

GOP Pushback on International Agreements

By

Alexander Mayer

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of International Relations

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in International Affairs

Supervisor: Erin K. Jenne

Vienna, Austria

2021

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my parents Gerhard Mayer and Lucinda Mayer

ABSTRACT

Climate change has become a major talking point in international politics and is seen by many as being a pressing global issue. Throughout history there has been agreements drafted amongst the nations of the world, each one with a goal to reduce the negative impact of climate change.

Scientists and scholars have stated that time is running out and that if the goal of lowering global temperature is to be reached then there needs to be cooperative action from all nations. Therefore, the political environment surrounding this global issue in the US is of importance to international relations. During the recent Trump presidency and the Bush presidencies in the past there has been the most environmental policy deregulations well as push back on international agreements from the GOP. Using frame analysis of speeches on climate change by all three GOP presidents since the 1980's I show that there is pushback through the use of climate skepticism, sovereignty, economic competitiveness, and economic security rhetorical frames.

Table Of Contents

ABSTRACT	<i>i</i>
Table Of Contents	<i>ii</i>
Introduction	<i>1</i>
CHAPTER 1: Theoretical Chapter	<i>5</i>
1.1 Research Question:	<i>5</i>
1.2 Literature Review:	<i>6</i>
1.3 My Framework:	<i>11</i>
1.4 Research Methods & Design:	<i>14</i>
1.5 Limitations:	<i>15</i>
1.6 Contribution:	<i>16</i>
Chapter 2: The George H. W. Bush Presidency	<i>17</i>
2.1 Background:	<i>17</i>
2.2 Overview of Administration's Approach:	<i>17</i>
2.3 Frame Analysis:	<i>19</i>
Chapter 3: The George W. Bush Presidency	<i>24</i>
3.1 Background:	<i>24</i>
3.2 Overview of Administration's Approach:	<i>25</i>
3.3 Frame Analysis:	<i>29</i>
Chapter 4: The Trump Presidency	<i>33</i>
4.1 Background:	<i>33</i>
4.2 Overview of Administration's Approach:	<i>35</i>
4.3 Frame Analysis:	<i>39</i>
Chapter 5: Conclusion	<i>43</i>
Bibliography	<i>45</i>

Introduction

I am passionate about this research topic because time is running out to reach the international goal of lowering the global temperature. Global goals like this one are set by international agreements like the Paris Climate Accord, but many scientists proclaim we are not on track to reach this. This is important because the US is a leader amongst other democracies. They are a leader, but they are also one of the top contributors to global carbon emissions. Therefore, the US is a vital participant in international affairs of global environmental policy. With the US being at the forefront of the free world, it is essential to note when it is no longer in agreements like the Paris Climate Accord or the Kyoto agreement. Climate change is a global issue that cannot be ignored but should be addressed and fought with a unified effort. It is crucial to consider when such a nation steps out of cooperation and environmental regulations when the main goal is to lower the temperature globally. This research will extend the existing literature on this topic to fill the gap as to why an impulse to deregulations in the US should matter to the international community. As the GOP has been at the forefront of deregulation. I research how the motive behind anti-climate policies by looking at the George H. W. Bush, Bush Jr., and Trump presidencies for pushback on environmental protection agreements and how and how they frame these decisions to their base.

During these three time periods, environmental deregulation and pushback against environmental policy agreements are present. Starting with the Bush Sr. Administration we can see such a pushback of US resistance to joining an international climate agreement and the following periods repeating this rhetoric. I will be using the Congressional Research Service to provide data on international agreements on climate change during the Bush Sr. and Bush Jr. era.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was signed in 1992 and

soon after was ratified by the United States¹. This could easily be misrepresented as a step towards environmental policy agreement approval. But it is how it was framed that goes against this statement. It is stated, " the George H.W. Bush Administration represented that any protocol or amendment to the UNFCCC creating binding GHG (GreenhouseGas) emissions targets would be submitted to the Senate for its advice and consent."² We can see why this is an issue later with the Bush Jr. Presidency. This pivotal moment in history created the initial correlation between GOP presidencies and environmental agreement pushback that becomes a normative practice for the GOP. The Bush Jr. Administration conducted more of the same rollbacks on environmental policy agreements from the GOP. In this section, I will be using a speech given by George W. Bush on climate change and a record from the interior and the environmental protection agency (EPA). The data will help me assert the correlation between the GOP and environmental pushback as well. I will also be drawing on scholarly articles that deal specifically with campaign contributions from oil companies. An example of the rollbacks on environmental agreements from this period is the Kyoto agreement in 1990. Its goal is to reduce each parties' overall emissions by at least 5% below 1990 levels by 2012³. This agreement was the first of its kind, but we can see that the UNFCCC failed to push the deal to the Senate, it never reached the Senate. It is stated that "the George W. Bush Administration announced in 2001 that it would not pursue US accession to the Protocol."⁴ As mentioned earlier, it was the guideline of the UNFCCC that stated the US did not have to sign any

1. Barbour "International Agreements on Climate Change: Selected Legal Questions" (April 12, 2010).

2 . Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

agreement not including developing nations that created this order of events. This is one of many instances of pushback during the George Bush Jr. Term that undermined a global approach to climate change. The administration exited the Kyoto protocol, but there was also a lot of pressure and lobbying from oil companies to roll back climate change regulations at the domestic level. Using governmental data, analysis from this speech, and scholarly articles on campaign contributions, I plan to show a correlation between the GOP and withdrawal on environmental agreements from the United States, demonstrating how it was rationalized by each president over time. The Trump presidency was the most recent instance of pushback from the GOP concerning environmental policy and the general idea that climate change exists. Along with a president that did not initially believe in climate change, there is also pressure from the republican party for Trump to go against environmental agreements like the Paris Climate accord. During President Trump's election in 2016, Mr. Trump said climate change was "a hoax."⁵ Since then, he has gone back on this statement, but we can see the general dismissal of the environment from the GOP candidate. I argue that this viewpoint has become a standard frame used by the Republican party with a clear impact on policy. After his election in 2016, you could see the beginning of many deregulatory decisions made by the Trump administration. The oil companies were on his side, with the appointment to the Environmental Protection Agency being Scott Pruitt, a known confidant of the oil and gas companies⁶. Among other similar instances in the previous case

5. "Trump on Climate Change Report: 'I Don't Believe It'" (BBC News, November 26, 2018).

6. Davenport and Lipton. "Trump picks Scott Pruitt, climate change denialist, to lead EPA" (The New York Times 2016).

selections, it will help me argue that there is a correlation between the GOP and international agreement pushbacks.

I will be using data from scholarly articles, governmental articles, and speeches to make my argument. That there is a correlation between the GOP and pushback against international climate agreements. Longitudinal framing analysis will be used to show the similarities amongst several different periods. The periods that I will focus on are the Bush Sr., Bush Jr., and Trump presidencies. All these presidencies engaged in climate change pushback. Two of these presidencies removed the US from international agreements. The GOP being against climate change is due to several different causal mechanisms. These causal mechanisms include the ideology that it is in the GOP DNA to go against climate change policies. There is also pressure from the republican party and its supporters. Lastly, lobbying or campaign contributions from big oil companies cause the pushback. I will be using process tracing to test which causal mechanism best accounts for the GOP and environmental agreement pushback

CHAPTER 1: Theoretical Chapter

1.1 Research Question:

What is the position of the GOP on international climate agreements, and what is the motivation behind this position?

To answer this question, I will consider the following:

- An analysis of the George H. W. Bush, Bush Jr., and Trump presidencies and their international environmental agreement pushback based on the use of frame analysis
- Process tracing of the several types of rhetorical frames and which one is more dominant in describing GOP pushback against international environmental agreements
- The possibility that more than one frame is dominant depending on which president

The GOP pushback against international agreements is something that can be seen throughout history. While there are many distinct factors that cause this, there are three main factors amongst three GOP candidates. In the George H. W. Bush, Bush Jr., and Trump presidency the security of the American economy and its sovereignty are the frames used to rationalize it. There is also the creation of the debate and climate change skepticism in the George H. W. Bush period. This period created precedence with the GOP stance on environmental protection. While these frames can be found throughout these periods, there is the probability that a singular frame is not dominant. It can be argued that the numerous factors in GOP pushback all have a hand at what the stance is today. It is through a longitudinal discourse analysis that I will be able to assess the ways the GOP used to rationalize and environmental pushback. With the use of framework like the creation of a grand strategy and legitimation as well as rhetoric in speeches I will be able to show the function of frames in the pushback.

Despite the undeniable damage of climate change today there is still the debate initiated during the 1990's in the George H. W. Bush administration present today. Multiple agreements mentioned in my research are not seen as being in good faith of the US and their economic interests. This is where the sovereignty frame plays a role in justifying US not making considerable concessions towards these agreements. There is also the defense of this backing out from the UNFCCC in that the US does not have to be involved in an agreement that does not include developing nations like China. These are all substantial reasons and causes for GOP pushback and information that will be used to answer my research questions.

