should* be willing to renegotiate the deal with the United States. For example, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt argued that “[a]fter all, we’re the United States, and we are leading with respect to CO2 reduction. We have made tremendous progress. If nations around the globe want to see -- to learn from us on what we’re doing to reduce our CO2 footprint, we’re going to share that with them,” saying that “it’s up to them” – the other parties of the international climate regime – to approach the United States.<sup>267</sup>

Later in his term, Trump inveighed against the presidential candidate Joe Biden, arguing that Democrats “want to destroy our country. These people are sick. They are sick. And you better get used to hearing it, because they have some real problems. They don’t love our country in any way, shape, or form. They don’t love our country. There’s no respect for the American way of life. There is no way of life ever in history that’s been like the great American way of life,” thus stating that Democrats don’t respect the ideology of American exceptionalism, and with their policy of reentering the Paris Agreement, they will destroy the uniquely American way of life.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Rex Tillerson, „Transcript: US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson ‚Face the Nation‘,“ interview by John Dickerson, *CBS News*, September 17, 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/transcript-u-s-secretary-of-state-rex-tillerson-on-face-the-nation-sept-17-2017/>.

<sup>265</sup> U.S. Department of State, „Department Press Briefing,“ transcript of press conference with Heather Neuert, delivered in Washington, DC, November 7, 2017, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/briefings/departments-press-briefing-november-7-2017/index.html>.

<sup>266</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, „Press Briefing of the President’s Agenda at the UN General Assembly,“ transcript of speech delivered in New York City, September 24, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/press-briefing-on-the-presidents-agenda-at-the-un-general-assembly/index.html>.

<sup>267</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer and Administrator of Environmental Protection Agency Scott Pruitt,“ June 2, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-press-secretary-sean-spicer-and-administrator-the-environmental-protection>.

<sup>268</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks On Energy Production in Midland, Texas,“ transcript of speech delivered in Texas, July 29, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-energy-production-midland-texas>.

In conclusion, Trump's rhetoric of U.S. exceptionalism promoted the idea that American exceptionalism would be threatened by the Paris Agreement, and referred to the unique position the United States has in the international climate regime, thus claiming its right to ask for exceptions, creating a double standard agreement.

### 3.3.3 Comparison

In comparison, both administrations employed some exceptionalist rhetoric, but their conception of what U.S. exceptionalism represents was different, thus proving that there is not just one ideology of U.S. exceptionalism present in the United States.

Whereas the Obama administration employed the rhetoric of the exceptional position of the United States to lead by example on environmental policies and the Paris Agreement in particular, the Trump administration believed in the American unique position to ask for exceptions regarding the agreement, thus applying the logic of the double standard. Although from different points of view, both administrations believed that the United States was somehow unique, thus should have a respected high authority in international negotiations.

This section proves, that regardless of party affiliation, the ideology of American exceptionalism is present in U.S. politics, having an impact on international environmental politics too. Although not one of the major narratives regarding the Paris Agreement, the ideology of exceptionalism impacted the rhetorical strategy of both administrations.

## 3.4 Multilateralism

Different attitudes toward international cooperation, the international environmental regime, and the framework of common but differentiated responsibilities constructed the metanarrative of multilateralism, referring to the administration's rhetoric regarding the multilateral character of the Paris Agreement, and its opportunities or threats.

### 3.4.1 The Obama Administration Term: Cooperation is Needed to Tackle Climate Change Successfully

One of the narratives used by the Obama administration in order to gain broader support for the Paris Agreement was the argument that multilateral cooperation is needed to successfully act on climate change, thus the United States should join the agreement.

The **narrative of cooperation** promoted the idea, that the United States cannot face the challenge of climate change alone. As described by Secretary of State Kerry, “[w]e can’t address this problem all by ourselves. (...) We can only deal with this with a global

solution,”<sup>269</sup> stressing that climate change “affects every human, in every country, on our planet. And if any challenge requires global cooperation and effective diplomacy, this is it.”<sup>270</sup> Obama argued in favor of cooperation, arguing that “no nation, not even one as powerful as ours, can solve this challenge alone,”<sup>271</sup> sending the message that the United States is willing to cooperate multilaterally under the Paris Agreement (as the analysis already mentioned in the section 2.2.2.1 on U.S leadership). Obama stressed the importance of the agreement on the creation “of a strong, enduring framework to set the world on a course to low-carbon future,”<sup>272</sup> thus indicating that the success of the agreement in the future depends on global cooperation. The administration was also highlighting the benefits of the cooperation. As Secretary of State Kerry explained on the example of legally-binding transparency commitment, it “will shed light on what every country is doing to keep its commitments. And it helps everybody to share experience, to share technologies, to share best practices.”<sup>273</sup>

While stressing global cooperation, the administration did not forget to mention that it was the United States who got the international cooperation on climate protection moving, when it signed the joint statements with China on cooperation to actively challenge climate change. As Senior Advisor Brian Deese described it, “[t]his partnership – and deepened cooperation with leaders from major economies – was not just helpful to getting the Paris Agreement over the finish line. Rather, it is the beginning of a new global coalition on climate change. And that is truly historic.”<sup>274</sup> The administration was reminding its credits because, as Obama argued, the United States “lead by example with our historic joint announcement with China two years ago (...) And that achievement encouraged dozens of other countries to set more ambitious climate targets of their own. And that, in turn, paved the way for our success in Paris.”<sup>275</sup> Thus, the administration combined the rhetoric of

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<sup>269</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks on Climate Change and National Security,“ transcript of speech delivered at the Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, November 10, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/11/249393.htm>.

<sup>270</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks on COP21 and Action Beyond Paris,“ transcript of speech delivered in Le Bourget, Paris, France, December 9, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250502.htm>.

<sup>271</sup> Barack Obama, „Statement by the President on the Paris Climate Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in the White House, Washington, DC, December 12, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/12/statement-president-paris-climate-agreement>.

<sup>272</sup> Tanya Somanader, „President Obama: The United States Formally Enters the Paris Agreement,“ The White House, September 3, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/09/03/president-obama-united-states-formally-enters-paris-agreement>.

<sup>273</sup> John Kerry, „Press Availability,“ transcript of remarks delivered in Paris, France, December 12, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250590.htm>.

<sup>274</sup> Brian Deese, „The Paris Agreement and Beyond,“ The White House, April 15, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/04/15/remarks-senior-advisor-brian-deese-prepared-delivery>.

<sup>275</sup> The White House, „Remarks by the President on the Paris Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in Rose Garden, the White House, Washington, DC, October 5, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/10/05/remarks-president-paris-agreement>.

cooperation with the U.S. leadership, saying that the world must cooperate, and that the United States claims the right to lead the cooperation.

Additionally, the administration stressed the importance the Paris Agreement would have on international cooperation, creating “a new level of partnership: government leaders from every region, working constructively alongside the private sector and civil society to address an enormous challenge that no one could solve alone.”<sup>276</sup> When the agreement was adopted, climate envoy Todd Stern called it “a pivot to sustainable multilateralism, in which the Parties to the UNFCCC turn a corner toward working constructively together rather than in two opposing camps.”<sup>277</sup>

Obama’s rhetoric in favor of multilateralism also promoted the Paris **concept of common, but differentiated responsibilities**, and help to the developing states. As Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz explained, the United States understood “that different countries are on different development paths and different stages of development and that’s the differentiation concept that we need.”<sup>278</sup> Climate envoy Todd Stern argued that the United States recognized that “there are more advanced developing countries that have already started to contribute and we think that’s a good thing and they would be encouraged to do so.”<sup>279</sup> Secretary Kerry argued that the United States is ready to help the developing countries because “[i]t’s only fair to have higher expectations for developed countries, and a sliding scale of ambition and approaches for everyone else. We recognize that.”<sup>280</sup>

One of the supporting arguments in favor of help to the developing countries was the notion that not every state was impacted by climate change the same. For example, Obama argued that the United States acknowledged “the truth that many nations have contributed little to climate change but will be the first to feel its most destructive effects,”<sup>281</sup> and explained that the Paris Agreement is “not just serving the interests of the most powerful, but is serving the

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<sup>276</sup> John Kerry, „Paris climate conference is a rare opportunity – grab it,“ *Financial Times*, October 29, 2015, <https://www.ft.com/content/54c4ac32-7da8-11e5-98fb-5a6d4728f74e>.

<sup>277</sup> Todd D. Stern, „Remarks at Climate Week,“ transcript of speech delivered in New York City, NY, September 28, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/e/oes/rls/remarks/247418.htm>.

<sup>278</sup> Marc Perelman, „US Secretary of Energy optimistic on deal at Paris climate conference,“ *The Interview*, December 7, 2015, <https://www.france24.com/en/20151207-interview-ernest-moniz-secretary-energy-cop21-climate-conference-paris-deal>.

<sup>279</sup> U.S. Department of State, „COP21 Press Availability with Special Envoy Todd Stern,“ December 4, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/s/climate/releases/2015/250363.htm>.

<sup>280</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks on COP21 and Action Beyond Paris,“ transcript of speech delivered in Le Bourget, Paris, France, December 9, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250502.htm>.

<sup>281</sup> Barack Obama, „Remarks Announcing the Mission Innovation Initiative in Le Bourget, France,“ transcript of speech delivered in Le Bourget, France, November 30, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-the-mission-innovation-initiative-le-bourget-france>.

interests of the most vulnerable as well.”<sup>282</sup> Obama also repeatedly stated, that the United States acknowledged the right of the developing states to grow economically and develop, promising to “help developing countries deal with climate change and ensuring that they do not feel they have to choose between uplifting their people economically and preserving the planet.”<sup>283</sup>

The Obama administration promoted the transfer of financial aid and clean technologies to the developing states because “[d]eveloping nations don’t have the same means or capacity as other countries, or access to the same technologies. That’s why the wealthier among us need to do our part to help to mobilize funding, to build capacity, to help make low-cost technology available.”<sup>284</sup> Importantly, as climate envoy Todd Stern pointed out, the transfer of technologies and financial aid were not perceived as transfer of benefits. He argued that assistance to developing states was “part of a long bipartisan tradition that foreign assistance is provided to help prevent instability and protect national security and expand market access”, arguing that the Paris Agreement would do “all of those things, as well as also shoring up food security and health and poverty reduction and the like.” Thus, the administration saw help to developing states as serving “the U.S.’s interests diplomatically and economically as well.”<sup>285</sup>

However, the rhetoric of help to developing states was not well received by the Republican congressmen, who argued that the Paris Agreement imposed a double standard on its participants at the U.S. disadvantage, and did not approve of the idea of extensive financial help to developing states in fear that it might transfer benefits at expense of the United States. Senator Inhofe (OK) argued that in the agreement, the “responsibility is unequally divided between the developed and the developing world”<sup>286</sup> and criticized that “[t]he ‘agreement’ calls for different standards of transparency between developed and developing countries and even expects that developed countries will set economy wide emission reduction targets while

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<sup>282</sup> Barack Obama, „Remarks during a Meeting with Leaders of Small Island Nations in Issy-les-Moulineaux, France,“ transcript of speech delivered at the OECD Development Center in Issy-les-Moulineaux, France, December 1, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-during-meeting-with-leaders-small-island-nations-issy-les-moulineaux-france>.

