

Changing the discourse of American foreign policy?
Identity construction in Barack Obama's Middle Eastern policy

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis considers the discursive (re)production of American foreign policy throughout Barack Obama's tenure as US president. Focussing on the official discourse of US relations with the Middle East and North Africa from 2009 to 2016, the thesis analyses official constructions of identities and threats in foreign and security policy discourse. The thesis addresses two research questions: (1) How did the discursive structures of US foreign policy change between 2009 and 2016? and (2) How did official constructions of identity and threat change over the same period? In order to investigate these structures and constructions, it employs a rigorous computer-aided discourse analysis methodology to study a corpus of approximately 4,700 texts, comprised of speeches and remarks taken from the Obama White House archive.

The analysis finds that Obama initially constructed a narrative of progress to make sense of the Middle East and the 'Muslim World'. This involved the idea of the East as temporally behind the West, as well as the construction of two co-constitutive Muslim/Arab Others. The first sympathetic Other was associated with 'ordinary people' and ethically linked to the American self. Meanwhile, a second 'oppressive' Other was associated with irresponsible leaders and governments, and ethically distanced from both the self and the sympathetic Other. After the Arab Spring, the Orientalist tropes underlying this discourse became more apparent, as Obama deployed colonial oppositions of civilisation and barbarism to ostracise the Libyan and Syrian regimes, and galvanise the international community into action. Finally, in response to the rise of ISIL, this colonial opposition became starker again as the nihilistic, barbaric 'cancer' of ISIL was framed as a threat to Western culture and civilisation. Between these two ethical poles, the ordinary/sympathetic Muslim/Arab Other was constructed as risky due to its tendency towards pre-Western tribalism and sectarianism, and its vulnerability to extremist narratives.

The thesis makes linked theoretical and empirical contributions to three International Relations literatures. Empirically, this study is original in demonstrating the progression of

official constructions of identity and threat, and the related changes to the discursive structures of US foreign policy over President Obama's eight years in office. Second, the thesis makes a theoretical contribution by highlighting the president's strategic agency in affecting discursive changes that were conducive to selling a limited and multilateralist foreign policy. Finally, the thesis makes a contribution to post-colonial and critical security studies literatures by detailing how the official construction of identity and threat continued to create (neo)colonial logics of civilising interventions in the Middle East.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AIPAC: The America Israel Public Affairs Committee

AQAP: al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations

BRIC: Brazil, Russia, India and China

CENTCOM: United States Central Command

DHS: Department of Homeland Security

IC: The international community

IEA: International Energy Agency

IMF: International Monetary Fund

ISAF: International Security Assistance Force

ISIL: Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (alternatively Da'esh and/or similar English acronyms).

MENA: Middle East and North Africa

MEPP: Middle East Peace Process

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

OPEC: Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

SCO: Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

UAV: Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

UNGA: United Nations General Assembly

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

UNSCR: United Nations Security Council Resolution

Style and terminology

Concerning quotations, where short quotes are included in the main text of the thesis, double quotation marks indicate a direct quote taken from a specific source. In other instances, single quotation marks are used either to denaturalise and make strange subjective concepts, or occasionally to refer to a common phrase in the official discourse without referencing a specific instance of its use.

All texts included in the data sample have been numbered for simplicity. Where individual texts are explicitly referenced in the thesis, this is done by speaker, year and number (e.g. Obama, 2011, Text 1020). More often, the empirical chapters refer to common ‘nodes’ or unifying themes running through multiple texts, that have been identified and compiled using NVivo software. For aesthetic purposes, these are referenced in footnotes, with a table of each node’s constituent texts included in the appendices. The number of texts included in this table is limited for space, and as such each entry usually represents a sample of texts coded to a given node rather than an exhaustive list. A separate index also gives the dates and titles of each coded text, as found on the White House archive site.

This thesis most often employs the term ‘Middle East’ to designate a broad and often vague geographic region because this is how it most often appears in US foreign policy discourse. This is done whilst recognising the problematic nature and Western origin of that label. Pinar Bilgin’s excellent 2005 study on the political construction of the Middle East as a short hand for certain, predominantly Western, security concerns and practices engages with alternative designations (e.g. Euro-Med, Arab Regional System, Muslim Middle East, MENA) to highlight the equally problematic and insufficient nature of these. Similarly ‘America’ is often used as a synonym for the USA for stylistic reasons.

Finally, ‘ISIL’ is used in preference to other more common designations such as ‘(the so-called) Islamic State’, ‘ISIS’ or ‘Da’esh’. This is done for the sake of coherency and mirrors Obama’s own choice of terminology, which has been analysed by Siniver & Lucas (2016).

Introduction

But I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. These are not just American ideas; they are human rights. And that is why we will support them everywhere.

Barack Obama, Cairo 2009

1. A new beginning? Reading Barack Obama's foreign policy

Barack Obama promised to reset America's relations with the Muslim World (de Vasconcelos & Zaborowski, 2009; Gerges, 2013). On 4 June 2009, President Obama stood in the Main Reception Hall of the University of Cairo, and delivered a speech outlining how he saw this renewed relationship unfolding over the following years. The Cairo speech, titled 'A New Beginning' but referred to simply as 'the Muslim speech' by Obama's inner circle (Rhodes, 2019, p. 51), highlighted a number of 'tough issues' requiring cooperation between America and the (Middle) East. Obama quoted from the Qu'ran in proposing a new era of dialogue, and promised to speak the truth, foster new and existing partnerships, and engage in a collaborative effort to empower the people of the Middle East. Despite his clear insistence he would continue to confront violent extremists and support Israeli sovereignty, he was received by a largely enthusiastic audience. The speech has since been interpreted as signalling a departure from the Bush era that would ultimately fail to occur (Jackson, 2014).

The Cairo speech, along with an earlier address to the Turkish parliament, is a marker of President Obama's discursive entry into the Middle East. It also constituted an important intervention into established foreign policy discourse. By proposing a 'new beginning', Obama challenged a specific discourse on how the US saw itself acting in the international sphere, that had dominated US foreign policy since 9/11. In this sense the new beginning became, if not an apology for Bush's 'War on Terror' (as Mitt Romney would later claim (C-SPAN, 2012; Obama & Romney, 2012)), then at least an acceptance of certain criticisms and a commitment

to rethink elements of American diplomacy going forward. According to its authors, this was a text produced with the intention of mobilising cooperation; to open dialogue between rivals and to open a door to those nations who had previously been America's de facto enemies – some of whom had been excluded from dialogue in the past due to their inherently 'evil' nature (Goldberg, 2016). There is debate however, over whether this was a serious challenge to the War on Terror and the broader traditions of American foreign policy, or simply a continuation of the softening of rhetoric started in the last months of the Bush presidency (McCracken, 2011). Parmar & Ledwidge, for example, have gone as far as to suggest that the "only difference between Obama and previous presidents who have inherited crises of confidence in American power... is that Obama's racial status – face, name - permits a more radical-sounding admission of America's past wrongs" (2017, p. 380). In the mainstream however, Jackson suggests it was believed that Obama would put an end to the excesses of the Bush doctrine and "inaugurate a new era of global engagement on security matters" (2014, p. 76)

The Cairo address presents a number of interesting and important questions: Did Obama disrupt or only rebrand the War on Terror? How did US foreign policy discourse change after the address? How can Barack Obama – as an intelligent and strategic actor – be conceptualised within the greater structures of official discourse? In terms of power relations, what do these discursive interventions mean for people associated with the imagined geographies of the Muslim world? These questions in turn point to a range of contentious academic discussions including but not limited to the structure/agency debate, the relationship between knowledge, language and power, and the politics of security, identity and representation. This thesis speaks to each of these questions and discussions, however its main interest is in how official US foreign policy discourses constructed the Other during this time.

This line of interrogation comes out of a sense of disappointment that often characterises critical assessments of Obama's presidential tenure, and particularly of his mixed results in taking America past the controversial practices of the Bush era. As Chapters One and Two of this thesis demonstrate, the discursive structures of American foreign policy and the War on

Terror under the Bush administration have been explored and unpicked at length and in depth by authors including (but not limited to) Croft (2006), Holland (2013a), Jackson (2005), Khalid (2011) and Nayak (2006). Whilst existing studies on the Obama era have presented discourse analyses either on specific foreign policies during Obama's tenure (Bassil, 2019; Belova, 2016; Biswas, 2018; Espinoza, 2018), and/or on certain moments within this period (Jarvis & Holland, 2014; Löffmann, 2015; Saleh, 2016), these have been relatively limited in scope in comparison to the large sample of 4,700 texts used in this thesis, and/or have not maintained a narrow focus on official presidential discourse. In light of this, there remains a need for research on the historical development of official constructions of identities and threat in the Middle East over the full eight-year timeframe of Obama's presidency. This thesis fills this gap by using a critical discourse analysis methodology and a post-colonialist critical lens to trace the use of identities and linking and differentiation processes in presidential rhetoric on security and foreign policy over three historical timeframes demarcated by key events – namely the start of the Arab Spring, and the rise of ISIL – that required the official discourse to adapt and engage with opposing voices.

When considering Obama's record on foreign policy, one can look to the list of achievements the administration's speechwriters included in the president's 2012 and 2016 campaign appearances for the most positive narratives of success: Under Obama, Americans killed Osama bin Laden, 'ended' the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, signed the Iran nuclear deal and the Paris climate treaty, and 'normalised' relations with Cuba. Still, the administration's failures and abandonment of early promises are not difficult to identify. Contrary to Obama's stated goals on taking office, Guantanamo Bay remained open in 2017, US troops were still present in Iraq and Afghanistan, the 'Peace Process' between Palestinians and Israelis was non-existent and North Korea had continued to develop its nuclear capabilities, having previously conducted its first test in 2006.

By 2011, the Arab Spring had sparked liberal hopes that a new democratic wave – perhaps inspired by Obama's speech in Cairo – was finally sweeping the dictatorships and theocracies

of the Middle East. Unfortunately, the mishandling of the Libyan situation, the democratic election of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (and its subsequent ousting by the same military regime the revolution had sought to replace), and the failure of the various parties involved in Syria soon turned optimism into shock and desperation. By the time Obama left office, the Arab ‘Winter’ had become a theatrical backdrop to his actions on the international stage; whether this was seen in the disregard for human rights and human life in the proxy conflicts in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, the crisis of refugees forced to leave these same areas, the possibility of a new Cold War taking hold as Russia insisted on supporting Bashar al-Assad while the West denounced him, or in the declaration of the ISIL caliphate, followed by a renewal of US airstrikes in Iraq from 15 June 2014, and Syria from 22 September, and the subsequent terrorist attacks launched on cities across the world and within the American mainland.