1.2 Literature Review:

In the article "Increasing Influence of Party Identification on Perceived Scientific Agreement and Support for Government Action on Climate Change in the United States, 2006–12" Aaron M. McCright, Riley E. Dunlap, and Chenyang Xiao explain the reasoning behind GOP pushback on climate change. This article offers a broader sense of the relationship between the GOP and climate change. These authors state that since the mid 2000s the GOP have increased their efforts in challenging climate change policies as well as climate change itself⁷. In this article, there is the argument made that during the Obama administration, it was a crucial time for climate change skepticism. The idea is that because of Obama agreeing with climate change this caused a substantial increase in its denial. This argument as to why there is climate change denial is rooted in republican identification according to the authors. Climate change denial has become a test of

7 . Mccright Aaron, Dunlap Riley, and Xiao Chenyang, "Increasing Influence of Party Identification on Perceived Scientific Agreement and Support for Government Action on Climate Change in the United States, 2006–12" (Weather, Climate, and Society 6, no. 2 2014), 194.

whether a republican candidate is a legitimate conservative or not⁸. Data provided in this article back up this statement with a poll given from Gallup organizations stating that over half of Republican politicians are on record denying the credibility of climate change⁹. In this article it is argued that climate skepticism is more of an identification trait in the time period of 2006 to 2012. There is also the argument being made that it created an increase in lobbying from the energy sector¹⁰. Within this identification comes the close relationship to coal, oil, and gas companies. Although there is the focus on climate skepticism in this article, there is not a substantial claim for the relationship between the GOP and the energy sector.

In the article “The Bush Administration Climate Proposal: Rhetoric and Reality” by Odile Blanchard, more on climate skepticism is given. Climate skepticism is seen when at first, Bush agrees and provides full support of the Kyoto protocol, but then just a week later completely flipped the script and even goes as far as producing a new agreement¹¹. According to the author it is not only climate skepticism as mentioned here but also pressures of maintaining economic prosperity and competitiveness. There is a loss of competitive edge; the same rhetoric is given here as in the Trump administration. It exempts developing nations like China and India and there is

8. McCright Aaron, Dunlap Riley, and Xiao Chenyang, "Increasing Influence of Party Identification on Perceived Scientific Agreement and Support for Government Action on Climate Change in the United States", 194.

9 . Ibid, 195.

10 . Ibid, 194.

11 . Blanchard, "The Bush Administration's Climate Proposal: Rhetoric and Reality?" (September 17, 2007).

also pushback from the energy sector for less regulation on climate change¹². While there is the focus on economic factors in this article, there is the lack of understanding of the GOP ideology. GOP ideology is important because it gives an idea of why there is GOP pushback against climate change policies based on the perception of how they act. It is possible that Republican candidates are more likely to find more importance in the economy than the environment based on this ideology. There are a lot of commonalities between these articles in that there is climate skepticism as well as economic pressures, specifically from the energy sector.

While there is the mention of the energy sector in this article there is still missing statistical data or evidence to back up this claim other than the statements given by Blanchard for how big of a role the energy sector plays in American politics. The author has a section briefly discussing the role of the energy sector in accordance with the Kyoto protocol exit from the GOP. This is important to my research although the information given is not substantial it does give context to how this relationship is perceived. The information is important because it gives context on how the energy sector and campaign contribute to GOP pushback on international agreements. The author describes the energy sector as the most potent influence on the Bush administration and its decisions, especially lobbying ExxonMobil¹³. The issue with this article is that it does not give much more context into the role of the energy sector in GOP pushback, nor does it provide enough detail as to why there is this heavy involvement from the energy sector as mentioned. The author does not fail to mention that there is also pressure from the US citizens or the GOP in general. These factors contribute to the pressure on the Bush administration to exit the Kyoto protocol because it would put an economic strain on the US according to this article from Blanchard.

12. Blanchard, "The Bush Administration's Climate Proposal: Rhetoric and Reality?"

13. Ibid.

In more recent years, there has been an especially aggressive pushback during the Trump presidency. In the article “U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement; Compliance; Global climate governance; China” by Hai-Bin Zhang, Han-Cheng Dai, Hua-Xia Lai, and Wen-Tao Wang offer reasons as to why Trump is in denial of climate change as well as the reasons for his exit of the Paris agreement. The basis of this argument is that Trump has economic based ties to the energy sector claiming that it played a major role in American politics¹⁴. Not only is there the claim that there is the close relationship to Trump but also the Republican party. In this article unlike the previous ones there is the elaboration on this relationship between the GOP and the energy sector. The article states that 22 senators campaigned for Trump to back out of the Paris agreement accumulating \$10 million in campaign contributions from coal and oil companies¹⁵. This statement gives more clarity into how powerful the ties are compared to the previous articles. There is the explanation of other factors like political polarization, republican identification, and the need to follow the rhetoric of GOP denial of climate change in order to win a re-election¹⁶. These are all repeating factors in the previous articles mentioned suggesting that there is a multitude of reasons at play determining GOP pushback, not just one. We can see that the energy sector, GOP identification, and climate change skepticism are all present in these instances discussed in the articles mentioned above.

An example of how GOP pushback can occur is the exiting of the Kyoto Protocol in relation to the UNFCCC. In the article, “The Bush Administration Climate Proposal: Rhetoric and Reality” by

14. Hai-Bin Zhang et al., "U.S. Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement: Reasons, Impacts, and Chinas Response," (Advances in Climate Change Research 8, no. 4 2017), 221.

15. Ibid, 221.

16. Ibid, 221.

Odile Blanchard insight can be drawn from the author as to why there is GOP pushback against climate change in general from this article. According to this article, the George H. W. Bush administration had set up their signature to be non-binding to future agreements if it did not include developing nations¹⁷. Substantial historical evidence is present that explains GOP pushback towards climate change policies is caused by the need for a competitive economic edge on the developing nation counterparts. The UNFCCC serves as precedent for Republican candidates in the future, as we can see that the positionality of the Republican party stays the same throughout time. It is important for the GOP to keep the American competitive edge. GOP pushback is accomplished using the UNFCCC. The UNFCCC does not bind any presidential candidate to join an agreement. Rather it allows the US to take itself out of any obligation for international climate change policies. There are also the pressures of this period from the energy sector, the automobile sector, and the American people to exit the Kyoto protocol. All these pressures in this case contributed to the exiting the international environmental agreement. The role of the energy sector according to the article is another cause for GOP pushback. The author gives details as to how this GOP administration had such an aggressive pushback against climate change policies. This information can be used comparatively across the entirety of the Republican platforms.

It is important to also discuss how this climate change pushback is framed rhetorically. In the George H. W. Bush administration, it is argued from this author that the focus was on the uncertainty of climate change rather than its effects. In the article "Climate change and journalistic

17. Blanchard Odile, "The Bush Administration's Climate Proposal: Rhetoric and Reality?".

norms: A case-study of US mass-media coverage" by Maxwell T. Boycoff and Jules M. Boycoff, there is a critical context given on how this uncertainty emerged. This uncertainty is essential to my research because it sets a precedent for the GOP in general in the way that they act towards climate change policies. In 1990, during George H. W. Bush's presidential campaign, he stated that global warming was a significant issue and that it would be dealt with¹⁸. The authors of this article give interpretations of the issue not just from the president's standpoint but also his chief of staff. The authors argue that John Sununu who was the Chief of Staff at the time was blatantly against environmental policy and set up climate skepticism amongst Republicans. The authors also argue that Sununu attributed to the president's backtrack from having a solid stance, to requesting that more scientific research needs to be done¹⁹. This is the same rhetoric present in the Trump administration.

1.3 My Framework:

I argue in this thesis that economic competitiveness, climate science skepticism, and sovereignty are significant frames employed to justify the GOP pushback against international environmental agreements. I will be using speeches, scholarly articles, and a policy briefing to assert that these are causal mechanisms of the GOP pushback. These speeches and administrative approaches to international agreements are a specific form of legitimization²⁰. To help frame these speeches and articles, I will be using legitimization and grand strategy frameworks. The pushback from the GOP

18. Boycoff Maxwell and Boycoff Jules, "Climate Change and Journalistic Norms: A Case-study of US Mass-media Coverage" *Geoforum* 38, no. 6 (2007).

19. Ibid.

20. Goddard and Krebs, "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy" *Security Studies* 24, no. 1 (2015), 6.

candidates can be seen as a political contest, with real consequences being the impending dangers associated with climate change. Legitimation constitutes what scholars call a grand strategy. The great strategy is within national interests and is obtained through national means²¹. In this case, the grand strategy being economic security, climatechange skepticism, and sovereignty. The grand strategy is used to target threats, and in this case, the threats are financial losses, specifically from the energy sector and loss of sovereignty²². This frame justifies the US exiting the agreements in both the Bush Jr. and Trump presidencies and is a cheap tactic. The legitimation, in this case, would be the UNFCCC, where George H. W. Bush justified the policy that the US would not have to join an international climate agreement if it did not include developing nations. This allows for an easy exit for the GOPcandidates, and the legitimation structures the grand strategy. The GOP pushback or political skepticism structure the great strategy of exiting the international environmental agreements.

