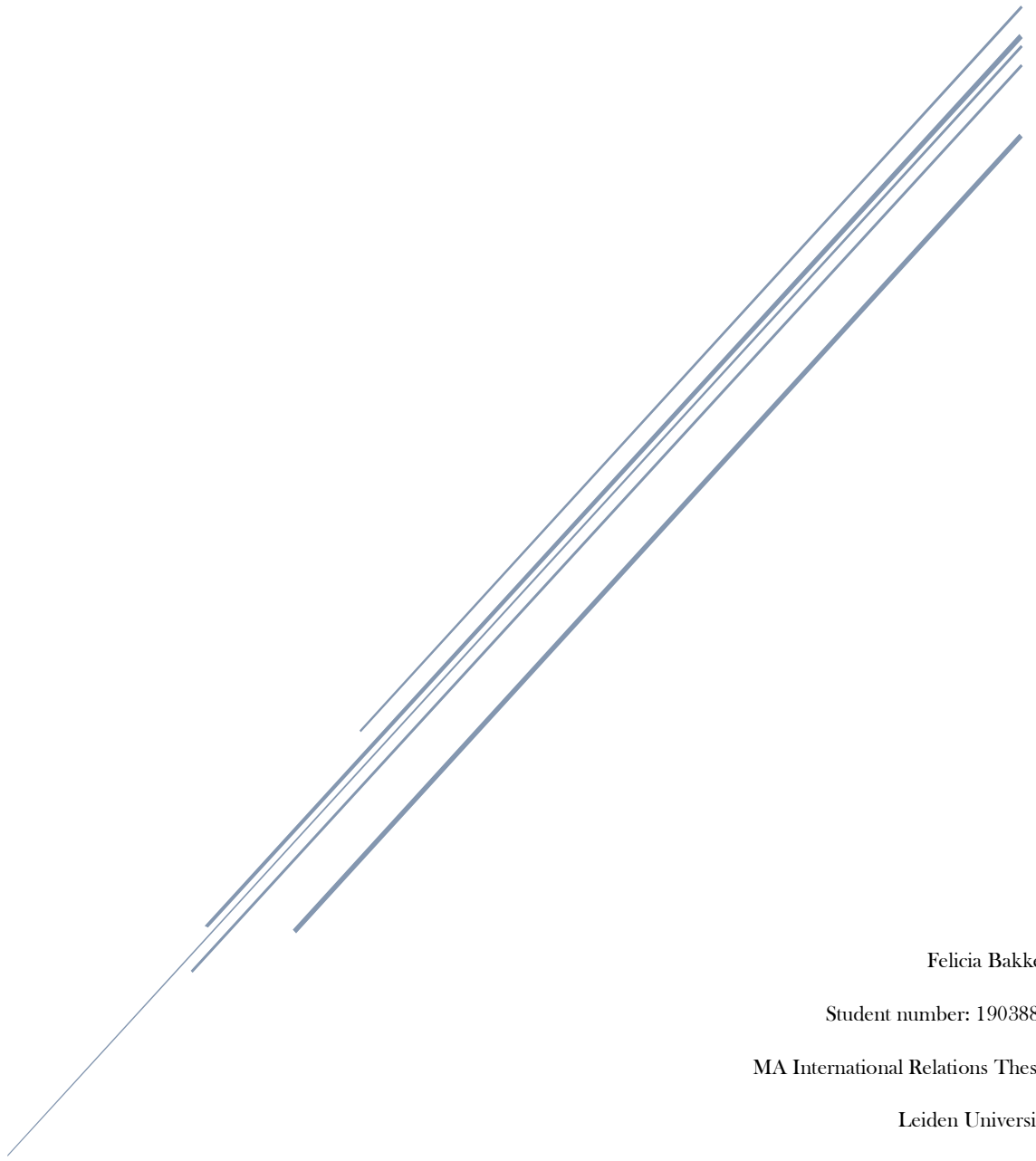


# ARCTIC POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES 2001-2017: OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES?



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Words: 14214

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## INTRODUCTION

With the decline of Arctic sea ice, the United States (US), as a powerful state, has more interest and concerns about the Arctic region than ever before. Climate change has made the Arctic a states' main priority and is possibly changing the region into a commercial center.<sup>1</sup> The Arctic is warming twice as fast than anywhere else on earth, with rising temperatures affecting the region's environment. As a result, the local inhabitants have to face the detrimental consequences: melting permafrost leads to saltwater encroachment and pollution, which both affect the inhabitants' drinking water.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, shrinking ice caps make it possible to access the Arctic's oil reserves. A 2008 US Geological Survey estimated that zones north of the Arctic Circle contain 90 billion barrels of undiscovered oil.<sup>3</sup>

With the potential of billions of oil barrels in the region, the Arctic seems to have caught US interest during the last decades. Not surprisingly, as oil plays a key part in US foreign policy.<sup>4</sup> As former President, George W. Bush (2001-2009) stated in his 2006 State of the Union: "America is addicted to oil".<sup>5</sup> Acting upon this statement, the Bush administration gave energy a prominent role in US policy, with little room for environmental concerns. A few months after the inauguration of Bush as the new president in 2001, the Bush administration proposed an energy policy, presenting it as a new start for America.<sup>6</sup> The Energy Policy aimed to reduce America's dependency on foreign oil, especially from the Middle East, by focusing more on available domestic oil sources. The major supply of oil available in the Arctic became key to US national interest. With Alaska at the heart of US Arctic policy,<sup>7</sup> the Bush administration strongly advocated onshore drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), claiming that it would "make America less dependent on foreign sources of energy".<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> H. Conley and J. Kraut, *US Strategic Interests in the Arctic: An Assessment of Current Challenges and New Opportunities for Cooperation* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2010) p.1.

<sup>2</sup> R. Clifford, 'What is Obama's Arctic Legacy?' *The Polar Connection* (London: PRPI, 2016) <http://polarconnection.org/obama-arctic-legacy/> (accessed November 2, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> US Geological Survey from the US Department of Interior (2008) <https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2008/3049/> (accessed January 9, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> See: I. Rutledge, *Addicted to Oil: America's Relentless Drive for Energy Security* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> State of the Union by President George W. Bush (January 31, 2006) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65090> (accessed on October 12, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Report of the National Energy Policy Development Group, The White House (May, 2001) <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/energy/2001/index.html> (accessed on October 12, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> US domestic policy towards Alaska is part of its Arctic policy, see R. Huebert, 'The United States Arctic Policy: The Reluctant Arctic Power,' in *SPP Briefing Papers*, vol. 2:2 (May 2009), p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Energy Legislation by President George W. Bush (May 25, 2006) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=62&st=House+of+Representatives+Passage+of+Energy+Legislation&st1=> (accessed on October 12, 2017).

However, drilling in the ANWR received much criticism from Congress and the public because of environmental issues. “When we drill, we spill” was a common phrase from environmental organizations, referring to the high potential damage of oil drilling. They argued that an oil spill would irreversibly harm the Arctic’s environment, on which many people and animals depended.<sup>9</sup> Tom Daschle, Senate Majority Leader and Democrat, made a stance against the administration’s drilling proposal in 2002: “We are just not going to allow Republicans to destroy the environment”.<sup>10</sup> Despite the controversy, Bush kept on promoting drilling in the ANWR as an energy security measure. With the release of the 2008 US Geological Survey (USGS) of the Department of Interior (DOI), the focus of the Bush administration shifted to Alaskan offshore drilling, with the projected amount of undiscovered oil north of the Arctic Circle in mind. As a result, Bush lifted an executive order<sup>11</sup> banning offshore drilling, and pushing Congress to do the same.<sup>12</sup>

During the presidential campaign of 2008, the candidate of the Democratic Party, Barack Hussein Obama, made very clear that he opposed the opening of the ANWR to oil exploration because of environmental concerns. “I strongly reject drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge because it would irreversibly damage a protected national wildlife refuge without creating sufficient oil supplies to meaningfully affect the global market price or have a discernible impact on US energy security”.<sup>13</sup> Obama’s presidential campaign focused on the subject of change. In addition, he promised US citizens that he would combat climate change. Furthermore, he repeatedly stated that climate change and, like the Bush administration had said, dependence on foreign oil were major threats to America’s national interest. The problem of energy was one of the most dangerous threats the nation ever faced.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to the Bush administration, Obama’s solution to both threats was alternative energy. Obama proclaimed an environmental friendly Arctic policy, however, his administration

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Arctic Oil Drilling,’ *Greenpeace* <http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/arctic/issues/oil-drilling/> (accessed December 14, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> ‘Senate rejects drilling for oil in Arctic,’ in *CNN* (April 19, 2002).  
[www.edition.cnn.com/2002/TECH/science/04/18/arctic.refuge/index.html](http://www.edition.cnn.com/2002/TECH/science/04/18/arctic.refuge/index.html) (accessed December 14, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> President George H.W. Bush introduced this drilling ban in 1990.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Bush lifts executive ban on offshore oil drilling,’ in *CNN* (June 14, 2008)  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/07/14/bush.offshore/> (accessed on December 6, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> M. Farrar, *A Line in the Snow. The Battle for ANWR: The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge* (New York: Bloomington, 2009), p. 59.

<sup>14</sup> A. Mahdi, *Energy and US Foreign Policy: The Quest for Resource Security after the Cold War* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2012), p. 191.

adopted several energy policy suggestions from the end-term of the Bush administration.<sup>15</sup> This made Obama's 'environmentalist' campaign and proposals contradict his administration's agreement on offshore drilling in the Energy Plan of March 31, 2010. The Plan endorsed the expansion of domestic offshore oil exploration in Alaska.<sup>16</sup> This contradiction during the first term of the Obama administration, continued during its second term, with the administration promoting environmental protection but at the same time allowing oil company Shell to drill in Arctic waters. This move clearly satisfied the oil industry but upset the administration's environmentalist supporters.<sup>17</sup> Increasing fossil fuel production was not in line with the administration's declared interest in taking action on climate change.

Knowing this, the paradox of offshore drilling in the Arctic region during the Obama administration asks for further research. This raises the question, to what extent did the Arctic policy concerning oil drilling of the Obama Administration actually differ from its predecessor? Or did Obama's Arctic policy turn out to be *old wine in new bottles*? Both administrations recognized energy security crucial to US national interests, however, they both advocated different energy policies stances initially, with the Obama administration highly stressing environmental concerns. This leads to the following research question: **how did US Arctic policy concerning oil drilling changed from 2001-2017 (Bush and Obama administration)?** By researching this question, this thesis will examine how their policy discourses and actual policy strategies differed from each other. What were their key patterns? In what ways did they differ? The next section will elaborate on how academic literature has assessed change in Arctic politics and in particular change in US Arctic policy.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the field of International Relations (IR), scholars in the debate on Arctic politics agree that the Arctic region changed as an area due to climate change. It changed into a more diverse area of interest. During the Cold War (CW), the region was a possible conflict zone for the US and Russia. According to Franklyn Griffiths, militarization of the Arctic was due to “1) the East-West conflict, which shaped the political context for superpower tension; 2) geostrategic settings, which indicated the Arctic was a suitable place for strategic weapons systems; and 3) developments in

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<sup>15</sup> A.K. Fitzsimmons, *Reforming Federal Land Management: Cutting the Gordian Knot* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), note 105 on p. 83.