If this was not disappointing enough from a liberal perspective, the year 2016 saw a global ‘populist’ wave sweep across America, Asia and Europe. In Europe, the British vote to leave the EU threw into question the future of one of Washington’s most important alliances, as well as its longstanding strategic priority of promoting European integration (Whitman, 2016). In Asia, Narendra Modi, Shinzo Abe and Rodrigo Duterte have all been characterised as having “leanings towards authoritarian populism” by Chacko & Jayasuriya (2017, p. 126), leading them to conclude the “‘rules’ of the ‘rules-based order’ are likely to become more contested than ever”. Finally, after Obama left office, even his list of successes was cast into question and partially dismantled by a Trump administration whose most constant guiding principle sometimes appeared to be its determination to erase Obama’s political legacy (Eilperin & Cameron, 2017; Smith, 2018).

In short, Barack Obama did not succeed in establishing a lasting new era of liberal engagement with the world, or the new beginning with the Muslim world he had promised in 2009. The phrase ‘War on Terror’ may have been retired as the Obama administration settled into the White House (Aaronson, 2014), but many of the practices and institutions associated with it continued broadly without interruption and, this thesis argues, the Orientalist language

it relied upon only became more apparent the longer Obama stayed in office. It has been claimed that Obama followed an 'anti-doctrinal doctrine' (Gerges, 2013; Lizza, 2011), as a kind of non-ideological political realist, and the president himself has been keen to frame himself as a pragmatist (ibid; Goldberg 2016). Said's (1995) seminal critique of Orientalism returns frequently to the socially constructed rationalism of 'enlightened' Western thought, which was often presented by its proponents as similarly escaping ideological contamination. This thesis seeks to disrupt these claims of rationalism and objectivity by evidencing the progression of intersubjective discursive structures on the Middle East and the (Muslim) Other throughout the Obama presidency, and disrupting the constructed identities and foreign policy narratives underlying the Obama doctrine. The second section of this introduction outlines the focus, structure and arguments of the thesis.

2. Research questions, findings and relevance

On assuming the presidency, Barack Obama positioned himself as opposing the excesses of his predecessor under the banner of the War on Terror and had argued he would effectively 'reset' the role of America on the world stage. Upon taking office however he was faced with the deeply embedded discursive, legal and material structures of US foreign policy that had accrued over the seven years since the events of September 11th 2001 (Croft, 2006; Holland, 2013a; Jackson, 2005; 2014). Despite the unique level of agential power that came with the office, there is a strong body of literature to suggest Obama did not or could not change the American approach to counter-terrorism as he claimed he would (See for example, Aaronson, 2014; Bentley, 2014a; Desch, 2010; Jackson, 2014; Parmar, 2011; Pious, 2011). Observing the Obama administration's framing of foreign policy, counter-terrorist operations and military/humanitarian interventions, Bentley (2014a) and Roth (2010) argue President Obama did however succeed in promoting the language of human rights and multilateralism, over the

previous administration's preference for national security and American exceptionalism from international laws and norms¹. In light of this, the thesis asks two research questions:

- RQ1. How did the discursive structures of American foreign policy change between 2009
and 2016?
- RQ2. How did official constructions of identities and threat change over the same period?

These are questions of discourse that speak to the strength of the linguistic and cultural structures of US foreign policy and the power of elite agency to affect change. This discursive focus speaks to the linguistic change identified by Bentley and Pious, but also to Richard Jackson's (2014, p. 80) argument that the underlying 'regime of truth' of the War on Terror remained unchallenged in the Obama era. As such the questions are intended to identify and unpack changes to the discursive structures of official US foreign policy under Barack Obama, through a specific focus on identity and threat construction. Correspondingly, this thesis makes use of a discursive analytical framework, employing a theoretical foundation that draws on critical constructivist and poststructuralist literature, and a methodology informed by the models of discourse analysis employed by Doty (1997), Hansen (2006), and Holland (2013a). From this theoretical and methodological basis, the project analyses 4,700 official speeches texts, and the links between them in responding to the research questions. These choices in analytical framework come from the increasingly mainstream recognition of the discursive nature of foreign policy by scholars of international relations. The thesis takes the view that the evolution of constructivism and poststructuralism within the academic field of International Relations has led to three important developments for students of Western foreign policy. First, the philosophies of postmodern social theorists such as Derrida, Foucault and Nietzsche have been applied to global politics in seminal works by Campbell (1998), Der Derian (1987; 1989) and Shapiro (1992; 1989), and are increasingly influential in 21st century international relations

¹ See Ralph (2007) on America's longstanding cultural and interest-based opposition to the 'world society' and the International Criminal Court, and (2013) on the manifestations of these relationships through the War on Terror.

literature. Second, Edward Said's (1983; 1994; 1995) works on Orientalism, and related and inspired post-colonial and decolonial studies, have offered a template for Foucauldian analyses of Western knowledge on the (Middle) Eastern Other through a post-colonialist lens. Third, the relatively new sub-disciplines of critical security studies, and critical terrorism studies offer radical insights into the purpose and nature of security and counter-terrorism. This thesis incorporates key elements of each of these academic traditions in order to construct a robust, critical and original theoretical foundation to provide a meaningful set of responses to the research questions. The analysis considers a corpus of approximately 4,700 texts taken from the Obama White House archive website. These texts are records of speeches, mostly delivered by President Obama, but also including contributions from the Vice-President, First and Second Ladies and a small number of other high-ranking members of the administration².

The thesis argues that Obama made limited but strategic use of the substantial agential power inherent to his position to shift the discursive structures of US foreign policy closer to a reflection of his own ideological understanding of the Middle East. According to the principles of poststructuralism, the idea of the Middle East is always intersubjectively produced. As Pinar Bilgin (2005) and many others have previously made clear, the choice of language when labelling this region is inescapably problematic. This is because the 'Middle East' is not simply a geographical region, but also an object of US foreign policy (discourse) whose articulation relies upon and reinforces asymmetrical relations of power. Drawing on Edward Said's 'travelling theory', Derek Gregory argues in *Geographical Imaginations* (1994) that the Middle East is foremost a label signifying the multitude of intersubjective judgments and cultural memories we carry with us and which serve to separate East from West in popular Western thought. Alternative labels for similar, although not synonymous, territories include the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the Euro-Med, the Arab world, the Arab Regional System, the

² These are: NSC staff Denis McDonough, Jeff Bader, Ben Rhodes, General James L Jones, Tom Donilon, Susan Rice, Ned Price, Avril Haines, Mike Hammer; Press Secretaries Robert Gibbs, Jay Carney, Eric Schultz (Deputy); Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counter Terrorism John O Brennan; Homeland Security Advisor Lisa Monaco; Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner; Education Secretary Arne Duncan; Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russia and Central Asia Celeste Wallander; Senior Advisor Brian Deese; and several anonymised 'deep background' conference calls.

Near East and the Muslim Middle East (Bilgin, 2005). As Bilgin observes, each of these labels carries its own cultural and political baggage, and often originates in military and securitised jargon (this relation between geographical and securitised language and knowledge is unpacked in detail in Chapter Three). Furthermore, each of these labels is of predominantly Western construction, and therefore functions to produce boundaries around a certain understanding of the Self. This thesis, which has also been produced from a distinctly Western perspective, takes official US foreign policy discourse as its object of study, and seeks to deconstruct and critique the intersubjective knowledge on the Middle East that is (re)produced therein. Hereon in, the term ‘Middle East’ is used most often because of its ubiquity within this official discourse. In some cases the ‘Muslim world’, is also referred to, not because of its accuracy or utility as a signifier, but again because this is the phrase that features most frequently in the official discourse. Of course, these phrases are neither synonymous nor interchangeable. This being said, they are occasionally used interchangeably within the official discourse. Part of the purpose of the thesis is to unpack how these labels are intersubjectively constructed and (re)produced with reference to Orientalist and securitised cultural archives. The work related in the following chapters challenges and deconstructs how these labels develop, and uncovers the various intertextual links, assumptions and subjective knowledge claims that underlie their ‘official’ meanings. Focussing on these most dominant labels and placing them into question allows the thesis to disrupt the consensus on their meaning and expose the contested and often racialised, gendered and Orientalist logics and power dynamics at play in their articulation.

In shifting the foundations of the debate on American power away from a reliance on the patriotic representation of the national self favoured by Bush, and towards a more Orientalist narrative of Western civilisation and Eastern barbarism, Obama did not attempt to completely dismantle the structures of the War on Terror or to redefine America’s grand strategic goals. Instead he recognised the enabling power of historic narratives of civilisation and progress, and altered the grounds on which this debate was fought in a way that was strategically beneficial for the implementation of a limited, multilateralist foreign policy. While Orientalism was already present in Bush’s discourse (Gregory, 2003; Jackson, 2005; 2006; Little, 2009; Nayak,

2007; Tuastad, 2003) – this thesis works from Jackson’s understanding that the Orientalist civilised/barbaric binary was one of many metanarratives structuring Bush’s response to 9/11 and the War on Terror, along with more nationalistic narratives. The thesis subsequently argues that Obama’s language relied more heavily on Orientalist structures, as opposed to an American-centric discourse, and that this was strategically beneficial to him in pursuing a more multilateralist foreign policy, and especially a greater level of engagement with European powers – for example in the P5+1 negotiations with Iran (see Chapter Five), in the Western-led intervention in Libya (Chapter Six), and in leading the international military response to ISIL (Chapter Seven).

Rather than struggle with a nationalistic narrative that drew unhelpful boundaries between the US and its allies, the American self under Obama was ethically linked to a sympathetic international Other identity, through narratives of basic truths and universal values. This sympathetic Other included the ‘ordinary’ people of the world, who in the context of the Muslim World and the Middle East were constructed as desiring the same liberal values pioneered in the European Enlightenment and the American Revolution. In contrast, the identity of (for example) ISIL and oppressive Arab regimes, were confined to the current embodiment of the historical barbarian. As a consequence, the forces of (Western) civilisation and universal/American values retained the moral right to intervene wherever the forces of barbarism threatened people’s basic aspirations to Western ideals. Simultaneously, the foot soldiers of barbarism – most often labelled as extremists, radicals and Jihadists – were dehumanised and their physical destruction enabled. While the Orientalist narrative was also evoked by the Bush administration, and has always coloured the discourse of international relations, Obama was able to shift the balance of foreign policy discourse away from the nationalistic anti-terror narrative of his predecessor, and towards the less jingoistic but nonetheless Orientalist alternative which could better support his ‘reasonable’ (neo)colonialist ideology and multilateral but Western-centric foreign policy agenda.

The thesis will demonstrate that in the early years of his presidency, Obama's language displayed a latent Orientalism, which prioritised the positive language of civilisation and progress in its interactions with the Muslim World; (re)producing a metanarrative of human progress which positioned the Middle East behind America and Europe in its social and political development, but understood Muslims and Arabs as sharing the same basic desires for Western liberal democracy as their European and American counterparts on an individual level. This language was Orientalist in the sense that it ascribed a set of Western ideals onto the Muslim/Arab Other, and then when the Other failed to pursue the basic aspirations and universal desires Obama ascribed to it, or failed to do so in the correct, civilised manner, the speaker often resorted to traditional Western caricatures of 'wild', 'irresponsible' or simply 'immature' Muslims/Arabs – either at the level of the people, or more often their leaders – to make sense of this failure. This can especially be seen in the official discourse on the Middle East Peace Process, and the Iran deal, where Palestinians and Iranians were first characterised as sharing American values and aspirations, but were then chastised for not showing enough maturity or seriousness when, for example, ceasefires broke or negotiations faltered.