<sup>283</sup> Barack Obama, „Remarks at the Department of State’s Global Chiefs of Mission Conference,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, March 14, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-department-states-global-chiefs-mission-conference>.

<sup>284</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks on COP21 and Action Beyond Paris,“ transcript of speech delivered in Le Bourget, Paris, France, December 9, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250502.htm>.

<sup>285</sup> *2015 Paris International Climate Negotiations: Examining the Economic and Environmental Impacts, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Multilateral International Development, Multilateral Institutions, and International Economic, Energy, and Environmental Policy of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, 114th Cong. 4 (2015) (statement of Climate Envoy Todd Stern), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114shrg35994/pdf/CHRG-114shrg35994.pdf>.

<sup>286</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8715 (December 16, 2015) (statement of Sen. James Inhofe), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-16/CREC-2015-12-16-pt1-PgS8715-2>.



developing countries like China and India can play it by ear.”<sup>287</sup> Other feared that the agreement would force the United States “to do a lot, costing job growth here” while “other countries will do almost nothing.”<sup>288</sup>

Despite the Republican opposition, the Obama administration’s rhetoric of multilateralism promoted the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities in faith that it was in America’s interest too, believing that help to developing states has always been part of international cooperation. Besides, the administration believed that climate change could be effectively challenged only by global cooperation, and it acknowledged that even in cooperation with the second-largest emitter, China, it did not have a chance to solve the issue. Thus, the Obama administration recognized multilateral cooperation as serving the American interest to have a cleaner future.

### 3.4.2 The Trump Administration Term: Reluctance to Paris Multilateralism

In contrast to the Obama administration, the Trump administration hardly ever talked about the importance of international cooperation directly and rather focused on other narratives, such as economic impacts, that played a key role in Trump’s rhetoric. When speaking of cooperation under the Paris Agreement, Trump or his administrators pronounced their *wish* to renegotiate the agreement on new terms, that would better serve American interests.

In Trump’s view, the multilateral character of the international environmental regime represented by the Paris Agreement posed a **threat to U.S. sovereignty**. As he argued in the statement announcing his attempt to withdraw the United States from the agreement, “[f]oreign leaders in Europe, Asia, and across the world should not have more to say with respect to the U.S. economy than our own citizens and their elected representatives. Thus, our withdrawal from the agreement represents a reassertion of America's sovereignty.”<sup>289</sup> Trump criticized that the agreement would “prevent the United States from conducting its own domestic economic affairs” and that by withdrawal, he protects Americans “from future intrusions on the United States sovereignty and massive future legal liability.”<sup>290</sup> In line with

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<sup>287</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, „Inhofe Statement on Final COP 21 Deal,“ December 12, 2015, <https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2015/12/inhofe-statement-on-final-cop21-climate-deal>.

<sup>288</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8230 (December 1, 2015) (statement of Sen. Roger Wicker), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-01/CREC-2015-12-01-pt1-PgS8230>.

<sup>289</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks Announcing United States Withdrawal from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, June 1, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-united-states-withdrawal-from-the-united-nations-framework-convention>.

<sup>290</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks Announcing United States Withdrawal from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, June 1, 2017,

Trump's arguments, EPA administrator Scott Pruitt called the U.S. withdrawal "a historic restoration of American economic independence—one that will benefit the working class, the working poor, and working people of all stripes."<sup>291</sup>

Trump's rhetoric of protection of the U.S. "sovereignty and freedom"<sup>292</sup> indicates the administration's reservations to multilateralism, as he criticized the framework of common but differentiated responsibilities, arguing that the Paris Agreement would cause a transfer of benefits to developing countries and it would allow "foreign bureaucrats plan our economy or tell Americans how to run their country."<sup>293</sup> In Trump's interpretation, the international environmental regime of the Paris Agreement was imposing too many regulations and restrictions on the United States, thus threatening their sovereignty, so he promised to his audiences that his administration will "never have outside forces telling us what to do and how to do it, believe me. That would have been a huge anchor on our country,"<sup>294</sup> thus theoretically rejecting any multilateral international treaty that would require some level of U.S. cooperation or compromise. For Trump, the only acceptable version of an international deal was an agreement drafted according to the U.S. wishes and serving American interests.

Although the rhetoric of protection of the U.S. sovereignty suggested Trump's reservations to multilateral agreements, the administration tried to signal to the world that it is still interested in some sort of cooperation. As Secretary of State Mike Pompeo explained, although the United States withdrew from the Paris Agreement, the United States was still "determined to obviously be involved in multilateral organizations where we see it, but not in the way that they're mandated on what the United States does or that infringes on the American people."<sup>295</sup> Not to harm its credibility abroad indefinitely, the analysis suggests that the administration was aware of the importance of international cooperation and the impact the withdrawal of the Paris Agreement could have on U.S. credibility, thus it tried to signal the continuing U.S. willingness to cooperate. The first Trump's Secretary of State Rex Tillerson believed that the withdrawal would not hamper future cooperation on climate change, arguing that "[t]here's no reason it would stop just because

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<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-united-states-withdrawal-from-the-united-nations-framework-convention>.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at the Faith and Freedom Coalition's Road to Majority Conference,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, June 8, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-faith-and-freedom-coalitions-road-majority-conference>.

<sup>293</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at a “Make America Great Again“ Rally in Cedar Rapids, Iowa,“ transcript of speech delivered on June 21, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-cedar-rapids-iowa>.

<sup>294</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks in Cincinnati, Ohio,“ transcript of speech delivered on June 7, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-cincinnati-ohio-6>.

<sup>295</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, „Press Briefing of the President's Agenda at the UN General Assembly,“ transcript of speech delivered in New York City, September 24, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/press-briefing-on-the-presidents-agenda-at-the-un-general-assembly/index.html>.

we withdrew from the Paris climate accord. So we do believe that engagement globally continues to be important on the issue of climate change, and we will be seeking ways to remain engaged,”<sup>296</sup> and his successor Mike Pompeo assured the international political community that the United States “will continue to work with our global partners to enhance resilience to the impacts of climate change and prepare for and respond to natural disasters. Just as we have in the past, the United States will continue to research, innovate, and grow our economy while reducing emissions and extending a helping hand to our friends and partners around the globe.”<sup>297</sup> The Trump administration’s rhetoric signaled that the United States was willing to cooperate on international environmental agreements into the future, but formed by American leadership. In the case of the Paris Agreement, Trump expressed his wish to reenter the agreement on terms that would be fair to Americans and would not infringe on their sovereignty.

The analysis of the rhetoric suggests that the Trump administration had reservations to the idea of multilateralism presented by the Paris Agreement. Trump and his administrators viewed the agreement as a threat to American sovereignty, because it was imposing the regulations of the international environmental system that limited the U.S. power to determine its own climate agenda.

### 3.4.3 Comparison

On the issue of multilateralism and sovereignty, the analysis suggests that the administrations’ approach differed based on partisan ideology, where Democratic President Obama did not comply with the theory that the United States is suspicious of multilateralism because of the common but differentiated responsibilities and because of the functioning of the international environmental regime that imposes regulations on participating states. On contrary, the Obama administration enhanced the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, offering its financial and technological support to the developing states.

In contrast, the Trump administration’s rhetoric of sovereignty and reluctance to multilateralism was influenced by the Republican ideology that is reserved to external regulations and proved as one of the turning points of why Trump decided to leave the agreement. Trump’s arguments suggest that his administration favored individual rights over

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<sup>296</sup> Rex W. Tillerson, „Press Availability with New Zealand Prime Minister Bill English,“ *U.S. Department of State*, June 6, 2017, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/press-availability-with-new-zealand-prime-minister-bill-english/index.html>.

<sup>297</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, „On the U.S. Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement,“ *U.S. Department of State*, November 4, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/on-the-u-s-withdrawal-from-the-paris-agreement/index.html>.

shared rights, and saw the framework of the common but differentiated responsibilities as a transfer of benefits at the U.S. expense.

### 3.5 Economy and the Rule of Neoliberal Ideology

The argumentation of transfer of benefits at the U.S. expense also laid the foundations of another metanarrative which covered the question of economic benefits versus losses of the U.S. participation in the Paris Agreement. The topic of the economic impacts of the Paris Agreement on the United States raised a lot of questions among the federal political elite, thus a large part of the discourse was influenced by it.

#### 3.5.1 The Obama Administration Term

##### *I. Narrative: The Paris Agreement Offers Huge Economic Opportunities*

The Obama administration promoted the goals of the Paris Agreement frequently through the economic rhetoric and the narrative of opportunities the agreement would bring to the U.S. economy and American workers.

One of the common narratives argued, that the agreement sent a strong message to the leaders in the world and that it presented a huge **economic opportunity** for the United States. Secretary of State Kerry argued that “[i]t will give confidence, above all, to business leaders, to the private sector, who are uncertain about our collective commitment and therefore in many places hesitant to invest notwithstanding all the investment I talked about, some sitting on the sidelines.”<sup>298</sup> Kerry called the agreement “the most extraordinary market opportunity in the history of humankind”<sup>299</sup> and predicted that the market “is going to explode if we get the right market signal coming out of Paris.”<sup>300</sup> Obama advertised that the agreement “has the potential to unleash investment and innovation in clean energy at a scale we have never seen before”<sup>301</sup> and argued that it is “not just an agreement to roll back the pollution that threatens our planet, but an agreement that helps our economies grow.”<sup>302</sup> Using this kind of economic rhetoric, the administration tried to emphasize the far-reaching positive impacts on the economy. For example, Senior Advisor Brian Deese stated that the argument of economic opportunities is “the most compelling rationale to promote this agenda” because it will

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<sup>298</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks on Climate Change and National Security,“ transcript of speech delivered at the Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, November 10, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/11/249393.htm>.

<sup>299</sup> John Kerry, „New York Times Energy for Tomorrow Event,“ transcript of interview delivered Paris, France, December 9, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250499.htm>.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Barack Obama, „Statement by the President on the Paris Climate Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in the White House, Washington, DC, December 12, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/12/statement-president-paris-climate-agreement>.

