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Change of the Arctic Narrative: From Exceptionalism to Jacksonianism.

The discursive analysis of the US Arctic policy under Barack Obama and Donald Trump (2009-2021).

MA International Relations: Global Conflict in the Modern Era
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Introduction

The increasingly multipolar world and the effects of the climate change have significantly impacted the ever-changing international arena. In the last two decades, the Arctic has become the last frontier, capturing attention of the world's most prominent actors, including the United States of America. With the expanding US Arctic interests, the region encompasses American strategic thinking and the formation of new foreign policy goals, differently approached by Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump.

The Arctic has been permanently affected by the climate change due to process known as Arctic amplification, causing the Far North to warm up three times as fast compared to the global average. The rising temperatures accelerate the melting of the Arctic ice cap, the sea-level rise, the ocean acidification and pollution, becoming a threat to human and environmental security (Leddy 2020). Even though the importance of the Arctic region had been mentioned in the 1990s by President George H. W. Bush in the context of the climate change, it was not until January 9, 2009, when President George W. Bush established new US policy for the Arctic region (*the National Security Presidential Directive 66/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 25*) stating that “the US is an Arctic nation” (2). However, being adopted eleven days before the inauguration of the next US President, Barack Obama, this Directive only outlined the trajectory for the US developing interests in the Arctic, not implementing specific policies.

Barack Obama embraced the significance of the Arctic region, including for the first time “Arctic interests” in the 2010 *National Security Strategy* (NSS). Following that in May 2011, Hilary Clinton became the first US Secretary of State to attend the Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Nuuk, Greenland, stating afterwards: “we are going to raise the visibility of Arctic issues back in the United States so that we can begin to take the steps that are necessary for us,” One of the first steps was implementing the *US National Strategy for the Arctic Region* (NSAR) adopted on May 10, 2013, the first document dedicated to the US policy in the Arctic. This document upholds the objectives made by President Bush, outlining three priority lines of efforts that the Arctic strategy is constructed on i.e., the advancement of the US security interests, the pursuit of the responsible Arctic region stewardship, and international cooperation reinforcement (2). This document has enhanced the visibility of the Arctic issues predominately the environmental concerns that the Obama administration strongly focused on. In accordance

with the NSAR policy, three themes can be identified within the abovementioned lines of efforts - environmental, economic, and military, which serve as a foundation of this thesis.

While Barack Obama swayed the attention to the Arctic governance, Donald Trump changed its trajectory completely. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to analyze the Arctic policy under the Obama and the Trump administrations against two identity narratives – American exceptionalism and Jacksonianism, in order delineate continuity and change of the Arctic policy between 2009 and 2021. Therefore, this thesis answers the following research question: *How did the differing identity narratives about the role the US plays in the world implemented by the Obama and the Trump administrations affect the US Arctic policy between 2009 and 2021?*

This thesis is structured as follows: the literature review provides an overview of the current academic debate concerning the increasing significance of the Arctic and the US expanding activity in the region, as well as outlines arguments on American exceptionalism and Jacksonianism in the context of the US foreign policy. The methodology section introduces the poststructuralist discourse analysis approach, which builds the foundation for the theoretical framework based on the concept of identity narratives as constructed by Ronald R. Krebs. The analysis is composed of two chapters, first chapter devoted to the Arctic discourse analysis of the Obama administration (2009-2016), the second chapter examining the Trump administration (2017-2021).

With the growing relevance of the Arctic for global affairs, not enough research has been conducted regarding the evolving US activities in the region. Thus, this thesis aims to fill the gap, through the analysis of US Arctic policy starting with President Barack Obama, who brought back the attention to the Arctic, reestablishing the exceptional nature of American foreign policy in the region, then focusing on Donald Trump, who turned towards Jacksonian tradition of political thought.

Literature Review

The literature review aims to outline the current academic debate over the growing significance of the Arctic region from the US perspective. The relevance of American exceptionalism and Jacksonianism as characterizing features of the US foreign policy are also outlined.

Increasing significance of the Arctic region

Mathias Albert and Andreas Vasilache (2018) highlight that, from the historical point of view, the Arctic has received the most public attention in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century during the age of exploration of this region and the Antarctic. Even though, the Arctic has been of strategic importance during the Second World War and the Cold War, it was not until the 1990s when global spotlight has been placed again on the region due to climate change (3-4). The academic debate has further deepened in the past two decades, due to several factors, indicated by Rob Huebert in the book *Global Challenges in the Arctic Region* (2017). Firstly, climate change and the melting of the ice cap allowed access to the exploitation of the natural resources such as oil, gas and minerals, which attracted international attention to the Arctic Ocean. Secondly, alternatives to the traditional southern sea route through the Suez Canal would become available, which would increase commercial maritime traffic (365-367). Lastly it is a strategically significant research site for space-related work and analysis of climate change patterns affecting agriculture, economy and countries' security interests.

With the new opportunities in the Arctic arising, Heather A. Conley and Matthew Melino (2020) point out that, the region has witnessed progressively growing interest and expanding activities of major world powers – the United States, Russia and China. Russia has been developing its naval infrastructure and military capabilities along its northern border, NATO Members have been exercising larger joint trainings in the region, while China has published its first Arctic strategy policy paper in 2018 known as *Polar Silk Road* and self-declared itself to be a “Near-Arctic State,” since the country does not have a border there (7-9). Agata LAVORIO (2021) argues that when Russian scientist Artur N. Chilingarov symbolically placed Russian flag on the North Pole, the “Arctic Rush” (114) has begun, ending the period of international cooperation established in the region after the Cold War. The intensifying great power competition, as Mikkel Runge Olesen and Tenna Nørup Sørensen (2019) argue, has put the “Arctic exceptionalism” i.e., the period of low tensions and mutual collaboration, in question.

US activity in the Arctic

One of the factors that impacted the increasing visibility of the Arctic within the US politics in the past two decades has been climate change, a “threat multiplier” (Goodman, Sullivan 2013), that has proven to significantly impact the US national security. Even though the threat of climate change had been articulated in the US since the 1990s, the post-Cold War era has been characterized by slight American activity in the region, predominantly focused on cooperation with Russia to ease tensions. Although, Lavorio (2021) outlines the role of the US Navy, which has been actively monitoring and documenting changing of the sea levels in the Arctic since the 1948. The melting of the ice cap has increased the vulnerability of the US’ northern flank, exposing the country to several security threats including natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and possibility of international conflicts which shifted the US geostrategic outlook on the Arctic region (115-116).

Elana Wilson Rowe and Helge Blakkisrud (2019) analyzed the Arctic political discourse of the US between President’s Barack Obama second administration and the presidency of Donald Trump. The authors acknowledge arguments that oftentimes the US has been seen as a reluctant Arctic actor (Nilsson 2018), lacking the national “Arctic identity,” nevertheless they claim that the US activity in the Arctic politics has been unequivocal, especially during negotiations over the Arctic Council (AC) binding agreements between 2011-2017 (Rowe, Blakkisrud 2019). Furthermore, the research shows the increase of US involvement in the region during American chairmanship of the AC from 2015 to 2017, which partially overlapped with Obama’s presidency. During the Obama administration the focus was put on the climate change related issues in the Arctic and development of the US national strategy for the region. The decrease in activity was noted while President Trump was in the office, however what was concluded from the interviews conducted by Rowe and Blakkisrud (2019) with policymakers in Washington DC, was that the executive bodies outside of the White House, DOI and EPA, have been actively engaged in the workings of the AC during both presidential administrations.

American identity and foreign policy

When analyzing American national interests and foreign policy it is vital to mention the role of identity, which Hilde Eliassen Restad (2012) defines as American exceptionalism, which she defines as “the belief in the special and unique role the United States is meant to play in world history, its distinctiveness from the Old World, and its resistance to the laws of history” (54-55). In addition, she provides Anthony Smith’s definition of national identity seen

as “maintenance and continual reinterpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths, and traditions that form the distinctive heritage of the nation, and the identification of individuals with that heritage and its pattern” (55). The study of identity, Restad argues, allows to define country’s national interests, which directly influence state’s foreign policy. Since the Second World War, American foreign policy has been defined by American exceptionalism used by politicians as a powerful tool to define US policy goals. It has the function of consolidating American identity and capacity to underline the continuity of foreign policy (70). Similarly, to Restad, Byron E. Shafer (1999) argues that if political actors believe in the concept or use its symbolism to shape public policies “then exceptionalism is a genuine and confirmedly empirical phenomenon” (446).