This latently Orientalist narrative was strongest at the dawn of the Arab Spring in 2011, when street protests across MENA appeared to demonstrate its accuracy, and a singular, homogenous protestor identity took form in Obama's discourse that could be applied to Egyptians, Tunisians, Libyans and Syrians alike. Obama spoke of these protests in a decontextualised, dehistoricised, and depoliticised narrative that framed them as a spontaneous expression of the universal truths and aspirations that he had previously situated at the heart of his foreign policy rhetoric. As the Gaddafi and Assad regimes turned the machinery of the state against their people, the discourse was adapted as the latent Orientalist protestor identity was contrasted with an opposing tyrant regime identity which took on many of the more obvious traits associated with the Eastern barbarian.

As the Arab Spring morphed into the 'Arab Winter' and the complexities of Middle Eastern regional politics were made apparent through multiple civil wars, the emergence of power

vacuums, and the rise of networks of anti-Western non-state actors, ultimately leading to the rise of ISIL, the thesis shows how the discursive structure changed again, as official constructions of identities and threat drew more heavily on Orientalist imagery. In making sense of the unforeseen and chaotic events, the Obama administration turned to a sharper Orientalist language of senseless, nihilistic and diseased barbarism to characterise ISIL in particular. Following attacks by ISIL and al Qaida groups in Europe and America from 2015, the roots of this language became more obvious again, as the official construction of the Western self was (re)produced in opposition to the threat of ISIL savagery. Here, imagery of Paris in particular, as the spiritual home of the Enlightenment and Western civilisation and culture, was opposed to the dark threat of barbaric, nihilistic terrorists. Problematically, the Muslim identity was left occupying a 'risky' space between civilised self and the barbaric Other. While Obama regularly made efforts to insist that America would never be at war with Islam, he increasingly framed phenomena such as extremism as a problem of the Other, occurring within Muslim communities (whether at home or abroad), and placed a particular responsibility on Muslims and their leaders to confront 'extremist' narratives. This thesis argues that this was a consequence of the same Orientalist knowledge structures that associate extremism and the absence of reason and maturity with the Muslim/Arab Other.

This research is of contemporary relevance not least because the use of Orientalist identities continues to play a key part in framing and legitimising violent foreign policies in the name of security and counter-terrorism. The rise of ISIL saw the use of US and coalition airstrikes in both Iraq and Syria. The monitoring organisation Airwars has reported over 14,000 strikes in Iraq and 19,000 in Syria as of September 2019, with between 8,000 and 13,000 civilian deaths resulting from these strikes having either been confirmed by belligerents or for which reporting was assessed as 'fair' by the monitors (Airwars, 2019). Interventions in both countries were framed in the language of civilisation and barbarism as the 'civilised world' was argued to have a duty to intervene militarily in order to stop the barbarian forces of Islamic State. The high proportion of civilian casualties continues the trend seen in Iraq and Afghanistan before the withdrawal of US and coalition forces and is mirrored in the continued use of armed aerial

drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Since Obama left office, President Trump has used the threat of terrorism combined with racialised and Islamophobic language to justify a total ban on refugees entering the US as well as a blanket ban on immigration from seven Muslim majority countries. This constitutes an escalation rather than a rupture from Obama era immigration policy, which in the words of Obama's Deputy National Security Advisor, entailed "comprehensive and rigorous vetting" of refugees, designed to ensure Syrians in particular had no links to crime or terrorism "before finally being allowed to set foot in the United States" after a process that "generally [took] up to a year" (Haines, 2016, Text 4500). This thesis provides valuable information on the official discursive structures that frame these foreign and security policies as possible and necessary (Doty, 1993). Specifically, it investigates the changes to core constructed identities and narratives of threat in US foreign policy discourse. In drawing attention to subjectivities underlying these constructed identities and narratives, this thesis disrupts the dominant framings of US foreign policy and counter-terror activity and places in question hegemonic discourses and power structures.

In terms of agency and structure, this thesis argues that Obama, as an intelligent and strategic political actor, had an imperfect but substantial awareness of the discursive structures he both used and was constrained by, and a similarly imperfect awareness of the full effects of his actions (Bennett, 2011; Howarth, 2013). It is certainly the case that Obama and his close confidant Ben Rhodes shared a keen awareness of what they call 'the Blob', or the structural power of state institutions in reigning in any attempted divergence from the established protocols of American diplomacy (Samuels, 2016). There can also be little doubt that Obama recognised the power of patriotic and Jacksonian narratives, especially in the context of the War on Terror, when one bears in mind, for example, his treatment in the 2008 elections, various statements from his staff on media and Republican reactions to the attack on the US Embassy in Benghazi in 2012, or the opposition he ran into when attempting to close the Guantanamo Bay detention centre (MacAskill, 2008).

In the post-colonial context, the president's awareness of historic discursive structures is less obvious. On the one hand, Obama recognised the power of the civilizational metanarrative and was able to use this to position America on the 'right side of history' and on the side of liberal progress despite his administration's use of (for example) coercive force, airstrikes that frequently caused collateral damage to civilians and children, and hostile immigration policies that disproportionately affected Muslims and people of colour. Similarly, it seems unlikely that Obama failed to understand how representing America's enemies as barbaric would not only help him to justify his policy to 'degrade and ultimately destroy' ISIL, but would also appeal to his right-wing domestic critics who accused him of being soft on terrorism and national security. Having said this, the power of hegemonic structures was also evident in what was either Obama's inability to recognise the colonialist and imperialist roots of his language, or his unwillingness to publicly acknowledge these. By speaking of himself, his decisions, and his foreign policy in the language of rationalism, Enlightenment values and 'sensible' pragmatism, the president showed either an unwillingness or an inability to recognise the subjective judgments that ran through his discourse on the Middle East, beyond the basic claim that 'American value' were also 'universal values'. Similarly, the language of rationalism, objectivity and pragmatism enabled him to explain away public disapproval of his foreign policies on the part of those people who were most affected by them as the consequence of populist anti-Americanism, of the lingering appeal of tribalism and sectarianism in the Muslim world, or simply of misperceptions of what he claimed to be Washington's benign goals in the region. As a result, this thesis argues that Obama, as a powerful elite actor, had a substantial but limited strategic awareness of his discursive environment, to the extent that he was able to make use of narratives that drew on an archive of colonialist discourses to sanitise and sell aggressive foreign policies to Western audiences. This awareness ended when critics of American policy and language in the Middle East were dismissed as unreasonable, immature or uninformed.

3. Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured into seven chapters. The first chapter provides a review of the existing literature on US foreign policy in order to contextualise the thesis and its focus. This chapter first considers the literature on the dominant traditions of American diplomacy, focussing especially on ‘realist’ and ‘Wilsonian’ influences on political decision-making and revisionist critiques, before going on to look at the importance of 9/11 and George W Bush’s War on Terror in establishing new structures of Washington statecraft. The chapter then continues to examine existing accounts of Obama’s foreign policy, including how this has been explained through material concepts of structure such as America’s relative decline in hard power, as well as more institutional and cultural factors wrapped up in the lingering influence of the War on Terror. The purpose of this discussion is to establish an understanding of what is usually meant by the structures of US foreign policy, and to highlight a gap in the literature which fails to account for the shifting discursive structures of American diplomacy over the eight years of Obama’s presidency, and can be filled by an analysis that examines continuity and change through an explicitly post-colonialist framework.

The second chapter then details the ontological framework underpinning the thesis, exploring poststructuralist and constructivist perspectives on structure, agency and discourse in the sphere of foreign policy. The role of this chapter is to develop the understanding of discourse, structure and agency used in framing and responding to the research questions. As such it draws on the works of Nietzsche, Foucault, Derrida and Howarth to set out an understanding of social structures as unstable, incomplete and contingent, and therefore vulnerable to human agency, and especially to speech acts made by a powerful strategic actor with a far-reaching platform, such as the president of the United States. The second half of this chapter then applies this framework to the realm of foreign policy in order to unpack and develop crucial ideas such as narrative and identity.

The third chapter consolidates the analytical framework for research through an exploration of post-colonial and critical security studies literatures which develops the intellectual

foundation for analysis and establishes the value of Said's critique of Orientalism as an analytical tool for studying Obama's record. This chapter makes use of post-colonial theory to understand the power relations and subjectivities at play in America's discourse on the Middle East and the 'Muslim world'. It also engages with the theory of securitisation to understand the political struggle over the meaning of security, and the role of elite agency in defining the object of security and establishing what constitutes a threat, and the effects of this on less powerful groups. Chapter Four then completes this framework by articulating the method of discourse analysis employed in responding to the research questions, focussing first on the research design before then moving on to the detail of the specific computer-aided method of discourse analysis used, as well as the importance of Hansen's (2006) and Krebs's (2015) 'key' or 'unsettled' discursive moments to the research.

The final three chapters of the thesis relay the findings of the research. These are structured thematically but also roughly chronologically around two such key/unsettled foreign policy moments which demarcate Obama's presidency. Chapter Five focusses on the initial rhetoric used by the president in his first years in office, focussing especially on the language around the self and the Other in respect to the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) and the negotiations towards a nuclear deal with Iran. Chapter Six then takes the Arab Spring of 2011 as the first major key moment to unsettle US foreign policy discourse under Obama. This chapter examines diverging narratives on the (attempted) revolutions in Egypt, Libya and Syria in order to gain a sense of the changing constructions of identity and threat, and the formation of a cohesive narrative of the Arab Spring over this period. The seventh and final empirical chapter then takes the announcement of ISIL on the world stage from 2014 as the second major key moment in Obama's tenure, and seeks to trace changes to terrorist identities and the opposing self, as well as the construction of threat as these developed before and after 2014, and finally following a series of attacks on European and American targets from 2015. A final concluding chapter then ties together all of these findings, responds to the research questions set out above and discusses avenues for future research.

Chapter one: Reviewing the structures of American foreign policy

Barack Obama took office after a campaign that framed him as the candidate for change. In terms of foreign policy, this was interpreted by many as signalling a departure from the neoconservatism of the Bush administration and the end to the War on Terror. In a 2007 article published in *Foreign Affairs* under the title “Renewing American Leadership”, Obama had argued against isolationism, but in favour of a recalibration of America’s global strategy. The presidential candidate promised to take US troops out of the long and costly war in Iraq, and to make use of the nation’s hard and soft power to promote a more collaborative and multilateral approach to global security and prosperity.