<sup>16</sup> 'Obama energy plan would open Atlantic and Gulf drilling,' in *CNN* (April 1, 2010) <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/03/31/obama.energy/index.html> (accessed on November 1, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*.

military technology, which produced nuclear weapons”.<sup>18</sup> The Arctic became an area for international cooperation after the CW. Since the end of the twentieth century, Arctic states (US, Russia, Norway, Canada, Finland, Kingdom of Denmark, Iceland and Sweden<sup>19</sup>) have taken numerous actions in order to safeguard their national interests in the region.<sup>20</sup> Scholars as Margaret Blunden argued that both Arctic as well as non-Arctic states in Europe and Asia are aware of the new potentials of the Arctic region, due to economic, security and environmental issues.<sup>21</sup>

Since the 2000s, the IR debate particularly focused on the potential of conflict in the north because of the ‘new’ available resources due to climate change. According to Øyvind Østerud and Geir Hønneland, states have their eyes on natural resources like oil and gas, which has the potential to turn the Arctic into a region of conflict.<sup>22</sup> As noted by Kathrin Keil, there are generally two dominant theoretical schools in the debate on the potential conflict in the Arctic: neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism.<sup>23</sup> Both schools have different perspectives on how international relations work and develop. This also results in differing views on Arctic politics and the region’s future. However, as Keil argued, both schools assume that there is an increasing interest in the north.<sup>24</sup>

Although there is an increasing interest in the north, IR scholars share the consensus that the US has had little to no interest in the region.<sup>25</sup> “The Arctic has seldom figured prominently in US policy discussions. Thus the United States may be characterized as the ‘reluctant’ Arctic power.”<sup>26</sup> Scott G. Borgerson and James Kraska argued that the US mainly stayed on the sidelines in comparison to other states such as Russia. The US has failed to ratify the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as of yet, although different presidential administrations have pledged ratification. As long as the US fails in passing UNCLOS, their

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<sup>18</sup> F. Griffiths, *Arctic Alternatives: Civility of Militarism in the Circumpolar North* (Toronto: Science for Peace, 1992), p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> See member states on <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/member-states> (accessed December 21, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> K. Åtland, ‘Interstate relations in the Arctic: an emerging security dilemma?’ in *Comparative Strategy*, vol. 33:2 (2014): p. 145.

<sup>21</sup> M. Blunden, ‘The new problem of Arctic stability,’ in *Survival*, vol. 51:5 (2009): p. 136.

<sup>22</sup> Ø. Østerud & G. Hønneland, ‘Geopolitics and International Governance in the Arctic,’ in *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*, vol. 5:2 (2014): p. 156-176.

<sup>23</sup> K. Keil, ‘The Arctic: A new region of conflict? The case of oil and gas,’ in *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 49:2 (2014): p. 163.

<sup>24</sup> K. Keil (2014): p. 162.

<sup>25</sup> See for example the work of K. Keil (2014).

<sup>26</sup> R. Huebert (2009), p. 2.

position in the Arctic remains weak.<sup>27</sup> Peter J. May stated that the lack of US interest in the region is due to an ineffective Arctic policy. US Arctic policy is a component driven policy, which has no policy coherence. There are too many different interest groups in the US that all pressure the policy to go in different directions. This results in an ineffective policy in which components are often a “byproduct of broader policy discussion”.<sup>28</sup>

Even though US interest remains relatively low, US Arctic policy changed after 2000. Kristian Åtland argued that the US has taken some serious steps towards a stronger Arctic position. This is reflected in US actions towards, “strengthening military and homeland security capabilities”.<sup>29</sup> Rob Huebert referenced Bush’s new Arctic policy of 2009 as an example of renewed and increasing US interest in the region.<sup>30</sup> Keil agreed, noting that the policy was definitely a sign of growing US Arctic interest. In her article, Keil gave several other examples of increasing interest: “1) debates in Alaska and within the federal government about opening up areas for resource exploration; 2) passed legislature in 2011 by the House of Representatives that would accelerate approvals for drilling in the Arctic by removing regulatory hurdles; and 3) in 2011, the US Secretary of State joined the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting for the first time in US history”.<sup>31</sup> Both Keil and Huebert agreed that US Arctic interest increased but also continued to be relatively low.

This study builds further on the literature that states that US Arctic interest has increased during the last two decades. It will assess change, however, from a different angle. The existing literature on US Arctic policy has mainly focused on the availability of ‘new’ material resources in the region that led to change in policy. This study will focus on the role of the discourse that formed US Arctic policy concerning oil drilling. Discourse Analysis can give an important understanding as to why certain policies were established as well as why and how they changed or continued. Furthermore, the policy discourses on Arctic oil drilling provide insights on the broader discussion, where environmental concerns meet present-day energy challenges. This discussion not only confronted the Bush and Obama administration, but also dominates current debates in world politics.

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<sup>27</sup> S.G. Borgerson, ‘Arctic Meltdown,’ in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 87:2 (2008): p. 63-77 & J. Kraska, *Arctic Security in an Age of Climate Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>28</sup> J.P. May, eds., ‘Policy Coherence and Component-Driven Policymaking: Arctic Policy in Canada and the United States,’ in *The Policy Studies Journal*, vol. 33:1 (2005): p. 57.

<sup>29</sup> K. Åtland (2014): p. 154.

<sup>30</sup> R. Huebert (2009): p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> K. Keil (2014): p. 170.

This thesis demonstrates two key patterns of four presidential administrations (Bush I, Bush II, Obama I, Obama II), with a focus on the political discourse that constructed US Arctic policy concerning oil drilling from 2001-2017. The following section will present the main arguments of the thesis and the supporting theoretical framework. Followed by an outline of the methods employed to achieve rigorous academic standards and results in the study. Afterwards, the various chapters will be set forth briefly.

## **THEORY AND ARGUMENTS**

The main question of this study is: how did US Arctic policy concerning oil drilling change from 2001-2017? In response to this question, this thesis maintains two key arguments. First refers to the administrations' argument of national security, which became the number one priority in US foreign policy after 9/11. The focus on national security in US foreign policy, gave the US presidential administrations the possibility to, "strategically localize the global threat of terrorism in ways that could seem relevant"<sup>32</sup> for, in this case, the Arctic region. This concept of 'strategic localization' maintains that actors can reframe and reconstruct certain ideas and discourses in order to justify and legitimize certain policy actions.<sup>33</sup>

The second argument utilizes the concept of 'self-reliance', used in the policy discourses. The political discourses on the protection of US national security and the defense of American national interest as the central principles, established the necessity for domestic oil drilling. Reliance on foreign oil meant an energy crisis, which could be solved by increasing domestic oil drilling, in order to secure energy and thus becoming self-reliant. The dangers associated with being dependent on foreign oil, "take place within larger discourses of Self and Other".<sup>34</sup> The presidential administrations used the self-reliance rhetoric to make their Arctic policy concerning oil drilling seem legitimate and acceptable, and paved the way towards oil drilling in the Arctic region.

The theoretical framework for these arguments is drawn from the constructivist and discursive approaches. The reason this study selects the constructivist approach in the field of IR, is that it offers the possibilities to go beyond the key suppositions about human nature and behaviour. One of the prominent scholars of constructivism is the political scientist, Alexander

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<sup>32</sup> S.S.F. Regilme, 'Does US Foreign Aid Undermine Human Rights? The 'Thaksinification' of the War on Terror Discourses and the Human Rights Crisis in Thailand, 2001 to 2006,' in *Human Rights Review*, vol. 27 (2018): p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Idem, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> S. Herbstreuth, 'Constructing Dependency: The United States and the Problem of Foreign Oil,' in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, vol. 43:1 (2014): p. 26.



Wendt. In his leading article *Anarchy is What States Make of It*, he opposed the realist statement, that a state's behavior is only an outcome of self-interest based on rational cost-benefit calculations.<sup>35</sup> In social constructivism, the identity of a state and its national interests are subject to social constructions of actors in international relations. The starting point of social constructivism is that international relations mainly rely on these social constructions, which are the processes in which various actors give meaning to their relationships and the social and material world.<sup>36</sup> Social constructivism assumes that, "people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meaning that the objects have for them".<sup>37</sup> Actors define the 'Self' in relation to the 'Other'.<sup>38</sup> In addition, identities regulate which actions actors undertake. This assumption leads to the question of which actions are appropriate. For this, we can refer to the 'logic of appropriateness'.<sup>39</sup>

Wendt emphasized the role of ideational factors in defining identities.<sup>40</sup> Ideas about ideas have been very diverse and discussed in many different disciplines. IR scholar Thomas Risse claimed that "socially shared ideas – be it norms ('collective expectations about proper behavior for a given identity') or social knowledge about cause-and-effect relationships – not only regulate behavior but also constitute the identity of actors."<sup>41</sup> Social constructivism argues that ideas and norms are conveyed through discourse. Discourse can answer the question of how, "ideas go from thought to word to deed, that is, how ideas are conveyed, adopted, and adapted, let alone the actors who convey them to whom, how, where, and why".<sup>42</sup> To this end, this section will further elaborate on the concept of discourse.

Different definitions on the concept of discourse have been developed. There is no unambiguous concept whatsoever to measure discourse. Often referred are two leading scholars of the concept: Michael Foucault and Jürgen Habermas. Foucault focused on how discourses are organized, and which actors are included or excluded in this process. Power is an important aspect in his work. He argued that power spreads through discourses.<sup>43</sup> Habermas, however,

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<sup>35</sup> A. Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It,' in *International Organization*, vol. 45:2 (1992): p. 391-425.

<sup>36</sup> T. Risse, "Let's Argue!": Communicative Action in World Politics,' in *International Organization*, vol. 54:1 (2000): p. 5-6.

<sup>37</sup> A. Wendt (1992): p. 396-397.

<sup>38</sup> Idem.

<sup>39</sup> See: Risse (2000): p. 4, in particular note 8.

<sup>40</sup> A. Wendt (1992).

<sup>41</sup> T. Risse (2000): p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> V. Schmidt, 'Discursive Institutionalism: the Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse,' in *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 11:1 (2008): p. 303-326.

<sup>43</sup> B.C. Stahl, 'Whose Discourse? A Comparison of the Foucauldian and Habermasian Concepts of Discourse in Critical IS Research,' *Proceedings of the 10<sup>th</sup> Americas conference on information systems (2004)*.

argued that power must be abolished in order to establish an ideal condition of ‘communicative action’.<sup>44</sup> In his work *Theory of Communicative Action*, he elaborated on the concept and functions of discourses broadly.<sup>45</sup> This theory maintains that speakers communicate on the basis of a shared understanding. Furthermore, Habermas stated that discourse is not only about what actors say; but also emphasized that is important who actors are addressing their sayings.<sup>46</sup>

IR scholar Vivien Schmidt, building among others on Habermas, defined discourse as the interactive process of ideas. This thesis utilizes the following definition of discourse that has been put forward by Schmidt: “Discourse is not just what is said (ideas) but what is, where, when, how, and why (discursive interaction). Defined in this way, discourse is not just about ‘text’ (what is said) but also about context (where it was said when, how and why); and it is not just about structure (what is said or where it was said) but also about agency (who said what to whom)”.<sup>47</sup> Thus, what Schmidt actually argued, by focusing on the interactive process of discourse, is that ideas and identities are dynamic and subject to challenges, and so, to change.<sup>48</sup> In this sense, national identities are discursively produced, reproduced, and transformed.<sup>49</sup> By focusing on discourse it becomes clear why, how and where some ideas succeed (or not).