American exceptionalism

There is no one fixed definition of US exceptionalism, which Andrew Butfoy (2012) defines as a “set of ideas, deeply rooted in the nation’s history about the nature of the country and its relationship with the external world” (463), highlighting seven intertwined set of notions that characterize American exceptionalism. Among them is the belief in American ability to improve the state of the world, and in its special purpose, described in 1998 by then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright as an “indispensable nation.” History, belief in progress and optimism about the future are also essential components, however as Butfoy claims the relative significance of each feature changes with years (465). Furthermore, James W. Ceaser (2012) underscores that due to different understanding of the concept it may be related to both domestic and external US policies (4). Therefore, even though, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze the origins of the concept, the focus is put on the evolving understanding and present use of American exceptionalism in the context of US foreign policy in the Arctic during the Obama administration.

On the pages of *The Atlantic*, Jake Sullivan (2019) defines American exceptionalism as a concept through which “despite its flaws, America possesses distinctive attributes that can be put to work to advance both the national interest and the larger common interest.” He argues that one of America’s post war features is the ability to reconsider its mistakes and adjust actions after failures, which is a part of global leadership, differentiating the US from past superpowers. Sullivan claims that because of American exceptionalism, the US continues to be the world leader, which would not be possible if the country was perceived as one of the many.

David Hughes (2015) maintains that the relevance of American exceptionalism stems from its ability to provide “a cultural mechanism for legitimating foreign policy decisions and practices” (528). It is the position of the US as a global power, that enables it not to follow the same rules as the rest of the world. Hughes states that US exceptionalism has proven to reemerge throughout history, despite variety of scholars and politicians declaring it a myth. He considers the concept as a discourse produced by American post-Second World War power status, which can embody any form as long as Americans believe in it, thus upholding its relevance (534-535). Hughes argues that the focus should not be put on the myths that American exceptionalism might produce, rather on the legitimacy it provides to justify US foreign actions.

This thesis largely draws from the Georg Löfflmann’s article *Leading from Behind – American Exceptionalism and President Obama’s Post-American Vision of Hegemony* (2015), where he explores the discursive significance of the concept during the Obama administration. Through the critical approach, he analyses how the concept “is constituted and reconstituted through discourse” (310) and what is its political function within contemporary US foreign and security policy. Löfflmann argues that considering its changing nature “American exceptionalism is a construct of geopolitical identity that draws both from the materiality of the superior power base of the United States – economically as well as militarily – and ideationally from the belief in the superiority of American values of freedom and liberty” (311). However, during Obama administration a shift has occurred in the understanding of American exceptionalism, which is no longer seen as an equivalent of the US manifestation of its unipolar hegemony and show of strength on the global arena.

Rejecting Exceptionalism, implementing Jacksonianism

Restad (2019/2020) argues that American exceptionalism has been the foundation of the US foreign policy since the Second World War. Based on the work of Ronald R. Krebs (2015), which is furthered discussed in the theoretical framework section of this thesis, she states that the concept served as an identity narrative, the basis for all US national security narratives. However, she implies that the identity narrative has been a subject to change with Donald Trump taking the office of the 45th US President on January 20, 2017. Trump rejected the idea that the US is morally or ideationally superior, thus it does not have the obligation to lead the world by example nor is the US responsible for solving world’s problems (65). Instead, Restad argues, Trump implemented a new identity narrative, defined by Walter Russell Mead

as Jacksonianism. However, not only scholars argue that Trump's foreign policy is based on Jacksonian values. Stephen K. Bannon, Trump's former White House chief strategist, stated that Trump's Inaugural Address echoed the premises of the 7th US President, Andrew Jackson (1839-1837). Bannon (2017) implied that, "it was an unvarnished declaration of the basic principles of his populist and kind of nationalist movement [...] I don't think we've had a speech like that since Andrew Jackson came to the White House [...] you could see it was very Jacksonian. It's got a deep, deep root of patriotism there."

In the book *Special Providence* (2002) Mead argues that American foreign policy since the founding era has been defined by four schools of political thought, influenced respectively by Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson and Woodrow Wilson. Mead states that Jacksonianism "is an expression of the social, cultural, and religious values of the large portion of the American public life" (226), it is a belief, an emotion rather than ideology, with a strong focus on economic prosperity and physical security of the "folk community," predominantly defined as white, Christian middle class (226). Central for this narrative is the concern over country's own national interest rather than global politics and international cooperation, which do not profit the economic development of the state. Similarly to Jeffersonians, Jacksonians are suspicious of the elites and share the belief that the US should protect its citizens and national interest at all costs, hence the enhanced focus on the military. "Honor, concern for reputation and faith in the military institutions" (245) characterize Jacksonian foreign policy, which justifies military interventions when American interests are threatened. In this regard, Jacksonianism has more of a realist view on international life, which is seen as violent and anarchic, thus "the United States must be vigilant, strongly armed. Our diplomacy must be cunning, forceful, and no more scrupulous than any other country's" (245-246). According to Mead (2017) Jacksonians see American exceptionalism as "a commitment to the equality and dignity of individual American citizens" (3) not as a moral responsibility of a country to lead the world order. At the time of the presidential campaign between Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump, the electorate aligning with Jacksonian beliefs progressively viewed US global engagement and strengthening liberal world order with scepticism since they did not believe it directly benefited the American national interest. Mead highlights that identity politics became the source of Trump's power.

Following that, Robert J. Merry (2016) argues that when it comes to foreign policy "Trumpian nationalist" are not concerned with the US leading world events, since their supporters want

“their country to be powerful, with plenty of military reach, but mostly to protect American national interests. They usually ask a fundamental question when foreign adventures are proposed—whether the national interest justifies the expenditure of American blood and treasure on behalf of this or that military initiative. [...] The fate of America is the key.” In this context, Michael Clarke and Anthony Ricketts (2017) highlight Trump’s unwillingness to endorse Article V of the NATO Treaty, military actions in Afghanistan and Syria, and withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, as decisions which demonstrate the presence of the Jacksonian political tradition in Trump’s foreign policy agenda.

Conclusion

There are vast academic discussions concerning differing narratives characterizing US foreign policy of Presidents Obama and Trump, however not in the context of the US Arctic policies. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to fill the gap by conducting poststructuralist discourse analysis of the selected official documents, speeches and interviews in the context of the US Arctic, considering the interconnection between the American foreign policy and two identity narratives – American exceptionalism and Jacksonianism.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This section combines the theoretical framework and methodology, which is centered around the works of Lene Hansen, predominantly her book *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (2006). This book explains the poststructuralist theory and its relationship with foreign policy and state's identity, as well as provides methodological framework for applying discourse analysis to foreign policy. Of importance is also book by Ronald R. Krebs titled *Narrative and the Making of the US National Security* (2015), given that this thesis is focused on two identity narratives – American exceptionalism and Jacksonianism, characterizing the US foreign policy. Finally, in the last part, research design is explained.

Foreign Policy and the Identity Narratives

This thesis is based on the arguments of Krebs (2015), who maintains that discourse is a realm of narratives, which shape the national security that states pursue. He argues that “dominant narratives of national security establish the common-sense givens of debate, set the boundaries of the legitimate, limit what political actors inside and outside the halls of power can publicly justify, and resist efforts to remake the landscape of legitimation” (3). Therefore, narrative is a form of analysis and presentation, as well as the instrument defining political reality. Krebs also argues that national security narratives serve as a basis for state's grand strategy, which in turn, Peter Feaver (2009) defines as “the collection of plans and policies that comprise the state's deliberate effort to harness political, military, diplomatic, and economic tools together to advance that state's national interest.”

Krebs implies that national security narratives need to align with broader identity narrative, serving as a founding narrative which “is fairly stable and only occasionally challenged” (13). One of such identity narratives is American exceptionalism characterizing the US foreign policy since the 18th or 20th depending on the source (McCoy 2012, Butfoy 2012). Restad (2019/2020), adds to the argument, claiming that since the 1950s the US presidents from both parties based their leadership on the premises of American exceptionalism. Different national security narratives have been debated and implemented based on the belief in the exceptional nature of the US, however, the concept itself has not been questioned (Restad 2019/2020, Krebs 2015). With that said, Restad argues that Donald Trump undermined the post Second World War liberal order by undermining the “master narrative” (63), by rejecting American exceptionalism and the idea that the US has moral obligations as a world leader. Instead, he

turned towards more realist foreign policy, defined by Walter Russel Mead (2002) as Jacksonian nationalism.