<sup>302</sup> The White House, „Press Conference by President Obama,“ December 1, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/01/press-conference-president-obama>.

create jobs “not just in directly supporting renewable energy deployment (...) but also from things like infrastructure to build transmission lines; in the oil and gas sector -- to repair the leaks in pipelines associated with reducing methane emissions. Jobs all across the country in different industries.”<sup>303</sup> By such an argument, Deese signaled that economic opportunities arising from the agreement were *the main* reason why the United States lobbied for the U.S. presence in the Paris Agreement, although it was never officially presented as such.

The administration repeatedly argued in favor of job creation, business and innovation opportunities, and economic gains, which signals how deeply was the administration influenced by the neoliberal ideology of economic growth. Members of the administration frequently highlighted that policies to mitigate climate change can at the same time produce economic growth and create new jobs. For example, Obama argued that “skeptics said these actions would kill jobs. Instead, we’ve seen the longest streak of private-sector job creation in our history,”<sup>304</sup> and pointed out that the United States “have broken the old arguments for inaction. We have proved that strong economic growth and a safer environment no longer have to conflict with one another; they can work in concert with one another,”<sup>305</sup> thus trying to gain broader support for the agreement among economy-oriented audiences.

The rhetoric of economic growth and economic opportunities was very vivid in almost every remark or speech that tried to explain the importance of the agreement. One line of the narrative stressed the long-term positive effects of the agreement. Secretary of State Kerry admitted that the Paris agenda was not easy to promote because “it seems difficult to rationalize investing in clean energy when your economy is already strained, when you got millions, tens of millions, hundreds of millions of poor people, and sources like coal and oil appear cheaper and they appear closer at hand, at least in the near term. But here’s the fact: The fact is that in the long term, carbon-intensive energy is one of the costliest investments any government could possibly make.”<sup>306</sup> Kerry argued that sustainable development presents a huge economic opportunity for the private sector and believed that the agreement was “a critical beginning to send an important message to the marketplace so that the private sector

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<sup>303</sup> The White House, „Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Josh Earnest and Senior Advisor to the President Brian Deese en route Ottawa, Canada,“ June 29, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/29/press-gaggle-press-secretary-josh-earnest-and-senior-advisor-president>.

<sup>304</sup> Barack Obama, „Statement by the President on the Paris Climate Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in the White House, Washington, DC, December 12, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/12/statement-president-paris-climate-agreement>.

<sup>305</sup> The White House, „Remarks by President Obama at the First Session of COP21,“ transcript of speech delivered in Le Bourget, France, November 30, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/30/remarks-president-obama-first-session-cop21>.

<sup>306</sup> John Kerry, „New York Times Energy for Tomorrow Event,“ transcript of interview delivered Paris, France, December 9, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250499.htm>.

will feel confident in investing.”<sup>307</sup> The narrative of economic opportunities strived to convince audiences that investment into clean energy will have a positive impact on the economy. Secretary of State Kerry called the clean energy market “the largest market ever conceived of by human beings.”<sup>308</sup> The narrative of economic opportunities also aimed to disprove doubts that the benefits of economic opportunities might shift to other countries than the United States. Administrators like Press Secretary Josh Earnest made sure to stress that the agreement is “going to be good for our economy back here at home. It’s going to be good for American workers. (...) [I]t actually creates some important economic opportunity for the United States and American workers back here at home”, assuring the domestic audience that the agreement has the potential “to create good, American, middle-class jobs.”<sup>309</sup> Although it was mainly Kerry, who nourished the economic rhetoric, the narrative of business opportunities and economic growth was employed by the whole administration, creating one of the most visible pillars of the administration’s rhetorical strategy.

Another economic narrative employed was comparing the costs of action on climate change versus the **costs of inaction**, arguing that without the Paris Agreement, costs to fix climate change-induced damages would be higher than investment into a cleaner future under the agreement. Climate Envoy Todd Stern once noted that the Paris Agreement is in the United States’ “economic interests because the costs of inaction, properly accounted for, will dwarf the costs of acting,” adding that “no one is better positioned than the United States to win big in a multi-trillion-dollar 21st century market for low carbon energy innovation.”<sup>310</sup> The same argument was brought up by Democratic congressmen who supported the agreement, arguing that addressing climate change will “mitigate unprecedented damage to our economy [and] spur growth and innovation,”<sup>311</sup> while the failure to act on climate change “will risk American economic prosperity and will disproportionately impact the poorest and most vulnerable communities across our Nation.”<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks at the Opening of the 2015 Our Ocean Conference,“ transcript of speech delivered in Valparaiso, Chile, October 5, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/10/247875.htm>.

<sup>308</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks at the 46th Organization of American States General Assembly,“ transcript of speech delivered at Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, June 14, 2016, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/06/258461.htm>.

<sup>309</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing by Press Secretary Josh Earnest,“ December 14, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-press-secretary-josh-earnest-127>.

<sup>310</sup> *2015 Paris International Climate Negotiations: Examining the Economic and Environmental Impacts, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Multilateral International Development, Multilateral Institutions, and International Economic, Energy, and Environmental Policy of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, 114th Cong. 6 (2015) (statement of Climate Envoy Todd Stern), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114shrg35994/pdf/CHRG-114shrg35994.pdf>.

<sup>311</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8697 (December 16, 2015) (statement of Sen. Al Franken), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-16/CREC-2015-12-16-pt1-PgS8697>.

<sup>312</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. H9085 (December 9, 2015) (statement of Rep. Ruben Gallego), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-09/CREC-2015-12-09-pt1-PgH9085-2>.

The economic rhetoric employed by the Obama administration suggests how important role the economic ideology plays in environmental politics. Even though the administration supported the narrative that the Paris Agreement was introduced to protect the environment, the analysis shows that the rhetoric of economic opportunities and economic growth played a key role to convince the audiences of the positive impacts of the agreement. This suggests that even an administration positively inclined to the international environmental regime and its agenda is driven by neoliberal ideology and that no matter if Democrat or Republican, it must listen to the domestic economic interests. Usually, such interests are mainly economic, as confirmed by Obama's statement that "economic growth remains a top priority for Democrats and Republicans alike and every Governor and every President; whoever takes my place, they're going to want to grow the economy. (...) We've got to grow the economy, which means we've got to produce energy. And we've got to deal with climate change."<sup>313</sup> The narrative of the economic opportunities appeared in the analysis as a key tool of the president how to satisfy the Level II audience – particularly the opposing party – based on Putnam's two-level game framework, and to get it on the side of the international environmental agreement.

## *II. Narrative: The Agreement Will Hurt American Economy*

Although the Obama administration tried to enhance public support for the agreement through the rhetoric of economic opportunities, the Republican opposition did not agree with the argument, because it perceived the agreement as harmful to the U.S. economy.

As summarized by the House Resolution of 2015, sponsored by 31 Republicans, "the Paris Agreement could result in serious harm to the United States economy, including significant job loss, increased energy and consumer costs, risks to grid reliability, or any combination thereof."<sup>314</sup> Republicans argued that the agreement and policies to implement it will cost "billions of dollars, cause financial hardship for American families, and diminish the competitiveness of American industry around the world, all with no significant benefit to climate change,"<sup>315</sup> or threatened with figures predicting that the agreement will increase

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<sup>313</sup> Barack Obama, „Remarks to the National Governors Association and a Question-and-Answer Session,“ transcript of speech delivered at the White House, Washington, DC, February 22, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-national-governors-association-and-question-and-answer-session>.

<sup>314</sup> Expressing the sense of Congress regarding the "Paris Agreement" announced on December 12, 2015, at the 21st session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, H.Con.Res.105, 114th Cong. (2015).

<sup>315</sup> *The Administration's Empty Promises for the International Climate Treaty, Hearing Before the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology*, 114th Cong. 7 (2015) (statement of Hon Lamar S. Smith, Chairman), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114hhrg97769/pdf/CHRG-114hhrg97769.pdf>.

electricity prices and “[l]ower income Americans will be colder in their own homes, our economy will have suffered, and job growth will have been slowed.”<sup>316</sup>

Also, the administration’s argument that climate politics is no longer a zero-sum game between a cleaner environment and economic growth was not well received by the opposition. For example, Senator Inhofe (OK) argued that “no nation will ever prioritize emission reduction promises over poverty eradication and economic growth. Why should the United States be any different? The American people do not support the President’s climate agenda, which would make everyday life exceptionally challenging and more expensive”<sup>317</sup> and Senator John Cornyn (TX) criticized Obama for his “willingness to sacrifice our economy—job creation and the ability of people to find work and to provide for their family—to promote a cause that offers no guarantee of a more resilient climate or a clean environment.”<sup>318</sup>

As the examples suggest, Republicans did not like Obama’s argumentation of the agreement’s positive impacts on the economy, because they believed the opposite, arguing that economic growth should be a priority but cannot be accomplished by job-killing and harmful Paris Agreement.

### 3.5.2 The Trump Administration Term

#### *I. Narrative: Economic Nationalism and Rhetoric of “America First”*

In the case of the Trump term, the economic metanarrative played a key role in the discourse too. However, the economic narratives of the Trump administration were reversed to the ones of Obama and his administration. This section presents narratives framing the Paris Agreement as a threat to American economic interests, outsourcing benefits of the agreement out of the United States. The rhetoric in line with the idea of economic nationalism was mirroring the ideology of Trump’s chief strategist and campaign manager Steve Bannon, who held the view that the United States participates in the zero-sum economic competition with other countries and that foreigners were getting wealthier at the expense of Americans.<sup>319</sup> Although Bannon himself did not comment on the agreement publicly, the Trump administration’s rhetoric clearly applied the ideology.

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<sup>316</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8230 (December 1, 2015) (statement of Sen. Roger Wicker), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-01/CREC-2015-12-01-pt1-PgS8230>.

<sup>317</sup> Jim Inhofe, „Beware of Empty Climate Promises,” *CNN*, published November 30, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/30/opinions/inhofe-obama-climate-talks/index.html>.

<sup>318</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8712 (December 16, 2015) (statement of Sen. John Cornyn), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-16/CREC-2015-12-16-pt1-PgS8712>.

<sup>319</sup> Matthew Yglesias, „Steve Bannon’s „economic nationalism“ is total nonsense,” *Vox*, August 21, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/8/21/16165348/steve-bannon-economic-nationalism>.