Despite Obama’s apparent wariness of the ‘Washington playbook’¹, his actions in office were broadly in line with America’s longstanding approach to the world and the Middle East (Gerges, 2012). Not only this, but they were generally in-keeping with those of his predecessor, particularly after 2006, from when the more hawkish members of the Bush administration were substituted for foreign policy ‘realists’ such as Robert Gates. Under Obama, the Middle East continued to hold the focus of US foreign policy, with Afghanistan, Iraq and later Syria and Libya, absorbing much of the state’s military and financial resources. Furthermore, at an ideological level, the core Bushist priorities of eliminating terrorists, promoting democratic governance, and unconditional support for the Israeli state remained unchallenged.

In his final year as president, Obama gave an interview in which he allowed Jeffrey Goldberg (2016) to compare him to Michael Corleone of the *Godfather* trilogy; trying to escape the dangerous, messy and violent world of the Middle East, only to be “pulled back in” whenever he thought himself free. While he was able to withdraw troops from both Iraq and Afghanistan by 2011 and 2014 respectively, the use of UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles/drones) for targeted killings continued. The growing violence of ISIL led to a renewal

¹ Ben Rhodes, Obama’s speechwriter and later National Security Advisor, famously characterised the dynamic between the President’s team and the Washington foreign policy establishment as similar to that of Steve McQueen’s character trying to escape the all-consuming ‘Blob’ in the 1958 sci-fi movie of the same name (Samuels, 2016).

of conventional airstrikes in Iraq from June 2014, which was expanded into Syria by September of the same year. Following the Arab Spring, the spiralling chaos of the ‘Arab Winter’ was met with increased US involvement in Libya and Yemen, as well as renewed antagonism with the Kremlin and its allies. There is thus a tension between what was expected of the new president and the reality of his actions (McCriskin, 2011). In the White House, the president spoke of ‘better’ and ‘cleaner’ approaches to counter-terrorism, which often translated on the ground to a preference to ‘kill rather than capture’ enemy combatants (McCriskin, 2011). Authors such as Bentley (2014a), Gerges (2012), McCriskin (2011) and Richard Jackson (2014) have deduced from this that Obama succeeded in shifting the tone of US foreign policy but remained either unwilling or unable to dispose of the underlying ‘regime of truth’ that continued to guide the assumptions and logics of the War on Terror (Jackson, 2014, p. 80). In short, this suggests that Obama either failed to overcome, or did not attempt to challenge the structures of American foreign policy that had developed under his predecessors.

This chapter contextualises the thesis and its research questions on structural change by reviewing existing literature on US foreign policy. Its aim is to set out the academic literature on the structural constraints on the president, and to survey the existing discussion on the extent to which Obama was able and willing to achieve change in US foreign policy. In doing this it also highlights the gap in the literature that the current research fills with its examination of the historical development of discursive structures and official constructions of identities and threat in the Middle East. It follows a two-part structure. The first section presents an overview of the traditions of US diplomacy, leading up to and including the practices and institutions of the War on Terror under George Bush. This section begins by considering ‘conventional’ understandings of Washington statecraft, looking first at realist interpretations before then turning to writings on the Wilsonian tradition of democratic expansion, as well as revisionist critiques. This then leads into a brief assessment of the US foreign policy in the Middle East, the Bush Doctrine, and the Republican administration’s response to the 9/11 attacks. The second half of the chapter is dedicated to the literature on President Obama’s terms in office. It is split into three sub-sections. The first of these again considers realist-inspired writings,

this time on the material structures that may have affected Obama's conduct on the world stage. The second then reviews the literature on the US anti-terror campaign post-2009 with the aim of contextualising the thesis within the academic discussion on change and continuity in the Obama era. Finally, the third focusses in on writings on the discursive structures of the Bush years that may have influenced Obama's actions, especially in regards to (counter) terrorism and foreign policy in the Middle East, and highlights the gap in the literature on the historic development of discursive structures, and specifically official constructions of identities and threat in the Middle East, that this thesis fills. The chapter concludes that 9/11 represented a key moment in the history of US foreign policy in that it presented the Bush administration with the opportunity to drastically expand Washington's global presence through the War on Terror. This did not however constitute a fundamental departure from a broader Wilsonian/interventionist tradition of US diplomacy. Similarly, while Obama made an effort to reign in the unilateralist excesses of the Bush era, his grand strategic vision of 'enlightened self-interest' appears to have been broadly in keeping with the supposed merging of values and interests claimed by his most recent predecessors. Chapter Two will then explore the discursive structures of the War on Terror and begin to establish the framework for analysis that is used in this thesis, before Chapter Three then develops the critical perspective of the thesis by engaging with post-colonialist and critical security studies literatures. The analytical method used in this research is then outlined in Chapter Four.

1. Traditions of American diplomacy

1.a. Conventional and revisionist perspectives on American foreign policy

Conventional accounts of international relations often see the US as an historically isolationist power that became increasingly active internationally throughout the 20th century (Mead, 2002). These histories claim that for much of this time Washington was dominated by foreign policy realists. That is to say, foreign policy was considered to be state-centric, guided by Hobbesian laws of human nature, reticent on morality, and concerned above all with the nation's military power in relation to its chief rivals. In this paradigm, US diplomacy was best

governed by cold strategic considerations of the kind championed by the likes of Henry Kissinger, George Kennan and Hans Morgenthau. Rational calculations of statecraft were compromised only by intervening variables of domestic politics, popular opinion and the human weaknesses of practitioners (Morgenthau, 1967). As such, the US remained isolationist as long as the British Empire could be relied upon to maintain the European balance of power (Mead, 2002; Williams, 1972). America was then coaxed out of its continent as the necessities of 20th century geopolitics dictated. The markers of the adoption of interventionism usually include the 1898 war with Spain, the Open Door policy in China, and the two World Wars, culminating in the Truman Doctrine of indefinite containment of the Soviet Empire (Kennan, 1984; Mead, 2002, pp. 3-24; Williams, 1972). The 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center altered the structures of the world system once more, triggering a new (over)reaction from Washington in the form of the global War on Terror.

The rationalist accounts tell a story in which America is pushed incrementally towards accepting a leading global role through a series of interactions with the wider world. On 25th April 1898, following uprisings in Spanish Cuba and a series of diplomatic failures culminating in the sinking of the USS Maine, America reluctantly committed itself to the island's defence (Kennan, 1984). In so doing, it was drawn away from the homeland to the far side of the Pacific where its navy defeated the occupying Spanish force in the Philippines. This subsequently allowed the US to gain control of the territories, thereby strengthening its hand in the Pacific and placing it on a tentatively interventionist footing. The Open Door policy was a further attempt to gain a foothold in Asia, guaranteeing free-trade across China in the age of empire, and preventing European powers from pushing American traders out of the area (Kennan, 1984, pp. 26-7; Williams, 1972, p. 45). Later, the First World War, initially viewed as an internal European crisis, eventually became evidence of the diminishing power of the great empires. When the *Lusitania* was struck by a German vessel in 1917, the US lost 128 civilian nationals and joined the European war (Kennan, 1984, pp. 55-64). The success of the allies enabled America to consolidate its position as a global player – at the cost of over a hundred thousand of its troops (DeBruyne, 2018, p. 2). By 1941, the Pearl Harbour attack, along with the rise of

Imperial Japan, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia seemingly pushed Washington into finally realising the survival of democracy would require the active involvement of a liberal superpower (Kennan, 1984). As a result, the Marshall Plan was engineered to ensure the US could profit from a stable and (mostly) capitalist Europe. Finally, containment plans and domino theories were set in place to ensure the Soviet Union could not expand its influence any further than it had through its efforts in the war and negotiations in Yalta and Potsdam. At each stage, ‘the US’ was steered by intelligent actors who observed and recorded the evolving geopolitical situation before using logic and reason to plot the best available course of action.

When the scope of analysis has been expanded to include the function of norms and values, scholars have pointed to the Wilsonian tradition of democratic and economic expansion as a continuous thread running through the history of American diplomacy. This tradition is most famously encapsulated by Wilson’s Fourteen Points for Peace, delivered in the last year of the First World War, and heralding the establishment of the League of Nations. Mead (2002) traces the idealist interventionist agenda back to the Christian missionary tradition of the 19th century, although Tucker (1993) contends that it has more secular roots in Jeffersonian republicanism applied to the international sphere². This tradition of foreign policy is committed to spreading ‘American values’ abroad; values which are tied up in the guarantee of free trade between nations and the protection of human rights across them – even if this may violate the sovereignty of states.

William Appleman Williams (1972) has dissected the Wilsonian tradition in his revisionist analysis of twentieth century US diplomacy. Influenced by Charles Beard, he argued that

² Mead (2002) argues US diplomacy is historically influenced by four dominant American traditions. This argument is informed by a methodology that embraces the history of American domestic and foreign politics. Contrary to what he calls the retrospective myth of pre-20th century isolationism, Mead argues the US has navigated an active foreign policy since its foundation. In studying the foreign policy of the past, he identifies four interrelated traditions. Mead names these Hamiltonian, Wilsonian, Jeffersonian and Jacksonian. The four traditions stem from strong cultural, social and economic identities in American history and have played crucial roles in the nation’s defining moments. Mead claims they are united in their attachment to core American ideals and values, and in a shared history that is traced back to “old world” Europe and to the British approach to foreign policy in particular (see Mead, 2002, pp. 36-8). The shared British/American approach to foreign policy is labelled “American realism” and is characterized by an allegedly “Anglo-Saxon” world view, in which the nation, protected by the seas, can afford to pursue economic and democratic interests rather than waste resources on territorial disputes.

America has historically navigated an expansionist course, following the myth that domestic prosperity relies upon the opening up of foreign markets for American traders (Beard, 1913; Brands, 1998, pp. 238-263; Williams, 1972). According to revisionist accounts, expansionism has been embedded in the national culture as far back as the Protestant arrival in New England. Taking Christian civilisation to the barbarous natives was understood to be a humanitarian imperative which happily led to the establishments of new markets in which to trade. Expansion is framed as the righteous spread of democracy/capitalism from Washington, towards the frontier and beyond. Williams highlights the strong lobbies in American history – including farmers, business leaders, unions and politicians – who have historically made the case that domestic agriculture and industry require expansion into foreign markets to unload surplus produce (Williams, 1972, p. 36). From this, Williams develops his ‘tragedy of American diplomacy’ - that US foreign policy is compromised before it begins due to three incompatible truths: firstly, America has a humanitarian impulse to help other people improve their lives; secondly, it believes in democratic freedom and the undeniable right of peoples to self-determination; finally and most problematically, it believes other people are “only truly capable of being happy” if they follow the same path as America (Williams, 1972, p. 13). With seemingly benign intentions, the US continually leaps into humanitarian action only to meddle in the internal affairs of other states and prevent them from following their own courses of action.