In my research, I will be using the rhetorical analysis of political speeches that can help in the assertion of political inquiry²³. In my research, the staging of communication is essential due to its ability to give contextual evidence. Specifically contextual evidence of political rhetoric on international environmental agreements. These speeches will helpdevelop an understanding of the justification strategies of GOP pushback on international environmental agreements. The reason speeches like the ones I will be discussing have importance is due to theircontextual nature.

21. Goddard and Krebs, "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy", 8.

22. Ibid, 8.

23. Finlayson and Martin, "'It Ain't What You Say...': British Political Studies and the Analysis of Speech and Rhetoric" (British Politics 3, no. 4 2008), 447.

Political speeches have a specific contextual nature that is a response to events²⁴. Speeches are means by which to motivate others to see a particular situation in a particular light²⁵. The speech must be adaptable to the audience. In context, the speeches I will be going over, particularly in George H. W. Bush, have this adaptive nature. The president adapts his stance on the international environmental policy according to the uncertainty and climate skepticism in the GOP during that time. This adaptation is seen in the Bush Jr. and Trump administration as well with relation to the economy. These speeches I consider to be tools of strategy like in the Bush Jr. administration. There is a drawing of focus away from the environmental concerns to economic concerns and issues with American sovereignty. Speeches are helpful in my research because of their contextual nature and usefulness in political strategy for the GOP candidates to exit international environmental agreements.

I will also be using frame analysis of the three presidencies of different types of frames. These frames are climate skepticism, sovereignty, and economic competitiveness or economic security. Critical frame analysis is a twofold approach by both analytic and qualitative means²⁶. I will be using the critical frame analysis on these three different types of frameworks in order to generate standards from which the research can be based on. There will be a main focus on the discursive approach to climate change policy analysis. The climate skepticism, sovereignty, and economic competitiveness or economic security frames open at a macro level. These frames were developed by the environment itself of the three presidencies. All were present throughout these periods and

24. Finlayson and Martin, "It Ain't What You Say...", 449.

25. Ibid, 450.

26. Dombos, "Critical Frame Analysis: A Comparative Methodology For the Quing Project," 4.

relate to GOP pushback towards climate policy. I will be recoding documents with the aid of these frames of analysis. I will be doing so by identifying the frames in these documents, giving reasoning as to why the documents or dialogue matches with a certain frame or frames.

1.4 Research Methods & Design:

This section will explain the research methods that I will be applying to my research questions. My methodology will answer these questions with a qualitative approach due to its holistic reasoning. I will be analyzing different causal mechanisms using process tracing. Process tracing is a "technique for examining the intermediate steps in cognitive mental processes to understand better the heuristics through which humans make decisions"²⁷. When it comes to examining GOP presidencies and their environmental pushback, I will be looking at a longitudinal discourse analysis of GOP communication in three-time periods and any pushback that may have occurred concerning international environmental agreements. The periods I will be focusing on are Bush Jr., Bush Sr., and Trump presidencies. There are three different possibilities of causal mechanisms that can affirm the correlation. Causal mechanisms are theorized to have caused an outcome to be assessed²⁸. The first possibility is that the voter of the republican party pressure these presidents to pull out of agreements. The next possibility would be looking at the fear of economic damages in the energy sector during these periods and seeing how they affected the environmental policy pushback and the GOP's positionality in international agreements. The last possibility could be that the United States is simply trying to protect its sovereignty, meaning America should not have to be in an international agreement if developing nations are not. Process tracing between communication and policy in each of these periods will help me distinguish which of these causal

27. Bennett and Checkel, "Process Tracing From Metaphor to Analytic Tool".

28. Ibid.

mechanisms accounts for the GOP pushback on climate agreements. Based on the information that I find; I will introduce the expected outcome of the research and conclude the section.

The data used for process tracing and testing each causal mechanism are publicly available. This data ranges from speeches, governmental papers, and scholarly articles. I look at the selected periods to enhance the understanding of the GOP positionality. I will also assert the statement of the GOP being against environmental protection agreements as being a normative position when protecting the American economy. In American politics, climate change is a partisan issue, creating a divide in which republicans are against it, while Democrats favor climate change policies. I argue that rolling back for environmental protection in the republican party extends to the backing out of agreements by the US. I plan to demonstrate this through process tracing of the different causal mechanisms.

For my research, I will be using frame analysis. It will specifically aid me in understanding the construct of GOP pushback as a legitimizing strategy in three separate time periods by looking at them through the rhetorical frames of climate skepticism, sovereignty, and economic security and economic competitiveness. I will be using speeches given by George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Trump. I will also be looking at prior stances towards climate change from previous presidents before these three took office as well as their policy stance before they took office. I will be looking for any shifts in their dialogue during these three periods. I will be using news articles as well to help construct my research for a thorough investigation into different perspectives of these GOP administrations and which rhetorical frame they coincided with the most.

1.5 Limitations:

The limitation of my research is that while this argument can be affirmed through my research, there is still the possibility of a GOP candidate in the future agreeing with international climate

accords. Moreover, there is also the factor of other variables at play. The other variables expand the scope of my argument into a broader assertion. There are too many variables to consider for a complete account of the GOP pushback against international environmental agreements. These variables are concerning climate change deniability from the GOP. There is also missing information from other GOP candidates that are not presidents. While I do include statements from the George H. W. Bush period from his Chief of Staff, it is challenging to ascertain the entirety of the republican party significantly when viewpoints on climate change overtime shift.

It is also important to consider my own biases in my research because I am more democratic than republican. I have a strong stance towards environmental protection and thus think that international ecological policy is essential. I believe that the state of our planet should trump the state of the economy simply because if there is not a habitable place to live, then the economy would not matter. I am very against most GOP candidates in their stance on environmental protection. This does not discredit my research as I strive for an objectified account on the past exits from international agreements. I attempt to step back from critique and away from arguing that these causal mechanisms are entirely wrong, instead ask why the GOP has this approach.

1.6 Contribution:

While there may not be any conclusive evidence as to whether the future of climate change policy in the GOP focus on environmental agreements help to understand American politics towards this global issue better. While it is known that there is GOP pushback against ecological law, it is not easy to decipher the exact reason. My research will explain why the GOP pushback to international environmental agreements is considered a normative stance in American politics.

Chapter 2: The George H. W. Bush Presidency

2.1 Background:

In the mid 1980's before George H. W. Bush was president, Ronald Reagan was president with Bush as his vice president. During this period, the GOP were in favor of international climate change agreements. The call to action from the GOP was due to damage to the ozone layer, Reagan acted on scientist's advice and implemented a plan to counter act the damage. The company Du Pont created a replacement of chemicals that were causing the issue²⁹. The Montreal protocol was implanted to ban the use of the harmful chemicals. These chemicals were coming from air conditioning, refrigeration, and aerosols that were destroying the protective layer of the atmosphere³⁰. This progressive action from the GOP would not last long. At the end of the 1980's when a call to action was called towards climate change, fossil fuel companies halted action from the republican party³¹. This is due to the probability that any further action may impact economic growth of these fossil fuel companies negatively.

2.2 Overview of Administration's Approach:

There was a shift during the George H. W. Bush presidency from a strong resolve towards climate policy to a wait-and-see approach that did not accomplish much. In a news article it is described

29. Shultz, "A Reagan Approach to Climate Change" (The Washington Post, March 13, 2015).

30. Jenkins, "Conservatives Should Follow Reagan's Lead on Climate Solution: Commentary," (Orlandosentinel.com, July 01, 2020).

31. Ibid.

as the period where the GOP turned away from climate policy³². At the beginning of his presidency, remarks from the president include “Those who think we are powerless to do anything about the greenhouse effect forget about the White House effect.”³³ The president is taking a strong stance against climate change and a need for climate policy. This statement was given during his campaign in 1988 and future statements during his presidency continue with the same rhetoric³⁴. It is important to look forward to the time in which the shift occurs. The reason the shift to climate skepticism did not exist in the beginning is because it was not yet politicized. According to Jerry Taylor, president of the Niskanen Center “the GOP during the Bush presidency pivoted from a position of being torn on how to respond to Climate Change.”³⁵ The Niskanen Center is a think tank based out of Washington focused on environmentalism among other global issues³⁶. There was a change in the political agenda from speeches that stated, “we will act” to “significant scientific uncertainty.”³⁷ This last statement fits the climate skepticism framework and seems to be the only frame distinguishable during the beginning of this shift in the early 1990s. The blame is directed towards the Chief of Staff Sununu,

32. Waldman and Hulac, "WHITE HOUSE: This Is When the GOP Turned Away from Climate" (December 5, 2018).

33. Waldman and Hulac, "WHITE HOUSE: This Is When the GOP Turned Away from Climate".

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. "Niskanen Center." Wikipedia. June 01, 2021

37. Waldman and Hulac, "WHITE HOUSE: This Is When the GOP Turned Away from Climate".

claiming that he was the one pushing for the president to be more skeptical on climate change³⁸. It could be viewed that the president took a back seat during this period on climate change policy.