Mead (2002) highlights that “the most important goal of the US government in both foreign and domestic policy should be the physical security and the economic well-being of the American people” (xvii). Jacksonians similarly to realists perceive the world as violent and anarchic, hence the focus is on strong military and “cunning, forceful” (246) diplomacy. The core of Jacksonian foreign policy is country’s national interest and enhancement of economic wealth, since as Mead argues “countries, like families, should take care of their own [...]” (245). Thus, the focus on this thesis is on the identity narratives, American exceptionalism and Jacksonianism, and extent to which those different narratives have influenced the US Arctic policy between 2009 and 2021.

Discourse analysis and foreign policy

The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on poststructuralist discourse analysis. Poststructuralism draws from and challenges realist tradition, at the core of which is state’s concerns over its own survival, given the constant security dilemma and power competition playing out on the international arena. Poststructuralism contrasts with realism, since realists do not focus on the role of identity and the process of creation of state’s interests and security concerns. Even though, poststructuralists hold that state’s domestic and external policies derive from its self-interest, those interests are a product of discourse, not predominant survival, and security needs (Hansen 2016).

Discourse analysis originates from poststructuralist international relations theory built upon theories developed by prominent scholars such as Michel Foucault. The central element of Foucault’s discourse and poststructuralist theory is the focus on power, which creates and determines knowledge. However, there is no one unequivocal definition of discourse, which is embedded in social practices. Based on Foucault’s work, David Knights and Glenn Morgan (1991), define discourse as “set of ideas and practices which condition our ways of relating to, and acting upon, particular phenomena” (253). Lene Hansen (2006) provides a complementary definition of political discourse, as analytical constructions of “*substantial* articulations of identity and policy” (58, original emphasis).

Poststructuralists understand power as language, because it is through language that objects, subjects and identities are created. What is more, it is through discourse that foreign policies are justified and legitimized, as well as problems that need to be addressed, are represented. Thus, as Hansen (2016) maintains, “discourse analysis seeks to provide a ‘road map’ that shows as accurately as possible the main foreign policy positions and the representations that sustain them” (102-103). These representations are of significance, because they allow to analyse the discursive foundations of foreign policies. When examining social construction of state’s national interests, the focus is put on analysing the reasons why policymakers understand the political context in a particular way, whereas foreign policy discourse analysis concentrates on the consequences of adopting distinctive representations.

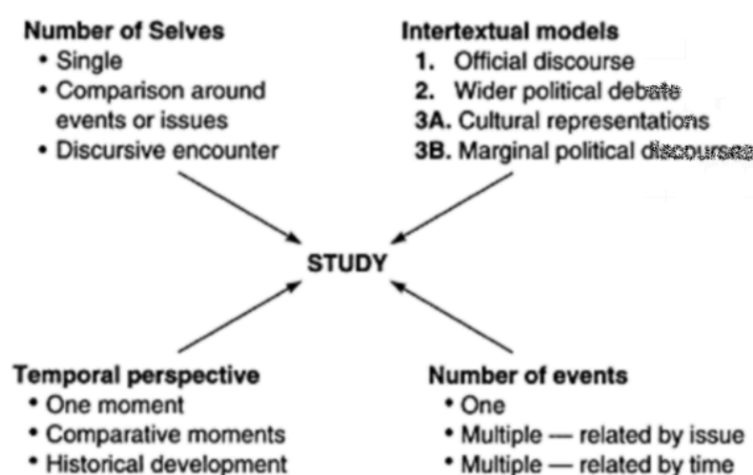
Research design

This thesis focuses on two different identity narratives – American exceptionalism and Jacksonianism, serving as the foundation of Obama’s and Trump’s foreign policies respectively. Given that political discourse is a realm of narratives (Krebs 2015) the presence and key features of both American exceptionalism and Jacksonianism in the US Arctic policies are analyzed. American exceptionalism characterizing Obama’s Arctic policy is centered around the view that in the increasingly multipolar world, the US continues to lead the world however not by imposing its will on other actors but by encouraging and enhancing global cooperation, with decreasing American military presence in the world at the same time. In contrast, Trump’s Arctic policy characterized by Jacksonian values is primarily focused on strengthening and protecting US national interests, through increasing economic wealth and military power.

Hansen (2006) argues that state’s actions are legitimized through discourse, however that discourse should be placed within larger intertextual framework, in order to locate the source of identities represented. She identifies three intertextual models centered around the official foreign policy discourse. This thesis is based on the first model (model 1) which focuses on political leaders, who have power to sanction pursued foreign policies, along with high-ranked officials crucial for implementing these policies. Furthermore, Hansen implies that the main goal of this models is to “carefully investigate the constructions of identity within official discourse, to analyze the way in which intertextual links stabilize this discourse [...]” (53-54). Thus, the aim is to examine how the use of exceptionalist and Jacksonian rhetoric stabilized US Arctic policy under Obama and Trump.

This thesis follows the poststructuralist discourse analysis which has been summed up by Hansen as depicted in the Figure 1. For the purpose of my research, I have chosen a single-Self-study of the United States, through the official discourse of the American Arctic policy during the Obama and the Trump administration between January 20, 2009, and January 20, 2021.

Figure 1. Research design for discourse analysis (Hansen 2006, 72)



As identified above, the research focuses mainly on Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump, as well as political figures from their administrations crucial for executing Arctic policies between 2009 and 2021. Model 1. further identifies the object of the analysis which includes official texts produced by these actors such as speeches, political debates and interviews (Hansen 2006). These were primarily sourced from American Presidency Project archives and US State Departments archives, which store presidential documents and speeches from a selected administration. For both the Obama administration (January 20, 2009 – January 20, 2017) and the Trump administration (January 20, 2017 – January 20, 2021) two key terms were searched – “Alaska” and “the Arctic,” since US Arctic policy includes American domestic affairs in Alaska and externally in the Arctic region. Given that the US Arctic policy has been re-developed under Obama, all policy documents from 2009 until 2021 have been analyzed, however, only the most relevant were included in the thesis. The research was supplemented by relevant speeches from key government officials such as secretaries of state and various state departments. A total of 29 texts were analyzed, all included in the Appendix A. Both chapters are focused on three domains in which the Arctic policy has been developing.

Environmental, economic, and military national security objectives are analyzed against the identity narratives of American exceptionalism and Jacksonianism.

Through the poststructuralist discourse analysis of key policy documents and speeches this thesis aims to compare and contrast the US Arctic policy under Obama and Trump, in order to examine continuity and change of this policy and the extent to which two identity narratives – American exceptionalism and Jacksonianism, characterizing America’s role in the world, have affected the US Arctic policy.

Chapter 1: The Obama Administration

“The question is never whether America should lead, but how we lead.”

- Barack Obama, February 2015

The following chapter explores the development of the US Arctic policy during the administration of President Barack Obama between January 2009 and January 2017, against the concept of American exceptionalism based on Löfflmann’s definition. The chapter analyses three national security objectives, significant for the Arctic region, i.e., 1) environmental, 2) economic, and 3) military, in order to understand to what extent American exceptionalism, and more precisely Obama’s leading from behind strategy, has been present in the Arctic political discourse.

Revival of American exceptionalism

This chapter largely relies on Löfflmann’s (2015) arguments that the key features of American exceptionalism i.e., the belief in country uniqueness and superiority of values along with primacy of the US power, have been revived under Obama presidency. He argues that during Obama’s administration a shift has occurred in the understanding of American exceptionalism, which is no longer seen as an equivalent of the US manifestation of its unipolar hegemony and show of strength on the global arena. Instead, in line with Sullivan’s (2019) arguments, Obama has put emphasis on burden sharing, less military engagement and international cooperation with the US “leading from behind” (311). Löfflmann claims that in the increasingly multipolar world, Obama correlates American exceptionalism with the geopolitical vision of the US as a leader able to establish cooperation addressing global issues, such as climate change.

Environment

In line with the objectives of American exceptionalism as argued by Löfflmann (2015), under the Obama administration the concept has been redefined, as a “largely un-exceptional foreign and security policy” (309), which stresses international cooperation over traditional belief that the US carries the responsibility to single handedly solve world’s problems. The US, in Obama’s words, still leads and is destined to lead the world order, however global challenges such as climate change require global cooperation. This rhetoric

and the newly redefined “post-American exceptionalism” (Ibid.) are present in the US Arctic climate policies and political discourse used by the Obama administration.