This interpretation points towards the existence of certain foundational myths that continue to inform perceptions of the American identity and the nation’s role in the world, and are therefore relevant to this thesis’s focus on structural change. Most important amongst these are the ideas of manifest destiny and American exceptionalism, as well as related narratives surrounding the innocent or divine nation (Campbell, 1998; Marsden, 2011; 2012; McCrisken, 2003; Restadt, 2014). These frames carry a level of Christian religious connotations, with America being cast as God’s chosen nation. The manifest destiny label appears in an 1845 article published anonymously in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* supporting the annexation of Texas and criticising the English for obstructing “our manifest

destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions” (Hudson, cf Hodgson, 2009, p. 50). At this time, the “United States of America” had expanded and was expanding rapidly since signing the Treaty of Paris with Britain in 1783. Having purchased the Louisiana territory from France in 1803, and Florida from Spain in 1821, Washington then acquired Texas, Oregon, and California in quick succession between 1845 and 1848. The article encapsulated the view that Americans, as citizens of a young republic amongst empires, had a righteous (perhaps divine) claim to the territories and resources of their continent as well as a duty to ‘liberate’ those under the yoke of less enlightened regimes.

The nature of exceptionalism is more difficult to define. Materially, thanks in part to the territorial acquisitions mentioned above, America’s richness in resources continued even into the 21st century to set it apart from other nations. More normatively, America’s Jeffersonian values have been interpreted as constituting as an exception to the norm of global power politics (Ignatieff, 2005). In another sense, actors such as George W Bush have been adamant that the US is exceptional in the sense that it need not and should not be bound by the international laws that keep lesser nations from destabilising the international order, especially when it finds itself thrown into an exceptional state of insecurity, as was the case after 9/11 (Ralph, 2013). Trevor McCrisken (2003) however ties his theory of exceptionalism to Americans’ cultural knowledge of their nation. Identifying a similar dualism as Brands (1998), McCrisken recognises two diverging interpretations of exceptionalism: one in which America is the City on the Hill, and a shining example of democracy for the rest of the world to follow; and another more Wilsonian interpretation that sees America as vindicator or missionary, with a duty to take civilisation and capitalism to those in need (McCrissen, 2003). The latter of these is particularly underlined by an understanding of America as an innocent nation “more sinned against than sinning” (Marsden, 2011, p. 329). This in turn justifies and legitimises US expansion on the grounds of external evil, and makes difficult any accusations of national self-interest or moral failing such as the revisionist critique. Woodrow Wilson himself saw America as leading the fight to “make the world safe for democracy,” Roosevelt labelled America the

“arsenal of democracy” and Kennedy poetically described the nation as the “keystone in the arch of freedom” threatened by Soviet expansion (cf Gurtov, 2006, p. 3). Madeleine Albright famously used a vindicationist interpretation of exceptionalism to defend a ‘hard’ vision of Wilsonianism in arguing “if we have to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation” (Albright, cf Bacevich, 2003 p. x; Holland, 2016). In this cultural imagination, America is exempt from the laws binding lesser nations precisely because it has a duty to protect the society of nation-states (Ralph, 2007).

In the decade between Soviet disintegration and the War on Terror, Bill Clinton’s administration embraced Wilsonianism in its attempt to build a broadly coherent foreign policy without the benefit of a significant threatening Other to focus its efforts. Clinton responded to unipolarity by insisting economics should be at the heart of his international agenda (Dumbrell, 2009; Robinson, 1996; Walt, 2000). The ‘New Democrat’ administration sought to take advantage of the end of history by building a truly global capitalist system through the process of ‘democratic enlargement’. As the communist alternative disappeared, American democracy, free market capitalism and the rule of law seemed set to become universal norms. William Hyland suggests that Clinton had little foreign policy of his own, preferring to focus on the domestic and delegate international issues to his administration. As a result, his eagerness to please the American public was “hijacked in the name of neo-Wilsonian internationalism” (Hyland, 1999, p. 197). During this period, the phrase ‘assertive multilateralism’, usually associated with Madeleine Albright as secretary of state from 1996 to 2000, came to underline US foreign policy, especially as it became clear NATO would be expanded to the east despite its lack of purpose given the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. The following section explores the literature on US foreign policy under the Bush administration, especially in the context of the Middle East and the War on Terror. This is done with the aim of establishing the foreign policy situation that Barack Obama inherited in 2009, as it relates to the focus of the thesis.

1.b. Structures of the War on Terror and US foreign policy in the Middle East

America's approach to the Middle East has historically been dominated by realist and Wilsonian arguments. Fawaz Gerges (2013) frames this debate in Washington over policy in the Middle East as a longstanding contest between 'globalist' and 'regionalist' points of view. For Gerges, the US approach to the 'Arab world' was initially influenced by regionalists, interested in the stability and prosperity of the Middle East as ends in themselves. In evidencing this, the author points to the establishment of the King-Crane commission under President Wilson to survey local opinion on the potential creation of a Zionist state – a move which ultimately failed to influence the Franco-British partitioning of the Ottoman Empire, but nevertheless succeeded in raising America's moral standing in the region (ibid, pp. 28-30; Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008, pp. 17-22). From the Cold War however, the globalist side gained dominance, as the Muslim world was increasingly seen as a small but important arena in a wider struggle between America and the Soviet Union. Following the creation of the Truman Doctrine, globalists and realists were increasingly happy to support authoritarian regimes (such as the Shah in Iran) due to their utility in the containment of communism. Furthermore, relations between Israel and Palestine were most often understood through the lens of the Cold War – as can be seen in President Truman's lobbying of the UN to support partition of Palestine, through to US support for Israel in the Six Day War, the Yom Kippur War, and even the invasion of Lebanon in 1983 (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008; Gerges, 2012).

Like Clinton, George W Bush had few foreign policy credentials, and overcame this by surrounding himself with those with experience or relative expertise. Part of this entourage were the group of eight 'Vulcans', headed by Condoleezza Rice, who briefed him during his campaign and were ushered into official positions following the election (Mann, 2004). Some of these were also signatories of the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) letter criticising Clinton's handling of Iraq in 1998. PNAC, an unashamedly vindicationist and

neoconservative³ lobby, embraced the moralism of the Reagan era to make the case that the US must take advantage of the ‘unipolar moment’ to reshape the world according to American values and interests. Gurtov (2006) contends that this demonstrates the latter Bush was closer to the foreign policy of the Reagan era than that of either his father or his immediate predecessor. Nevertheless, although this lobby was critical of Clinton, it had the same core attachment to democratic/economic expansion – albeit unhindered by what it dismissed as a ‘Wilsonian’ tolerance of international laws and norms (Gurtov, 2006, pp. 27-35). In any case, as the 2000 PNAC report admitted, any serious transformation of US military strategy would be a long process, “absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbor” (Donnelly, 2000, p. 51; Harvey, 2003, p. 15).

On 14th September 2001, Congress authorised President Bush to use “all necessary and appropriate force” in response to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon three days earlier (Bacevich, 2002, p. 226). By 7th October, Bush had launched Operation Enduring Freedom with the aim of destroying al Qaida and the Taleban in Afghanistan. This has been characterised as a neoconservative response, or as “Wilsonianism with boots” (Holland, 2016, p. 40), with Bacevich, for example, pointing out how the similarities between US Bush’s initial air power heavy strategy in Afghanistan and Clinton’s Operation Allied Force in Yugoslavia (Bacevich, 2002, p. 233). Nevertheless, it was also consistent with the Jacksonian tradition, which is characterised by both Holland and Mead as being sceptical of international entanglements until provoked through attack, at which point ideas of honour, patriotism and pride combine to motivate unrestrained, “assertive unilateral displays of military force” (Holland, 2016, p. 42; Mead, 2002). For Holland, this tradition can also explain the Bush administration’s version of exceptionalism, in that “as Jacksonians consider America’s

³ Robinson (1996, p. 76) defines neoconservatism as characterised by a belief in the reassertion of US power and the strengthening of military capabilities. Croft adds to this in reference to Irving Kristol’s writings, seeing neoconservatives as understanding the US as having “ideological interests” as well as “material concerns” which may be defended through the unrestrained use of force where necessary (Kristol, cf Croft, 2006, p. 99). Croft summarises, “neoconservatives have held that democracies tend to be supportive of the United States, and it is therefore in the interests of America to spread democracy, if necessary by force” (2006, p. 99). Within this paradigm, the 9/11 attacks were explained by Kristol as “the product of two decades of American weakness” (cf *ibid*).

enemies to be beyond the protection of the law by virtue of having broken it, they have little time for international legalities or institutions” (ibid).

Drilling down into the underlying principles of the ‘Bush doctrine’, Gurtov (2006, pp. 39-47) identifies core commitments to pre-emption, unilateralism and expansion of military capabilities. Bush claims to have embraced the pre-emptive strategy, which can be seen most obviously in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, after taking from 9/11 that deterrence and containment were meaningless in a struggle against global terrorism. Speaking in 2002, the president developed his new strategy by making a link between rogue states (especially the ‘axis of evil’: Iran, Iraq and North Korea), weapons of mass destruction and terrorists and using it to argue that “the war on terror will not be won on the defensive... we must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge” (Bush cf Daalder & Lindsay, 2005, p. 120). In other words, if the Pentagon believed Saddam Hussein was developing WMD, America had a right to intervene before he had a chance to use them or distribute them to al Qaida. Cheney, Rumsfeld and the more hawkish members of the Bush administration were also determined that the mistakes of the senior Bush should not be repeated; hence regime change was considered a necessary part of pre-emptive intervention. The unsubstantiated link between WMD, hostile regimes and terrorism, was made more real in White House circles thanks to the vice-president’s growing paranoia that the former would be used in the ‘next 9/11’ (Daalder & Lindsay, 2005, pp. 118-9; 128). Colin Powell would later take this theory to the UN Security Council, complete with prop vials of ‘anthrax’, when seeking its approval for the invasion of Iraq. When Powell’s empty vial failed to convince the necessary powers, the US chose instead to act unilaterally, via a coalition of the willing.

Concerning unilateralism, the US famously refused NATO assistance in the aftermath of 9/11. PNAC (whose membership included Cheney, Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz) had made clear its disdain for multilateralism and international institutions in the 1990s, and Washington opted to ‘go it alone’ in the initial air phase of the Afghan campaign. Later, as the US began to make use of its allies, Dick Cheney would explain the neoconservative rationality when telling

the Council for Foreign Relations, “America has friends and allies in the cause but only we can lead it. Only we can rally the world in a task of this complexity, against an enemy so elusive and so resourceful... We are in a unique position because of our unique assets – because of the character of our people, the strength of our ideals, the might of our military and the enormous economy that supports it” (Cheney, cf Daalder & Lindsay, 2005 pp. 119-20). This unique position enabled the US to disregard, or at least interpret broadly, international laws and agreements on the rules of war and the use of torture, rendition, and extra-judicial detention (Ralph, 2013). The Bush administration also decided early on that body counts – though mandatory by international law – were unhelpful in the War on Terror and therefore optional for the greatest nation on earth. Furthermore, by 2008, an estimated 100 000 terror ‘suspects’ had been detained without trial (Rogers, 2008, p. 182).