A shift that took place in the administration of George H. W. Bush from advocating for climate policy to being against climate policy. George H. W. Bush towards the end of his administration made a realization. The realization took place during the Earth Summit in Rio that climate policy advocacy would not work for him politically³⁹. Bush had already advocated for climate policy in the past the GOP would not be in support of further action in climate policy. According to this article George H.W. Bush had spent too much capital with his republican allies on developing the Clean Air Act⁴⁰. Bush at the beginning of his presidency had fully delved into the issue of acid rain. This is the one climate issue the president would be known for combating climate change. Politically, he was done with climate policy. This could be argued to have allowed for climate denial to grow without action from the president. It was time for George H. W. Bush to focus on the economy.

2.3 Frame Analysis:

It is important to understand how climate skepticism emerged during the George H. W. Bush administration. In the year of 1989 efforts were performed using propaganda from the coal and oil companies to grow skepticism according to an article by Marc Hudson. Propaganda was used in terms of a film titled, "The Greening of Planet Earth". The film argued that increasing CO2 emissions are aiding in agricultural growth and any effort to lower the emissions are falsely

38. Waldman and Hulac, "WHITE HOUSE: This Is When the GOP Turned Away from Climate".

39. Waldman, "Bush Had a Lasting Impact on Climate and Air Policy," (Scientific American, December 03, 2018)

40. Ibid.

motivated⁴¹. Along with the film that was shared with members of the president's administration was the Chief of Staff, John Sununu. George H. W. Bush's Chief of Staff was a massive blockade against climate policy, being in full support of the film mentioned⁴². During this period, it can be considered a time of substantial climate skepticism growth within the GOP. With relation to the president himself there was less skepticism and more of a lack of interest or action. As mentioned before, politically climate policy was not attractive for the former president and when this realization was made his interest lessened in the issue. It was during a Washington Post profile accomplished through the interviewing of policy officials, that George H. W. Bush, once cavalier in climate change policy, was described as detached from the climate change issue⁴³. All though the profile on him portrays him as being detached, he did not keep quiet about climate change policy. The president had stated, "The American way of life is not up for negotiations,period."⁴⁴ This American way of life being protected from the impending regulations that would have clamped down on the US and their emissions and falls under the sovereignty frame. There was already presence of the coal and oil industry politically, so it is assumed that when speaking of the American way of life, he is also speaking on behalf of the coal and oil industry. The Rio deal that was to come from the Earth Summit was eventually signed by the US, but it took a longer amount of time due to the shift in the administration against climate policy and lack of action from the president.

41. "The Greening of Planet Earth," (Wikipedia, May 03, 2021).

42. Hudson, "George Bush Sr Could Have Got in on the Ground Floor of Climate Action – History Would Have Thanked Him" (THE CONVERSATION).

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

In a speech given by George H. W. Bush on climate change there was not really any form of climate skepticism, sovereignty, or economic competitiveness frames. The constant narrative in this brief speech is that climate change is an issue that needs to be dealt with and that there needs to be more research done. The president stated, “We all know that human activities are changing the atmosphere, in unexpected and in unprecedented ways. Much remains to be done. Many questions remain to be answered.”⁴⁵ The president is not fully committing to climate skepticism in his speech but is saying questions on climate change science are needed to be answered. George H. W. Bush concludes the speech by addressing the need to expand research through a conference, “therefore, this spring, the United States will host a White House Conference on science and economic research on the environment.”⁴⁶ As can be seen from these two experts there is not a clear direction towards climate skepticism, or the other two frames mentioned. It was not until there was a clear shift in the president's administration that climate skepticism was present.

It is important to discuss the relevancy of John Sununu because as mentioned he is portrayed during this period as pushing the president and his administration into climate skepticism. In a time where the debate had not formed yet, the Chief of Staff questioned the science which grew skepticism within the GOP. The president and the Chief of Staff during this time were described as being “in a sharp public debate over the accuracy of such predictions, the president had remained aloof.”⁴⁷ This statement describes the relationship between George H. W. Bush and John Sununu perfectly

45. METERRORIST MEDIA. "1990 George H W Bush on Climate Change" (YouTube Video, 2:36. April 13, 2020)

46. Ibid.

47. Weisskopf, "Bush Was Aloof in Warming Debate" (The Washington Post, October 31, 1992).

that procured the emergence of climate skepticism. Within the confidence of the decision making from his chief of staff, the president delegated policy decisions to Sununu⁴⁸. This furthers the notion that the president lacked action, leaving Sununu to create climate skepticism. It was not until after the chief of staff resigned that an accord had been reached but there was still little effort from the president according to this article.

It was not just the chief of staff Sununu that was directing the administration into climate skepticism, there were other frames produced by other actors as well. GOP members within the administration had stated, “that limits on greenhouse gases, produced by burning oil and coal, would be economically ruinous because of U.S. dependence on those fuels.”⁴⁹ The economic security rhetoric is continued through the Environmental Protection Agency Administrator, William R. Kelly as well⁵⁰. Even the administrator of the EPA was against climate policy that would hurt the American economy. It is argued that Kelly wanted “a more detached analysis of the scientific forecasts and called for energy conservation measures that would carry their own economic benefits while reducing warming gases.”⁵¹ Within this statement there is not a full denial of climate change and policies, but a call for ones that would not affect the economy. Here, there is an emergence of pitting the security of the economy against the need for climate policy. After the Chief of Staff, another member of Bush’s administration took control of the development of climate policy and specifically the Rio deal. This was Clayton Yeutter, a domestic policy coordinator under the previous chief of staff. Yeutter was much like Sununu in that he sought after

48. Weisskopf, "Bush Was Aloof in Warming Debate"

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

climate policy that would not harm the US. His approach to the Rio agreement was “devised to permit the president to go to Rio without committing the nation to drastic economic measures.”⁵² Both the sovereignty and economic security frames are present within this statement. The need for America to not be tied to any obligation that would affect the economy negatively usurps any environmental policy. When explaining the deal and its language Yeutter states, “Neither binds the United States to specific commitments of any kind.”⁵³ This statement as well employs the sovereignty frame.

Within the administration of George H. W. Bush, all three rhetorical frames were present. However, the rhetorical frame that is more substantiated than the rest is the climate skepticism frame. This rhetorical frame was at middle of the administration and gave way to the development of the sovereignty frame and economic competitiveness frame that were present during the signing of the Rio deal. With not only the statements mentioned confirming climate skepticism from his administration, but there is also climate skepticism from the president himself and therefore the emergence of climate skepticism is the strongest in this administration. I believe that the back seat position of President Bush during this period perpetuated climate skepticism.

52. Weisskopf, "Bush Was Aloof in Warming Debate".

53. Ibid.

Chapter 3: The George W. Bush Presidency

3.1 Background:

George W. Bush was the Governor of Texas before he was president of the US. During his time as governor of the state of Texas Bush had a deregulatory stance on climate change. George W. Bush signed a law in the state of Texas that deregulated the states' energy industry⁵⁴. This caused several destructive forces to emerge under his time as governor. During this period, air quality had worsened due to this deregulatory law. Texas had 1000 unregulated industrial plants contributing to air pollution⁵⁵. The damage continued with opposition from Bush on legislation that would force companies to cut back on their emissions. The stance from this follows economy security having more importance over environmental protection. The owners of the companies that Bush decided not to regulate were also the biggest contributors to his campaign for governor.

Before Bush was president, Bill Clinton was president of the US and had begun the Kyoto talks. It is important to understand Clinton's interpretation of the GOP stance on climate change. In a phone call with the prime minister of the UK, the former president said that the GOP would not agree to any treaty unless it included market-based emissions trading⁵⁶.

Market based emissions trading was the focus of American interest on the Kyoto agreement

54. Reilly, "George W. Bush Helped Make Texas a Clean-Energy Powerhouse" (MIT Technology Review, April 02, 2020).

55. Henry, "Air Pollution in Houston, Texas" (NPR, August 20, 2012).

56. Chemnick, "How Clinton and Blair Talked about Global Warming," (Scientific American, January 11, 2016).

when Clinton was president. As well as the creation of a market for carbon credits, Clinton also wanted to make sure that China and India accepted a deal that would cut their emissions as well⁵⁷. It was very important to Clinton that developing nations were included because he did not want to sign it otherwise. Carbon credits are as follows: “Companies get a set number of credits, which decline over time...they can sell any excess to another company.”⁵⁸ Ultimately Clinton signed the treaty to cut emissions by 7 percent with the carbon trading market included in the Kyoto treaty but unfortunately for him cuts to emissions were not required ⁵⁹.