In 2009 Obama recognized that “the threat from climate change is serious, it is urgent, and it is growing,” highlighting at the same time the US “responsibility to lead” in enforcing new ideas to combat the impact of climate change. During the speech in 2013 at Georgetown University, Obama announced new national climate action plan “to enlist your generation's help in keeping the United States of America a leader -- a global leader -- in the fight against climate change.” He maintained in the speech that no nation can combat changing climate alone, hence the US as a world largest economy and second-largest carbon emitter has a “unique responsibility” to lead international efforts to keep the earth habitable claiming that “this is the fight America can, and will, lead in the 21st century.” Even though the rhetoric describing the US a responsible to lead, adheres to the traditional understanding of American exceptionalism, Obama referred to American leadership strengthening international cooperation and burden sharing in fight with climate change, no to the American responsibility to combat the global issue alone. That is the primary feature characterizing Obama’s leading from behind strategy in the Arctic, which focuses on enhancing international leadership.

According to Robert R. Tomes (2014), there are two themes characterizing the exceptionalist thinking that shape the US foreign policy. First is leading by the example, manifested in the US involvement in creating and leading the international institutions, beside the pursuit of American unilateralism (44). Secondly it is American aim to promote the values that the US was founded on, abroad. Both features are present in Obama’s rhetoric on the Arctic.

First, one of the goals of the *2013 DoD Arctic Strategy* is the pursuit to strengthen international Arctic cooperation through “responsible stewardship” (7), to enhance regional security and protect the Arctic environment in order to secure common interests in the region for “the global good” (4). The preamble of the NSAR Directive states:

The Arctic is one of our planet’s last great frontiers. Our pioneering spirit is naturally drawn to this region, for the economic opportunities it presents and in recognition of the need to protect and conserve this unique, valuable, and changing environment.

Here, Obama highlights the significance of protecting the Arctic as the planet's last great frontier, and its changing environment, mentioning at the same time economic opportunities that became visible due to occurring changes. However, he refers to the "planet's last great frontiers," not America's last great frontiers, indicating that the Arctic, as a global good, needs to be protected by the international community. The "pioneering spirit" that is further mentioned, points to the US as a leader in enhancing international cooperation in the region, as Obama implied during the speech in 2013 at Georgetown University.

Furthermore, the American rotating chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2015-2017) which began on April 24, 2015, under the slogan "One Arctic: Shared Opportunities, Challenges and Responsibilities" acknowledges peaceful character of the multilateral Arctic cooperation and burden sharing of Arctic responsibilities. Amid these two years, the US involvement and active pursuit of the leadership role addressing environmental concerns has been clearly visible. Upon taking the chairing role, US Secretary of State John Kerry appointed the former Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, Admiral Robert J. Papp Jr., as the first-ever US Special Representative for the Arctic in July 2014, to guide the US engagement in the Arctic, which shows further commitment to the Arctic affairs. During the Congressional hearing in December 2014, Admiral Papp stated that "the future of America is inextricably linked to the future of the Arctic," highlighting that the Arctic Council will enable the US to promote American priorities and values on the international stage, which is the second feature characterizing Obama's leading from behind strategy. Papp further pointed out that:

As an Arctic nation and a global leader, we have an obligation to use our diplomatic, economic and scientific resources to help those in the region find ways to adapt to a changing Arctic.

Similarly, with the implementation of *The Executive Order 13689-Enhancing Coordination of National Efforts in the Arctic* on January 21, 2015, prior to the US Arctic Council chairmanship, Obama stated that:

As the United States assumes the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, it is more important than ever that we have a coordinated national effort that takes advantage of our combined expertise and efforts in the Arctic region to promote our shared values and priorities.

In this speech, Obama again mentioned positioning the US as a global leader in the fight against climate change through promoting American values and priorities included in the *Implementation Plan of the NSAR Directive* (2014). Obama maintains that the US leads by example, by setting goals to limit carbon emission, moving towards clean energy resources and deepening scientific research in the region, at the same time encouraging other countries to follow the same steps. Tomes (2014) adds that, the American exceptionalism in the 21st century is amplified by a sense of “global meliorism” (45), the belief that the world can be advanced morally, politically and economically through proper leadership and motivation (Graebner 2000). During a weekly address on August 29, 2015, President Obama said:

And since the United States and China worked together to set ambitious climate targets last year, leading by example, many of the world's biggest emitters have come forward with new climate plans of their own. [...] Now, one of the ways America is leading is by transitioning away from dirty energy sources that threaten our health and our environment and by going all-in on clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar. And Alaska has the natural resources to be a global leader in this effort.

Brands (2017) argues that another feature characterizing Obama’s foreign policy strategy was “doubling down on diplomacy with friends and rivals alike” (107) in order enable and enhance multilateral cooperation on global issues such as climate change, while “regenerating U.S. leadership on a more consensual, lower-cost basis” (Ibid.) Hence, a joint US-China announcement on climate change was issued on November 21, 2014, stating that both countries agree to strengthen bilateral cooperation in order to mitigate the effects of climate change. Joanna Lewis (2017) argues that Obama pursued an aggressive bilateral agenda to work with China on clean energy and climate change. The result was the implementation of the Paris Agreement on December 12, 2015, a legally binding international treaty on climate change. The agreement was signed by 196 parties, providing a framework enabling countries to decrease carbon emission over the next years, thus limiting global warming to achieve climate neutral world by 2050 (UNFCCC n.d.). Initiated cooperation between the US and China on climate change, following the Paris Agreement serves as a prime example of US leading from behind strategy and promoting American environmental values and strengthening international engagement on the global arena.

Following the beginning of the American chairmanship at the Arctic Council, President Obama became the first US president to travel to Alaska and the Arctic circle. At the GLACIER

Conference on August 23, 2015, in Anchorage, Alaska, Obama reaffirmed the role of the US in contributing to the climate change and the responsibility to solve the problem. He continued stressing the significance of international cooperation:

And I'm determined to make sure American leadership continues to drive international action -- because we can't do this alone. Even America and China together cannot do this alone. Even all the countries represented around here cannot do this alone. We have to do it together.

Obama stresses the international engagement, highlighting at the same time burden sharing among global community, which needs to fight climate change together. In line with Tomes' (2014) argument about global meliorism, Obama argued that the world can combat climate change and the effects it continues to have on peoples' livelihoods, world economic and prosperity of nations in general by pursuing a path, which:

[...] embrace the human ingenuity that can do something about it. This is within our power. This is a solvable problem if we start now.

Lawson W. Brigham (2015) argues that the GLACIER Conference, hosted by the US Secretary of State John Kerry, was a US domestic political summit aimed at bringing attention to the American public that the US is as Arctic nation, emphasizing the threat that climate change pose not only to the Arctic region but to the entire US and the world (1-2). The conference is an example of an international, non-Arctic Council meeting, laying foundations for multilateral cooperation in the region led by the US. Mark Brzezinski, the Executive Director of Arctic Executive Steering Committee (AESC) who stated in an interview in 2016 that:

We [the US] are continuing to play a leadership role in the Arctic while striving to strengthen international cooperation on the future of the region.

As Löfflmann (2015) argues, Obama used American exceptionalism as a tool to shape international environment and promote "more cooperative, less military centric approach to power politics" (313). One of the main pillars of Obama's foreign policy was environmental issues and climate change primarily visible in the Arctic. Policy documents and speeches by key government officials focused on enhancing American leadership in the region in order to coordinate international response to the climate change. Nilsson (2018) argues that by the end of Obama's presidency the process of implementing the Arctic climate and environmental policies had gone according to plan, with the US strengthening the American presence and

influence in the region as compared to previous administrations (103). The importance of international cooperation in the Arctic has been outlined in Obama's political discourse since the 2010 NSS. In 2016, joint statement between the US and Canada was issued declaring commitment to clean energy development, environmental protection and Arctic leadership. The statement included a part regarding "a shared Arctic leadership model" which required "all Arctic nations and those with Arctic interests to embrace a new future for Arctic leadership," with objectives including building sustainable Arctic economy.

Economy

Consistent with Obama's leading from behind strategy in the Arctic, economic policies in the region were drafted prioritizing the environmental concerns, designed to mitigate the effects of climate change. Integrated management, environmental protection, and bilateral cooperation in the Arctic have been of priority for Obama administration, even though American economy continues to largely rely on fossil fuels. Brands (2017) maintains that Obama's policies promoted a shift in the understanding of the US leadership compared to the Bush administration. In 2014, Obama claimed that with the changing international landscape, withdrawal of the American troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, the US refocuses its attention to "a key source of American strength: a growing economy." In the 2015 NSS Obama maintained that:

America's growing economic strength is the foundation of our national security and a critical source of our influence abroad. [...] We are now the world leader in oil and gas production. We continue to set the pace for science, technology, and innovation in the global economy.