Third, the Revolution in Military Affairs was given the resources to flourish under the Bush doctrine. The modernisation of the military had been an issue since the time of Clinton, and the new threat of terrorism did much to bridge the gap between public support and the required increase in defence spending. Beyond ballistic missile defences and nuclear deterrence, the Bush administration sought the capabilities to “take the war to the enemy” (Rumsfeld, cf Gertov, 2006, p. 44). To this end, the Washington provided the budget for the Pentagon to invest in research and development, to procure high-tech weaponry and to project American power around the globe (Gertov, 2006, p. 44). Troops stationed in Germany, South Korea and areas of lesser strategic importance were relocated to bases in the CENTCOM region and Eastern Europe (ibid). This focus on capabilities expansion was distilled in the 2002 National Security Strategy. The militaristic response to 9/11 was framed as the reassertion of US power and leadership, which was argued to have been neglected by Bill Clinton. The sense of shame surrounding the perceived failures of the Clinton administration has been argued to have heightened the national appetite for aggression. If America under Bush had not been adequately masculine, an uncompromising, unilateral assault on the people judged to be responsible for 9/11 would make up for previous wavering (Keen, 2006; Nayak, 2006).

Finally, under Bush the Clintonian/Wilsonian tradition of democratic enlargement survived, and was often seen as the most obvious tool at America's disposal in suppressing the rise of terrorist ideology and practice. Despite the neo-conservative disdain for 'Wilsonian' internationalism, the Reaganite ideological leanings of the Bush administration, and perhaps the President's personal religious convictions, aligned them closely to the missionary aspects of liberal expansionism (Boyle, 2004; 2011; Desch, 2008; Halper & Clarke, 2004). This combined with a concerted effort to draw parallels between Islamic terrorism and 20th century fascism and communism (Boyle, 2011; Holland, 2013a; Jackson, 2005) enabled the juxtaposition of freedom and democracy with the constructed American identity, which was opposed to fear and anti-democratic violence on the part of terrorists (Boyle, 2011). This has been argued to have entrenched the 'common sense' approach to fighting the War on Terror by promoting democracy in the minds of the US public and political elites alike (Boyle, 2011; Romano, 2011). Again, this was most obviously visible in Iraq, where "millennial ambitions" led to an indefinite occupation and a huge drain on resources for the US, the deaths of thousands of civilians, as well as prolonged regional instability that enabled the growth of the very terrorist networks and insurgencies the Bush administration had committed itself to eliminating (Acharya, 2007; Bâli & Rana, 2010; Gregory, 2004; Pressman, 2009).

On the domestic front, the institutionalisation of the War on Terror can be seen most strikingly in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), created by Bush through the Homeland Security Act (HSA) of 2002. The HSA, divided into seventeen titles, established the DHS, the National Homeland and Security Council, the Directorate for Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection, as well as the Critical Infrastructure Information and the Cyber Security Enhancement Acts of 2002. HSA's titles covered a wide array of domains including border control, "transportation security", emergency responses, air travel and the "arming of pilots against terrorism", "science and technology in support of Homeland Security", and "the treatment of charitable trusts for members of the armed forces". As of 2014, the DHS held around 200,000 employees, each of whom, through their salary and job security, had a vested interest in the continued threat of terrorism (Jackson, 2014, p. 83). The first budget document

for DHS (Bush, 2003, p. 7) requested \$37.7bn for the 2003 financial year. By 2008, this figure had risen to \$46.4bn (DHS, 2008). Alongside this, the USA PATRIOT Act created a legal framework specifically designed to fight a war against terrorism according to the Bush agenda – allowing mass surveillance of US citizens, indefinite detention of immigrants and government access to private business and financial records (source). The War on Terror also saw the power of the presidency increase, as did those of federal and security agencies such as the CIA, FBI and NSA, along with new organisations such as the Suspicious Activity Reporting initiative and the National Defence Authorization (Jackson, 2005; 2014).

These institutional changes represent the creation of a tangible infrastructure of War on Terror mechanisms, all offering people and institutions vested interests in maintaining elements of the post-9/11 ‘Bush Doctrine’ as an accepted part of 21st century American foreign policy. Bacevich’s revisionist argument – that the expansionist, Wilsonian tradition of US diplomacy was strongly represented from Bush Sr, to Clinton, to Bush Jr – carries a certain amount of weight, however it appears undeniable that the 2001 attacks lifted the constraints from some of Washington’s vindicationist impulses. The public hunger for immediate, Jacksonian retaliation allowed the more hawkish members of the Bush administration to set in motion the pre-emptive, unilateralist agenda that would come to define the era. Despite this, as the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq dragged on, and more American lives were lost in the ‘post-war’ effort, public support began to wane. By the end of Bush’s second term, Barack Obama’s promise of change was able to defeat Republican candidate John McCain by 365 electoral votes to 173, with a popular vote of over 69 million, and by a margin of just under 10 million (US Electoral College, 2009). The remainder of this chapter considers the existing literature on Obama’s international record.

2. Situating Obama within contemporary structures of US foreign policy

In assessing Obama’s record as president, it is necessary to consider his place within certain structures of international relations and US (foreign) politics. As an elite actor, the president is well-placed to achieve long term changes in foreign policy practice and discourse. Nonetheless,

authors such as Bentley, Jackson, Kitchen and Quinn have claimed that either through lack of material resources or through social constraints, the 44th president was unable to fundamentally alter the course of state action. A spectrum of theories has been advanced to explain an apparent lack of rupture from the past, which Holland (2014) categorises into accounts based on an unwillingness to change, failure to achieve change and structural limitations preventing change. The final section of this chapter is split into two parts; the first reviews Obama's record in leading America on the world stage, whilst the second specifically examines the continuity and change he has overseen in regards to taking over the War on Terror. The chapter concludes that although Obama has been adept at managing the nation's 'relative decline' in global status, he has not achieved any radical change in the practice of counter-terrorism. Chapter Two will then develop the discursive theoretical and ontological perspective that underpins this thesis as well as exploring in more depth the ideational structures of US foreign policy and the War on Terror.

2.a. Material structures on Obama's foreign policy: managing relative decline

In the contemporary era, structural realists have explained Obama's approach to politics as largely constrained by the material reality of America's relative decline in status. Whilst the US is still generally agreed to be the most powerful state actor in terms of resources, new international competition means that it can be thought of as in a phase of relative decline (Quinn, 2011). The rise of rival powers, notably the 'BRIC' nations⁴, and the continued effects of the 2008 financial crisis drive arguments that material factors were the most powerful constraints on the world's hegemon during Obama's tenure (Quinn, 2014; 2011; Gelb, 2010; 2009). Scarcity of resources and growth in competition are said to have limited the president's ability to achieve the changes he would otherwise effect. Although Obama would have liked to live up to the optimism of his campaign, his hands were tied by the nasty and brutish reality of the anarchical world.

⁴ Brazil, Russia, India and China.

Decline has been conceptualised as a deficit of domestic economic resources in comparison to overseas commitments (Kennedy, 1989). The notion of decline therefore relies on an estimation of both domestic and international variables, with the latter category further dividable into those issues that relate to the strength of America's rivals and those that stem from its relationships with traditional allies. Considering first domestic variables, fiscal analyses have shown how it became more difficult to fund America's international agenda immediately before and during Obama's time in office. The US still had the largest and most powerful military in the world, and its defence budget far surpassed that of any other nation. Nevertheless, national spending had outweighed income since the early 2000s. Altman & Haass's (2010, p. 26) detailed analysis highlighted how the Bush administration's tax cuts of 2001 and 2003, its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and increases in healthcare coincided with the national annual surplus turning to a deficit from 2002 (see CBO, 2016, p. 10). The Bush administration apparently considered this rise in the public debt manageable. However, after the financial crisis of 2008, the national economy was less favourable to expanding overseas commitments. Altman & Haass argued the stimulus introduced to stabilise the economy prevented a depression but brought the federal deficit up from 3.2% of GDP for 2008 to 12% (\$1.6 trillion) for the fiscal year 2009 (ibid). According to more recent figures from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) the public debt grew from 39% of GDP as of the end of the fiscal year 2008 to 76% as of end 2015. The debt was further projected to reach 86% of GDP by 2026 and 141% by 2046 (CBO, 2016). This led 'declinists' to conclude that America's ability to implement strategy and affect its environment was diminishing (Quinn, 2011, p. 803).

The situation was not helped by the president's obligation to negotiate with Congress in order to free up these resources for state use. The insights of neoclassical realism are particularly useful for theorising the US political case. Neoclassical realists foreground the roots of decline in the comparative lack of domestic state power. Unlike dictatorial regimes, democratic governments cannot (in theory) simply seize the resources required to secure their place in the international order (Dyson, 2010). The democratic leader's dependence on the support of the various elements of the state machine affects the nation's capacity to adapt to

the global balance of power (Gelb, 2009; Quinn, 2014; Rathbun, 2008; Rose, 1998). For Obama, a bicameral legislature combined with the US two-party system and a populist demand for lesser taxation placed him in a difficult situation. The president is required not only to keep the population on side, but also to pass any request for greater funding through Congress, whose houses may be controlled by uncooperative parties (Forsythe, 2011). In Obama's case the House of Representatives seated a majority of Republicans from 2011 until he left office with the Senate also under Republican control from 2015 – this political context has been used to explain a 'strategic choice' by senior administration members such as Rahm Emmanuel to prioritise the passage of healthcare reform through Congress over the campaign promise to close the Guantanamo Bay detention centre (Bruck, 2016). The shortfall in state power was also illustrated in September 2013 after Republicans and Democrats in Congress failed to reach an agreement on appropriations for the new fiscal year. As a result, the US Federal Government was 'shut down' for 16 days from 1st October. This is not the first time academics have pointed to decline and observers have been justifiably sceptical of pessimistic predictions in the past (Quinn, 2011, pp. 804-5)⁵. Those who class Obama's circumstances as uniquely unfavourable point to the unprecedented size of the debt figure, the growing interest this accumulated, as well as the burdens this placed on healthcare commitments and social security liabilities by an aging population.