The Kyoto treaty or Kyoto protocol was an international agreement to lower carbon emissions amongst industrialized nations⁶⁰. During this period, it was important to lower the emissions because of the rise in global temperatures. Member nations were given a maximum level of emissions and if they passed this level, they would have to pass a lower level of emissions the next period⁶¹. During the Clinton administration, as mentioned, the original treaty was signed, and it was not until Bush that the US had exited the agreement.

3.2 Overview of Administration’s Approach:

It is important to understand how much energy companies contributed to Bush’s campaign because they were contributing even before he was elected. Before Bush was running for president, he was running for governor. In 1978 Bush had his first attempt at running for governor which failed and was mostly funded by oil and gas companies. Later in 1994 he ran for

57. Samuelsohn, "Clinton Memos Show Climate Tactics," (POLITICO, June 06, 2014).

58. Will Kenton, "What Is Carbon Trade?" (Investopedia, May 19, 2021).

59. Samuelsohn, "Clinton Memos Show Climate Tactics".

60. Will Kenton, "What Is Carbon Trade?".

61. Ibid.

governor again and this time succeeding with the help of the energy companies⁶². When Bush ran for president, he also had the same support. During his campaign he received more than \$1.54 million in campaign contributions from top oil companies⁶³. This can be seen as an important motivator in his pushback on climate change.

The George W. Bush presidency can be described as the presidency in which climate skepticism was consolidated within the party. While Bush did aid in the growth of climate skepticism, he still believed in it. In 2000, when Bush was asked about climate change on one of the warmest days he stated, "I think it's an issue that we need to take very seriously."⁶⁴ During Bush's campaign he wanted to enact climate change policy, not go against it based on this statement. It is important to understand how much energy companies had contributed to Bush's campaign in order to understand why they would be so against climate policy. As mentioned, they had contributed over \$1.54 million to his presidential campaign⁶⁵.

The statement Bush originally had made agreeing that it was an issue that needed to be taken care of was changed once the president had gotten into office. President Bush stated "we need an aggressive, forward thinking energy policy, balances the needs of the people of the Country."⁶⁶ Following this statement and retracement of climate policy was a downward spiral into climate skepticism. In 2001 the president had withdrawn from the Kyoto agreement. The

62. Broder, "Oil and Gas Aid Bush Bid For President" (The New York Times, June 23, 2000).

63. Broder, "Oil and Gas Aid Bush Bid For President".

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Burbank, "Bush Views Shift on Climate Change" (NPR, February 01, 2007).

Kyoto agreement would put regulations on emissions that Bush had originally not been so outspoken on stating that something needed to be done as mentioned. Since he had his shift from climate advocacy to climate skepticism due to the support from the energy sector, an agreement would agree with this rhetoric. George W. Bush stated that “mandates in the Kyoto treaty would affect our economy in a negative way.”⁶⁷ This is due to the heavy support of the oil and gas companies in his administration. With a lot of support backing the Kyoto agreement and the need to lower carbon emissions globally, the US withdrawal is seen as being counterproductive. America was going against the position of a large group of nations in favor of the Kyoto protocol.

Not only is the former president known for his withdrawal from the Kyoto protocol, but Bush and his administration are also known for making significant efforts to discredit science backing the need to lower carbon emissions. According to environmentalists the most damaging action performed by this administration was the doubt that was created in the science behind climate change policy⁶⁸. This was not just a buildup of climate skepticism but also an attack on climate change policy. Green organizations saw the administration's stance on climate change as one that's goal was to dismantle environmental protection policies for the benefit of gas and oil companies⁶⁹. Downplaying the science of climate change was a constant rhetorical tactic of the administration.

Actions were made by Bush's administration to stop scientific research proving the urgency of

67. Burbank, "Bush Views Shift on Climate Change"

68. Goldenberg, "The Worst of Times: Bush's Environmental Legacy Examined" (The Guardian, January 16, 2009).

69. Goldenberg, "The Worst of Times: Bush's Environmental Legacy Examined"

climate change. The Bush administration tampered with official scientific documents to create climate skepticism⁷⁰. The following instances occurred where the Bush administration interfered with climate change science. In 2001 the administration asked the National Association of Science to test findings from the intergovernmental panel on climate change⁷¹. The findings were found to be true that “greenhouse gases are accumulating in Earth's atmosphere as a result of human activities, causing surface air temperatures and subsurface ocean temperatures to rise”⁷². Another instance occurred where the administration was tampering with the science which was with a report done in 2002 on the role of human behavior in climate change⁷³. The administration did not believe that climate change was caused by human activity. The president stated it was “a report put out by the bureaucracy”, and in September a section was removed from the annual air pollution report as well⁷⁴. Following this action was the exclusion of scientists from climate change policy talks. And in 2007 a report enacted by the Union of Concerned Scientists and the Government Accountability Project stated that the Bush administration had many “efforts to manipulate the work of climate scientists and strict control over which scientists are allowed to talk to the media and which scientific results are communicated to the public.”⁷⁵ All of these instances mentioned have the same strategy from the

70. "Manipulation of Global Warming Science" Union of Concerned Scientists, March 19, 2007,

71. "Manipulation of Global Warming Science".

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

Bush's administration, to get in the way of climate science and their findings. This is a great example of climate skepticism which from the information provided can be seen as the focus of this administration.

3.3 Frame Analysis:

In the speech given by George W. Bush all three of the frames can be seen. The climate skepticism frame is seen within the period that Bush's administration requested research be done into the actual effects of climate change. As mentioned, this research came from the National Association on Science. While the report confirmed that in fact the importance of climate change was warranted and human activity negatively impacts the planet, Bush had more focus on possible unknown aspects of climate change. The president stated,

“Yet the Academy's report tells us that we do not know how much effect natural fluctuations in climate may have had on warming. We do not know how much our climate could or will change in the future. We do not know how fast change will occur or even how some of our actions could impact it.”⁷⁶

This statement from the president's speech on Kyoto referencing the report done by the National Association on Science clearly is within the bounds of building climate skepticism. This response gives less attention to the dangers of climate change and more attention to the unknown. The president then continues to bolden the uncertainties by stating, “Given the limits of our knowledge, while scientific uncertainties remain, we can begin now to address the factors

76. Politics Dude. "President George W Bush on the Kyoto Protocol (2001) " (YouTube Video, 15:43. February 15, 2018)

that contribute to climate change.”⁷⁷ This rhetoric and strategy give the president justification to exit the treaty.

Coinciding in this speech with climate skepticism is the economic security frame. Bush’s main drawback from climate change policy is that it has the potential to hurt the American economy. The economy and its security seem to be of more importance to George W. Bush and his administration. In his speech the president stated, “We’re making great progress through technology, but have not yet developed cost effective ways to capture carbon emissions at their source.”⁷⁸ The statement mentioned does not call to action a certain policy to fight climate change but shows that the solution must be cost efficient for the economy. In his speech, he compares the rise in emissions from the US to be caused by an increase in GDP. The economic rhetoric at play here is being used to bring the economy into the debate of climate change policy.

Along with these two rhetorical frames, there is the sovereignty frame present within the speech given by George W. Bush. This sovereignty frame is less prominent than the other two frames and one statement still contains the frame of economic security. The statement, “for America complying with those mandates, would have a negative economic impact with layoffs of workers and price increases for consumers” has both economic security and sovereignty⁷⁹.

While there is importance of protecting the American economy, there is also the rhetoric that America would not sign to a treaty that harms its economy.

In this case period, there was present the climate skepticism frame, sovereignty, and economic competitiveness or economic security frame. The one frame that was more present than the rest

77. Politics Dude. "President George W Bush on the Kyoto Protocol (2001) "

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

was the climate skepticism frame. The climate skepticism frame is more present because of tactics to undermine climate science like excluding scientists in policy meetings. As stated in the 2007 report from the Union of Concerned Scientists and the Government Accountability Project the George W. Bush administration there were many “efforts to manipulate the work of climate scientists.”⁸⁰ This was not the case of someone speaking out against the profound amount of climate skepticism from the administration.

Officials from the EPA were also very outspoken on the topic of climate skepticism. Christine Todd Whitman president of the EPA during the exit of the Kyoto protocol stated it was "the equivalent to 'flipping the bird,' frankly, to the rest of the world."⁸¹ This statement follows the sovereignty frame as mentioned but it is important to take into account the context of the statement. Christine Todd Whitman in an official statement is in fact in favor of exiting the Kyoto agreement and voices the same sentiment as the Bush administration. Whitman stated that “the Kyoto Protocol is unfair to the United States and to other industrialized nations because it exempts 80 percent of the world from compliance” (EPA 2001)⁸². The statement can be considered to follow the same rhetoric as the last statement from the former president of the EPA, the sovereignty frame. She is creating importance in the statement on the sovereignty of the US to not be tied to an unfair agreement for America. The frame present in this administration is within the president's own statement on the Kyoto exit. The president stated,

80. "Manipulation of Global Warming Science"

81. Goldenberg, "The Worst of Times: Bush's Environmental Legacy Examined"

82. EPA, April 03, 2001

“mandates in the Kyoto treaty would affect our economy in a negative way.”⁸³ This statement is within more of an economic security frame. The president justifies the exit from the treaty by stating that it would do harm to the US economy.