Of further importance is Schmidt’s definition of ‘institutions’. Institutions, viewed as social constructs, are the “context within agents think, speak and act’ and ‘the results of agents’ thoughts, words, and actions”.<sup>50</sup> Hence, institutions can limit actors in their actions by serving as structures, but also be produced and changed by the same actors by serving as constructs.<sup>51</sup> Institutional change and continuity is therefore explainable through agents’ ideas and discourse.<sup>52</sup>

But when is a discourse successful? Schmidt stated that a successful discourse is relevant to the concerning problems and issues when it is acceptable, applicable, suitable and resonant. It holds similar requirements as for successful ideas.<sup>53</sup> Another important aspect of discourse, in order to be reliable, is that it has to contain consistency and coherence across policy sectors.

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<sup>44</sup> B.C. Stahl (2004).

<sup>45</sup> J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).

<sup>46</sup> V. Schmidt (2008): p. 310.

<sup>47</sup> V. Schmidt (2008): p. 305.

<sup>48</sup> V. Schmidt, ‘Taking Ideas and Discourse Seriously: Explaining Change Through Discursive Institutionalism as the Fourth New Institutionalism,’ in *European Political Science Review*, vol. 2 (2010): p. 1-25.

<sup>49</sup> R. De Cilla, M. Reisigl & R. Wodak, ‘The discursive construction of national identities,’ in *Discourse & Society*, vol. 10:2 (1999): p. 153.

<sup>50</sup> V. Schmidt (2008): p. 314.

<sup>51</sup> Idem.

<sup>52</sup> Idem, p. 322.

<sup>53</sup> V. Schmidt (2008): p. 311.

Besides this, discourse can also serve in order to sway others of the need of a given course of action.<sup>54</sup> In this sense, it can be said that discourse serves to legitimize a certain policy.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, ideas in discourse must also be considered relevant in a certain context. This requires that the discourse itself needs to be patterned in certain ways. Discourse can therefore explain the dynamics of change and/or continuity in policy. The following section will discuss which methods will be implemented in this thesis.

## **METHODS AND APPROACH**

This study elaborates on US Arctic policy concerning oil drilling, comparing four presidential administrations: Bush I (2001-2005), Bush II (2005-2009), Obama I (2009-2013) and Obama II (2013-2017). The study examines how the administrations' policy discourses and actual policy strategies differed from each other. The structure of this thesis, employing discourse analysis and the earlier mentioned theoretical framework, consists of different elements that will be applied to each of the administrations: 1) US identity and foreign policy; 2) US energy policy; and 3) oil drilling in the Arctic region. Each element is subject to an individual discourse analysis. Because this study wants to emphasize the role of discourse, it employs discourse analysis for explaining and understanding both policy changes and continuity. However, it is important to bear in mind that discourse analysis is not an absolute objective method. Meaning it is never fixed and everything is always open to interpretation and negotiation.<sup>56</sup>

This study will turn in particular to discursive institutionalism (DI) as introduced by Schmidt. Schmidt's understanding of discourse, "as the exchange and the interactive process of ideas"<sup>57</sup> will serve as the starting point for this thesis in order to analyze how the presidential administrations tried to 'sell' and justify their Arctic policy concerning oil drilling by strategically localizing the war on terror and through the rhetoric of self-reliance. The traditional 'new institutionalisms' - rational choice (RI), historical (HI) and sociological (SI) - have all stressed in their own approach the importance of ideas and discourses in different ways. DI differs from these three approaches in that it regards institutions as 'dynamic', as opposed to RI, HI and SI that view institutions more as static and given structures.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> V. Schmidt (2010): p. 10.

<sup>55</sup> Idem, p. 12-13.

<sup>56</sup> T. Mogashoa, 'Understanding Critical Discourse Analysis in Qualitative Research,' in *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education*, vol. 1:7 (2014): p. 104-113.

<sup>57</sup> V. Schmidt (2008): p. 308.

<sup>58</sup> Idem, p. 304.

DI is an interdisciplinary analytical framework that perceives the other three approaches of new institutionalism as part of its own, and incorporates different theories. Every scholar who takes discourse seriously is a discursive institutionalist.<sup>59</sup> The underlying idea of this is that it concerns the fact that both ideas and discourse are taken as the starting point to explain institutional change and continuity. DI as an analytical framework is, however, better able to explain change and continuity because DI not only or mainly focuses on the role of ideas, but also places as much value on the interactive side of discourse.<sup>60</sup> Schmidt argued that the process in which ideas are communicated between political actors and to the public through discourse is the essence in explaining institutional changes and continuity.<sup>61</sup> It must be borne in mind, however, that discourse and ideas that attempt to bring about change do not necessarily have an effect on, “crystallized ideas about rationalist interests and cultural norms or on the frozen landscapes of rationalist incentives, historical paths, and cultural frames”.<sup>62</sup>

Discourses can come in a variety of categories as well as content.<sup>63</sup> Discourse can refer to ideas (policies and programs etc.) and to the interactive processes in which these ideas are transferred to a relevant audience.<sup>64</sup> This study focuses on diverse discourses, such as policies and strategies, speeches and remarks. For the first element in each section, the empirical analysis of this research mainly focuses on State of the Union messages and National Security Strategies (NSS). State of the Union messages serve as the most significant examples of presidential discourse.<sup>65</sup> Together with NSS, they form an important source for analyzing how administrations discursively formed US identity. The focus here is on analyzing key patterns during the relevant period.

Furthermore, major addresses on energy plans, energy bills, and policies form the core of the analysis for the second element of the thesis. To this end, the analysis will focus on a certain degree of consistency and coherence between the foreign policy discourse and energy policy discourse in the period 2001-2017. For the third element, the study analyzes the administrations’ Arctic policy in general and major addresses on Arctic oil drilling. Focus lies on identifying discursive patterns throughout the different presidential administrations.

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<sup>59</sup> V. Schmidt (2010): p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> V. Schmidt (2010): p. 15.

<sup>61</sup> V. Schmidt (2010): p. 15.

<sup>62</sup> Idem, p. 21.

<sup>63</sup> V. Schmidt (2008): p. 309.

<sup>64</sup> Idem.

<sup>65</sup> F. Austermühl, *The Great American Scaffold: Intertextuality and Identity in American Presidential Discourse* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014), p. 41.

Both primary and secondary sources serve as the basis for this study. Quotes from speeches will mainly derive from the archives of the website of *The American Presidency Project*.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, selected texts of the presidents or of members of the administration will be consulted via the official website of the White House of the Bush and Obama archives.<sup>67</sup> Related secondary sources or reflected writings such as case studies of texts or (online) newspaper articles will guide the analysis of the selected texts.<sup>68</sup> The next section will outline the chapter structure of the thesis.

## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The first chapter discusses how the Bush I administration approached the oil drilling question. It analyzes how the Bush administration developed the ‘war on terror’ discourse based on the ‘Axis of Evil’ speech and the work of Frank Auster Mühl.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, it elaborates on the increased US national interest in oil and on the strong ties of the Bush administration with the oil industry. The National Energy Policy speech of 2001 forms the basis for analysis on how Bush linked national security with energy security. Furthermore, the chapter assesses how the administration actively advocated opening up the ANWR for oil drilling.

Chapter 2 builds further on the given context of the pro-exploration argument for the Bush II administration. The State of the Union speech of 2005 serves as the starting point in this chapter, analyzing how the Bush administration’s discourse linked national security with the oil issue in the Arctic region, in his second term. Besides this, the chapter discusses the shift of the Bush II administration from onshore to offshore drilling, and the release of a new US Arctic policy directive in 2009.<sup>70</sup>

The Obama I administration is central to the next chapter. The administration is evaluated in light of how a new president with a proclaimed different ideology than his predecessor during his election campaign, justified oil drilling in Arctic waters during his presidential term through discourse. First, this section analyzes how and why the ‘war on terror’ rhetoric is reflected in Obama’s discourse, guided by the work of IR scholar Michelle Bentley.

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<sup>66</sup> A non-profit and non-partisan project, hosted at the University of California, Santa Barbara: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>

<sup>67</sup> See: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/> and <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/>

<sup>68</sup> F. Auster Mühl (2014), p. 42.

<sup>69</sup> F. Auster Mühl (2014).

<sup>70</sup> National Security Presidential Directive 66 (January 9, 2009) <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-66.pdf> (accessed October 28, 2017).

In addition, this chapter analyzes how the Obama administration portrayed dependence on foreign oil as the biggest threat to US national interest.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, the struggle between environmental ideals and energy challenges is central to the last chapter. How was the Arctic oil issue framed, justified and incorporated in the political discourse of Obama II? This section examines the opposing tendencies of the Obama II administration regarding oil drilling in the Arctic region, by analyzing Obama's 2014 Energy Strategy and the administration's new Arctic approach.

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<sup>71</sup> 'A Comprehensive Plan for Energy Security,' The White House (2010) <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2010/03/31/a-comprehensive-plan-energy-security> (accessed on November 12, 2017).

# 1. BUSH I ADMINISTRATION (2001-2005)

## 1.1 Reshaping US identity

During the Bush I administration, US identity was reshaped by US foreign policy and the political discourses on the ‘war on terror’. However, the big focus on foreign policy was initially not expected from the Bush administration. Throughout Bush’s presidential campaign in 2000, Bush did not present himself as a leader with radical plans regarding US foreign policy.<sup>72</sup> He did not have foreign policy as his main priority. Observers believed Bush would form an administration with experienced advisors, by whom he would be guided in foreign affairs and by whom he would be led to certain policies.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, his foreign policy was expected to be based on isolationism. Bush did not deny that he lacked knowledge about foreign affairs and therefore collected a strong team of advisers.<sup>74</sup>

With the inauguration in January 2001, the Bush administration focused US foreign policy around a set of goals. The introduction of the National Missile Defense (NMD) system would keep the US safe against enemy states having weapons of mass destruction.<sup>75</sup> The administration recognized ‘peace through strength’, and advocated for a strong military force.<sup>76</sup> Besides this, the Bush administration’s foreign policy centered on energy, especially in the Middle East. The first days in office proved the previous general accepted beliefs about Bush wrong.<sup>77</sup> He entered the White House with a mission and believed that a unilateral approach to

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<sup>72</sup> A. Moens, *The Foreign Policy of George W. Bush: Values, Strategy, and Loyalty* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 87.