One of the narratives following the economic nationalism ideology was the narrative of **transfer of benefits** at expense of the United States. Trump repeatedly defamed the Paris Agreement for trying to steal American wealth and jobs. He criticized Obama for entering the agreement “where the United States pays the costs and bears the burdens, while other countries get the benefit and pay nothing,”<sup>320</sup> arguing that the “agreement doesn't eliminate coal jobs, it just transfers those jobs out of America and the United States and ships them to foreign countries.”<sup>321</sup> Trump complained about the alleged financial advantage that other countries were gaining at the expense of the United States, arguing that the agreement “hamstrings the United States, while empowering some of the world's top polluting countries” and that it redistributes American wealth to other countries.<sup>322</sup> In the speech announcing the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement, Trump justified his step with the statement that the agreement “handicaps the United States economy in order to win praise from the very foreign capitals and global activists that have long sought to gain wealth at our country's expense.”<sup>323</sup>

Trump also often referred to the fact that the agreement treated China and India as developing states, thus posing different responsibilities on them: “We couldn't use the kind of assets that we have. We would have had to close up factories and companies in order to qualify. We would have had to pay large amounts of money to other countries because they were developing. As far as I'm concerned, we're developing. Pay us some money. Right? Pay us. We're developing. Maybe we'll call it we're ‘redeveloping’.”<sup>324</sup> Trump declared that the agreement would transfer American wealth to the world’s largest polluters while “shutting down American producers with excessive regulatory restrictions like you would not believe, while allowing foreign producers to pollute with impunity.”<sup>325</sup>

Additionally, Trump employed a narrative arguing that the Paris Agreement was intentionally made to hurt the United States. Trump argued that the agreement was “actually drawn, in my opinion, to take advantage of the United States, just like so many other deals that are done to

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<sup>320</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at a „Make America Great Again“ Rally in Harrisburg, Pannsylvania,“ transcript of speech delivered on April 29, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-harrisburg-pennsylvania>.

<sup>321</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks Announcing United States Withdrawal from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, June 1, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-united-states-withdrawal-from-the-united-nations-framework-convention>.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Donald Trump, Remarks in Richfield, Ohio,“ transcript of speech deliver on March 29, 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-richfield-ohio>.

<sup>325</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at the Ninth Annual Shale Insight Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,“ transcript of speech delivered on October 23, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-ninth-annual-shale-insight-conference-pittsburgh-pennsylvania>.

take advantage of the fools running the United States.”<sup>326</sup> Trump also openly accused the agreement of an intention to offshore American “best jobs to foreign countries and foreign polluters,”<sup>327</sup> and when the presidential candidate Joe Biden announced his plan to re-enter the agreement, Trump reacted that “the Washington radical-left, crazy Democrats would also send countless American jobs, factories, industries to China and to other foreign polluting states.”<sup>328</sup> In the case of the rhetoric of a deal “horrible for us, good for other countries,”<sup>329</sup> Trump was the chief disseminator of the narrative which persisted through the whole of term as one of the most frequently pronounced narratives when speaking of the Paris Agreement.

Although not pronounced openly, the rhetoric of economic disadvantages and transfer of benefits indicated the President’s reservations about the Paris vision of multilateralism, because his politics was very skeptical of the international environmental regime and the cooperation specified in the agreement by the framework of common, but differentiated responsibilities. Indicated by the analysis, such an argument was supported by the numerous appearances of the second narrative of economic nationalism – the rhetoric of **America first**. This group includes statements that argued against the Paris Agreement because, in the words of Press Secretary Sean Spicer, it put the American interests last, whereas the President’s priority was to “get the best deal for the American people” and “to protect the interests of this country and our citizens” because Americans elected Trump to “represent Pittsburgh, not Paris.”<sup>330</sup>

Trump used the rhetoric of America first to argue in favor of withdrawal from the Paris agreement, convincing audiences that he wanted to promote American interests first and was “going to make America first—not somebody else, not some other country.”<sup>331</sup> Trump argued in favor of withdrawal that “after years of rebuilding other nations, we are finally rebuilding

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<sup>326</sup> Donald Trump, „The President’s News Conference,“ transcript of statement delivered in Washington, DC, July 14, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-1242>.

<sup>327</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks on Deregulation,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, July 16, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-deregulation>.

<sup>328</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks On Energy Production in Midland, Texas,“ transcript of speech delivered in Texas, July 29, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-energy-production-midland-texas>.

<sup>329</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at a „Make America Great Again“ Rally in Pensacola, Florida,“ transcript of speech delivered on December 8, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-pensacola-florida>.

<sup>330</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer and Administrator of Environmental Protection Agency Scott Pruitt,“ June 2, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-press-secretary-sean-spicer-and-administrator-the-environmental-protection>.

<sup>331</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at the Faith and Freedom Coalition’s Road to Majority Conference,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, June 8, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-faith-and-freedom-coalitions-road-majority-conference>.

our nation. We are finally putting America first.”<sup>332</sup> Trump’s first Secretary of State Rex Tillerson argued, that Trump made a right decision to leave the Paris Agreement and its subsequent policies because “they were not in the best interest of the American people and our own future prosperity. (...) I think the President, again, felt this was just simply not an agreement that served the American people’s interest well.”<sup>333</sup> When the House of Representative Democrats drafted a resolution in 2019 prohibiting the use of federal funds to withdraw from Paris, the Administration strongly opposed the resolution, arguing that the resolution “is inconsistent with the President’s commitment to put American workers and families first, promote access to affordable, reliable energy sources and technologies, and improve the quality of life for all Americans.”<sup>334</sup>

This section suggests that economic wellbeing was a priority of the administration, demonstrating the significant influence of the neoliberal logic on rhetoric and political argumentations. Trump presented the agreement as a threat to U.S. economic wealth, using the narrative to justify the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement.

## *II. Narrative: The Agreement is Costly and Unfair to Americans*

Another very popular narrative of the Trump administration was a rhetoric of economic costs of the agreement to the United States and was put forward as the main reason why Trump decided to withdraw the agreement. The administration argued that the agreement would hurt American workers, would kill jobs, and cost the United States a fortune, while giving Americans no real benefits.

Trump argued that the agreement would leave “American workers—who I love—and taxpayers to absorb the cost in terms of lost jobs, lower wages, shuttered factories, and vastly diminished economic production”<sup>335</sup> and argued that the withdrawal from the “job-killing” agreement was to “protect our workers and our coal miners”, thus indicating that Trump

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<sup>332</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at a „Make America Great Again“ Rally in Lexington, Kentucky,“ transcript of speech delivered on November 4, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-lexington-kentucky>.

<sup>333</sup> Rex W. Tillerson, „Press Availability with New Zealand Prime Minister Bill English,“ *U.S. Department of State*, June 6, 2017, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/press-availability-with-new-zealand-prime-minister-bill-english/index.html>.

<sup>334</sup> American Presidency Project, „Statement of Administration Policy: H. R. 9 – Climate Action Now Act,“ transcript of statement delivered on April 29, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-administration-policy-hr-9-climate-action-now-act>.

<sup>335</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks Announcing United States Withdrawal from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, June 1, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-united-states-withdrawal-from-the-united-nations-framework-convention>.

wanted to protect fossil fuel industries too.<sup>336</sup> He argue that he withdrew “from the horrible, costly, one-sided Paris Climate Accord” to “end the war on beautiful clean coal”<sup>337</sup> because the United States has “among the most abundant energy reserves on the planet, sufficient to lift millions of America's poorest workers out of poverty. Yet, under this agreement, we are effectively putting these reserves under lock and key, taking away the great wealth of our Nation and leaving millions and millions of families trapped in poverty and joblessness.”<sup>338</sup> As the examples shows, Trump did not like the idea that the agreement would dictate to the United States what to do with its coal wealth, and tried to protect the fossil fuel industry.

The administration framed the Paris Agreement as a huge evil that striped the United States of every opportunity to run their businesses and harmed Americans financially. For example, Trump argued that the agreement “would have cost us a tremendous fortune. They were going to take away our wealth. They were going to say we can't do certain businesses. We can't take oil and gas. We can't do anything.”<sup>339</sup> Trump often used emotional rhetoric aimed at American families, saying that the agreement would leave them in poverty and would let them “suffer the consequences in the form of lost jobs and a very diminished quality of life.”<sup>340</sup> Later in his presidency, Trump used threatening rhetoric of economic costs to criticize his rival presidential candidate Joe Biden, saying that Biden wants to “eliminate carbon from the U.S. energy industry, which means abolishing all American oil, clean coal, and natural gas. The result of this Federally mandated shutdown would be the wholesale destruction of the entire energy industry and many other industries, the economic evisceration of entire communities” and warned that “[u]nder this dismal future, energy would be unaffordable for

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<sup>336</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at a „Make America Great Again“ Rally in Huntington, West Virginia,“ transcript of speech delivered on August 3, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-huntington-west-virginia>.

<sup>337</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at a „Make America Great Again“ Rally in Lexington, Kentucky,“ transcript of speech delivered on November 4, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-lexington-kentucky>.

<sup>338</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks Announcing United States Withdrawal from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, June 1, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-united-states-withdrawal-from-the-united-nations-framework-convention>.

<sup>339</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at the House Republican Conference Member Retreat Dinner in Baltimore, Maryland,“ transcript of speech delivered on September 12, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-house-republican-conference-member-retreat-dinner-baltimore-maryland>.

<sup>340</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks Announcing United States Withdrawal from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, June 1, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-united-states-withdrawal-from-the-united-nations-framework-convention>.

the vast majority of Americans, and the American Dream would be sniffed out so quickly and replaced with a socialist disaster.”<sup>341</sup>

A great number of economic statements of the administration centered around the argument of how costly the agreement would be, speaking of “trillions and trillions of dollars of destruction” that would have been done to the United States if it stayed in the agreement.<sup>342</sup> Trump repeatedly argued that the agreement “was going to cost us a fortune. It was going to cost us millions of jobs”<sup>343</sup> and that it “drained us. That was costing us—that would have cost us hundreds of billions of dollars.”<sup>344</sup> As a result, Trump argued, the agreement “was meant to hurt the competitiveness.”<sup>345</sup> Thus, we can see a completely reversed rhetorical trend to the Obama administration, which promoted the agreement to be an incredible opportunity, that would create a great number of new jobs. Yet another difference to Obama’s argumentation appeared around Trump’s Energy Secretary Perry’s argument that the “binary choice between pro-economy and pro-environment that has (...) been perpetuated by the Obama administration has set up a false argument. The fact is, we can do good for both -- and we will.”<sup>346</sup> However, a great amount of Obama’s rhetoric was built around exactly the same narrative that the United States can have both – a better environment and economic growth. This example shows, how both administrations were driven by the same ideology of continued economic growth, and both used it in their narratives to attract their most important audience – the American public. Both administrations used the same rhetorical tool, although contrarily, to address the same audience, driven by the same neoliberal logic of continuing economic growth.

Trump’s rhetoric of harmful costs was endorsed also by Republican congressmen. For example, Senator Inhofe argued that the agreement “would have constituted arguably the largest single tax increase in the history of America, and there would have been nothing that

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<sup>341</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks on Deregulation,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, July 16, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-deregulation>.