Apart from strong military, American economic dominance enables the US to lead the international order through cooperative engagement (Löflmann 2015). With that said, Alaska plays a pivotal role in the economy, providing major energy resources, with some of the largest oil and natural gas fields located in Alaskan North Slope (Conley, Melino 2019). However, during a speech on American energy security at Georgetown University on March 30, 2011, Obama acknowledged that the transition away from fossil fuels is necessary for the long-term energy security. He claimed that:

The United States of America cannot afford to bet our long-term prosperity, our long-term security on a resource that will eventually run out, and even before it runs out will get more and more expensive to extract from the

ground. We can't afford it when the costs to our economy, our country, and our planet are so high.

Obama correlated economic security with the environment and climate change. With that, the need for international cooperation among Arctic nations has been pointed out in the 2013 NSAR Directive, to create mechanisms advancing economic and energy development while protecting the environment (10). The link between the two domains has been summarized as follows:

Our economic development and environmental stewardship must go hand-in-hand (11).

Thus, the foundation of Obama's economic policies in the Arctic was based on enhanced international cooperation. It is further stated in the 2014 *Implementation Plan* that the economic development will be continued using Integrated Arctic Management (IAM), emphasizing science-informed decision-making in order to combine environmental goals with economic growth. Furthermore, Obama's remarks during GLACIER summit in 2015 have indicated how intertwined are the climate and economic interests in the Arctic. He stated that:

climate change is a trend that affects all trends -- economic trends, security trends. Everything will be impacted. And it becomes more dramatic with each passing year.

Further commenting on the US climate and economic policies in the Arctic:

We're proving that there doesn't have to be a conflict between a sound environment and strong economic growth.

Obama continued to argue that economic and environmental policies need to go hand in hand. He strongly emphasized the need for an international leader such as the US, to recognize what threat climate change pose to the global economy:

That's not a future of strong economic growth. That is not a future where freedom and human rights are on the move. Any leader willing to take a gamble on a future like that -- any so-called leader who does not take this issue seriously or treats it like a joke -- is not fit to lead.

This is a stark contrast with Trump's Jacksonian approach to the Arctic economic policies, since Trump considered environmental policies as an obstacle hindering American economic growth. He maintained that a responsible leader puts country's national interest first. Trump also opposed strengthening the international cooperation which would not benefit American interests. In contrast, in the joint statement between President Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau from March 2016, both leaders reaffirmed bilateral partnership to enhance the efforts on climate change and energy cooperation, including phasing out of fossil fuels for clean energy subsidies, along with advancing US-Canadian leadership reinforcing global efforts in this domain. The science-based approach was announced to oil and gas development and exploration. In terms of building sustainable Arctic economy, the statement maintained that:

Further, commercial activities will occur only when the highest safety and environmental standards are met, including national and global climate and environmental goals, and Indigenous rights and agreements.

Finally, on December 20, 2016, in the final weeks of his presidency, Obama invoked the *Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act*, indefinitely banning oil and gas exploration and development in the Atlantic Ocean and Arctic waters, more precisely in the vast majority of Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. The decision was made in consistency with the principle of responsible stewardship mentioned in the NSAR directive, as a part of a joint partnership with Canada that took parallel actions in the Arctic Canadian waters. This decision confirmed Obama's strategy in the Arctic, prioritizing environmental policies and climate change. The economic strength that Obama mentioned in his speeches allowed the US to focus on changing the American outlook on the Arctic, which became an arena of enhanced multilateral engagement and place for scientific research, implementing economic policies that prioritize the environment. A complete opposite to Trump's Jacksonian approach.

Military

American exceptionalism, as an identity narrative, embraces American strategic thinking and frames US foreign policy goals. Brands (2017) argues that, while President Bush was focused on the War on Terror, enhancing US military involvement in the world, Obama took approach of more military restraint, reliance on others, burden sharing, and international engagement in order to provide the country with "a strategic breather after the period of

overexertion” (102) in times when the world becomes increasingly multipolar. Pentagon’s 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review* highlights this fact:

The United States will remain the most powerful actor but must increasingly work with key allies and partners if it is to sustain stability and peace (iii).

In addition, the central point of Obama’s exceptionalist thinking was presented as seeking the US strength in leading the world by example, instead of imposing American will on others. The 2010 NSS reflects:

Our [American] moral leadership is grounded principally in the power of our example – not through an effort to impose our system on other peoples (10).

Thus, the Arctic became the arena, where Obama implemented more cooperative, less military centric approach, characterizing his leading from behind strategy. The 2013 *DoD Arctic Strategy* mentions that the goal is to focus on collaborative security approaches outlined in 2013 NSAR since:

Being too aggressive in taking steps to address anticipated future security risks may create the conditions of mistrust and miscommunication under which such risks could materialize. There is some risk that the perception that the Arctic is being militarized may lead to an “arms race” mentality that could lead to a breakdown of existing cooperative approaches to shared challenges.

Moreover, the Arctic strategy acknowledges that militarization of the Arctic could lead to increased tensions between Arctic nations. In 2014 at West point Obama clearly stated that US military actions should not define American leadership, which is centered around the goal of strengthening and enforcing international order:

Here’s my bottom line: America must always lead on the world stage. If we don’t, no one else will. [...] But U.S. military action cannot be the only -- or even primary -- component of our leadership in every instance.

Turning away from American leadership defined by the US military presence in the world, the leading from behind strategy has led to the enhancement of bilateral cooperation with other Arctic nations (Plouffe 2017). Due to the fact the Arctic has been described as a cooperative zone, free of conflict, there has been a strong emphasis on maintaining peaceful, cooperative relations in the region. On December 11, 2012, the US and Canada signed a joined Tri-

Command Framework for Arctic Cooperation, acknowledging that the Arctic is not a region of conflict thus enhancing regional military cooperation “to ensure a timely and coordinated response to safety, security and defence challenges to North America” (NORAD and USNORTHCOM Public Affairs 2012), which align with Obama’s exceptionalist strategy.

Another example of enhanced cooperative engagement with “friends and rivals alike” (Brands 2017, 107) has been the developing bilateral American relationship with Russia. In April 2012, US Coast Guard (USCG) Rear Adm. Thomas Ostebo and his Russian counterpart, Lt. Gen. Rafael Daerbaev, signed an agreement establishing further bilateral cooperation between the USCG and Russian Border Guard in the Arctic, Bering Sea and the North Pacific (Alexander 2012). International cooperation was further stressed in 2014, despite Russian aggression on Ukraine, with Admiral Papp stating that:

Russia's continued violations of Ukraine's sovereignty are an affront to a rules based international system. [...] Nevertheless, the Arctic has been a zone of cooperation and free of conflict. We [the US] will continue to work with Russia on global issues related to the Arctic through our multilateral engagement at the Arctic Council.

In 2016 a shared US-Russian initiative was concluded during the first ever White House Arctic Science Ministerial held on September 28, 2016, enhancing readiness for international cooperation. It is a stark contrast with Trump’s Arctic policy, which mostly focused on escalating power competition in the region, which motivated American increased militarization in the Arctic.

Obama implemented American exceptionalism as an identity narrative, shaping the US foreign policy as a response to the changing, increasingly multilateral and complex international arena. The 2016 DoD’s *Arctic Strategy* further refers to the changing security environment by updating the 2013 Arctic security objectives to include international cooperation and strengthening partnerships with Arctic allies. However, the DoD underscores one other US military objective, i.e., shaping military activity in the region to avoid conflict (3). In the document the friction points, the most significant disagreements from the US’ perspective, were outlined for the first time, although only concerned Canada and Russia over the navigation in the Arctic waters, and possible economic and security implications given the broadening access to Arctic shipping lanes and natural resources.

It is further mentioned that, in the light of Russian violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, the DoD will continue to conduct training and exercises in Europe under Operation Atlantic Resolve (10), acknowledging at the same time the expanding importance of the Arctic defense cooperation in light of changing geostrategic environment since 2013. However, the focus is put on maintaining:

international relations among like-minded nations preparing to work together to meet security challenges (10).

and building:

cooperative strategic partnerships that promote innovative, affordable security solutions and enhance burden-sharing in the Arctic (Ibid.).