<sup>73</sup> I.H. Daalder & J.M. Lindsay, ‘Bush Foreign Policy Revolution,’ in *The George W. Bush Presidency: An Early Assessment*, ed. F.I. Greenstein (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 100-102.

<sup>74</sup> Idem, p. 103.

<sup>75</sup> A. Mahdi, *Energy and US Foreign Policy: The Quest for Resource Security after the Cold War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), p. 61.

<sup>76</sup> A. Moens (2016), p. 87.

<sup>77</sup> I.H. Daalder & J.M. Lindsay (2003), p. 112-113.

international relations was the best way to endorse US national interest. This approach became apparent when the Bush administration ended several agreements on multilateral cooperation.<sup>78</sup> Amongst others, the administration decided to withdraw the US from the Kyoto protocol.<sup>79</sup>

Political scientists Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay argued that after the attacks of 9/11, President Bush did not change his approach on how the US had to engage in foreign affairs, but rather confirmed them.<sup>80</sup> The disasters happened during 9/11 opened up opportunities for the Bush administration “to act on those beliefs and develop them in full”.<sup>81</sup> The threat of terrorism and mass weapons was increasing, so President Bush was convinced America needed to abandon the restrictions forced by multilateral agreements. This strategy would be known as the Bush Doctrine.<sup>82</sup>

The administration’s first foreign policy priority became the ‘war on terror’. America’s national security centered on counterterrorism. Bush made this very clear in his ‘Axis of Evil’ speech. “States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. [...] They could attack our allies, or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.”<sup>83</sup> During this speech, Bush discursively defined the US (‘Self’) as ‘good’ by portraying ‘states like these’ (‘Other’) - referring to states in the Middle East - as ‘evil’ and ‘bad’.

As Auster Mühl examined, the leading themes of the speech were ‘security’ and ‘freedom’. He argued that Bush used the term ‘freedom’ on different levels in his speech.<sup>84</sup> First, Bush mentioned that “so long as training camps operate, so long as nations harbor terrorists, freedom is at risk and America and our allies must not, and will not, allow it”.<sup>85</sup> Secondly, he stressed that “it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom’s fight”.<sup>86</sup> Bush mentioned as last that the eventual triumph of that fight will occur, stating that “in this great conflict, my fellow Americans, we will see freedom’s victory”.<sup>87</sup> All the three stages of ‘freedom’ were built on the

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<sup>78</sup> Idem.

<sup>79</sup> Idem, p. 101.

<sup>80</sup> Idem.

<sup>81</sup> Idem.

<sup>82</sup> I.H. Daalder & J.M. Lindsay (2003), p. 101, 103-110.

<sup>83</sup> State of the Union by President George W. Bush (January 29, 2002)

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644> (accessed on November 11, 2017).

<sup>84</sup> F. Auster Mühl (2014), p. 171.

<sup>85</sup> Idem.

<sup>86</sup> Idem.

<sup>87</sup> Idem.



underlying main function of the speech: protecting America's national security against outer threats.<sup>88</sup>

## 1.2 The oil administration

Similar to foreign policy, Bush did not focus on energy nor environment related topics during the presidential campaign of 2000. However, this changed during the administration's first week in office. In January 2001, Bush stressed that a new overall approach to energy was necessary.<sup>89</sup> The US lacked an energy policy since the Jimmy Carter administration (1977-1981).<sup>90</sup> At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, several factors led to an increasing interest in oil exploration. The first factor was the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, which resulted in that US dependency on foreign oil remained a key part in US politics. The second factor was the enormous high level of oil prices in 2000.<sup>91</sup>

Besides these factors, the Bush administration seemed highly in favor of boosting the oil industry. The administration consisted of members like National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and Vice-president Richard Bruce Cheney, who were connected to the oil business.<sup>92</sup> Cheney's claimed position as an oilman later came into disrepute. "The image formed of Cheney [...] is a single-minded representative of oil capitalism. Someone who, given the opportunity, would not hesitate to mould US foreign policy into a form conducive to the business opportunities and profit maximization so earnestly sought after by the huge energy multinationals of which his own company was a leading representative."<sup>93</sup> President Bush himself was also strongly linked to the oil industry.<sup>94</sup> He grew up in Texas, where he was exposed to the oil industry and its economic impact. During his period as governor of the state (1995-2000), Bush booked a lot of support among the many Texan oilmen and royalty owners due to actions like the oil severance tax relief. Bush received the highest amount of financial funding from the oil businesses for his campaign in US history.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Idem.

<sup>89</sup> A. Moens, (2016), p. 78.

<sup>90</sup> See chapter 2 of A. Mahdi (2012).

<sup>91</sup> R. Huebert (2009), p. 6.

<sup>92</sup> A. Mahdi, (2012), p. 57.

<sup>93</sup> I. Rutledge, *Addicted to Oil: America's Relentless Drive for Energy Security* (New York: I.B. Tauris Ltb, 2005), p. 65.

<sup>94</sup> A. Mahdi, (2012), p. 57.

<sup>95</sup> I. Rutledge (2005), p. 59-60.

### 1.3 National security means energy security

Acting upon the statement that a new energy policy was necessary, the administration presented its new Energy Plan in May 2001. A new task force, chaired by Cheney, started with proposals for the Energy Plan in January 2001. As noted in the work of Ahmed Mahdi, the administration's plan echoed Cheney's motto: a strong belief that the government should reduce the limitations on the energy sector and the belief of the crucial role of energy in US national security.<sup>96</sup> It emphasized the exploration of ways "to advance dependable, affordable, and environmentally responsible production and distribution of energy".<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, it called for more domestic energy production. The main aim of the Energy Plan was based on supply-side actions and fossil fuels. It focused on the revival of nuclear energy, more natural gas production, domestic oil exploration and clean coal technology.<sup>98</sup>

The task force and the proposed Energy Plan received much criticism. Environmentalist groups became very critical of the policy procedure because the task force largely overlooked their concerns. President Bush introduced the Energy Plan in May that year as a turning point for the American people. He asked Congress to take its responsibility and to protect US citizens against major threats.<sup>99</sup> "Over-dependence on any one sources of energy, especially a foreign source, leaves us vulnerable to price shock, supply interruptions and, in the worst case, blackmail."<sup>100</sup>

Sebastian Herbstreuth pointed out that "from the American standpoint, Canadian oil is not 'foreign' in the same sense as Middle Eastern oil. The culturally constructed 'foreignness' of imported oil ultimately determines whether dependence is represented as a mutually beneficial economic relationship or as a fundamental threat to national security."<sup>101</sup> Especially the dependence on oil from the Middle East created the image of a national energy crisis because the 'war on terror' was the overarching principle in US policy. The threat of terrorism was reflected in Bush's discourse to legitimize his Energy Plan and related actions. Bush also referred to the Californian blackouts that occurred during that year, and stressed the importance of

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<sup>96</sup> A. Mahdi (2012), p. 60.

<sup>97</sup> Report of the National Energy Policy Development Group, The White House (May 2001).

<sup>98</sup> Remarks announcing the Energy Plan in St. Paul, Minnesota by George W. Bush (May 17, 2001) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=45617&st=Remarks+announcing+the+Energy+Plan+in+St.+Paul%2C+Minnesota&st1=> (accessed on November 1, 2017).

<sup>99</sup> G.H. Eriksen, *From Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush: Presidential Policies and Involvement in the Debate over the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, 1977-2009*, Thesis presented to the University of Oslo (Fall 2009), p. 89.

<sup>100</sup> Remarks Energy Plan in St. Paul, Minnesota (May 17, 2001).

<sup>101</sup> Herbstreuth, 'Constructing Dependency: The United States and the Problem of Foreign Oil,' in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, vol. 43:1 (2014): p. 26.

immediate action to Congress.<sup>102</sup> “If we fail to act, America will face more and more widespread blackout. If we fail to act, our country will become more reliant on foreign crude oil, putting out national energy security into the hands of foreign nations, some of whom who do not share our interests.”<sup>103</sup>

The trend that popped up after 9/11 was the Bush administration starting to present the Energy Plan more and more in terms of national security.<sup>104</sup> Like mentioned in section 1.1, the feeling of national emergency in the US arose after 9/11. In addition, Bush argued that the US was using more energy than they could provide for themselves. This constructed a crisis in energy production that endangered US citizens. Reliance on foreign oil, on ‘enemy states’ like Iraq, was no longer maintainable.

#### 1.4 Onshore drilling in the ANWR

ANWR oil drilling has been subject to a debate in US Congress for a long time.<sup>105</sup> The refuge became a Federal Protected Area in 1960, and twenty years later, the usage of the coastal plain of the ANWR took judicial form in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).<sup>106</sup> ANILCA passed Congress in November 1980 and became law under President Carter. The act gave protection to over thousands acres of land and included the ANWR’s prohibition on development. Several times an effort was made to open the ANWR for oil drills.<sup>107</sup> However, the bipartisan in Congress made sure that it did not happen.

Onshore drilling in the ANWR became a substantial part of the Bush administration’s energy strategy.<sup>108</sup> This resulted in an immediate protest from the Democratic Party and environmental groups. They argued that oil drilling in the coastal plain would lead to irreparable harm of the ANWR.<sup>109</sup> Bush, on his turn, stated that domestic drilling in the ANWR was highly necessary in order to make America self-reliant in terms of oil. “America today imports 52 percent of all our oil. If we don’t take action, those imports will only grow. As long as cars and trucks run on gasoline, we will need oil, and we should produce more of it at home.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> G.H. Eriksen (2009), p. 89.

<sup>103</sup> Remarks Energy Plan in St. Paul, Minnesota (May 17, 2001).

<sup>104</sup> G.H. Eriksen (2009), p. 93-94.

<sup>105</sup> E. Shogren, ‘For 30 Years, a Political Battle Over Oil and ANWR,’ in *NPR* (November 10, 2005) <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5007819> (accessed on December 2, 2017).

<sup>106</sup> R. Huebert (2009), p. 5.

<sup>107</sup> The Reagan administration tried to pass several bills to open up the ANWR.

<sup>108</sup> Onshore drilling refers to drilling deep holes under the earth’s surface.

<sup>109</sup> G.H. Eriksen (2009), p. 89-90.

<sup>110</sup> Remarks Energy Plan in St. Paul, Minnesota (May 17, 2001).

For the Bush administration, the intensified feeling of danger caused by 9/11 further legitimized the prospect of drilling in the ANWR as a way to enhance America's national security. "We need an energy policy that encourages diversification away from place like Iraq. [...] The reason I bring up ANWR is because it just so happens that once production is up and running on a very small footprint in the middle of this vast country, we can produce as much oil as Iraq produces on the world market."<sup>111</sup> Bush stressed in an interview with Wall Street Journal that further exploration in the ANWR was necessary because of recent developments leading to a possible oil embargo.<sup>112</sup>

## 2. BUSH II ADMINISTRATION (2005-2009)

### 2.1 National security argument continues

Bush won the presidential election of 2004 from Democrat John Forbes Kerry. With this victory, Bush kept his foreign policy in his second term focused on the 'war of terror'. "I vowed to the American people after that fateful day of September the 11<sup>th</sup> that we would not rest nor tire until we're safe. The 9/11 Commission put out a report that said America is safer, but not yet safe. There is more work to be done. We'll stay on the hunt on Al Qaida."<sup>113</sup> The 'war on terror' discourse became so embedded in US politics and society during the Bush years that it evolved into a prevailing body of thought. The political discourse created an 'institutionalized construction' of the war.<sup>114</sup> The 'war on terror' was produced and constructed by the Bush administration and required certain 'do's and don'ts' for the administration for the sake of the American people.