<sup>342</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at the Economic Club of New York and a Question-and-Answer Session in New York City,“ transcript of speech delivered on November 12, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-economic-club-new-york-and-question-and-answer-session-new-york-city-0>.

<sup>343</sup> Donald Trump, „Interview with Mike Gallagher of the Salem Radio Network,“ transcript of interview delivered on October 17, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/interview-with-mike-gallagher-the-salem-radio-network>.

<sup>344</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at the Future Farmers of America Convention and Expo in Indianapolis, Indiana,“ transcript of speech delivered on October 27, 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-future-farmers-america-convention-and-expo-indianapolis-indiana>.

<sup>345</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at the Ninth Annual Shale Insight Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,“ transcript of speech delivered on October 23, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-ninth-annual-shale-insight-conference-pittsburgh-pennsylvania>.

<sup>346</sup> The American Presidency Project. „Press Briefing of Secretary of Energy Rick Perry and Principal Deputy Press Secretary Sarah Sanders.“ June 27, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-secretary-energy-rick-perry-and-principal-deputy-press-secretary-sarah>.

would have been accomplished by it”<sup>347</sup> and Representative John Shimkus (IL) reminded that the Paris “commitments, the financial pledges, and the costly burdens from implementing regulations that will be needed to meet our obligations were not submitted to or approved by Congress.”<sup>348</sup> In the House Resolution of 2017 in favor of withdrawal, Republican Representatives argued that “the Paris Agreement could result in serious harm to the United States economy, including significant job loss, increased energy and consumer costs, risks to grid reliability, or any combination thereof.”<sup>349</sup>

Another course of the economic rhetoric argued that the agreement would put the United States in **economic disadvantage**. For example, EPA Administrator Pruitt argued, that the world applauded the United States when it entered Paris because they “knew it was going to put this country at an economic disadvantage. (...) I think they want us to stay in is because they know it will continue to shackle our economy, though we are leading the world with respect to our CO2 reduction.”<sup>350</sup> Trump argued that he decided to leave the agreement to send “a clear message to the world that we will not allow other nations to take advantage of us any longer”<sup>351</sup> and the administration argued that “despite the enormous domestic costs, under the Agreement emissions are expected to continue to grow internationally, including in countries that are major economic competitors of the United States, placing our country at a competitive disadvantage.”<sup>352</sup> Connected to the narrative of disadvantage, the Trump administration also used language calling the Paris Agreement **unfair to the United States**. In his speech announcing withdrawal from the agreement, Trump signaled that the United States was ready to renegotiate the deal to reenter “on terms that are fair to the United States, its businesses, its workers, its people, its taxpayers.”<sup>353</sup> Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

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<sup>347</sup> 163 Cong. Rec. S3543 (June 15, 2017) (statement of Sen. James Inhofe), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2017-06-15/CREC-2017-06-15-pt1-PgS3543>.

<sup>348</sup> *We'll Always Have Paris: Filling the Leadership Void Caused by Federal Inaction on Climate Change, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change of the Committee on Energy and Commerce*, 116th Cong. 5 (2019) (statement of Rep. John Shimkus), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-116hhrg36534/pdf/CHRG-116hhrg36534.pdf>.

<sup>349</sup> Expressing the sense of Congress that the United States should withdraw from the Paris Agreement, adopted in December 2015, H.Con.Res.55, 115th Cong. (2017).

<sup>350</sup> The American Presidency Project, „Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer and Administrator of Environmental Protection Agency Scott Pruitt,“ June 2, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-press-secretary-sean-spicer-and-administrator-the-environmental-protection>.

<sup>351</sup> Donald Trump, „The President’s Weekly Address,“ transcript of speech delivered on July 7, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-weekly-address-425>.

<sup>352</sup> American Presidency Project, „Statement of Administration Policy: H. R. 9 – Climate Action Now Act,“ transcript of statement delivered on April 29, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-administration-policy-hr-9-climate-action-now-act>.

<sup>353</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks Announcing United States Withdrawal from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, June 1, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-united-states-withdrawal-from-the-united-nations-framework-convention>.

backed Trump's argumentation, saying that President withdrew from the agreement "because of the unfair economic burden imposed on American workers, businesses, and taxpayers by U.S. pledges made under the Agreement."<sup>354</sup>

The analysis demonstrates that the argumentation of the Trump administration and its Republican supporters in Congress was significantly driven by the neoliberal ideology of economic growth and **anti-regulation rhetoric**. For example, Secretary of State Tillerson argued in 2017 that the United States had an "extraordinary record of reducing greenhouse gas emissions", stating that it has "been done without a Paris climate accord. It's been done without a heavy-handed regulation", thus arguing that the United States does not need any internationally-imposed regulations to effectively face climate change.<sup>355</sup> Trump applied his anti-regulation rhetoric especially later in his term in reaction to Joe Biden running for president, saying that "Biden wants to massively reregulate the energy economy"<sup>356</sup> and that the U.S. "entire economy and our very way of life are threatened by Biden's plans to transform our Nation and subjugate our communities through the blunt-force instrument of Federal regulation at a level that you haven't even seen yet. You think that was bad? You haven't even seen it yet."<sup>357</sup> Some Republican congressmen also employed the anti-regulation rhetoric, arguing that during the Obama administration, "America moved away from an innovative approach and instead pursued a regulatory approach, which punished our businesses instead of supporting and collaborating with them,"<sup>358</sup> suggesting that there is an alternative of "personal responsibility, less government intervention in our daily lives, and freedom," arguing that every administration should "defend property rights and believe that private ownership of property is a fundamental right in America."<sup>359</sup> The anti-regulation rhetoric demonstrates the ideological closeness of the neoliberalism to the Republican ideology.

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<sup>354</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, „On the U.S. Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement,“ *U.S. Department of State*, November 4, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/on-the-u-s-withdrawal-from-the-paris-agreement/index.html>.

<sup>355</sup> Rex W. Tillerson, „Press Availability with New Zealand Prime Minister Bill English,“ *U.S. Department of State*, June 6, 2017, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/press-availability-with-new-zealand-prime-minister-bill-english/index.html>.

<sup>356</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks on Infrastructure Development at the United Parcel Service of America Airport Hub in Hapeville, Georgia,“ transcript of speech delivered on July 15, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-infrastructure-development-the-united-parcel-service-america-airport-hub-hapeville>.

<sup>357</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks on Deregulation,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, July 16, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-deregulation>.

<sup>358</sup> *Promoting American Leadership in Reducing Air Emissions Through Innovation, Hearing Before the Environment and Public Works*, 115th Cong. 2 (2017) (statement of Sen. John Barrasso), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-115shrg28078/pdf/CHRG-115shrg28078.pdf>.

<sup>359</sup> 165 Cong. Rec. H3323 (April 30, 2019) (statement of Rep. Paul A. Gosar), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2019-04-30/CREC-2019-04-30-pt1-PgH3323-7>.

The Democratic opposition to administration's and Republican rhetoric criticized Trump's argumentation, and promoted arguments in line with the past Obama rhetoric, arguing that the Paris Agreement brings the United States huge economic opportunities. Additionally, as Senator Charles Schumer (NY) pointed out, Democrats warned of the negative economic consequences of withdrawal, because "abandoning the Paris Agreement could lead to carbon tariffs on U.S. goods, stymying access to global markets for our companies and undercutting our trade position. That is why hundreds of American companies, including 28 Fortune 100 CEOs representing 9 million jobs, support the climate agreement," highlighting that many American companies in fact did not support Trump's withdrawal.<sup>360</sup>

As the examples from the analysis suggest, the Trump administration and its Republican supporters promoted the idea that the Paris Agreement would severely hurt the United States economically as one of the major rhetorical frameworks to justify Trump's move to withdraw from the agreement.

### 3.5.3 Comparison

In the case of economic metanarrative, the analysis proved that both administrations cared a lot about the U.S. economic condition, both supporting economic growth, the creation of jobs, and the well-being of American workers, suggesting that the U.S. economy presents a driving force of the U.S. approach on any international climate deal. However, the approach of the analyzed administrations varied, where during the Obama term, the prevailing economic discourse said that the Paris Agreement was an economic opportunity for the United States, creating a great number of new jobs and enhancing the well-being of American workers. On contrary, Trump and his administration employed an argumentation framing the Paris Agreement as a disaster to the U.S. economy, stripping the United States of its wealth and American workers of their jobs.

In both cases, the neoliberal ideology of continuing economic growth played an important role. While in the Obama case, the rhetoric focused on the conviction, that both economic growth and protection of climate change can be achieved, the Trump administration used anti-regulatory rhetoric, saying that the United States does not need top-down federal and international regulations in order to mitigate climate change.

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<sup>360</sup> 163 Cong. Rec. S2787 (May 8, 2017) (statement of Sen. Charles E. Schumer), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2017-05-08/CREC-2017-05-08-pt1-PgS2787-2>.



Thus, this section proved that no matter if the president is Democrat or Republican, they devote an extensive part of their statements to economic-related argumentation in order to address their audiences in a manner that signals to American workers and businesses that they are not omitted. Although the neoliberal logic is closer to the Republican ideology, this analysis proves that even Obama, although a supporter of the international environmental regime, had to invent a rhetorical approach how to acknowledge the economic needs of American workers and companies, thus addressing the Level II audience in line with Putnam's two-level game.

### 3.6 National Security and the Rhetoric of Threat

The last section of the analysis presents a metanarrative of national security and threat. Both administrations talked about the Paris Agreement in relation to the topic of national security and both employed the rhetoric of threat. Although the same narrative, the administrations determined different aspects of the agreement or issues related to it as a threat. This section presents the rhetorical approaches to the topic and main differences between the two terms.

#### 3.6.1 The Obama Administration Term: Climate Change is a Threat to Public Health, Economy, and National Security

For the Obama administration, the rhetoric of threat referred to the dangers posed by climate change. Climate change was framed as a threat to the American way of life, to the health of the people and to the planet, and as a threat to the economy. The unifying narrative argues that unless the administration acts on climate change – in this case by adopting the Paris Agreement – the impacts of climate change will be even more devastating in the future.

On the eve of the Paris Conference, Obama called climate change an “urgent threat” and argued that “the growing threat of climate change could define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other.”<sup>361</sup> On the day the agreement was adopted, he stressed the importance of international cooperation to “confront a threat to the people of all nations,”<sup>362</sup> pointing to the fact that climate change is an issue that does not respect the borders of nations. Even after the agreement was adopted, Obama continued the rhetoric of the threat of climate change, highlighting the fact that “[c]limate change remains a serious threat—

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<sup>361</sup> The White House, „Remarks by President Obama at the First Session of COP21,“ transcript of speech delivered in Le Bourget, France, November 30, 2015. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/30/remarks-president-obama-first-session-cop21>.