The difference between the 2013 and 2016 DoD Arctic Strategies was the indication of strengthening bilateral and multilateral military trainings and exercises, necessary for enhancing US goal to keep the region stable and secure. DoD highlighted closer cooperation with NATO allies and the Nordic countries to promote innovative defense solutions, data sharing and partnership building to resolve emerging threats in the region. However, the main goals of the 2016 DoD Arctic Strategy were still centered around enhanced military cooperative engagement, which has been the core argument of Obama's Arctic strategy.

Conclusion

Obama has made climate change and environmental concerns his priority with the US Arctic policy as the primary example of the leading from behind strategy. He presented the US as a global leader able to enhance international cooperation to address the causes of climate change in the Arctic and implement global policies mitigating its effects. It is the transformed meaning of global leadership, which is "associated with organising working international relationships" (Löfflmann 2015, 318) that reflects Obama's redefined approach to American exceptionalism.

This chapter analyzed the US Arctic policy under President Obama, against the concept of American exceptionalism, characterized by Löfflmann (2015) as a largely un-exceptional, leading from behind strategy. The main focus was on the geopolitical vision of the US as a leader able to establish international cooperation addressing global issues, such as climate change. As indicated above, climate change and environmental concerns, which started to

significantly shape global environment, have become the dominant objective of Obama's political agenda. While in office, Obama presented the US as a global leader fitted to guide the Arctic climate politics, addressing the environmental concerns. He advocated for peaceful multilateral cooperation in the region, based on American responsible stewardship, broadening scientific research to manage the Arctic. The 2015 GLACIER conference serves as an example of international, non-Arctic Council meeting, laying foundations for international cooperation initiated by the US. Obama's aim was to promote American Arctic priorities on the international stage, which included implementation of policies mitigating climate change, strengthening international cooperation both within the economic and military domains, and enhancing sustainable Arctic economy. Obama maintained that environmental and economic interests are intertwined, requiring American responsible leadership in the region. The analysis suggests that Obama's Arctic policy is centered around climate change and environmental issues. He aimed to strengthen and maintain US international leadership, while prioritizing and promoting American values, in accordance with leading from behind approach of American exceptionalism.

Chapter 2: The Trump Administration

The following chapter analyses the US foreign policy in the Arctic during the administration of Donald Trump between January 2017 and January 2021. As in the first chapter, three national security objectives are analyzed i.e., 1) environmental, 2) economic, and 3) military, against the Jacksonian identity narrative. With the implementation of Jacksonianism, Trump openly rejected the idea of American exceptionalism, hence, this chapter aims to identify the change of the identity narratives present in the US foreign policy in the Arctic and shifting trajectory of the US Arctic political discourse.

Rejection of American exceptionalism

Trump's 2017 *National Security Strategy* (NSS) was focused on four pillars, i.e., protecting American people, promoting American prosperity, preserving peace through strength and lastly advancing American influence. Contrary to Obama's 2015 NSS, which maintained that US national interests ought to be safeguarded through strong and sustainable leadership, Trump's NSS put "America First." Even though the preamble mentioned "America's renewal and the reemergence of American leadership," the main strategic vision was designed to "revitalize the American economy, rebuild our military, defend our borders, protect our sovereignty, and advance our values." The NSS acknowledges the role of the US as a global leader, however positioned along other nations, each respectively focusing on their national interests. This document outlines a clear distinction between Obama's and Trump's vision of American foreign policy. Several authors such as Restad (2019/2020), Clarke and Ricketts (2017) claim that Trump rejected the primary identity narrative characterizing the US foreign policy i.e., American exceptionalism, implementing Jacksonianism instead.

Restad (2019/2020) argues that by putting "America First" Trump rejected the premise that the US has a moral obligation to lead the world and solve global problems. In 2015, Trump commenting on American exceptionalism stated that he did not "like the term" and that:

[...] I want to take everything back from the world that we've given them. We've given them so much. On top of taking it back, I don't want to say, "We're exceptional. We're more exceptional." [...] I'd like to make us exceptional [...] when I take back the jobs, and when I take back all that money and we get all our stuff, I'm not going to rub it in. Let's not rub it in.

As mentioned above, Trump does not perceive the US as exceptional in nature, hence he does not recognize the unique role the country ought to play on the international arena. His foreign policy goal is to “take away everything back from the world that we’ve given them,” a complete change compared to Obama’s leading from behind strategy. Turning away from American exceptionalism, Trump aimed to establish “America First” foreign policy, based on a different identity narrative – Jacksonianism. The core principles of this narrative assume the focus on national interest, through the enhancement of economic prosperity and military strength, prioritizing bilateral agreements over multilateral cooperation.

Environment

Given that, economic wealth is the first priority for Jacksonian government, policies that obstruct economic development are often disregarded. Trump referred to environmental policies as “chains” hindering unlocking nation’s full economic potential. Shortly after his Inauguration, regarding the environmental policy, Trump stated that:

I've loosened up the strangling environmental chains wrapped around our country and our economy, chains so tight that you couldn't do anything—that jobs were going down. We were losing business. We're loosening it up.

Thus, the US Arctic environmental policy took a sharp turn after Donald Trump was sworn into the Office on January 20, 2017. In contrast with Obama’s leading from behind Arctic strategy, prioritizing climate change policies and international cooperation, Trump did not see significant interests in the Arctic region, nor in environmental issues, at the beginning of his administration. He only briefly mentioned the Arctic during the joint press conference with the President of Finland Sauli Niinistö on August 28, 2017, claiming that “the Arctic region has strategic and economic importance for both of our nations” and that “we [Trump and Niinistö] had a very good discussion in particular on the Arctic and black carbon.” He did not mention the issue of climate change, multilateral cooperation within the Arctic Council, nor other aspects significant from the national security perspective. In contrast President Niinistö acknowledged that “We can't afford losing the pristine Arctic nature. Finland firmly believes that business and environment can both be winners in the Arctic. A good example is reducing black carbon.” It was unclear what Trump meant mentioning a “very good discussion” about black carbon in the Arctic, given that the Arctic Council aims to reduce the black carbon emission, however prior to the meeting with the Finnish President, Trump withdrew the US from the Paris Agreement, a staple environmental accord of Obama’s administration.

Thomas Wright (2016) argues that Trump's main goal was to free the US from its international commitments, which he believed threatened American economy and sovereignty. The withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on June 1, 2017, which weakened the global efforts to combat the climate change, became the centerpiece of his Jacksonian policy. The speech announcing the withdrawal was a strong assertion of the "America First" foreign policy. Trump claimed that global environmental policies such as the Paris Agreement are designed to economically disadvantage the US in favor of countries such as India or China, or even Europe in general, at the same time preventing the US from "from conducting its own domestic economic affairs." Trump's core argument revolved around his duty to protect the US and American citizens, justifying his decision, which "represents a reassertion of America's sovereignty." He claimed that:

No responsible leader can put the workers and the people of their country at this debilitating and tremendous disadvantage. The fact that the Paris deal hamstring the United States while empowering some of the world's top polluting countries should dispel any doubt as to the real reason why foreign lobbyists wished to keep our magnificent country tied up and bound down by this agreement.

Further stating that:

The Paris agreement handicaps the United States economy in order to win praise from the very foreign capitals and global activists that have long sought to gain wealth at our country's expense. They don't put America first. I do and I always will.

The emphasis put on the well-being of the American workers and weakening the US national interests at the cost of foreign countries due to multilateral cooperation, aligns with the core Jacksonian beliefs. Furthermore, US Secretary of State Mark Pompeo (2019) added that the Paris Agreement imposed unfair economic burdens on American workers, businesses and taxpayers. Trump's "America First" Arctic foreign policy revolves around strengthening the economy through supporting the oil and gas extraction by leasing territory in the northern Alaska. Although, during the National Energy Awareness month in October 2017, Trump mentioned the environmental issues in the context of energy policy:

An America First energy policy goes hand-in-hand with responsible environmental protection. Protecting our streams, lakes, and air, and preserving all of our natural habitats, will always be high priority for my Administration. [...] Innovative technologies [...] will continue to allow our country to protect

our environment, while also reducing our trade deficits, strengthening energy security, raising wages, and supporting job growth for the hundreds of thousands of Americans currently employed in the energy sector.