A second factor towards relative decline relates to America's international rivals. Theorists have speculated since the 1990s that the rise of the BRIC nations will trigger the fall of the US empire. These assessments may have been premature, however the 'rise of China' has become a recurring point of reference in studies of Obama's foreign policy (Art, 2010; Beeson & Li, 2015; Buzan, 2010; Ikenberry, 2008). The Chinese export-led economy has grown rapidly since market reforms were introduced in the late 1970s and at annual rates of between 7 and 10% throughout Obama's terms in office. The World Bank estimated the Chinese national GDP at over \$10.8 trillion in 2015. On top of this, the IMF estimates China holds over \$3 trillion in

⁵ Paul Kennedy's original paper was published in 1989. See also Nye (2010) who suggests US declinism can be traced back as far as the founding fathers.

foreign reserves as of 2016 (IMF, 2016). The nation's leadership has taken advantage of this wealth by increasing military spending broadly in line with GDP growth, and expanding its diplomatic and economic sphere of influence into Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and even Latin America (Atesoglu, 2013, pp. 91-3; Jianyong, 2008, p. 442). Finally, as mentioned above, Beijing was able to take strategic advantage of the 2008 financial crisis to the extent that it became the largest holder of US debt (Buzan, 2010, p. 19). This has led to much debate over the possibility of a 'peaceful rise'. Historically, the stability provided by US primacy has been useful to China's economic development. On the 'offensive' end of the realist spectrum, Mearsheimer (2006; 2010) and Halliday (1999) have argued that as China comes ever closer to attaining 'superpower' status, the potential for a violent struggle for global leadership is increased – possibly to the point of inevitability. On the more liberalist side of the debate, scholars such as John Ikenberry and Barry Buzan contend that China is faced with a choice between rising within the established Western order and working to overthrow it; concluding that it is in the interests of both the US and China to pursue the former option (Ikenberry, 2008, p. 23; Buzan, 2010). No matter which outcome is more likely, Beijing is increasingly portrayed as a potential threat to American interests.

Beyond China, an array of state and non-state concentrations of power challenge the alleged hegemony of the US. This has led Haass (2008) to argue that the US now inhabits a 'nonpolar' world. The term 'nonpolarity' is used to convey the diffusion of power that emerged after the bipolarity of the cold war and the unipolarity of the 1990s (see Krauthammer, 1990). Considering state rivalries, Russia under Putin has become increasingly belligerent and adventurous, invading Georgia in 2008 and annexing previously Ukrainian Crimea in 2014. Meanwhile, North Korea, once listed as part of George Bush's 'axis of evil', now has offensive nuclear capabilities and Iran persistently poses a problem for the US. As a fundamentally anti-American regime, Tehran has been viewed with antagonism in the US since the Islamic Revolution and the hostage crisis of the 1970s. Added to this, the Republic is situated in a strategically important location and successive leaders' have made a habit of threatening Israel's existence. Following the fall of Iraq, the balance of power in Central Asia swayed in

Tehran's favour, and the suspected existence of a nuclear weapons programme again added to Washington's growing list of foreign monsters to destroy.

Aside from the traditional acknowledgement of the BRIC nations, Haass refers to the increasing relevance of international organisations such as the European Union, ASEAN, the IMF and the World Bank. Functional organisations including OPEC, the IEA, the SCO and media outlets such as the BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera and the Murdoch empire are included as alternative sources of influence. Finally, Cities and regional powers from London and New York to Sao Paulo and Uttar Pradesh are name checked as sub-national power centres, as are militia type forces such as Hezbollah and the Taleban, and terrorist organisations including al Qaida (Haass, 2008). None of these actors alone rival the coercive power of the US as a global player however their existence complicates the traditional realist view of a state-centric, anarchic system and feeds the argument that America under Obama was in a phase of relative decline.

Finally, America's diminished relative power is perceived to be aggravated by the absence of the kind of cooperation from other Western powers that it enjoyed during the cold war. Tara McCormack and David Skidmore argue that throughout the short 20th century Western elites had an obvious incentive towards cooperation. Whilst communism was perceived to be a real threat to European and American social structures, Europe in particular was aware of the necessity for American leadership (McCormack, 2011; Skidmore, 2011). From the 1990s, the Soviet Union no longer posed a strategic threat to the West and the strength of communist ideology was greatly diminished. This combined with George W Bush's eagerness for unilateralism after 9/11 has led to domestic constraints on US leadership in the 21st century. These were most obvious in France and Germany's failure to back the 2003 invasion of Iraq but can also be seen under Obama, where despite the new president's attempt to cleanse the image of American leadership, there is still strong opposition to the will of the super power (McCormack, 2011, pp. 192; 201-2). McCormack (ibid) uses the examples of European states refusing to do "what Obama has asked in terms of economic stimulus and contributing more

troops to Afghanistan” to show the continuing limits of US diplomacy, as well as its hard and economic power, and to argue that without the looming threat of communism, US leadership will continue in its phase of decline and Obama will continue to be frustrated in his attempts to achieve change.

In this environment, followers of *realpolitik* argue that a strategically-aware president will only pursue a limited foreign policy in line with available resources. Obama therefore needed to act with restraint in order to do enough to secure the state’s interests without spreading resources too thinly (Miller, 2012). This is what has been called “the art of declining politely” (Quinn, 2011) or “the Goldilocks principle” of US foreign policy (Miller, 2012). From a rationalist perspective, Obama’s task on taking office was to manage an inevitable decline in the best way possible.

To an extent, Obama achieved this. Under his leadership, America tended towards ‘offshore balancing’ and multilateralism over direct or unilateral intervention and Washington leant on the cooperation of external and alternative actors to achieve its aims (Kitchen, 2014; Quinn, 2014). Furthermore, Obama’s preference for drone strikes also allowed the CIA to eliminate threats and kill people from Virginia without committing to boots on the ground. Offshore balancing essentially requires the greater power remove itself from regions of instability. From a distance, the superpower allows the smaller regional powers to ‘play out’ their differences, intervening only to tilt the balance in the strategically preferable direction. This is a realist strategy championed most enthusiastically by Stephen Walt (2009; 2011). Theoretically, by withdrawing from Western and Central Asia, the US would be able to economise on its defence budget whilst leaving the likes of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, India Russia and China to struggle amongst themselves. In terms of propaganda, it is also suggested this could reduce anti-American sentiment. Walt and his supporters insist however that balancing is not the same as isolationism, and that the US should remain committed to intervention when necessary.

Leaving the ethics and legalities of this approach aside, the light-touch approach has been controversial, with Libya often used as a shorthand for its failings. In 2011, Obama waited in

vain for the EU nations to lead the international response to the developing civil war. As a result, he was derided for 'leading from behind' despite the economies of American blood and treasure (Quinn, 2014; Lizza, 2011). This was not helped as the situation deteriorated in the months and years that followed the lynching of Muammar Gaddafi. When the US embassy was attacked in Benghazi in 2012, it became politically damaging back in America to both Obama and Hillary Clinton personally. Despite his criticism of Bush in Iraq, Obama would eventually attribute the failures in Libya to a similar lack of post-intervention planning (Goldberg, 2016). However flawed in practice, this cautious approach to Libya followed the principles of structural realism as interpreted by Quinn, Mearsheimer and Walt (see especially Mearsheimer & Walt, 2016).

This same pragmatism can be seen throughout the two Obama administrations. In Iran, Washington pursued long negotiations over military action to dissuade Tehran from developing nuclear weapons. The threat of a hostile nuclear power was met with the threat of war as a last resort, but a deal was considered preferable (Quinn, 2014). Opting again for multilateralism, the US involved the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany (P5+1) in protracted talks. In 2015, the parties involved finally arrived at a deal in which certain sanctions were lifted in exchange for Iranian compliance. Similar tolerance of potential threats can be seen with regards to the rise of China and Russia. The 'pivot to Asia' (Lieberthal, 2011) can be read as a measured retreat from Bush's commitment to the Middle East (Dumbrell, 2009; Kitchen, 2014; Quinn, 2014). In total, these developments create an image of Obama as aware of the nation's limitations in the international sphere, and increasingly willing to allow other states to play greater roles on the international stage. Bush's unilateralism was therefore modified into a pragmatic approach to burden-sharing and the intelligent management of relative decline (Kitchen, 2014; Quinn, 2014).

These materialist structural analyses give a useful insight into the strategic shifts Obama oversaw since the Bush era and provide a context through which to understand the US as an actor on the international stage. Nevertheless, the question as to whether Obama achieved

substantial change in the War on Terror – and if not, how and why he failed to achieve the change expected of him – has yet to be addressed in this chapter. The penultimate part of this section and chapter considers the literature on change and continuity in the practice of the War on Terror under Obama's tenure as commander-in-chief, before the final part sets out a review of the literature on the discursive structures of the War on Terror, identifying the gap that this thesis fills.

2.b. Inheriting or adopting the War on Terror?

To look at Obama's rhetoric before taking office and during the early period of his tenure, an intended rupture from the Bush era seems apparent. As Parmar (2011) has observed, even before the announcement of his candidacy, the future president had made clear his appreciation of the effects of neo-colonialism on African and Eastern regions (Obama, 2004), and had given observers reason to hope he might act with more awareness of the Orientalist tendencies of American interventionism. During his campaign, Obama was most overtly critical of the war in Iraq, which he famously characterised as a 'dumb war' (Aaronson, 2014; Obama, 2009). Beyond this, the manner in which the Afghanistan campaign had been directed had also been the subject of criticism and there were general calls for America to become more of a moral actor, which was encapsulated in the sound bite of 'enlightened self-interest' (Aaronson, 2014; Goldberg, 2016). Before taking office, Obama had positioned himself as breaking with the nationalism of the Bush era in fighting the War on Terror, and redefining the US as a moral agent, following this enlightened self-interest on the basis that if others were made safe, Americans would be safer as a result (Brooks, 2007). This is perhaps as close as the president came as candidate or commander-in-chief to defining an Obama doctrine. As candidate, he was critical of the way the Bush administration had conducted itself in the War on Terror, and the morally and legally dubious techniques it had used in the name of national security. It has been argued that despite the expectations he generated, Obama never had the intention to achieve change in the first place. McCrisken (2011) argues criticisms of Obama which attack the failure to break from the Bush era result from an overestimation of the president's desire to achieve

change before taking office. For McCrisken, Obama's critics heard the standard campaign rhetoric of 'change' and recognised an unstated desire to resituate national foreign policy. Instead Obama's change was only meant to entail a 'smarter' approach to the Bush doctrine; focussing on Afghanistan and Pakistan rather than Iraq, using resources to counter key threats and resisting temptations to engage in unnecessary interventions. There is however evidence that whilst Obama may not have been the radically different candidate he was sometimes interpreted as, he still intended to make key changes to US foreign policy that he was unable to put into action. During his campaign, he called for the closure of the Guantanamo Bay detention centre, an end to the PATRIOT Act, as well as greater protection for national security 'whistle-blowers' (Madar, 2012; Pious, 2011). Upon taking office, the president positioned himself as more of a moral agent; opposing the use of torture or 'enhanced interrogation techniques' and extraordinary rendition, and signing an order to close Guantanamo within a month of his inauguration (McCracken, 2011; Obama, 2009b; Kitchen, 2014). In terms of framing, the Obama administration made a publicised move to distance themselves from the Bush administration and the 'War on Terror' label, instead referring to a struggle against 'Al Qaida and its affiliates', a war against 'violent extremism' or even simply to 'overseas contingency operations' (Jackson, 2014; Kitchen, 2014; Bentley, 2014a; McCormack, 2011). Many of these early gestures were not followed through as may have been hoped for however the newly elected president's immediate attempts to alter how America conducted itself in the war against terrorism as well as the publicised retirement of the phrase 'War on Terror' from official terminology (McCracken, 2011; Obama, 2009; Kitchen, 2014; Bentley, 2014a) appear to demonstrate the sincere intention of rupture from the Bush years, at least at the start of his tenure.