<sup>362</sup> Obama, Barack. „Statement by the President on the Paris Climate Agreement.“ transcript of speech delivered in the White House, Washington, DC, December 12, 2015. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/12/statement-president-paris-climate-agreement>.

even after we officially crossed the threshold for the Paris Agreement to take effect earlier this month.”<sup>363</sup> Also Democratic congressmen were calling climate change ‘one of the greatest threats’ or the ‘greatest threat’ that the world faces. Senator Thomas Carper (DE) stated that “[o]ur future generations face no greater environmental threat. We face a lot of threats, but no greater environmental threat than the threat of climate change”<sup>364</sup> and Senator Al Franken (MN) labelled the threat of climate change “a ‘Sputnik moment’ for our Nation, an opportunity to rise to the challenge and defeat that threat.”<sup>365</sup>

Obama’s threat rhetoric pointed to the effects that climate change was already having on the planet, thus sustaining the administration’s narrative of the looming and real impacts of climate change. Obama in his statements pointed out that the United States was “threatened by rising seas, melting permafrost, disappearing glaciers and sea ice”<sup>366</sup> and that people’s health was threatened by dirty air and water, thus an “unprecedented action to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink” was necessary.<sup>367</sup> Obama repeatedly linked the threat of climate change to public health, arguing that “[c]limate change has a profound impact on our public health, contributing to intensified smog, an extended allergy season, the spread of diseases into new regions, and greater and more acute incidence of asthma. (...) That is why last year, along with nearly 200 countries from around the world, the United States negotiated the Paris Agreement—the most ambitious climate change agreement in history.”<sup>368</sup>

Secretary of State Kerry also used the rhetoric of the threat of climate change and its effects, but in comparison to Obama, bolstered by the rhetoric of economic costs. For example, Kerry argued that the threat of climate change to public health is a serious problem to U.S. economy, pointing out that the hospitalization of children with environmentally induced asthma “costs us millions”. Kerry argued, that with effective actions on climate change, “[y]ou eliminate cancer that’s induced by particulates in the air that you breathe; you will have greater health, you will have better, obviously, environmental quality, you live up to your environmental

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<sup>363</sup> Proclamation No. 9528, 81 Fed. Reg. 74655 (October 21, 2016), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/10/26/2016-26071/united-nations-day-2016>.

<sup>364</sup> *Examining the International Climate Negotiations, Hearing Before the Committee on Environment and Public Works*, 114th Cong. 6 (2015) (statement of Sen. Thomas Carper), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114shrg98708/pdf/CHRG-114shrg98708.pdf>.

<sup>365</sup> 161 Cong. Rec. S8697 (December 16, 2015) (statement of Sen. Al Franken), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2015-12-16/CREC-2015-12-16-pt1-PgS8697>.

<sup>366</sup> The American Presidency Project, „The President’s News Conference With Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada,“ March 10, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-with-prime-minister-justin-pj-trudeau-canada-0>.

<sup>367</sup> Proclamation No. 9506, 81 Fed. Reg. 68931 (September 29, 2016), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/10/04/2016-24171/child-health-day-2016>.

<sup>368</sup> Proclamation No. 9416, 81 Fed. Reg. 20213 (April 1, 2016), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/04/06/2016-08082/national-public-health-week-2016>.

responsibilities, you have energy independence. America, all of a sudden, becomes more secure.”<sup>369</sup> On the issue of increasing storms in the United States, he said: [W]e coped with eight storms since I became Secretary of State, each of which cost us more than a billion dollars. But when I say more than a billion dollars, it was actually \$165 billion, 160 billion total, for those eight storms. We’re here struggling to find \$5, \$10 billion for the Green Climate Fund, and we’re spending 165 billion to clean up the mess from a number of storms which are intensified because of what is happening.”<sup>370</sup> By such an argument, Kerry signaled that cost of inaction on climate change is very high, trying to get support for funding of the U.S. policies to fulfill the Paris commitments and for the investments to the UN Green Climate Fund. Additionally, he intensified the message of the rhetoric of threat when he pointed out that climate change and its effects are a threat to the U.S. economy.

One specific narrative of the threat rhetoric, repeatedly mentioned by the Obama administration, was climate change’s threat to U.S. national security. Especially Secretary of State Kerry applied the narrative in his speeches, arguing that climate change is not just a threat to the environment but “by fueling extreme weather events, undermining our military readiness, exacerbating conflicts around the world – climate change is a threat to the security of the United States and, indeed, to the security and stability of countries everywhere”. In his interpretation, the threat of climate change was not just about “butterflies or polar bears – as some people try to mock it” but about serious impacts “on people – people everywhere – of severe droughts, rapid sea level rise. We’re talking about the impacts on whole cities of unpredictable and uncontrollable extreme weather events. We’re talking about the impact on entire countries of fundamental shocks to the global agricultural system”. Kerry continued by arguing that “possible destruction of vital infrastructure and the mass movement of refugees, particularly in parts of the world that already provide fertile ground for violent extremism and terror”, thus encouraging the U.S. security readiness to deal with the threat of climate change.<sup>371</sup> At this point it is important to notice *how* the threat of climate change was framed by the administration because although it did not omit the impacts on fauna and flora completely, the main rhetorical focus was on the impacts on *people*, thus raising awareness among Americans that climate change is an issue directly impacting them and their way of

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<sup>369</sup> John Kerry, „New York Times Energy for Tomorrow Event,“ transcript of interview delivered Paris, France, December 9, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250499.htm>.

<sup>370</sup> John Kerry. „New York Times Energy for Tomorrow Event,“ transcript of interview delivered in Paris, France, December 9, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250499.htm>.

<sup>371</sup> John Kerry, „Remarks on Climate Change and National Security,“ transcript of speech delivered at the Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, November 10, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/11/249393.htm>.

life. As Kerry summarized it, “climate change is not just about Bambi; it’s about all of us in very personal and important ways.”<sup>372</sup> As result, such a rhetorical strategy suggests that the rhetoric of threat was used by the administration to raise domestic support for the Paris Agreement, warning of the impacts that climate change could *directly* have on ordinary Americans.

Obama also promoted the rhetoric of threat to national security, pointing to the impacts that climate change can have on political stability because climate change-induced problems such as submerged countries and disrupted agriculture can cause “[p]olitical disruptions that trigger new conflict, and even more floods of desperate peoples seeking the sanctuary of nations not their own.”<sup>373</sup> President thus highlighted the danger of environmental immigration caused by inaction on climate change, saying: “If we don’t act boldly, the bill that could come due will be mass migrations, and cities submerged and nations displaced, and food supplies decimated, and conflicts born of despair. The Paris Agreement gives us a framework to act.”<sup>374</sup> The U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice and Senior Advisor Brian Deese argued that among other threats and challenges like terrorist groups, diseases like Ebola, or Russian aggression to Ukraine, “no threat is more terrifying in its global reach or more potentially destructive and destabilizing than climate change.”<sup>375</sup> Obama was also connecting the issue of climate change and national security to freedom, arguing that the adoption of the Paris Agreement set the United States on the path to “a world that is safer and more secure, more prosperous, and more free,”<sup>376</sup> thus addressing the delicate U.S. relationship to the concept of freedom.

Additionally, the administration linked the threat to national security with the economy. For example, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Energy and Climate Change at the National Security Council Paul Bodnar alerted the businesses that climate change “poses a clear and present threat to our economic and national security,”<sup>377</sup> and

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> The White House, „Remarks by President Obama at the First Session of COP21,“ transcript of speech delivered in Le Bourget, France, November 30, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/30/remarks-president-obama-first-session-cop21>.

<sup>374</sup> The White House, „Address by President Obama to the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly,“ transcript of speech delivered in New York City, New York, September 20, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/20/address-president-obama-71st-session-united-nations-general-assembly>.

<sup>375</sup> Susan Rice and Brian Deese, „Integrating Climate Change into National Security Planning,“ *The White House*, September 21, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/09/21/integrating-climate-change-national-security-planning>.

<sup>376</sup> The White House, „Remarks by the President on the Paris Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in Rose Garden, the White House, Washington, DC, October 5, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/10/05/remarks-president-paris-agreement>.

<sup>377</sup> The White House, „Press Call Briefing on the Paris Climate Change Summit,“ November 24, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/24/press-call-briefing-paris-climate-change-summit>.

Obama mentioned that without any action on climate change, the increased economic and military costs would be devoted “not to growing opportunity for our people, but to adapting to the various consequences of a changing planet. This is an economic and security imperative that we have to tackle now.”<sup>378</sup>

Pointing to the threats that climate change causes or might cause in the future and that the Paris Agreement plans to challenge, the administration strived to enhance the legitimacy of the Paris Agreement policies. The threat rhetoric of the Obama administration focused on the impacts that the inaction on climate change could have on public health, political stability, and national security, thus framing climate change as one of the greatest threats to the United States. By such a narrative, the administration and its Democratic supporters in Congress strived to get public support for the Paris Agreement, alerting how climate change could destabilize the American way of life.

### 3.6.2 The Trump Administration Term: Paris Agreement is a Threat to American Economy

In stark contrast to the Obama term, the Trump administration used the rhetoric of threat in a reversed trend, calling the agreement a threat to the United States, thus it should be exited. For Trump, climate change did not seem like a real threat to the United States but he saw the real danger in the Paris Agreement that attempted to tackle climate change.

In Trump’s opinion, the agreement threatened the American way of life, economy, and American workers. Trump talked about the agreement as of “extreme agenda” that “would destroy our country,”<sup>379</sup> and justified his withdrawal from the agreement by saying that the agreement was “a disaster, a death sentence. It’s a death sentence for your energy jobs. I took it out. I withdrew from that calamity.”<sup>380</sup> Other remarks argued with a threat that the agreement posed to the American way of life. For example, Republican Representative Paul Gosar (AZ) argued that “[t]he United States is the world’s top energy producer, and the American Dream is thriving. (...) [S]taying in the Paris Agreement threatens that dream. This is not a partisan issue. This is about doing what is right for America and about protecting

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<sup>378</sup> The White House, „Press Conference by President Obama,“ December 1, 2015,

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/01/press-conference-president-obama>.

<sup>379</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks On Energy Production in Midland, Texas,“ transcript of speech delivered in Texas, July 29, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-energy-production-midland-texas>.

<sup>380</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at a „Make America Great Again“ Rally in Latrobe, Pennsylvania,“ transcript of speech delivered on September 3, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-latrobe-pennsylvania>.

freedom and opportunity for our children and grandchildren,”<sup>381</sup> suggesting that the Paris Agreement limits people’s freedoms.