It is a fact that all three frames are present within this administration, but whereas the statements above were amongst some of the only ones for sovereignty and economic competitiveness or economic security, climate skepticism seems to be the tactic used by the Bush administration. Climate skepticism was a rhetorical tactic for the Bush administration because skepticism helped the administration circumvent the science backing climate policies such as the ones in the Kyoto treaty.

The reasoning was more in line with economic security in that the Bush administration believed the treaty would hurt the American economy⁸⁴. This does not change the fact that the basis of this argument would be led by climate skepticism. These frames are important because they show the rhetoric of this administration.

83. Burbank, "Bush Views Shift on Climate Change".

84. Beggin, "The Last Time a US President Dumped a Global Climate Deal" ABC News, June 1, 2017

Chapter 4: The Trump Presidency

4.1 Background:

Prior to Trump being president, Obama was president of the US in 2008. Obama was known for his climate change policy advocacy. But it is important to understand how successful Obama was in fighting climate change. Harvard law professor and former Obama official Cass Sunstein describes the setting for climate policy perfectly. He states that “with a paralyzed Congress, the executive branch proved able, between 2009 and 2016, to use regulatory authorities to take a remarkable variety of steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”⁸⁵ It can be speculated that Obama was too late in providing climate action, even though the executive branch was able to act considering the lack of action from congress. The former president did not act on climate policy until 2012, the latter half of his time in office⁸⁶. It is important to understand that those four years of lost opportunity in his first term would have been crucial to make any progressive action in climate change policy. As could be seen later in the Trump administration, rollbacks were made on Obama’s environmental policies right after he took office. Those rollbacks weakened or wiped out more than 125 rules and policies that protected the air, water and land in the US⁸⁷. This is an alarming amount of climate policy rollbacks and successfully undid any climate policy Obama had enacted.

Before he was president, Donald J. Trump was a highly regarded businessperson and TV show personality. He did not have any experience in politics, but this is what some Americans wanted

85. Bookbinder, "Obama Had a Chance to Really Fight Climate Change. He Blew it" (Vox, April 28, 2017).

86. Ibid.

87. Eilperin, Juliet, Brady Dennis, and John Muyskens. "Trump Rolled Back More than 125 Environmental Safeguards. Here's How" (The Washington Post. October 30, 2020).

in 2016, because he won that election. In relation to climate change, Trump was originally a concerned business leader. In 2009, he was among business leaders who wrote a letter in the New York Times addressing climate change and calling for climate policy action. The letter stated, “If we fail to act now it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet.”⁸⁸ Trump would later change his stance on climate change policy.

During his campaign, Trump was not a big believer in climate change. This is the rhetoric that Trump is more associated with when he was president. Trump stated, “it is just a very expensive form of tax.”⁸⁹ Trump usually voices these opinions through a social media platform, Twitter where people can like, share, and comment on his opinions. Some of the tweets that expressed his view on climate change are as follows,

The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive.

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) November 6, 2012

Any and all weather events are used by the GLOBAL WARMING HOAXSTERS to justify higher taxes to save our planet! They don't believe it \$\$\$\$!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) January 26, 2014

Ice storm rolls from Texas to Tennessee - I'm in Los Angeles and it's freezing. Global warming

88. Adler and Leber, "Donald Trump Once Backed Urgent Climate Action. Wait, What?" (Grist, April 07, 2021).

89. Dennis, "Trump: 'I'm Not a Big Believer in Man-made Climate Change'" (The Washington Post, April 29, 2019).

is a total, and very expensive, hoax!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) December 6, 2013

These Tweets have garnered thousands of interactions with the public. This is alarming, because Trump at the time of his campaign, and during the presidency, had used his platform to spread climate skepticism. In a report, it is stated that, “Trump was remarkably effective at harnessing this type of social media power to influence opinions” (Johnson 2016)⁹⁰. Although his tweets can be abrasive, his interviews give more information into his viewpoints on climate change. It comes down to his statement, “I just think we have much bigger risks.”⁹¹ This statement shifts the focus away from climate change completely, but still indicates he has a strong disbelief in climate change as can be seen from his tweets. Trump is believed to have been on the side of climate change denial for very a long time. This shift could have been caused by him amassing such a huge contribution from gas, oil, and coal companies during his campaign.

4.2 Overview of Administration’s Approach:

Trump’s presidency is known for its rollbacks on climate policies and it is mostly due to his close relationship with oil, gas, and coal companies. During his presidency, Trump wanted to rollback over 100 environmental regulations and did⁹². It is important to understand the extent of this relationship by looking at campaign contributions. There were over 1500 companies and

90. Johnson Professor of Intellectual Property Law, "Donald Trump Tweeted Himself into the White House," The Conversation, November 16, 2020

91. Dennis, "Trump: 'I'm Not a Big Believer in Man-made Climate Change'"

92. Merchant, "Trump's Affordable Clean Energy Rule Is Out" (Greentech Media, January 19, 2021).

executives that gave Trump a total of \$107 million⁹³. This is a substantial amount of money contributed to his campaign in 2016 and gives a better understanding as to why Trump is in favor of rolling back climate policy. The rollbacks would negatively affect oil, gas, and coal companies economically. Companies that contributed include big names like Chevron, Exxon Mobil, British Petroleum, and Citgo Petroleum⁹⁴. This follows the narrative of money in politics. Tyson Slocum, head of energy program at Washington watchdog Public Citizen stated, “It’s very clear the reason a corporation would seek to contribute to an inauguration is that they are making a business investment.”⁹⁵ He continues by arguing that the companies that contribute are expecting some form of compensation through legislation and policy actions, in this case rollbacks on climate policy and actively feeding into climate skepticism.

It is important to understand the reasoning behind such rollbacks or GOP pushback. The lack of advocating for international climate policy such as the Paris Climate Accord is seen as detrimental to the international goal of the Paris Climate Accord. The Paris Climate Accord is an agreement amongst 200 different countries to fight climate change⁹⁶.

The goal of the agreement is to lower the global temperature. More specifically it is to keep the global temperature below a rise of 1.5 degrees and commenced in 2016⁹⁷.

93. Lavelle, "Fossil Fuel Industries Pumped Millions Into Trump's Inauguration, Filing Shows" (Inside Climate News, November 30, 2020).

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. Daley, "U.S. Exits Paris Climate Accord after Trump Stalls Global Warming Action for Four Years" (Scientific American, November 04, 2020).

97. Ibid.

The most significant moment effecting the international community is the Paris Climate Accord exit. There was a lot of disapproval after Trump's announcement of the exiting from the agreement, especially from France and China⁹⁸. Trump's secretary of state reasoned that the exit was warranted due to economic concerns. The US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo stated that the agreement is an "unfair economic burden imposed on American workers, businesses and taxpayers."⁹⁹ Even though the federal government during this time exited the agreement, there was still the possibility of climate policies through the states. Trump's political advisories expressed deep disapproval as well. Al Gore a Democrat, and former vice president stated that those in favor of the exit would be "remembered for their complacency, complicity, and mendacity in attempting to sacrifice the planet for their greed."¹⁰⁰ This statement shows a perspective on the exit from a well-known climate advocate.

In a speech given by Trump, he gives reasoning as to why he exited the Paris Climate Accord. He stated that it was due to "cutting job killing regulations."¹⁰¹ Starting out the speech the president gives a brief synopsis of his accomplishments with the US economy, it is clear what the focus of this speech is. Trump continues his speech with the rhetoric that the agreement is not fair for American citizens. As if the agreement would do harm to the American people the president stated, "leaving American workers who I love and taxpayers to absorb the cost in terms

98. Holden, "Trump Begins Year-long Process to Formally Exit Paris Climate Agreement" (The Guardian, November 05, 2019)

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. The New York Times. "President Donald Trump On Paris Climate Accord Withdrawal (Full) | The New York Times" (YouTube Video, 31:12. June 1, 2017).

of lost jobs, lower wages, shuttered factories, and vastly diminished economic production.”¹⁰²

According to Trump the effect on the economy trumps the protection of the environment. After this statement Trump makes a remarkable assertion,

“As someone who cares deeply about the environment, which I do, I cannot in good conscience support a deal that punishes the United States, which is what it does. The world's leader in environmental protection, while imposing no meaningful obligations on the world's leading polluters.”¹⁰³

The reason why this is such a remarkable statement is because of the dialogue that Trump started his presidency with the hundreds of rollbacks on climate change policies, and the fact that the US is a leading polluter. As mentioned previously Trump has been anything but an advocate for the environment in the past. He concludes his speech with statements of economic competitiveness and goes as far as stating the exit would protect America's sovereignty.