"To keep our economy growing we also need reliable supplies of affordable environmentally responsible energy."<sup>115</sup> Bush stressed that his administration already made many

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<sup>111</sup> Bush in an interview with the Wall Street Journal (April 8, 2002)  
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63003&st=Interview+With+the+Wall+Street+Journal&st1=>  
(accessed on December 2, 2017), and see G.H. Eriksen (2009), p. 95.

<sup>112</sup> G.H. Eriksen (2009), p. 95.

<sup>113</sup> Presidential Debate in St. Louis, Missouri (October 8, 2004)  
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=72776&st=Presidential+Debate+in+St.+Louis%2C+Missouri&st1=>  
(accessed on December 14, 2017).

<sup>114</sup> J. Holland, 'Introduction: why is change so hard?' in *Obama's Foreign Policy: Ending the War on Terror*, eds. M. Bentley and J. Holland (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), p. 5.

<sup>115</sup> State of the Union by President George W. Bush (February 2, 2005)  
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58746> (accessed on December 19, 2017).

efforts to achieve environmentally responsible energy. He argued that his 2001 Energy Plan encouraged alternative sources, modernized electricity grid, and safe, clean nuclear energy.<sup>116</sup> Besides the Energy Plan, his “Clear Skies legislation will cut powerplant pollution and improve the health of our citizens. And my budget provides strong funding for leading-edge technology, from hydrogen-fueled cars to clean coal to renewable sources such as ethanol.”<sup>117</sup> In this sense, hence, it appears that the Bush administration already undertook substantial efforts for renewable energy. However, many environmental groups and Democrats in Congress opposed this assumption. They were of the opinion that the Bush administration had environmental interests as its last priority.<sup>118</sup> Representing the case that he already made enough efforts, Bush urged Congress “to pass legislation that makes America more secure and less dependent on foreign energy”.<sup>119</sup>

## 2.2 New energy bills

Two attempts for a new energy bill failed to pass Congress during Bush’ first term, but in 2005 and 2007, two new Energy Acts were signed into law.<sup>120</sup> Laurance Geri and David McNabb argued that the content of the acts tried to satisfy as many stakeholders as possible. “It was to forge a public policy in which all parties with a stake in the energy pool win some victories and no group loses all.”<sup>121</sup> In Congress and in the American public, several actors, who all had their own view on how to shape US energy policy and how to exploit resources, drove the energy debate. An energy bill needed to satisfy – at least parts of - the two ‘major sides’ of the debate in order to pass Congress. Briefly, these major approaches to energy were: 1) a safe and environmental friendly approach; and 2) an approach that argued for the development of fossil fuels.<sup>122</sup> Nevertheless, although the energy bills showed an increasingly important position for renewable energy, the Bush administration made clear that they in particular supported the exploration of fossil fuels in order to pursue US national interests.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Idem.

<sup>117</sup> Idem.

<sup>118</sup> D. Jehl, ‘On Environmental Rules, Bush Sees a Balance, Critics a Threat,’ in *The New York Times* (February 23, 2003) <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/23/us/on-environmental-rules-bush-sees-a-balance-critics-a-threat.html> (accessed on December 14, 2017).

<sup>119</sup> State of the Union (February 2, 2005).

<sup>120</sup> Energy Policy Act of 2005 and Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, see L.R. Geri & D.E. McNabb, *Energy Policy in the US: Politics, Challenges, and Prospects for Change* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 72.

<sup>121</sup> Idem.

<sup>122</sup> R. Huebert (2009), p. 6.

<sup>123</sup> C. Bakker & F. Francioni, *The EU, the US and Global Climate Governance* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2014), p. 184 and see also G.H. Eriksen (2009), p. 101-106.

Both bills originally included opening up the ANWR for oil drilling.<sup>124</sup> By continuously stressing the need of opening up the ANWR because of US national security, the Bush administration was ‘asking everyone to put national interest and a certain level of patriotism over other possible concerns’.<sup>125</sup> In addition, Bush continued arguing that oil exploration in the refuge could be done in environmentally safe and secure ways. Therefore, Bush referred to the CRS report that presented that oil exploration now could be done many times safer than decades ago due to developments in technology.<sup>126</sup> The report stated: “Production drilling techniques using slim hole technology, such as coiled tubing and multilateral drilling, can contribute to smaller footprints, less waste, and better recovery of hydrocarbons from each well.”<sup>127</sup>

The administration, however, did not succeed in attaching the ANWR issue to one of the bills. Congress was too divided on the ANWR when it came to the question of oil drilling.<sup>128</sup> Although the Republican Party controlled Congress during Bush’s first term, he did not achieve to pass an act that legitimized ANWR oil drilling. In 2007, the Democratic Party became a majority in Congress (110<sup>th</sup> Congress).<sup>129</sup> This made it even harder for the Bush administration to open up the ANWR for further exploration by legislative ways. Republicans and Democrats were advocating different approaches to the ANWR and to energy in general, and they could not agree on the issues.

### 2.3 From onshore to offshore drilling in the Arctic

Chapter 1.2 already discussed several reasons why interest in oil exploration increased at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2008, another factor joined in line that strengthened the pro-domestic oil drilling argument, and in particular in the Arctic region. The USGS of the DOI studied that the Arctic region might cover enormous amounts of oil supplies. It predicted that the Arctic region contained more than 30% of the world’s unexplored gas and 13% of unexplored oil reserves.<sup>130</sup> Important for the Arctic case was that approximately 30 million barrels of oil were

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<sup>124</sup> See G.H. Eriksen (2009), p. 101-104.

<sup>125</sup> Idem, p. 96 and see also: H. Seckingelgin, *The Environmental and International Politics: International Fisheries, Heidegger and Social Method* (London: Routledge, 2006) p. 5.

<sup>126</sup> G.H. Eriksen (2009), p. 89-90, 96.

<sup>127</sup> B.A. Gelb, eds., ‘Arctic Petroleum Technology Developments,’ CRS Report (January 23, 2006).

<sup>128</sup> G.H. Eriksen (2009), p. 104.

<sup>129</sup> This was for the first time since 1995.

<sup>130</sup> See R. Huebert (2009), p. 6. and US Geological Survey from the US Department of Interior (2008) <https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2008/3049/> (accessed January 9, 2018).

expected to be hidden in the waters directly off the north coast of Alaska.<sup>131</sup> The only way to find out was to start offshore drilling.<sup>132</sup>

The US could start offshore drilling in the Arctic region in two different areas: the Beaufort Sea and the Chukchi Sea. During the 90's, the Department of Interior did not receive much interest for lease sales in Arctic waters for development and exploration.<sup>133</sup> However, this changed at the beginning of 2000. In February 2008, there was a bidding record of \$2.6 billion on leases for development in the Chukchi Sea. Shell Gulf of Mexico Inc. and ConocoPhillips were the most active bidders.<sup>134</sup> There was a lot of opposition from environmental groups when federal authorities had approved Shell on offshore drilling in 2008. Finally, a court decision withheld Shell to start with the drilling plan, stating that the US government did not do a good enough research to study the precise complications of the planned drilling.<sup>135</sup>

Building forward on the arguments that the Arctic waters contained enormous amounts of oil and that drilling could be done environmentally safe, Bush lifted an executive order (introduced by his father in 1990) banning offshore drilling. Given that offshore drilling also was a federal ban, it mainly had symbolic value.<sup>136</sup> Bush urged Congress to do the same. Besides this, he demanded Congress again to open up the ANWR for oil exploration. He stressed the need of these opportunities, and continued declaring that those steps would “strengthen our national security”.<sup>137</sup> Bush accused Democrats of being the reason that oil prices were currently reaching enormous heights, because they had opposed some of the administration's energy policies, especially on Arctic issues. At first, Democrats were skeptical about lifting the offshore drilling ban. However, they agreed later that year to allow offshore drilling in Alaska's Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> R. Huebert (2009), p. 6.

<sup>132</sup> Offshore drilling contains drilling underneath the seabed.

<sup>133</sup> Oil leases are agreements between parties to allow oil companies to have access to the property and mineral on the property of the government <http://www.oil-gas-leases.com/oil-lease-description.html> (accessed November 2, 2017).

<sup>134</sup> R. Huebert (2009), p. 6-7.

<sup>135</sup> R. Huebert (2009), p. 6-7. See also: ‘Shell delays Alaska drilling plan due to legal dispute,’ in *Reuters* (June 20, 2008)

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/businessproind-alaska-shell-drilling-dc/shell-delays-alaska-drilling-plan-due-legal-dispute-idUKN2020246220080620> (accessed November 18, 2017).

<sup>136</sup> ‘Bush lifts executive ban on offshore oil drilling,’ in *CNN* (July 14, 2008)

<http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/07/14/bush.offshore/> (accessed on December 6, 2017).

<sup>137</sup> S.G. Stolberg, ‘Bush Calls for End to Ban on Offshore Drilling,’ in *New York Times* (June 19, 2008)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/19/washington/19drill.html> (accessed on October 29, 2017).

<sup>138</sup> C. Hulse, ‘Bill Would End Costal Oil Drilling Ban,’ in *New York Times* (September 23, 2008)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/24/washington/24offshore.html?> (accessed December 12, 2017) and see also G.H. Eriksen (2009), p. 105.

## 2.4 A new Arctic approach

The Bush II Administration presented in its final days on January 12, 2009, a presidential directive, launching a new US policy for the Arctic region. This directive was issued as National Security Presidential Directive 66/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 25 (NSPD/66/HSPD 25). It replaced the previous 1994 presidential directive on Arctic policy.<sup>139</sup> The process of developing a new Arctic policy started in 2007, and although many supposed that it would be finished before the 2008 presidential election, it was released at the end of Bush's presidential term.<sup>140</sup>

Rob Huebert argued that the new policy, comparing it to the 1994 Arctic policy, differed on two issues. First, “the earlier policy stated that ‘the United States *has been* an Arctic nation,’ while the 2009 document states that ‘the United States *is* an Arctic nation’”.<sup>141</sup> Secondly, the policy placed Alaska at the center of US Arctic interests.<sup>142</sup> Comparing the 1994 and 2009 documents to each other, the same basic aims arise. However, as noted by Huebert, the order of priorities changed. The first priority of the 1994 directive was protecting the Arctic environment. With the new policy release in 2009, America's focus shifted to national and homeland security as main objective in the Arctic. According to Huebert, this was a reflection of the changes after the terrorist attacks of 2001.<sup>143</sup> The new Arctic policy reflected what the Bush administration also considered as the main priorities in US foreign policy: protect US national security and safeguard US national interests.