Trump frequently connected the threat argument with economic rhetoric, saying how disastrous the agreement would be to the U.S. economy, thus arguing that *the agreement* was a threat to the United States. Trump argued that “full compliance with the agreement could ultimately shrink America's GDP by \$2.5 trillion over a 10-year period” which would mean “factories and plants closing all over our country”, calling the agreement a “broken system that has profited from this global theft and plunder of American wealth at the expense of the American worker.”<sup>382</sup> In other cases, Trump argued that the agreement imposed “draconian financial and economic burdens”<sup>383</sup> on the United States and would have “cost America millions of lost jobs and billions and billions of lost dollars and put us at a permanent economic disadvantage. It's a catastrophe if we would have agreed.”<sup>384</sup> Trump argued in favor of withdrawal from “the job-killing Paris climate accord,” because “[p]eople have no idea how bad that was for this country.”<sup>385</sup> Later in his term, Trump called the succeeding president Joe Biden a threat to America, when Biden announced his intention to re-enter the agreement. Trump argued that “[o]ur entire economy and our very way of life are threatened by Biden's plans to transform our Nation and subjugate our communities through the blunt-force instrument of Federal regulation at a level that you haven't even seen yet”, and stated that re-entering the Paris agreement will “cost our country trillions of dollars—trillions and trillions of dollars—and put us in a very, very bad competitive position relative to the world.”<sup>386</sup> Trump threatened the American public with the upcoming administration, calling it “the radical left-wing movement that would destroy our country” because “[t]hey want to

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<sup>381</sup> 165 Cong. Rec. H3323 (April 30, 2019) (statement of Rep. Paul A. Gosar), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2019-04-30/CREC-2019-04-30-pt1-PgH3323-7>.

<sup>382</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at a „Make America Great Again“ Rally in Harrisburg, Pannsylvania,“ transcript of speech delivered on April 29, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-harrisburg-pennsylvania>.

<sup>383</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks Announcing United States Withdrawal from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, June 1, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-united-states-withdrawal-from-the-united-nations-framework-convention>.

<sup>384</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at a “Make America Great Again“ Rally in Cedar Rapids, Iowa,“ transcript of speech delivered on June 21, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-cedar-rapids-iowa>.

<sup>385</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at a „Make America Great Again“ Rally in Phoenix, Arizona,“ transcript of speech delivered on August 22, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-phoenix-arizona>.

<sup>386</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks on Deregulation,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, July 16, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-deregulation>.

rejoin the disastrous Paris climate accord, where you'll pay billions and billions of dollars for the privilege of getting ripped off by other countries.”<sup>387</sup>

As the examples above suggest, Trump was often using very emotional and indeed threatening rhetoric, when speaking of the agreement, thus imposing the feeling of fear on its audiences. In one speech, Trump even did not hesitate to use rhetoric similar to speeches about a terrorist attack or a violent conflict, arguing that the Obama administration put America’s energy industry “under relentless and unceasing attack”. Trump continued by saying that on the day he entered the office, he ended Obama’s “war on American energy” and “stopped the far-left assault on American energy workers.”<sup>388</sup> Employing the narrative of a ‘disastrous’ and ‘job-killing’ agreement, that imposed ‘war’ on American energy with ‘draconian’ economic impacts on ordinary Americans, Trump was taking advantage of people’s fears, manipulating them into a conviction that the threat of commitments resulting from Paris was way greater than the threat posed by climate change itself. This represents a great rhetorical difference from the narrative of threat applied by the Obama administration.

Speaking of security, the Trump administration did not perceive climate change as a threat to national security, but contrary to the Obama rhetoric again, the Paris Agreement was presented by Trump as the real threat to U.S. security. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo argued that [u]nder previous administrations, our nation signed dangerous agreements that made Americans less safe, like the Iran nuclear deal and the Paris Climate Accord”<sup>389</sup> and defended Trump’s move to withdraw from the agreement, giving the explanation that Trump “didn’t get out of the Paris Climate Accord to get re-elected. He did this to secure the basic rights and security for every American.”<sup>390</sup> In the remarks on the National Security Strategy, Trump did not include climate change as a challenge to U.S. security, but mentioned that his administration confronted the U.S. challenges by withdrawing from the “very expensive and unfair Paris climate accord.”<sup>391</sup> For the Trump administration, national security meant energy independence, which according to the administration’s view could not be accomplished under the Paris Agreement.

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<sup>387</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks at the Whirlpool Corporation Manufacturing Plant in Clyde, Ohio,“ transcript of speech delivered on August 6, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-whirlpool-corporation-manufacturing-plant-clyde-ohio>.

<sup>388</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks On Energy Production in Midland, Texas,“ transcript of speech delivered in Texas, July 29, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-energy-production-midland-texas>.

<sup>389</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, „The State Department is Winning for America,“ transcript of speech delivered at Gaylord National Resort and Conference Center, in National Harbor, Maryland, February 28, 2020, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/the-state-department-is-winning-for-america/index.html>.

<sup>390</sup> U.S. Department of State, „Secretary Michael R. Pompeo With Sean Hannity of the Sean Hannity Show,“ transcript of interview delivered in Washington, DC, June 22, 2020, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-with-sean-hannity-of-the-sean-hannity-show-5/index.html>.

<sup>391</sup> Donald Trump, „Remarks on the 2017 National Security Strategy,“ transcript of speech delivered in Washington, DC, December 18, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-2017-national-security-strategy>.

Congressional Republicans, who supported Trump's decision to leave the agreement, argued that the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement will enhance U.S. security. Senator John Barrasso (WY) argued that Trump "promoted American energy security by rolling back several overreaching Obama-era regulations that are central to the Paris climate act" and continued by stating that "America faces challenges around the world that are more pressing than the Paris accord. We would be better off if our diplomats focused on security threats like those we face from North Korea, Russia and ISIS, instead of trying to justify remaining in a bad deal with which we do not intend to comply", thus indicating that climate change should not be approached as a national security threat priority.<sup>392</sup>

Contrary to Trump's administration and Republican congressmen, Democrats continued with Obama's rhetoric of the threat of climate change, evaluating the withdrawal from the Paris Agreement as a threat to the future of the United States. For example, Representative Frank Pallone (NJ) argued that "the Trump administration's retreat puts the health and safety of our communities at great risk and seriously jeopardizes our future security. It also puts our economic future at great risk as the world embarks on a major transition to a low-carbon economy"<sup>393</sup> and Representative Carolyn Maloney (NY) pointed out that "the President's actions put the health of Americans at further risk. Lives are lost due to climate change. And because of increased disease, these actions also increase the cost of healthcare."<sup>394</sup> Especially the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives was quite vocal about staying in the Paris Agreement, thus creating a rhetorical opposition to Trump, but were not publicly heard to the extent as the emotional rhetoric of Trump during his "Make America Great Again" remarks or other speeches that were more easily approachable by the American public.

### 3.6.3 Comparison

This section showed how contradictory were the narratives of threat and national security for the Obama and Trump administrations. Whereas during the Obama administration, climate change was framed as a threat to the American way of life and national security, during the Trump administration the narrative turned to the rhetoric of the threat the Paris Agreement posed on American workers, security, and economy. However, both narratives shared one

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<sup>392</sup> John Barrasso, "Paris Climate Agreement Should Be Nixed," *The Washington Times*, March 28, 2017, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/mar/28/paris-climate-agreement-should-be-nixed/>.

<sup>393</sup> *We'll Always Have Paris: Filling the Leadership Void Caused by Federal Inaction on Climate Change, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change of the Committee on Energy and Commerce*, 116th Cong. 8 (2019) (statement of Rep. Frank Pallone), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-116hhrg36534/pdf/CHRG-116hhrg36534.pdf>.

<sup>394</sup> *The Devastating Health Impacts of Climate Change, Hearing Before the Committee on Oversight and Reform*, 116th Cong. 2 (2020) (statement of Rep. Carolyn Maloney), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-116hhrg41911/pdf/CHRG-116hhrg41911.pdf>.



criterion – the audience. Both administrations acknowledged and addressed the ordinary Americans' fears – about the economy, health, or security – only by using different tools and argumentation frameworks to activate these, which suggests that the topics covered by different administrations do not change, only the rhetorical coverage of them, thus proving the importance of rhetoric on political strategy.

## Conclusion

The results of the analysis of U.S. rhetoric covering the Paris Agreement demonstrate that environmental ideology aligned with partisanship, dividing the Democratic and Republican argumentation into rhetorical opposition. The analysis proved the significant influence of the highly polarized two-party system on the rhetoric of the Paris Agreement and the results demonstrate that party orientation and ideology represented a clear marker of the U.S. federal positions on the issue of climate change and on the international environmental regime represented in the analysis by the Paris Agreement.

The principle of a two-level game, where the President balances domestic and international demands, trying to satisfy both, proved to have an influence on both administrations. However, the rhetoric of the Obama administration suggests it pursued a more balanced approach to satisfy both domestic and international audiences, although some argumentation in favor of the international audience represented by the international environmental regime and the Paris Agreement was visible. A large part of the administration's rhetoric was devoted to the justification of the Paris Agreement and U.S. participation in it, highlighting positive effects on American employment, economic growth, quality of the environment, and security, thus trying to get domestic support for the agreement established by the international environmental regime. On the contrary, the Trump administration was mainly focused on the domestic audience while sidelining the international audience, believing in a strong U.S. position in international environmental politics even without the U.S. participation in the Paris Agreement. The Trump administration and Republican congressmen promoted rhetoric of America First and a zero-sum game between the growth of the U.S. economy and international protection of the environment, thus gaining support for the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. Nevertheless, as the analysis shows, even a Democratic president cannot completely omit the domestic audiences, which in the case of the Paris Agreement resulted in more pragmatic rhetoric on topics such as the U.S. economy, economic growth, or U.S. leadership, and to the creative employment of narratives that addressed the pragmatic concerns of the American public (transfer of benefits, jobs, etc.) to gain support for the progressive foreign policy agenda in the end result. Through such rhetoric, Obama managed to satisfy the international audiences while still applying rhetoric responsive to domestic demands, not to get the domestic audience resentful.