In 2017 Trump started one of the rollbacks by ordering the EPA to cancel the Clean Power Plan from the Obama administration that was implemented to reduce emissions¹⁰⁴. In the four years that Trump was in office, rollbacks were a standard practice. According to the Rhodium Report, “The last four years of the Trump administration has

102. The New York Times. “President Donald Trump On Paris Climate Accord Withdrawal (Full) | The New York Times.” (YouTube Video, 31:12. June 1, 2017).

103. Ibid.

104. Daley, "U.S. Exits Paris Climate Accord after Trump Stalls Global Warming Action for Four Years".

been a reversal of many of the Obama policies that would have put us on track with meeting our initial obligations.”¹⁰⁵ The Rhodium Group is a group that studies the effects of climate policies. Even though Trump wanted to exit the Paris Climate Accord, it was a longer process than just announcing it. And the actual exit would not take effect until the day after the 2020 elections, taking up to a year to finalize the exit¹⁰⁶. Still the slight action of proceeding with this lengthy process is one that singles out the US as the only nation to exit from the Paris Climate Accord.

4.3 Frame Analysis:

The same rhetorical frame persists throughout his presidency and in his actions. As mentioned, Trump’s administration is known for implementing rollbacks in climate change policy. It is a probability that Trump’s actions helped foster an environment for climate skepticism amongst members of the GOP. With Trump’s nonfactual tweets being the fuel to the fire that is climate skepticism within the GOP during this period, it is important to understand how influential it really is. At the beginning of Trump’s presidency, his version of climate skepticism was in full swing. According to a survey conducted by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication, “President Donald Trump’s skepticism about climate change appeared to be pushing more Republicans toward a lack of conviction on the issue.”¹⁰⁷ However, a year later, there was a

105. Daley, "U.S. Exits Paris Climate Accord after Trump Stalls Global Warming Action for Four Years".

106. Holden, "Trump Begins Year-long Process to Formally Exit Paris Climate Agreement".

107. Rainey, "President Trump's Climate Skepticism May Be Swaying Fewer in GOP".

shift within the GOP into a growth of climate confirmation. According to a poll in 2019, more Republicans were likely to believe in climate change¹⁰⁸. Throughout his presidency even though this shift had occurred, there still was climate skepticism. Anthony Leiserowitz, director of the Yale program, stated "the statements and actions — an announcement that he will pull the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Agreement, his efforts to reverse the Clean Power Plan, and prior tweets suggesting that climate change is a hoax — likely had an effect on his fellow Republicans."¹⁰⁹ The combination of these three factors which are called “the Trump effect”, contribute to climate skepticism within the GOP. During the end as mentioned there is a decline in effectiveness of the Trump effect but this does not mean that it is not present during this period.

At the beginning of Trump’s political career during his campaign, there was climate skepticism present among other instances throughout his presidency. For instance, the tweets mentioned previously follow this rhetoric. When the president stated “Ice storm rolls from Texas to Tennessee - I'm in Los Angeles and it's freezing. Global warming is a total, and very expensive, hoax!” it was in line climate skepticism. Even though the statement may not be factual, it still is viewed by thousands of people that can be influenced through the presidents’ tweets like this one¹¹⁰. There are other tweets such as this one that follow its dialogue. Comments like these on Twitter as mentioned from Anthony Leiserowitz had an effect on the GOP.

In a speech given by President Trump on the exit from the Paris Climate Accord, there is a clear

(NBCNews.com, February 06, 2019)

108. Rainey, "President Trump's Climate Skepticism May Be Swaying Fewer in GOP"

109. Ibid.

110. Dennis, "Trump: 'I'm Not a Big Believer in Man-made Climate Change'".

importance of economic security throughout the speech as well as economic competitiveness and sovereignty. This is not the normal dialogue that Trump uses in twitter. His tweets have been more of climate skepticism frame whereas this speech is completely focused on an economic frame as well as sovereignty. In the statement, “leaving American workers who I love and taxpayers to absorb the cost in terms of lost jobs, lower wages, shuttered factories, and vastly diminished economic production” there is a clear link to the economic security frame. This then shifts from economic security frame to economic competitiveness frame. The statement “this agreement is less about the climate, and more about other countries gaining a financial advantage over the United States” shows this¹¹¹. The president is clearly framing his rhetoric from job security to economic competitiveness. The speech is concluded with a short reference towards the sovereignty frame. The president stated, “exiting the agreement protects the United States from future intrusions, on the United States, sovereignty.”¹¹²

In conclusion the president despite scientific evidence uses tweets, actions, and statements that side along with climate skeptics which is called the Trump effect. As mentioned, there was a shift to less climate skepticism in the GOP towards the end of his term as president. The other frame that is present is the economic security frame but is not as relevant as climate skepticism. Mike Pompeo stated when referencing the Paris Climate Accord that it is an “unfair economic burden imposed on American workers, businesses and taxpayers.”¹¹³ This is one instance versus

111. The New York Times. “President Donald Trump On Paris Climate Accord Withdrawal (Full) | The New York Times”.

112. Ibid.

113. Holden, "Trump Begins Year-long Process to Formally Exit Paris Climate Agreement".

many instances of climate skepticism. Given the information mentioned it is fair to state that climate skepticism is the driving factor in this period.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Despite the constant creation of international agreements to fight climate change, the US GOP has been against any sort of agreement. This research gives an analysis of this pushback throughout history. A GOP led presidency does not sign to international climate policy agreements or has exited from them in the past. Three causal frames are consistent with this statement and preside in three separate periods. The rhetorical frame of exit includes, climate skepticism, sovereignty, and or economic reasons. Failure to join the fight against climate change has been present in the George H. W. Bush Presidency, George W. Bush Presidency, and the Trump presidency. There has been an established debate of whether climate change is caused by human action. If climate change is accepted as being true by the GOP presidents, there is still the ideology within the GOP that economic growth is more important. In this research the reasoning behind the pushback is shown through news articles and speeches given by the presidents on climate change policy. A reoccurring theme throughout these three periods is the idea that the economy would suffer given the regulations from international climate policies. The GOP pushback being mostly driven by contributions from the energy sector can and has been justified in many ways. For them, the position against climate change policy comes first and the justification comes later. The frame used to justify the pushback during these periods is the frame that is most resonant or appropriate given the GOP's prevailing understanding of climate change at the time.

This research gives an example of how climate change denial or skepticism does not hold as a strong reason behind climate change policy pushback. In the George W. Bush presidency there is the question of the science and even the testing of it. The results of the testing concur with what had already been found to be true, that climate change is in fact caused by human behavior. Even though this had occurred this did not stop Trump from being in denial years later. With his Tweets, it seemed like skepticism still existed within the GOP regardless of the scientific evidence

backing the claim that climate change is caused by human activity. During these presidencies at one point there was climate denial and then a shift happened. It was no longer about denying the science, but more about the American economic growth. It became more important than climate change policy. This pattern persists within all three GOP presidencies and shows how one frame can lead to another as justification for climate change policy pushback. There is always a reason why climate change is not as important as it should be.

As time goes on it less likely that climate change can be denied. It becomes more difficult to deny the widely accepted science behind climate change causing a shift towards economic focus as mentioned. For the GOP either economic factors, sovereignty, or climate skepticism can serve as justification for climate change policy pushback. This is important to the international community because climate change is a global issue that in order to solve requires global cooperation and acknowledgement of climate change in order to combat global warming.

Bibliography

- Adler, Ben, and Rebecca Leber. "Donald Trump Once Backed Urgent Climate Action. Wait, What?" *Grist*. April 07, 2021. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://grist.org/politics/donald-trump-climate-action-new-york-times/>.
- Barbour, Emily C. "International Agreements on Climate Change: Selected Legal Questions." *International Agreements on Climate Change: Selected Legal Questions*, April 12, 2010, 1-19. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/117006/2010-04-12_International_Agreements_Climate_Change.pdf.
- Beggin, Riley. "The Last Time a US President Dumped a Global Climate Deal." *ABC News*. June 1, 2017. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/time-us-president-dumped-global-climate-deal/story?id=47771005>.
- Bennett, Andrew, and Jeffrey T. Checkel. "Process Tracing From Metaphor to Analytic Tool." *Process Tracing From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*: 3-38. doi:10.1017/cbo9781139858472.003.
- Blanchard, Odile. "The Bush Administration's Climate Proposal: Rhetoric and Reality?" *The Bush Administration's Climate Proposal: Rhetoric and Reality?*, September 17, 2007, 1-21. <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00199616/document>.
- Bookbinder, David. "Obama Had a Chance to Really Fight Climate Change. He Blew it." *Vox*. April 28, 2017. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2017/4/28/15472508/obama-climate-change-legacy-overrated-clean-power>.
- Boykoff, Maxwell T., and Jules M. Boykoff. "Climate Change and Journalistic Norms: A Case-study of US Mass-media Coverage." *Geoforum* 38, no. 6 (2007): 1190-204. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2007.01.008.
- Broder, John. "Oil and Gas Aid Bush Bid For President." *The New York Times*. June 23, 2000. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/23/us/oil-and-gas-aid-bush-bid-for-president.html>.
- Burbank, Luke. "Bush Views Shift on Climate Change." *NPR*. February 01, 2007. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7115660>.
- Chemnick, Jean. "How Clinton and Blair Talked about Global Warming." *Scientific American*. January 11, 2016. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-clinton-and-blair-talked-about-global-warming/>.
- Daley, Jim. "U.S. Exits Paris Climate Accord after Trump Stalls Global Warming Action for Four Years." *Scientific American*. November 04, 2020. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/u-s-exits-paris-climate-accord-after-trump-stalls-global-warming-action-for-four-years/>.
- Davenport, Coral, and Eric Lipton. "Trump picks Scott Pruitt, climate change denialist, to lead EPA." *The New York Times* (2016).