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<sup>139</sup> R. O'Rourke, 'Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues for Congress,' CRS Report (December 11, 2017) p. 6.

<sup>140</sup> Huebert (2009), p. 2.

<sup>141</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>142</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>143</sup> Huebert (2009), p. 3.



### **3. THE OBAMA I ADMINISTRATION (2009-2013)**

#### 3.1 Platform of change

The presidency of Barack Obama started during a tumultuous time for the US. Obama's most important task was to protect American interest while dealing with the decline of America's global empire and the economic crisis of 2008.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, the ongoing war in Iraq was a sensitive topic back home in America. Obama argued that the war was moving the focus of the US away from the 'real threats' and challenges the country had to deal with. "This war diminishes our security, our standing in the world, our military, our economy, and the resources that we need to confront the challenges of the twenty-first century. By any measure, our single-minded and open-ended focus on Iraq is not a sound strategy for keeping America safe."<sup>145</sup> In this turbulent time, Obama had to figure out what he believed were the most critical issues the US was facing. He argued for change during his presidential campaign in 2008. He promised change. Change in

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<sup>144</sup> A. Mahdi (2012), p. 91.

<sup>145</sup> A.R. Dimaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope: Presidential Rhetoric, the News Media, and US Foreign Policy Since 9/11* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2015), p. 33.

different aspects of policy as foreign and energy policy.<sup>146</sup> “It is no coincidence that one of the most secretive administrations in history has pursued policies that have been disastrous for the American people. Obama and Biden will reverse President Bush’s policy of secrecy.”<sup>147</sup>

The Obama administration differed from the Bush administration on how the US had to engage in world politics.<sup>148</sup> Obama’s foreign policy centered on cooperation and working together with allies all over the world; both states, NGOs, and other global groups on the international stage. Multilateralism became key and the US needed to ‘share the burden’. Obama was a big supporter of working with international institutions to achieve its international and national goals.<sup>149</sup> His multilateral perspective on US foreign policy renounced Bush’s unilateral approach.

Obama’s emphasis in US foreign policy, however, as similar to Bush, remained on counterterrorism. Although Obama proclaimed that he strictly opposed America’s war, the language on war remained in the core of his foreign policy. He also placed much focus on protecting US national interests. He removed the term ‘war on terror’ out of his political discourse, nevertheless, he imitated the rhetorical framework of the Bush years.<sup>150</sup> The 2010 National Security Strategy clearly stated that the US was not fighting the war on terror anymore, but was still responding to terrorism.<sup>151</sup>

Why? Why was there so little change in Obama’s foreign policy although he proclaimed to take another stance than his predecessor towards the war? Various reasons can be put forward why his foreign policy differed so little.<sup>152</sup> For example, that Obama “declined to implement greater change because he was ideologically opposed to it from the outset” or “failed to appreciate the demands of holding office whilst campaigning and adjusted accordingly once elected”.<sup>153</sup> Michelle Bentley argued that it was highly difficult for the Obama administration to break free out of Bush’ prevailing ‘stubborn’ foreign policy discourse. The ‘war on terror’ “had become so

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<sup>146</sup> See: B. Obama, ‘Blueprint for Change: Obama and Biden’s Plan for America,’ (2008)

<https://my.ofa.us/page/-/Action%20Center/ObamaBlueprintForChange.pdf> (accessed December 29, 2017).

<sup>147</sup> J. Toomey, *Change You Can Really Believe In: The Obama Legacies of Broken Promises and Failed Policies* (Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2012), p. 392, and ‘Blueprint for Change,’ (2008), p. 55

<https://archive.org/details/346512-obamablueprintforchange> (accessed December 29, 2017).

<sup>148</sup> S.M. Birkenthal, ‘Grand Strategy in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Carter, Bush, and Obama Doctrines,’ *CMC Senior Theses*. Paper 598 (2013), p. 68.

<sup>149</sup> *Idem*, p. 68-69.

<sup>150</sup> M. Bentley, ‘Ending the unendable. The rhetorical legacy of the war on terror,’ in *The Obama Doctrine: A Legacy of Continuity in US Foreign Policy?*, eds. M. Bentley and J. Holland (Oxford: Routledge, 2017), p. 57.

<sup>151</sup> National Security Strategy, The White House (May 2010) <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2010.pdf> (accessed January 10, 2018).

<sup>152</sup> J. Holland, ‘Introduction: why is change so hard?’ in *Obama’s Foreign Policy: Ending the War on Terror*, eds. M. Bentley and J. Holland (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), p.1.

<sup>153</sup> *Idem*.

embedded within political dialogue that not even its originators could restrain it”.<sup>154</sup> Bush’s institutionalized construction of the war was so deep-rooted in the structures of US politics and society that it was almost impossible for Obama to break out of it. The post 9/11 narratives on the role of America in the world and America’s fights against terrorism have therefore been decisive for Obama’s foreign policy in his first term.<sup>155</sup>

### 3.2 The threat of climate change

In 2008, oil prices reached enormous heights, which made it a dominant topic in the presidential race.<sup>156</sup> Republicans continued supporting the solution of domestic oil drilling as a solution for US oil dependence on foreign countries. Obama acknowledged the energy crisis and the threat of dependency on foreign oil. However, further exploration of fossil fuels was not his solution during his 2008 campaign because of environmental concerns.<sup>157</sup>

The issue of climate change has been a controversial subject in American politics after World War II. During the 60’s and 70’s, ‘the greens’ booked some big successes in US Congress, which is viewed as the Golden Era for environmentalists.<sup>158</sup> However, it was followed by a period of ‘legislative gridlock’. Congress was bipartisan about environmental issues, preventing any ecological laws to pass.<sup>159</sup> As outlined Christopher Klyza and David Sousa, environmentalist kept addressing climate issues in Congress, and with the realities of climate change becoming stronger, the ‘green drift’ moved forward.<sup>160</sup> That Obama as a pro-environmentalist candidate had the potential to become the next president of the US in 2008, showed that America’s awareness of climate change and US support of sustainable developments was increasing, both in politics and in US public.<sup>161</sup>

With regard to America’s ‘energy crisis’, Obama published during his campaign the Obama-Biden Energy Plan called *New Energy for America*. This Energy Plan stressed the importance of change and that the US could no longer be reliant on foreign sources of oil. “We

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<sup>154</sup> M. Bentley (2017), p. 57.

<sup>155</sup> Idem.

<sup>156</sup> J. Nyman, ‘Energy security under Obama,’ in *The Obama Doctrine: A Legacy of Continuity in US Foreign Policy?* in *The Obama Doctrine: A Legacy of Continuity in US Foreign Policy?*, eds. M. Bentley and J. Holland (Oxford: Routledge, 2017), p. 195.

<sup>157</sup> Idem.

<sup>158</sup> C. Klyza and D. Sousa, ‘Beyond Gridlock: Green Drift in American Environmental Policymaking’ in *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 125:3 (2010): p. 443-463.

<sup>159</sup> Idem, p. 443.

<sup>160</sup> Idem, 445-446.

<sup>161</sup> Idem.

must act quickly and we must act boldly to transform our entire economy.”<sup>162</sup> Obama argued that the solution to the threats of US national interests was alternative energy.<sup>163</sup> The approach of the Bush administration would not result in a long-term solution. The US had to focus more on sustainable energy that would provide more jobs for US citizens and a better world to live in.<sup>164</sup> One of the administration’s first steps towards clean energy was the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which included many objectives to invest in sustainable energy. Obama’s election and campaign indicated change, in both environmental as energy policy.<sup>165</sup>

The possibility of the Obama presidency meant new hopes for environmentalists, who felt forgotten under the umbrella of the Bush presidency. Obama, however, like his predecessors, sensed the warm breath of high gas prices at the pump in his neck.<sup>166</sup> Slowly, climate change disappeared out of his political discourse.<sup>167</sup> The emphasis shifted to lessen the addiction of foreign oil.

In the case of Arctic policy, the Obama I Administration continued operating under the Arctic policy of 2009, in which ‘national security’ replaced ‘environmental concerns’ as the US number one priority in the Arctic region. The administration’s National Security Strategy of 2010 reiterated the national security priority:

‘The United States is an Arctic Nation with broad and fundamental interests in the Arctic region, where we seek to meet our national security needs, protect the environment, responsibly manage resources, accounts for indigenous communities, support scientific research, and strengthen international cooperation on a wide range of issues.’<sup>168</sup>

### 3.3 Contrasting decision

During his 2008 campaign, Obama stated that he refused drilling in the ANWR because of ecological reasons. “I strongly reject drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge because it would irreversibly damage a protected national wildlife refuge without creating sufficient oil supplies to meaningfully affect the global market price or have a discernible impact on US energy

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<sup>162</sup> ‘Barack Obama and Joe Biden: New Energy for America,’ (2008)

[https://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/edg/media/Obama\\_New\\_Energy\\_0804.pdf](https://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/edg/media/Obama_New_Energy_0804.pdf) (accessed on November 29, 2017).

<sup>163</sup> A. Mahdi (2012), p. 191.

<sup>164</sup> Idem, p. 190-193.

<sup>165</sup> J. Nyman (2017), p. 196.

<sup>166</sup> A.C. Revkin, ‘The Obama Energy Speech Annotated,’ in *The New York Times* (August 5, 2008)

<https://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/08/05/the-obama-energy-speech-annotated/> (accessed December 6, 2017).

<sup>167</sup> See: J. Nyman (2017).

<sup>168</sup> See R. O’Rourke, *CRS Report* (2017), p. 7 and National Security Strategy, White House (May 2010), p. 50.

security.”<sup>169</sup> He held on to this statement, with the support of many environmentalist, during his first presidential term to combat climate change.

On March 31, 2010, Obama announced a decision on the Arctic region that received much criticism of both members of the Democratic Party as environmental groups. In his speech, he presented the administration’s new Energy Plan.<sup>170</sup> Although the plan included pro-environmental objectives to promote clean energy innovation, such as greening the federal fleet, and landmark car and truck fuel standards, the emphasis on climate change started to gradually disappear out of Obama’s political discourse.<sup>171</sup> The new Energy Plan included opening up new offshore oil drilling areas in the Arctic region. This was in contrast to Obama’s earlier statement in 2008, in which he opposed lifting the ban on offshore drilling. “Given our energy needs, in order to sustain economic growth and produce jobs, and keep our businesses competitive, we are going to need to harness traditional sources of fuel even as we ramp up production of new sources of renewable, homegrown energy. [...] This is not a decision that I’ve made lightly.”<sup>172</sup> He framed the exploration of fossil fuels in a way that energy security could undermine climate security.

According to Obama, the continuation of supporting development of leased areas in the Arctic was part of a larger strategy “that will move us from an economy that runs on fossil fuels and foreign oil to one that relies more on homegrown fuels and clean energy”.<sup>173</sup> The decision reflects the amount of pressure that lay upon Obama’s shoulders to boost domestic oil production.<sup>174</sup> Several factors can be put forward for this. First, Obama was inaugurated directly after the economic crisis of 2008, thus the economic pressure was high. Besides that, Congress was still largely divided on the energy issue, with Republicans never agreeing on an energy plan entirely based on renewable energy. Furthermore, it was an impossible task to completely transform an energy industry that was largely based on fossil fuels, into sustainable energy in a single presidential term. The Obama administration had to make choices.