These remarks not only stand in a contrast with Trump's announcement to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, but also highlight that even while addressing the environment Trump prioritizes the economic prosperity and job growth. What is more, throughout his presidency, Trump rolled back from more than a hundred environmental rules, including those relating to Alaska and the Arctic region. He finalized a plan to allow oil and gas development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska (ANWR), overturning a six decades of protection of the largest remaining stretch of wilderness in the US. Further, Trump opened over 18 million acres of land for drilling in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska and Lifted a Clinton-era ban on logging and road construction in Tongass National Forest, Alaska, one of the largest intact temperate rain forests in the world (Popovic, Albeck-Ripka, Pierre-Louis 2021).

Furthermore, the statement of Administration Policy from September 2019 opposes, among others *the Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act* implying that this bill would hinder administration's strategy for a prosperous American economy "supported by the responsible use of the Nation's abundant natural resources." The access to the "abundant natural resources" would enhance the development of energy security and energy dominance, which is the key aspect of Trump's foreign policy. The phrase "environmentally responsible energy development" appears in the policy statement, however referring to the American increasing energy independence and job creation as opposed to implementation of environmental policies in the Arctic region.

Along with Trump's climate skepticism he sought to enhance bilateral relations between Arctic countries over the multilateral forums such as the Arctic Council (Markiewicz 2020). After the 11th Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in May 2019, for the first time since 1996 the Council had not been able to reach an agreement over their regional priorities. The US blocked the Arctic Council from issuing a unanimous joint statement acknowledging climate change (Sengupta 2019). Furthermore, Trump exacerbated relations with Canada when he questioned Canada's commitment to the freedom of navigation in the Northwest Passage (NWP) connecting the Arctic and Pacific Oceans, over which Canada has claimed sovereignty rights for years. US Secretary of State Pompeo (2019) during the Ministerial meeting called Canada's claims "illegitimate," raising tensions between the two countries, while under President Obama

a productive bilateral relationship was maintained. Similarly, the tensions between the US and Denmark tightened when Trump discussed the idea of buying Greenland, an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark, causing a diplomatic spat.

Even though Trump has voiced his concerns over the environmental issues in the Arctic occasionally, policy documents of his administration have not reflected his words. What is more, US Secretary of State Pompeo and Secretary of Energy Rick Perry continued to praise Arctic oil and gas potential, maintaining that in further international climate discussions the US would continue to offer more realistic and pragmatic model incorporating mix of all global energy sources with innovative ideas resulting in “fewer emissions, and more secure sources of energy” (Pompeo 2019). Trump administration has openly dismissed numerous environmental debates over climate change, primarily in the context of the Arctic, putting the US economic and military interests first.

Economy

One of the primary characteristics of Jacksonian politics is a strong conviction about economic policy. During a speech at the Arctic Council in 2019, US Secretary of State Pompeo underscored that the melting of the ice cap in the Arctic enhances the strategic significance of the region by opening new sea passages and new economic opportunities. He claimed that:

Arctic sea lanes could come before – could come the 21s century Suez and Panama Canals.

Given that the government’s main goal it to ensure the prosperity of American citizens, more precisely the middle class, the energy policies are the fundamental tool to improve the economic status of Americans (Mead 2002). While Obama claimed that the transition away from the fossil fuels is required to maintain long-term security, Trump (2017) stated that:

I am going to lift the restrictions on American energy, and allow this wealth to pour into our communities.

On many occasions Trump referred to “the golden era of American energy” (Trump 2019) and “America's energy dominance” (Trump 2017), which he aimed to restore. Following Obama administration, under the current 2017-2022 leasing program, 94% of the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf's (OCS's) 1.7 billion acres are either off-limits to or not considered for oil

and gas exploration and development. Due to these restrictions, the federal revenues from OCSs in the FY 2016 were at \$2.8 billion instead of the actual sales value of oil and gas at \$28 billion, what contributed to the second-largest unemployment rate in the country (Peters, Woolley 2017). On April 28, Trump signed an *Executive Order* to reverse OCS restriction, implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy. He argued that:

This is a great day for American workers and families, and today we're unleashing American energy and clearing the way for thousands and thousands of high-paying American energy jobs.

The new energy policy aimed to open offshore areas to “job-creating energy exploration,” since the heart of Trump’s Jacksonian domestic and foreign policies were to enhance American economic strength by securing country’s energy independence, while protecting American jobs. Section 3 of the *Executive Order* calls for reopening of the Arctic offshore oil and gas development, including leases and sales along with simplifying the approval process of the energy production leases. It also revokes the existing protected areas limiting them to those areas designated as Marine Sanctuaries as of July 14, 2008 and instructs the Secretary of Commerce to enhance the search for new gas and oil development. In July 2018, the Department of the Interior announced it would hold the largest oil and gas lease sale in history. During the National Energy Awareness Month in October 2017, Trump maintained that

An energy dominant America is good for Americans -- and good for the world.[...] We commit to achieving an America First energy policy that will lower energy costs for hardworking Americans, protect our national security, and promote responsible stewardship of the environment. The United States is blessed with extraordinary energy abundance, and we must encourage policies that allow innovative Americans to unleash our Nation's energy potential and drive robust job growth and expansion in every sector of our economy.

In 2019 Trump further stated:

Instead of relying on foreign oil and foreign energy, we are now relying on American energy and American workers like never before.

During a press conference in Biarritz, France in 2019 Trump referred to the opening of ANWR for oil and gas development, which became the centerpiece of his “America First” energy policy in the Arctic. Trump claimed that the US increasing energy power leads to expanding

wealth, which in turn allows the government to enhance the prosperity of American citizens. Furthermore, he claimed that this wealth and prosperity is more important than environmental policies, which could hinder the US development. In the context of ANWR he argued that:

I was able to get ANWR in Alaska. It could be the largest site in the world for oil and gas. I was able to get ANWR approved. [...] It's tremendous wealth. [...] And I'm not going to lose that wealth. I'm not going to lose it on dreams, on windmills, which, frankly, aren't working too well. I'm not going to lose it. [...] I want a wealthy country. I want a spectacular country with jobs, with pensions, with so many things. And that's what we're getting. [...] We've become a much richer country. And that's a good thing, not a bad thing—because that great wealth allows us to take care of people. We can take care of people that we couldn't have taken care of in the past because of the great wealth. We can't let that wealth be taken away.

In most of the speeches concerning the Arctic, Trump continued to acknowledge the job growth that follows the oil and gas development in the Arctic, securing the well-being of Americans and country's national interests. He tied all the arguments to economic prosperity, which is the core domain of Jacksonian policy and the base of Trump's "America First" Arctic policy.

Military

Jacksonians believe in a more realist view of international relations characterized by violence and anarchy, which forces countries to focus on protecting their national interests. Trump's foreign policy took a sharp turn, falling in line with Jacksonian values. The remarks delivered by US Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis on the *National Defense Strategy* on January 19, 2018, illustrate it accurately. Mattis claimed that the world became defined "by increasing global volatility and uncertainty," underscoring the importance of evolving great power competition for the US national security:

[...] Great Power competition, not terrorism, is now the primary focus of U.S. national security. Adapting to today's realities, this strategy expands our competitive space, prioritizes preparedness for war, provides clear direction for significant change at the speed of relevance, and builds a more lethal force to compete strategically. This required some tough choices, ladies and gentlemen, and we made them based upon a fundamental precept, namely that America can afford survival. We face growing threats from revisionist powers as different as China and Russia are from each other, nations that do seek to create a world consistent with their authoritarian models, pursuing veto authority over other nations' economic, diplomatic and security decisions.

Mattis referred to the US survival, preparedness for war in the times when Russia and China are considered a growing threat. In this context, the 2019 *DoD Arctic Strategy* presents an updated strategic approach for protecting US national security interests in “an era of strategic competition” (1), with Russia and China portrayed as a primary challenge to the long-term US security and prosperity. The document highlights that the Arctic security environment directly impacts US national security interests, which include maintaining flexibility for global power projection and “limiting the ability of China and Russia to leverage the region as a corridor for competition that advances their strategic objectives through malign or coercive behavior” (5). The DoD outlined three objectives for the Arctic region i.e., 1) defending the homeland, 2) competing when necessary to maintain favorable regional balances of power and 3) ensuring common domains remain free and open (6-7). It is further mentioned that Arctic regional cooperation based on internationally recognized principles such as national sovereignty, is in the US interests. However, in the light of increasing threats to US Arctic interest the Joint Force need to strengthen their competitive edge against China and Russia, becoming more “lethal, resilient, agile and ready [...] to deter, and if necessary, defeat great power aggression” (2).