- Dennis, Brady. "Trump: 'I'm Not a Big Believer in Man-made Climate Change.'" The Washington Post. April 29, 2019. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2016/03/22/this-is-the-only-type-of-climate-change-donald-trump-believes-in/>.
- Dombos, Tamas. "Critical Frame Analysis: A Comparative Methodology For the Quing Project." *Critical Frame Analysis: A Comparative Methodology For the Quing Project*: 3-17. <http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00006845/01/cps-working-paper-critical-frame-analysis-quiring-2012.pdf>.
- Eilperin, Juliet, Brady Dennis, and John Muyskens. "Trump Rolled Back More than 125 Environmental Safeguards. Here's How." The Washington Post. October 30, 2020. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/climate-environment/trump-climate-environment-protections/>.
- EPA. April 03, 2001. Accessed June 01, 2021. https://archive.epa.gov/epapages/newsroom_archive/newsreleases/acf69d4a9b345ffe85256a23006aa7fc.html.
- Finlayson, Alan, and James Martin. "'It Ain't What You Say...': British Political Studies and the Analysis of Speech and Rhetoric." *British Politics*3, no. 4 (2008): 445-64. doi:10.1057/bp.2008.21.
- Goddard, Stacie E., and Ronald R. Krebs. "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy." *Security Studies*24, no. 1 (2015): 5-36. doi:10.1080/09636412.2014.1001198.
- Goldenberg, Suzanne. "The Worst of Times: Bush's Environmental Legacy Examined." The Guardian. January 16, 2009. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/jan/16/greenpolitics-georgebush>.
- Henry, Terrence. "Air Pollution in Houston, Texas." NPR. August 20, 2012. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://stateimpact.npr.org/texas/2012/08/20/now-you-can-see-houstons-smog-levels-in-almost-real-time/air-pollution-in-houston-texas/>.
- Holden, Emily. "Trump Begins Year-long Process to Formally Exit Paris Climate Agreement." The Guardian. November 05, 2019. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/nov/04/donald-trump-climate-crisis-exit-paris-agreement>.
- Hudson, Marc. "George Bush Sr Could Have Got in on the Ground Floor of Climate Action – History Would Have Thanked Him." THE CONVERSATION: George Bush Sr Could Have Got in on the Ground Floor of Climate Action – History Would Have Thanked Him | Research Explorer | The University of Manchester. Accessed June 01, 2021. [https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/media/the-conversation-george-bush-sr-could-have-got-in-on-the-ground-floor-of-climate-action--history-would-have-thanked-him\(ca7bd3a1-f35f-4d00-a872-eea8970054bf\).html](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/media/the-conversation-george-bush-sr-could-have-got-in-on-the-ground-floor-of-climate-action--history-would-have-thanked-him(ca7bd3a1-f35f-4d00-a872-eea8970054bf).html).
- Jenkins, David. "Conservatives Should Follow Reagan's Lead on Climate Solution: Commentary." *Orlandosentinel.com*. July 01, 2020. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/opinion/guest-commentary/os-op-climate-change-conservatives-invading-sea-20200702-5emlh2rllrbqlknp6gtiruqcwu-story.html>.

- Johnson Professor of Intellectual Property Law, Shontavia. "Donald Trump Tweeted Himself into the White House." *The Conversation*. November 16, 2020. Accessed June 01, 2021.
<https://theconversation.com/donald-trump-tweeted-himself-into-the-white-house-68561>.
- Kenton, Will. "What Is Carbon Trade?" *Investopedia*. May 19, 2021. Accessed June 01, 2021.
<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/carbontrade.asp>.
- Lavelle, Marianne. "Fossil Fuel Industries Pumped Millions Into Trump's Inauguration, Filing Shows." *Inside Climate News*. November 30, 2020. Accessed June 01, 2021.
<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/19042017/fossil-fuels-oil-coal-gas-exxon-chevron-bp-donald-trump-inauguration-donations/>.
- "Manipulation of Global Warming Science." *Union of Concerned Scientists*. March 19, 2007. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/manipulation-global-warming-science>.
- Mccright, Aaron M., Riley E. Dunlap, and Chenyang Xiao. "Increasing Influence of Party Identification on Perceived Scientific Agreement and Support for Government Action on Climate Change in the United States, 2006–12." *Weather, Climate, and Society* 6, no. 2 (2014): 194-201. doi:10.1175/wcas-d-13-00058.1.
- Merchant, Emma Foehringer. "Trump's Affordable Clean Energy Rule Is Out." *Trump's Affordable Clean Energy Rule Is Out | Greentech Media*. January 19, 2021. Accessed June 01, 2021.
<https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/trumps-affordable-clean-energy-rule-is-out>.
- The New York Times. "President Donald Trump On Paris Climate Accord Withdrawal (Full) | The New York Times." YouTube Video, 31:12. June 1, 2017.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=deTcuNgKN-E&t=2>.
- METERRORIST MEDIA. "1990 George H W Bush on Climate Change" YouTube Video, 2:36. April 13, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zds_2-xoblA.
- Politics Dude. "President George W Bush on the Kyoto Protocol (2001) " YouTube Video, 15:43. February 15, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsSUBiiQT40>.
- "Niskanen Center." *Wikipedia*. June 01, 2021. Accessed June 02, 2021.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niskanen_Center.
- Rainey, James. "President Trump's Climate Skepticism May Be Swaying Fewer in GOP." *NBCNews.com*. February 06, 2019. Accessed June 01, 2021.
<https://www.nbcnews.com/science/environment/president-trump-s-climate-skepticism-may-be-swaying-fewer-gop-n967496>.
- Reilly, Michael. "George W. Bush Helped Make Texas a Clean-Energy Powerhouse." *MIT Technology Review*. April 02, 2020. Accessed June 01, 2021.
<https://www.technologyreview.com/2016/08/29/70295/george-w-bush-helped-make-texas-a-clean-energy-powerhouse/>.

Samuelsohn, Darren. "Clinton Memos Show Climate Tactics." POLITICO. June 06, 2014. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.politico.com/story/2014/06/clinton-library-memos-kyoto-protocol-china-india-107545>.

Shultz, George P. "A Reagan Approach to Climate Change." The Washington Post. March 13, 2015. Accessed June 01, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-reagan-model-on-climate-change/2015/03/13/4f4182e2-c6a8-11e4-b2a1-bed1aaea2816_story.html.

"The Greening of Planet Earth." Wikipedia. May 03, 2021. Accessed June 01, 2021. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Greening_of_Planet_Earth#cite_note-Heat-4.

"Trump on Climate Change Report: 'I Don't Believe It'." BBC News. November 26, 2018. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46351940>.

Waldman, Scott, and Benjamin Hulac. "WHITE HOUSE: This Is When the GOP Turned Away from Climate ...". This Is When the GOP Turned Away from Climate Policy. December 5, 2018. Accessed June 1, 2021. <https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060108785>.

Waldman, Scott. "Bush Had a Lasting Impact on Climate and Air Policy." Scientific American. December 03, 2018. Accessed June 01, 2021. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/bush-had-a-lasting-impact-on-climate-and-air-policy/>.

Weisskopf, Michael. "Bush Was Aloof in Warming Debate." The Washington Post. October 31, 1992. Accessed June 01, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1992/10/31/bush-was-alooof-in-warming-debate/f14bea92-884c-401b-9870-5bef72960806/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.b9368e5b329b.

Zhang, Hai-Bin, Han-Cheng Dai, Hua-Xia Lai, and Wen-Tao Wang. "U.S. Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement: Reasons, Impacts, and Chinas Response." *Advances in Climate Change Research*8, no. 4 (2017): 220-25. doi:10.1016/j.accre.2017.09.002.