Point of interest is the rhetoric used to legitimize Obama’s action. His discourse stressed ‘an economy that runs on foreign oil’, which implied a threat to US national security. In addition, Obama promised a growing sustainable energy industry while boosting the fossil fuel production

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<sup>169</sup> M. Farrar (2009), p. 59.

<sup>170</sup> Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland by Barack Obama (March 31, 2010) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=87685&st=Remarks+at+Andrews+Air+Force+Base%2C+Maryland&st1=> (accessed on December 6, 2017).

<sup>171</sup> See: J. Nyman (2017), p. 195.

<sup>172</sup> Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland (March 31, 2010).

<sup>173</sup> Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland (March 31, 2010).

<sup>174</sup> K. Keil (2014): p. 164.

at the same time. Many environmentalist groups and Democrats in Congress, who felt betrayed by Obama for supporting the development of leased areas in the Arctic region, received the decision negatively. The administration's offshore drilling choice did not align with Obama's pro-environmentalist campaign.<sup>175</sup>

### 3.4 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

A month after the release of the energy plan, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill happened in the Gulf of Mexico. One of the leading oil and gas companies British Petroleum (BP) caused an environmental disaster by leaking tons of oil in ocean water after an explosion. Several states in the US called a state of emergency because of the amount of oil threatening the south coast of the US.<sup>176</sup> The oil spill fueled US debate about offshore drilling. In 2008, the debate on offshore drilling was polarized between two fundamentally opposed groups, the same groups who were active in the ANWR debate.

With the BP oil disaster, both sides were back on their toes. Obama again received much criticism on his earlier decision on opening up offshore areas in the Arctic region. The oil spill became the perfect example for environmentalist to point out how much damage oil drilling could cost. On April 30, 2010, the Obama administration announced that no drilling was allowed in new areas until full investigation of the cause of the spill was conducted.<sup>177</sup> Although Obama stressed that the environment came before all other issues, and that no other areas would undergo the same disaster, it did not take long before the offshore drilling ban was lifted again on October 12, 2010.<sup>178</sup> The DOI and Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) had published a new policy in which new guidelines were presented that have been put in place for companies that wanted to drill. Kenneth Lee Salazar, Secretary of the DOI, believed that by implementing these new requirements, enough measurements were taken by the Obama administration to lift the offshore drilling moratorium.<sup>179</sup>

The six-month suspension ended six weeks too early, which led to anger of the environmental organizations who accused the Obama administration of scheduling the end of the

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<sup>175</sup> M.J. Graetz, *The End of Energy: The Unmaking of America's Environment, Security, and Independence* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011), p. 161.

<sup>176</sup> 'BP oil spill timeline,' in *The Guardian* (July 22, 2010) <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/jun/29/bp-oil-spill-timeline-deepwater-horizon> (accessed on December 12, 2017).

<sup>177</sup> 'BP oil spill timeline,' in *The Guardian* (July 22, 2010).

<sup>178</sup> 'US drops oil drilling moratorium,' in *The Guardian* (October 13, 2010) <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/oct/13/us-drops-oil-drilling-moratorium> (accessed on December 10, 2017).

<sup>179</sup> *Idem*.

moratorium to the midterm-elections in November.<sup>180</sup> “This is pure politics of the most cynical kind. It is all about the election season, not safety and environmental concerns,” stated Phil Radford, Greenpeace USA executive director. “The White House wants us to believe that they solved all the dangers of offshore drilling and we can return to our business as usual. It is a false promise, if not a big lie.”<sup>181</sup> The Deepwater Horizon oil spill led the DOI to take a more careful approach to offshore oil exploration, but only in the short term. With Congress being controlled by Republicans again and the oil prices increasing repeatedly (from \$80 per barrel in 2010 to more than \$111 in 2011<sup>182</sup>), high pressure lay on the Obama administration to reopen offshore areas, especially in Arctic waters.

## 4. OBAMA II ADMINISTRATION (2013-2017)

### 4.1 Minor linguistic changes

In the election debates of 2012 against the Republican Party’s nominee Mitt Romney, Obama responded to the question of what he believed was the greatest future threat to US national security. His answer was clear: “It will continue to be terrorist networks. We have to remain vigilant.”<sup>183</sup> In his speech at the US Military Academy at West Point, Obama also stated that “for the foreseeable future, the most direct threat to America at home and abroad remains terrorism”.<sup>184</sup> In addition, his 2014 State of the Union speech also reflected that the language of war was still a central element to his foreign policy. “We have to remain vigilant. [...] So even as

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<sup>180</sup> Idem.

<sup>181</sup> Idem.

<sup>182</sup> E. Russel and S.K. Fairfax, *Guide to US Environmental Policy* (California: CQ Press, 2014), p. 196.

<sup>183</sup> Presidential Debate in Boca Raton, Florida (October 22, 2012)

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=102344&st=Presidential+Debate+in+Boca+Raton%2C+Florida&st1=> (accessed on January 12, 2018).

<sup>184</sup> R. Jackson and C. Tsui, ‘War on Terror II: Obama and the adaptive evolution of US counterterrorism,’ in *The Obama Doctrine: A Legacy of Continuity in US Foreign Policy?*, eds. M. Bentley and J. Holland (Oxford: Routledge, 2017), p. 71.

we actively and aggressively pursue terrorist networks through more targeted efforts and by building the capacity of our foreign partners, America must move off a permanent war footing.”<sup>185</sup> The prevailing idea that terrorism was one of the biggest threats to the US, became an “established, institutionally and culturally embedded feature of American politics”.<sup>186</sup> Counterterrorism was clearly the main priority in Obama’s foreign policy and had become an overarching principle.

The commitment to ‘share the burden’ with allies and partners is also clearly reflected in Obama’s second term. “Instead of sending large ground forces overseas, we’re partnering with nations from South Asia to North Africa to deny safe haven to terrorists who threaten America”.<sup>187</sup> The political discourse of Obama in his second term left clear that the US would benefit from cooperation in counterterrorism. In addition, Obama also proclaimed to focus on local troops and less on US troops on fighting terrorism abroad, also known as the ‘no boots on the ground’ policy.<sup>188</sup>

This multilateral approach, however, resulted in minimal changes in Obama’s foreign policy due to Bush’s institutionalized construction of the ‘war on terror’. The continuity in Obama’s counterterrorism discourse prevailed, and this resulted only in a few demonstrable changes. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is difficult for actors to break out of a dominant discourse and coherent ruling structures. The rhetoric is solidified and “embedded as a powerful and ubiquitous narrative and discourse into the political-cultural economy of American society, thereby transforming it into a durable social structure; that is, it has become a hegemonic discourse and a counterterrorism ‘regime of truth’”.<sup>189</sup>

#### 4.2 ‘All-out, all of the above’

Obama ended his first term with a new energy strategy: the ‘all-out, all of the above’ approach, which contained a combination of renewable energy and exploration of fossil fuels. This resulted in - despite the BP oil spill - a huge increase in oil and gas exploration and offshore drilling. The ‘all-out, all of the above’ approach received much opposition from environmental groups.<sup>190</sup> “If he intends to pass on a healthy and sustainable world to our children, there is no place for the

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<sup>185</sup> State of the Union by President Barack Obama (January 28, 2014) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=104596> (accessed on December 29, 2017).

<sup>186</sup> R. Jackson and C. Tsui (2017), p. 71.

<sup>187</sup> State of the Union by President Barack Obama (January 20, 2015) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=108031> (accessed on January 3, 2018).

<sup>188</sup> R. Jackson and C. Tsui (2017), p. 75.

<sup>189</sup> R. Jackson and C. Tsui (2017), p. 78.

<sup>190</sup> J. Nyman (2017), p. 195-196.



Keystone pipeline, 'clean coal', fracking Arctic oil drilling or giant giveaways to the coal industry."<sup>191</sup>

Climate change was hard to find in Obama's policy discourse.<sup>192</sup> Despite the fact that Obama advocated the rise of sustainable and clean energy in 2008, the focus in 2012 shifted to fossil fuels and indicates a clear change in Obama's policy discourse. 'Energy' had become the key word in the 2012 elections.<sup>193</sup> This was not surprising as the US still tried to recover from the 2008 crisis. In this situation, focus on climate change was not a ticket to presidential victory. "What has increased America's energy security is our strategy over the past several years to reduce our reliance on dirty fossil fuels from unstable parts of the world."<sup>194</sup> Also in his second term, Obama's discourse presented the idea that oil from the Middle East was no longer tenable because of the hostile states. Or in his words: 'unstable parts of the world' for which he indirectly refers to same states that America was fighting against in its war. Furthermore, he stated that US oil imports were also indirect funding terrorist groups.<sup>195</sup>

#### 4.3 Climate change: back on the table?

In 2013, Obama's rhetoric changed to some extent.<sup>196</sup> Climate change slowly skulked back again into his discourse, and he started to link it to security. During a speech at Georgetown University, he noted that the world's condition was urgently calling for action because of climate change. "As a president, as a father and as an American, I'm here to say we need to act."<sup>197</sup> Furthermore, Obama presented his Climate Action Plan in 2013, which stressed the safety issues arising from climate change and called for immediate action. Climate change started to play a greater role in Obama's discourse during his second term. In this respect, he increasingly emphasized the earnestness because of the major negative consequences for US security.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> P. Radford, 'For our future, today can't be Obama's final #ActOnClimate,' in *Greenpeace International* (June 25, 2013) <https://www.greenpeace.org/archive-international/en/news/Blogs/makingwaves/obama-act-on-climate/blog/45717/> (accessed on January 3, 2018).

<sup>192</sup> J. Nyman (2017), p. 196-197.

<sup>193</sup> Idem.

<sup>194</sup> Remarks on the Keystone XL Pipeline Project by President Barack Obama (November 6, 2015) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=111023&st=Remarks+on+the+Keystone+XL+Pipeline+Project&st1=> (accessed on January 4, 2018).

<sup>195</sup> V. Aghai, *Obama's Empty Promises Vanished Hopes: An Analytical Review of a President's Policy Failures* (Bloomington: Xlibris, Corp., 2014), p. 134.

<sup>196</sup> J. Nyman (2017), p. 200.

<sup>197</sup> Remarks by the President on Climate Change, The White House (June 25, 2013) <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/25/remarks-president-climate-change> (accessed on January 13, 2017).

<sup>198</sup> J. Nyman (2017), p. 200.