The ideological partisan divide projected in the analysis to all six metanarratives analyzed. The analysis proved that the Obama administration and Democrats were supportive of the

U.S. participation in the Paris Agreement and saw the agreement as a historic and extraordinary deal with positive effects on the health of the planet. On contrary, the Trump administration and Republicans viewed the Paris Agreement as a disaster to the United States, calling it ineffective and arguing in favor of the U.S. withdrawal. On the issue of leadership, the Democratic administration viewed the Paris Agreement as a tool to establish its leading position in the fight against climate change, whereas the Republican administration did not feel that the withdrawal from the agreement would hurt the U.S. leadership on environmental protection. Both administrations expressed their belief that the United States is somewhat unique and should have a respected authority in international negotiations, but every administration narrated a different vision of U.S. exceptionalism. Whereas the Obama administration employed the rhetoric of the exceptional position of the United States to lead by example on environmental policies and the Paris Agreement in particular, the Trump administration believed in the American unique position to ask for exceptions regarding the agreement, thus applying the logic of the double standard. However, by promoting American interests and values, while also exempting itself from standards applicable to others, the Trump administration put itself in danger of losing credibility abroad.

Further, the Trump administration favored individual American rights over shared rights and criticized the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the rise of the international environmental regime, which according to them limited the U.S. power to determine its own agenda and threatened the U.S. sovereignty. On the contrary, the Obama administration promoted cooperation and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities as the key principles of a successful multilateral fight against climate change. In the case of economic rhetoric, the Obama administration promoted the Paris Agreement as a huge opportunity for the American economy and economic growth, while the Trump administration and Republicans viewed the agreement as a threat to the U.S. economy, that would steal American jobs and wealth, and that would transfer U.S. benefits to developing countries. The Trump administration promoted the neoliberal ideology of economic freedom and deregulation, arguing that government and international regulations impede economic growth, thus applying a reversed rhetorical approach to the Obama argumentation. The same rhetorical trend of reversed argumentation appeared also in the case of the metanarrative of national security and rhetoric of threat, where the Obama administration and Democrats labeled climate change as a threat to the United States and its security, while the Trump

administration and Republicans were convinced that the Paris Agreement was the real threat to the United States, thus it should be exited.

However, the analysis suggests that although by different means, in this case by different rhetorical approaches, both Democrats and Republicans recognized the same topics as the key subjects to be addressed by their rhetoric to satisfy their domestic and/or international audiences. This suggests, that the partisan and ideological polarization applies to *how* the topics will be framed, not *what* topics will be covered, because no matter if Democrat or Republican, presidents have to be responsive to the same audience – the American public. This argument applied, even a Democratic president had to reflect pragmatic American interests and demands in his rhetoric supporting the international environmental regime. For example, the analysis proved that no matter if Democrat or Republican, both administrations devoted an extensive part of their statements to economic-related argumentation in order to address their audiences in a manner that signaled to American workers and businesses that they are not omitted, and both administrations were driven by the neoliberal logic. Whereas the Trump administration embodied the ideology, the Obama administration acknowledged the need to address it in order to recognize the economic needs of American workers and companies, thus addressing the Level II audience in line with the two-level game. Similarly, the U.S. leadership presented an important topic for both administrations, and although by different means, both rhetorical strategies expressed the administrations' wish to keep the U.S. leading position on climate into the future.

In conclusion, although the topic of international environmental politics seems clearly divided by partisan ideology, which it is, it should be taken into account that the topics the administrations and congressmen cover are in its essence non-partisan, appealing to American basic needs, interests and fears. As the analysis proves, regardless of partisanship the administrations were trying to satisfy domestic audience while not upsetting the international audience (the Trump case) or to satisfy international audience while not upsetting ordinary Americans and the opposing party back at home (the Obama case). This is why the Trump administration applied generally Paris-resentful rhetoric, but expressed the U.S. continuing willingness to cooperate on climate change mitigation. The same applies to the Obama administration promoting the Paris agreement in economic frame, trying to satisfy domestic demand.

## Summary

The goal of this paper is to present the theoretical determinants of the U.S. approach to the international environmental politics and to analyze in which ways these determinants appeared in the rhetoric of the federal political elites on the case of the Paris Agreement. The analysis shows how the administrations and congressmen of the analyzed period framed the Paris Agreement and the issue of climate change. It supports the existing literature on the issue of the U.S. approach to the international environmental politics and brings new findings about what were the U.S. federal political narratives regarding the Paris Agreement.

The first chapter of the paper presents the main sources of the U.S. approach to the international environmental politics, pointing out the complicated structure of the U.S. domestic politics and its significant influence on U.S. foreign politics. It presents how the current alignment of political ideology with partisanship intensifies the political polarization, having negative impact on the negotiation process over a multilateral environmental agreement. It also suggests that belief in American exceptionalism or the economic ideology of neoliberalism complicate how the United States approaches an international environmental deal. It further examines determinants such as the issue of national security or suspicion of multilateralism and its potential effects on the U.S. approach to international environmental agreements.

The second chapter presents the Paris Agreement and the debate whether it is an international treaty or just an executive agreement according to the U.S. law. The scholarship agrees that although the deal can be described as a treaty according to international law, it does not fit the narrower definition of a treaty according to the U.S. Constitution, thus it falls under the U.S. definition of an executive agreement that can be reversed by next administration.

The third chapter is devoted to the analysis of the U.S. rhetoric of the Paris Agreement, examining the six most common metanarratives, referring to six sources of the U.S. approach to environmental politics. The analysis found out that both administrations and their respective Congresses addressed the same topics related to the Paris Agreement, such as the national security or the implications of the agreement on the U.S. economy, but used different rhetorical tools, suggesting that partisan polarization applies mainly to how a topic is framed, not what topics are covered regarding the issue of the U.S. participation in an international environmental agreement.

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## Master's Thesis Summary

<b>ZÁVĚREČNÉ TEZE MAGISTERSKÉ PRÁCE NMTS</b>
Závěrečné teze student odevzdává ke konci Diplomního semináře III jako součást magisterské práce a tyto teze jsou spolu s odevzdáním magisterské práce do SIS předpokladem udělení zápočtu za tento seminář.
<b>Jméno:</b> Tereza Štěpařová
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<b>Specializace (uved'te zkratkou)*:</b> KSAS
<b>Semestr a školní rok zahájení práce:</b> LS 2020/2021
<b>Semestr a školní rok ukončení práce:</b> LS 2022/2023
<b>Vedoucí diplomového semináře: Dr.</b> phil. Lucie Kýrová, M.A.
<b>Vedoucí práce:</b> PhDr. Jan Hornát, Ph.D.
<b>Název práce:</b> Rhetoric of U.S. Foreign Environmental Policy: Case Study of the Paris Agreement
<b>Charakteristika tématu práce (max 10 řádek):</b> Tématem práce je zahraniční environmentální politika Spojených států na případové studii Pařížské klimatické dohody. Práce se však zaměřuje výhradně na rétoriku, tedy jakým způsobem americké federální politické elity prezentovaly, obhajovaly či naopak kritizovaly Pařížskou dohodu a její důsledky na americkou domácí politiku či ekonomiku. Práce využívá diskurzivní analýzy k výzkumu rétoriky konkrétně dvou období - druhého funkčního období prezidenta Baracka Obamy, a prezidentsví Donalda Trumpa. Práce zkoumá, jaké metanarativy byly pro jednotlivá období nejtypičtější, čím se vyznačují, a následně dvě období porovnává a hledá rozdílnosti či shody. Výsledkem práce je detailní analýza rétoriky federálních politických elit - vlády a představitelů Kongresu - k otázce Pařížské dohody a přístupu Spojených států k ní.
<b>Vývoj tématu od zadání projektu do odevzdání práce (max. 10 řádek):</b> Širší téma práce, tedy rétorika a americký přístup k zahraniční environmentální politice, zůstaly od zadání projektu stejné. Změnilo se však zaměření, neboť původně měla práce za cíl zkoumat pouze rétoriku americké výjimečnosti. Vzhledem k velmi úzkému zaměření analýzy a nedostatku zdrojů bylo nakonec zaměření práce rozšířeno a zkoumá rétoriku druhého funkčního období Obamy a období prezidentsví Trumpa obsáhleji. Nově práce pomocí diskurzivní analýzy identifikuje ústřední metanarativy typické pro obě období, tyto metanarativy práce následně porovnává. Otázka americké výjimečnosti tak zůstala jen jedním z šesti identifikovaných metanarativů.

**Struktura práce (hlavní kapitoly obsahu):**

- 1. Sources of the U.S. Approach to International Environmental Politics**
  - 1.1 Domestic Politics: Relationship between the Executive and Legislative Branch**
  - 1.2 Ideology and Partisanship: When Political Ideology and Party Affiliation Align**
  - 1.3 American Exceptionalism**
  - 1.4 Suspicion of Multilateralism**
  - 1.5 The Rule of Neoliberalism**
  - 1.6 National Security**
- 2. Paris Agreement: A Treaty or an Executive Agreement?**
- 3. Analysis: Rhetoric of the Paris Agreement**
  - 3.1 Ideology of Climate Change Meets Partisanship: How the Approach to the Paris Agreement Split by the Party Lines**
  - 3.2 U.S. Leadership**
  - 3.3 American Exceptionalism**
  - 3.4 Multilateralism**
  - 3.5 Economy and the Rule of Neoliberal Ideology**
  - 3.6 National Security and the Rhetoric of Threat**
- Conclusion**

**Hlavní výsledky práce (max. 10 řádek):**

Práce přináší detailní analýzu a popis rétoriky amerických federálních politických elit k otázce Pařížské dohody a obohacuje diskuzi o rétorických přístupech Spojených států k zahraniční environmentální politice, jenž se stává čím dál významnějším aspektem zahraniční politiky obecně. Z výsledků práce vychází, že americká environmentální rétorika je do značné míry ovlivněna stranickou a ideologickou polarizací, která staví republikánské a demokratické narativy do opozice. I přesto však práce dokazuje, že obě administrativy - republikánská i demokratická - se řídily logikou two-level games, tedy snažily se uspokojit jak zahraniční tak domácí publikum, což mnohdy vedlo k pragmatičtějšmu přístupu k rétorice v případě progresivně smýšlející Obamovy administrativy a demokratů, a naopak k umírněnější rétorice v případě běžně emotivní rétoriky Trumpovy administrativy či republikánů. Práce potvrzuje, že stranická polarizace se odráží především v tom, jak byla témata související s Pařížskou dohodou rámována a prezentována, nikoliv jaká témata byla vybrána a rétoricky pokryta, protože bez ohledu na to, zda jde o demokraty nebo republikány, prezidenti i kongresmani adresují stejné publikum.

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**Etika výzkumu:\*\***

Charakter práce nevyžaduje specifickou etiku výzkumu s ohledem na bezpečnost osobní a dalších účastníků či bezpečnost dat.

**Jazyk práce:**

Angličtina

**Podpis studenta a datum**

Štěpařová Tereza, 2. 5. 2023

Schváleno	Datum	Podpis
Vedoucí práce		
Vedoucí diplomového semináře		
Vedoucí specializace		
Garant programu		