Even though the strategy highlights the commitment to multilateral and bilateral cooperation in the region to strengthen the existing rules-based order to deter the strategic competitors. Significant part of the document relates to the increasing Russian military and Chinese economic activities in the region. The US does not recognize China’s claims as a “Near-Arctic State,” highlighting that Chinese civilian research efforts “could support a strengthened, future military presence in the region” (4). Russia’s growing commercial and defense investments in the region have also been pointed out, being considered a possible threat to the US interests.

Comparing to the 2016 *DoD Arctic Strategy*, the 2019 document strongly focuses on implementing plans to protect and deter US national interests in the region, presenting China for the first time as a threat to the region. While international cooperation is emphasized, including mentioning article 5 of the Washington Treaty i.e., principle of the collective defense, more attention is brought to the strategic and military significance of the US Arctic. In addition, the release of the US Coast Guard’s *Arctic Strategic Outlook* in 2019, the US Air Force’s *Arctic Strategy* in 2020, and the US Navy’s *Strategic Blueprint for the Arctic*, the US Army’s *Regaining Arctic Dominance* guidance, and the Department of Homeland Security’s *Strategic Approach for Arctic Homeland Security* in 2021 highlight recent defence and security prioritization of the Arctic region.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivered one of the most emphatic speeches concerning the US interests in the Arctic on May 6, 2019, during the Arctic Council meeting. He identified the Arctic as an arena of power and competition, where the US and regional interests are threatened, thus the focus ought to be shifted from environmental and scientific research towards strategic engagement. Pompeo rejected China's claims as a "Near-Arctic State," emphasizing that Chinese investments in the region as a part of "Maritime Silk Road" need to be transparent and closely observed since:

China's pattern of aggressive behavior elsewhere [...] should inform what we do and how it might treat the Arctic.

Pompeo further acknowledged the strategic significance of the Arctic Ocean and compared China's activity in the Arctic to the situation in South China Sea asking:

Do we want the Arctic Ocean to transform into a new South China Sea, fraught with militarization and competing territorial claims?

Pompeo also raised attention to Russia's claim over the international waters of the Northern Sea Route, including its newly announced plans to connect it with China's Maritime Silk Road claiming that:

These provocative actions are part of a pattern of aggressive Russian behavior here in the Arctic. Russia is already leaving snow prints in the form of army boots. [...] Russia is unique. Its actions deserve special attention, special attention of this Council, in part because of their sheer scale. But also because we know Russian territorial ambitions can turn violent.

Jacksonian foreign policy is characterized by strong belief in military institutions, since the international life is seen as perpetually anarchic. In his speech, Pompeo clearly outlined threats that Russia and China pose to the US interests, hence the stronger emphasis on military exercises in the region and modernization of military infrastructure. The same year Congress approved \$655 million for a new Coast Guard icebreaking fleet, with the funding covering building one icebreaker and enough to begin the works on the second one (Micallef 2020).

Regarding both Russia and China, Pompeo used a firm language, calling their activities in the region “aggressive.” He concluded the speech saying:

Today America is sharing its focus on the Arctic and securing its future. Under President Trump, we are fortifying America’s security and diplomatic presence in the area. On the security side, partly in response to Russia’s destabilizing activities, we are hosting military exercises, strengthening our force presence, rebuilding our icebreaker fleet, expanding Coast Guard funding, and creating a new senior military post for Arctic Affairs inside of our own military.

It is worth mentioning that contrary to criticism that Jacksonian foreign policy is isolationist, Mead argues the opposite. Throughout history Jacksonians did not oppose American military involvement, however country’s national interest had to be at stake. Therefore, they supported the Gulf War, where nation’s oil supplies were threatened but opposed American intervention in former Yugoslavia, given there was no threat to the US interests there (Mead 2002). In the case of the Arctic, Trump’s administration clearly stated the Arctic region could become an arena of strategic competition with rising security tensions, thus a stronger focus on military trainings between Arctic States and NATO members. At the end of Trump’s presidency, the US Arctic policy document (2021) was issued, which defines the Arctic as “an arena of competition, a line of attack in conflict, a vital area holding many of our nation’s natural resources, and a platform for global power projection” (i), which distinctly indicates the changing understanding of the Arctic in line with Jacksonian values. Even though enhancing peace and stability is still a primary thread in all US Arctic policy documents, the focus has shifted toward developing defense and military in the region in the age of growing great power Arctic competition.

Conclusion

Even though Trump did not pay much attention to the Arctic and the beginning of his administration, economic and military significance of the region became visible in policy documents and political discourse over the following years. Trump publicly rejected international cooperation on climate change by withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, stating that his primary goal is to put American interests first, prioritizing economic prosperity and job growth. His second major change in the Arctic was opening the ANWR for oil and gas development, which was previously blocked by President Obama. His economic and energy plans became the centerpiece of the Arctic policy. Lastly, with the strong focus on growing great power competition in the region, national defense and military aspect of the US Arctic

strategy has been significantly enhanced. The emphasis continued to be put on multilateral and bilateral cooperation, however the US proceeded to bolster its military infrastructure, while increasing the number of military trainings in the region. Such a sharp turn towards economic and military Arctic policy, while away from environmental agenda align with Jacksonian foreign policy values.

Conclusion

This thesis analyzed the US Arctic policy against two identity narratives, American exceptionalism and Jacksonianism, which respectively shaped the Obama and the Trump administrations' strategies in the region. These two identity narratives were used as a form of analysis and a tool of framing US Arctic policy, which was focused on three national security objectives i.e., environmental, economic, and military.

Obama made the climate change and environmental issues the centerpiece of his Arctic policy, which is how he expressed the exceptionalist nature of the leading from behind strategy. The US maintained its leadership position however as an actor enhancing cooperative engagement instead of imposing its will on others. Paris Agreement became the primary example of US leadership strengthening international cooperation to address the causes of climate change in the Arctic and implement global policies mitigating its effects. In contrast, Trump implemented radically different approach to the Arctic environmental issues, rejecting international cooperation on climate change and withdrawing the US from Paris Accords shortly after his inauguration. In line with the Jacksonian values, Trump put American national interests first, arguing that policies protecting the environment disadvantage the economic prosperity of the US. That is why he opened the ANWR for oil and gas development, previously blocked by President Obama. While Obama's focal point of the Arctic strategy was the environment, Trump solely focused on energy development in the region, which aimed to provide jobs for Americans while boosting country's economy. On the other hand, Obama maintained that the environmental and economic policies can go hand in hand. In fact, American economic strength allowed the US to maintain the position of a leader in the Arctic, initiating international cooperation by introducing sustainable, science-based approach to energy policies.

The emphasis on international cooperation and burden sharing has defined both economic and military domains of Obama's leading from behind strategy. GLACEIR Conference is a main example of an international, non-Arctic Council forum, led by the US, promoting American values and priorities in the region including peaceful multilateral cooperation based on American responsible stewardship. The Arctic frontier that Obama presented as a realm of cooperative engagement, the Trump administration portrayed through the realist lens, emphasizing that the Arctic became an arena of great power competition, presenting China and

Russia as primary threats to the US interests. Increase in the defence and strategy documents under Trump suggest enhanced security prioritization of the Arctic region.

Obama did not associate American exceptionalism with traditional understanding of unipolar hegemony, and Trump rejected the concept in all. The Arctic has become an arena where new visions of the US foreign policy has been enacted by both Presidents. The discursive analysis suggests that the Arctic security environment directly impacts US national security interests, however differently formulated by the Obama and the Trump administrations. While Obama argued that responsible leadership assumes enhancing the efforts to combat climate change, Trump maintained that a responsible leader puts the interests of the country first. Obama's 2015 NSS and Trump's 2017 NSS clearly visualise the difference between foreign policy strategies. Trump rejected the concept of American exceptionalism, and the idea that the US has the obligation to lead the world. He put American interests first, prioritizing economy and military development in the Arctic over the environmental policies, which were the foundation of the Obama Arctic strategy.

In conclusion, the differing identity narratives – American exceptionalism and Jacksonianism, have clearly characterized the US Arctic policy, with an explicit change of national security objectives pursued by Obama and Trump. It is beyond the scope of the thesis to evaluate the impact of the evolving Arctic affairs; however further research should be undertaken to assess the influence of Trump's "America First" Arctic strategy on the trajectory of the US foreign policy in the increasingly multipolar world. Lastly, more focus needs to be put on the Arctic region in general, which due to the effects of climate change will become an arena of great power cooperation or competition.

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Appendix A

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