Obama's rhetorical change is perceptible, however, Obama's energy policy continued to undermine concerns about climate change.<sup>199</sup> This was reflected in Obama's new 2014 Energy Strategy. The presented goals in his new strategy made it clear that 'a clean energy future' was at the bottom of the list of priorities, with the 'support for economic growth' and 'enhancing energy security' as the front-runners.<sup>200</sup> During his second term as president, he not only continued but also expanded fossil fuel exploration.<sup>201</sup>

The National Security Strategy presented by the Obama administration in 2015 once again emphasized the importance of energy security, with the focus on 'energy independence'. "The all-of-the-above energy strategy I announced a few years ago is working, and today, America is closer to energy independence than we have been in decades."<sup>202</sup> The energy policy kept on focusing on increasing fossil fuel production because of energy independence, and consequently undermined environmental concerns. According to IR scholar Jonna Nyman, Obama's policy attempted to give the impression that increasing domestic oil production was "the cure for all ills".<sup>203</sup> Nyman argued that Obama has done very little in changing US environmental policy. This was not only due to the 'unwillingness' of the Obama administration, but also to the setbacks by the US Congress.<sup>204</sup> In his second term, Obama tried to pass several laws in Congress in the field of renewable energy, however, he often ended up with a lump of coal in his stocking.

#### 4.4 Towards more balance in the Arctic region

As far as the US Arctic policy is concerned, the Obama II administration launched several initiatives that included securing US national interests and protection of the Arctic environment. In May 2013, Obama presented the National Security Strategy for the Arctic region that complemented Bush's 2009 Arctic policy directive.<sup>205</sup> The 2013 document tried to achieve a better balance between security interests and climate change. In his second term, Obama also stressed the dangers of climate change and the importance of protecting the Arctic environment more often. "Last year, temperatures in some areas of the ocean reached record highs, and ice in the Arctic shrank to its smallest size on record, faster than most models had predicted it would.

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<sup>199</sup> J. Nyman (2017), p. 203.

<sup>200</sup> 'New Report: The All-of-the-Above Energy Strategy as a Path to Sustainable Economic Growth,' The White House (May 29, 2014) <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2014/05/29/new-report-all-above-energy-strategy-path-sustainable-economic-growth> (accessed on January 4, 2018).

<sup>201</sup> J. Nyman (2017), p. 195, 204.

<sup>202</sup> State of the Union (2014).

<sup>203</sup> J. Nyman (2017), p. 200.

<sup>204</sup> J. Nyman (2017), p. 203.

<sup>205</sup> R. O'Rourke (2017), p. 7.

These are facts. [...] So the question is not whether we need to act. [...] The question now is whether we will have the courage to act before it's too late.”<sup>206</sup>

Obama's document from 2013 pointed out that US interests in the Arctic region contained a complex situation: on the one hand security and economic interests and on the other hand the changing world due to climate change. Obama's Arctic strategy had the 2010 National Security Strategy as its starting point, and was built along three main pillars: “1) advanced United States Security Interests; 2) Pursue Responsible Arctic Region Stewardship; and 3) Strengthen International Cooperation”.<sup>207</sup> National security and thus energy security continued to be America's number one Arctic priority.

Almost a year later, the Obama administration presented an operation plan concerning the previous presented National Strategy for the Arctic region.<sup>208</sup> In addition, on March 9, 2016, the Obama administration released three documents that reflected on the implementation plan for the Arctic.<sup>209</sup> “These documents highlight the Nation's strong commitment to action on the challenges and opportunities presented by the rapidly changing Arctic environment.”<sup>210</sup> On April 24, 2015, the US became chair of Arctic Council for the second time. With the chairmanship in prospect, Obama issued an executive order in January 2015: *Enhancing Coordination of National Efforts in the Arctic*.<sup>211</sup> Leaving the office in January 2017, the Obama administration did not manage to establish a new Arctic policy, but did take some action in creating a better balance between security and economic issues and climate change.

#### 4.5 From extending to banning offshore drilling

The hunt for oil in the Arctic continued during the last years of the Obama II administration. In January 2015, the DOI presented a draft version of the program for the development of natural resources for the period 2017-2022.<sup>212</sup> The program focused on opening up new offshore areas for oil exploration. Sally Jewel, Secretary of Interior, stated the following on the draft: “This is a

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<sup>206</sup> Remarks by the President on Climate Change (June 25, 2013) <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/25/remarks-president-climate-change> (accessed on January 14, 2018).

<sup>207</sup> R. O'Rourke (2017), p. 8.

<sup>208</sup> *Idem*, p. 8-9.

<sup>209</sup> *Idem*, p. 8-9.

<sup>210</sup> ‘Advancing Implementation of the National Strategy for the Arctic Region,’ The White House (March 9, 2016) <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/03/09/advancing-implementation-national-strategy-arctic-region> (accessed on January 4, 2018).

<sup>211</sup> R. O'Rourke (2017), p. 10.

<sup>212</sup> BOEM, *2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program* (January, 2015) <https://www.boem.gov/2017-2022-DPP/> (accessed January 3, 2018).

balanced proposal that would make available 80 percent of the undiscovered technically recoverable resources while protecting areas that are simply too special to develop”.<sup>213</sup> This statement emphasized that the administration’s program was pursuing energy security without overlooking environmental concerns. It was presented as an equilibrium between energy and climate security.

The Obama administration followed with new regulations for offshore oil drilling specifically for the Arctic region. These regulations focused on responses to oil spills to prevent another disaster as the BP Oil Spill.<sup>214</sup> That same year, Obama gave a green light to oil giant Shell to explore for oil in Arctic waters. This was a huge paradox considering the efforts of the Obama administration that same year to combat climate change, and received many negative reactions.<sup>215</sup>

Obama stressed that the US was working hard on transitioning away from dirty energy sources, however, that during this transition “our economy still has to rely on oil and gas. As long as that’s the case, I believe we should rely more on domestic production than on foreign imports”.<sup>216</sup> He made sure to his audience that the oil drilling of Shell was done under strict regulations: “My administration has worked to make sure that our oil exploration conducted under these leases is done at the highest standards possible, with requirements specifically tailored to the risks of drilling off Alaska. We don’t rubber-stamp permits.”<sup>217</sup>

Three months after Obama’s approval for Shell to start with the oil exploration in Arctic waters, Shell decided to withdraw. Not only due to public pressure, but also because of financial reasons.<sup>218</sup> Shortly afterwards, in October 2015, the Obama administration canceled two lease sales for 2016 and 2017 in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas.<sup>219</sup> Finally, in November 2016, the

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<sup>213</sup> N.S. Lind, *E.T. Rankin and G. Harris, Today’s Economic Issues: Democrats and Republicans* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO), p. 66.

<sup>214</sup> H.M. Osofsky, J. Shadian and S.L. Fechtelkotter, ‘Arctic Energy Cooperation,’ in *U.C. Davis L. Rev.*, vol. 49 (2016): p. 1435.

<sup>215</sup> S. Goldenberg, ‘Al Gore criticizes Obama on climate change and ‘insane’ Arctic drilling,’ in *The Guardian* (July 16, 2015) <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jul/16/al-gore-obama-climate-change-arctic-drilling> (January 3, 2018).

<sup>216</sup> Remarks of President Barack Obama, Weekly Address, The White House (August 29, 2015) <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/08/29/weekly-address-meeting-global-threat-climate-change> (accessed on January 3, 2018).

<sup>217</sup> Weekly Address by President Obama (August 29, 2015) <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/08/29/weekly-address-meeting-global-threat-climate-change> (accessed on January 10, 2018).

<sup>218</sup> H.M. Osofsky, J. Shadian and S.L. Fechtelkotter (2016): p. 1433.

<sup>219</sup> S. Goldenberg, ‘Obama administration blocks new oil drilling in the Arctic,’ in *The Guardian* (October 16, 2015) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/16/obama-blocks-new-arctic-oil-drilling-cancels-leases> (accessed on December 29, 2017).

Obama administration presented the final OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program in which it canceled the plans to lease Arctic offshore areas for oil drilling for the next five years.<sup>220</sup>

## **BRIEF DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The Bush I administration first presented oil drilling in the ANWR as necessary due potential economic benefits and national security. After 9/11, the national security argument became stronger. Bush strategically localized the threat of terrorism, and emphasized that domestic oil drilling was the key solution to become self-reliant in oil production.

Bush's policy discourse on the 'war on terror' made the war an institutionalized construction. Bush continued constructing 'energy security' as 'national security' during his second term. He built forward on the arguments that Arctic waters might contain an enormous amount of oil, and argued that oil exploration could be done in an environmentally safe manner.

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<sup>220</sup> H.M. Osofsky, J. Shadian and S.L. Fechtelkottter (2016): p. 1433.

Obama found himself trapped between the two-sided debate of energy and climate security, which was reflected in his political discourse. Although he proclaimed and promised ‘change’ during his campaign, ‘climate change’ slowly disappeared and the language on war remained in Obama’s political discourse. The Obama I administration built further on the self-reliance rhetoric of the Bush administration to legitimize the approval for offshore drilling.

During Obama’s second term, he continued framing energy in security terms, demanding a strategy centered on domestic production of fossil fuels. ‘Climate change’ reappeared back into his discourse around 2013. He stressed the concerns and dangers of climate change more often and linked it gradually to security. The Obama II administration tried to marry climate, energy and national security all together, in order to justify his controversial stance towards offshore oil drilling in the Arctic region.

## **CONCLUSION**

Why did Obama continue to allow oil drilling in Arctic waters? Did his Arctic policy concerning oil drilling actually differed from his predecessor? In this study, these issues led to the main question how US Arctic policy concerning oil drilling changed from 2001-2017. Which changes took place or was there continuity? Obama, chosen on a ‘platform of change’, promised to take a completely different approach than his predecessor in 2008, in both foreign policy as in the field of energy. The Arctic, which is subject to serious environmental issues, initially appeared to be an issue of which it was already clear on which side of the line both Presidents would stand. For US Arctic policy concerning oil drilling, significant changes were expected with the

inauguration of Obama in 2009. However, the opposite proved to be true. This thesis has shown that US Arctic policy 2001-2017 turned out to be *old wine in new bottles*.

Bush created an extremely dominant ‘war on terror’ discourse after the events of 9/11, which ruled both during the Bush I & II and the Obama I & II administrations. The ‘war on terror’ discourse of Bush was extremely dominant and became so embedded in US politics and society, that the core elements remained in US foreign policy from 2001-2017. The counterterrorism policy served as the guiding principle and formed the starting points of other policy areas, including US energy policy.

In conclusion, US Arctic policy concerning oil drilling hardly changed in the period 2001-2017, because discursive structures enabled the overarching agenda of the ‘war on terror’ and the ensuing appropriate policy actions. The analysis of this study shows that the Bush and Obama administrations strategically localized the ‘threat of terrorism’, and actively used the related rhetoric of self-reliance to justify and ‘sell’ oil exploration in the Arctic region. Being reliant on oil import, specifically from the Middle East, was a national security threat, created a national energy security threat, and turned oil drilling in the Arctic region into a solution for these threats. This strategy resulted in new and ongoing leases for offshore oil drilling in the Arctic waters. For future studies on US foreign policy concerning oil drilling, it would be meaningful to dive into discursive constructions of presidential administrations, and to research how these discursive structures justify and implement certain policy actions. The analysis also points out that not every attempt flourished to increase US domestic oil production in the Arctic. Although the discursive structures often succeeded, it was not always possible to overrule ecological values and issues. The current political and public debates about climate change and energy challenges also require well-considered decisions. The question remains: which side gains the upper hand?

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