Following his inauguration, President Obama's actions have been read as offering broad continuity with the Bush administration with minor strategic and legal changes. John Brennan, former assistant to Bush, has gone so far as to talk about "Bush's third term" (Pious, 2011, p. 264). Most emblematic of Obama's failure to achieve the change he promised, is the continued existence and use of the Guantanamo Bay detention centre, which, at the end of his

administration, still housed ‘terror suspects’ who had never faced trial (Murray, 2011; Pious, 2011; Forsythe, 2011; Parmar, 2011). In terms of domestic anti-terrorism policies, the PATRIOT Act was renewed in 2011 and replaced by the similar USA FREEDOM Act in 2015 (Madar, 2012; BBC News, 2015a), the first administration allowed six prosecutions under the Espionage Act (Madar, 2012), the Terrorist Screening Centre’s ‘No Fly List’ doubled from 2009 to 2011 to include 21 000 names (Madar, 2012), and the passing of the National Defence Authorization Act (NDAA) made legal the indefinite imprisonment of US citizens suspected of terrorism (Madar, 2012; Jackson, 2014). Obama allowed the encroachment of the War on Terror on the domestic life of US citizens to be approved by both major political parties, with over 30 000 people employed for the purposes of phone-monitoring in 2012, and the Department of Homeland Security ranking as the third largest federal bureaucracy (Madar, 2012). The effect of these measures has been perceived as the normalisation of ‘Bushist’ domestic surveillance (Madar, 2012), or “continuity with legal twists” (Pious, 2011, p. 265; Stern, 2015). In short, despite Obama’s campaign rhetoric, the post-9/11 anti-terrorism leviathan remained firmly in place.

Beyond the domestic front, the 2010 National Security Strategy offered little change from the 2002 ‘manifesto for the War on Terror’ under Bush Jr (Parmar, 2011; Romano, 2011). Where there were changes, these were essentially tactical and amounted to a streamlining of US efforts, much of which had begun to happen in the final months of Bush’s presidency (ibid). In terms of personnel, the retention of Robert Gates as secretary of defence was the most notable evidence of Obama’s willingness to continue with Bush’s strategic aims (Parmar, 2011; Pious, 2011). Along with Gates, many key appointments to the Obama administration were apparently sourced from those involved in the 2004-6 Princeton Project for National Security, which was convened to ‘correct’ the Bush administration’s counter-terrorist excesses (2009; 2011). These included the appointment of Anne-Marie Slaughter and Jim Steinberg to the state department and Michael McFaul and Samantha Power to the National Security Council (Parmar, 2011). However, key Obama staff that also served under Bush included current CIA director and 2009-13 Homeland Security advisor John Brennan, 2009-10 national security

advisor James L. Jones, and CENTCOM commander (later ISAF commander and CIA director) David Petraeus (Parmar, 2011; Pious, 2011; Romano, 2011). On the ground, the US under Obama remained involved in the same areas it had been since 2003. Afghanistan and Iraq continued to absorb much of the defence budget until troops were withdrawn in 2014 and 2011 respectively (Parmar, 2011), and even after these dates the US remained committed to a programme of air-strikes and targeted killings in both countries (Aaronson, 2014; Aslam, 2014; Espinoza, 2018). Obama's main achievement in terms of strategic change may have been his conceptual consolidation of the 'AfPak' region as the principal focus of US resources in fighting terrorism, although even this argument was being made in the Bush administration before the handover to Obama (Parmar, 2011; Woodward, 2013). Beyond this, Israel, Palestine and Iran remained a key focus of America's diplomatic activity, and the only change in the US's external behaviour seemed to be a more pragmatically multilateral approach to foreign policy and intervention, which was more open to burden-sharing with other state and non-state actors (Gerges, 2012; Parmar, 2011).

In the details of practice, Obama's rhetorical push for moralism in US foreign and security practices also may have been lost in the mechanics of government. The use of detention centres such as Guantanamo and Bagram, extraordinary rendition, state secrets and targeted killings as well as a lack of clarity on enhanced interrogation (torture) techniques all demonstrated a tension between the president's actions and rhetoric (Bentley, 2014a; 2016; Pious, 2011). Bagram Prison continued to be used as an offshore detention centre for terror suspects until 2013, and the refusal to grant prisoners the protections of habeas corpus went directly against Obama's stance before taking office (Desch, 2010; Pious, 2011, p. 265). Obama's controversial return to Bushism on taking office can be read in the Department of Justice's comments on the *al Maqaleh vs Gates* case (2009), when it repeated its refusal to grant legal protections via the short statement: "the government adheres to its previously articulated position" (Hertz, cited in Pious, 2011, p. 266). Obama did follow through on his campaign promise to end the use of torture or 'enhanced interrogation techniques', nevertheless legal protection was offered to former CIA officers who had used torture, and the order potentially allowed for the

recommendation of enhanced techniques to the CIA but not to regular military (Pious, 2011, pp. 268-9). Likewise, the practice of extraordinary rendition was opposed by Obama the candidate due to the likelihood of prisoners being subjected to torture by recipient states. In office, the practice continued – albeit with ‘diplomatic assurances’ that prisoners would not be abused – and the US remained active in pressuring foreign governments into dropping legal investigations into past renditions (Pious, 2011, pp. 269-270; Desch, 2010). Pious (2011), Murray (2011) and Desch (2010) have criticised the use of ‘state secrets’ to minimise transparency in Obama’s War on Terror, and have pointed to the lack of change in practice from Bush to his successor. Finally, the rapid rise in targeted killings or ‘extrajudicial process’ in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen and Somalia represented a development in the instruments used in the War on Terror, but a general continuity in practice and strategy. The CIA’s drone programme was kept officially secret, until the President admitted to its existence in response to a question from a member of the public during a Google+ video ‘hangout’ on 30th January 2012 (McCracken, 2014, p. 29), however the use of Predator drones was commenced by President Bush as a tool to achieve his policy of killing ‘enemy combatants’ in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Pious, 2011, p. 274). In 2003, Bush publicly claimed that although 3000 suspected terrorists had been arrested, “many others [had] met a different fate” (Bush, 2003). Obama not only defended the practice of targeted killings, but also expanded it to target US citizens abroad (Dennis Blair) (Desch, 2010; Pious, 2011, p. 276; Trenta, 2018).

Looking at America’s activities outside of the CENTCOM (Middle East) region, the “global War on Terror” in peripheral regions also seems to have continued after the transition from Bush to Obama (Ryan, 2011). The original framing of 9/11, which constructed ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorists’ as existential threats to Americans, led the Bush administration into interventions beyond Afghanistan and Iraq, due to the perceived necessity to respond to (mostly Islamist) terrorist activity around the globe (Boyle, 2011). As such, the strategic importance of the horn of Africa, Sahara, Caucasus and Philippines became more apparent in US foreign policy rhetoric and practice (Ryan, 2011). In each of these regions, pre-existing ‘radical Islamist’ groups, were newly framed as threats to regional security and US interests, and the

areas were designated as peripheral theatres or battlegrounds in a global war – and the Bush administration used this to support their right to intervene wherever they chose (Ryan, 2011, p. 366). Much of this new perception the American sphere of interest can be read in the 2006 Pentagon Quadrennial Defence Review (QDR), which, Ryan highlights, uses the illustrative phrase “war in countries we are not at war with” (QDR, 2006). As the War on Terror continued, these peripheral theatres became the backdrop for what the QDR referred to as ‘unconventional warfare’ and asymmetric operations, which would incorporate special operations forces, counter-insurgency tactics (with a focus on civil-military and reconstruction initiatives) and psychological and propaganda elements to US counter-terrorism (Desch, 2010; Ryan, 2011). Ryan highlights how this push towards US presence in peripheral areas, and particularly the establishment of US military bases in North and East Africa, demonstrates the shifting boundaries between counter-terrorism, ‘nation-building’ and the strategic promotion of US interests. Gen. James. L Jones (head of EUCOM under Bush but later Obama’s national security advisor) in particular was vocal in arguing that ‘ungoverned’ areas of Africa could be potential safe-havens for terrorists and succeeded in guaranteeing basing arrangements for US troops with 15 African states (Ryan, 2011, p. 371). President Obama continued this trend towards peripheral activity, with US troop presence in Iraq and Afghanistan falling whilst AfriCom funding has been increased (\$300 million requested for the year 2010), and drone strikes and special operations in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia have also been intensified (Ryan, 2011, pp. 379-80).

In light of this evidence, McCricken (2011) argues that Obama never wanted real strategic change in the first place. The smaller changes Obama might have imagined under the ‘enlightened self-interest’ banner can perhaps be illustrated through the Arab Spring, which gives the impression of a president willing to protect foreign populations provided the US was never the sole actor and its interests were not seriously at risk. In Egypt, close ties between the US and the military, that could have been tested had it been used against civilians, survived due to the relatively balanced position of the military and Mubarak’s timely decision to stand down (Lynch, 2011a). In Libya, Britain and France offered (limited) support for the

establishment of a no-fly zone and Russia and China, via UN Security Council resolution 1973, which enabled the toppling of Muammar Gaddafi only to lead to greater instability and another prolonged civil war from 2014 (Chivvis, 2014; Engelbrekt, 2014; Michaels, 2014). Meanwhile in Syria, with more opposition from Russia and China, an uprising turned into a long civil war, and the violence of Bashar al Assad eventually took second stage to the rise of Islamic State in Western media discourses (Combes, 2018; Cooper, 2015). In reaction, Obama did relatively little. Assad and Islamic State were denounced, Vladimir Putin's Russia was once again portrayed as an amoral danger, and US air strikes were eventually launched against Islamist strong holds. In short, Obama took what military action he could without returning either to isolationism or to the unilateralism of the Bush era and potentially the proxy conflicts of the cold war. His actions then were broadly consistent with his rhetoric: a foreign policy that was more streamlined, more cautious, but still insistent on America's right to 'take out terrorists'.

This section has reviewed the literature on continuity and change from Bush to Obama in the context of the War on Terror in terms of policy. The next and final section of this thesis will now proceed to review the literature on the discursive structures of the War on Terror, and how these may have influenced or changed under Obama's leadership.

2.c Discursive structures of the War on Terror and Orientalism as a lens for critical analysis

Beyond the material and institutional structures of the War on Terror, Richard Jackson (2005; 2014) also sees a social structure, made up of discourses and narratives that shaped the way Barack Obama was able to talk about and conduct American foreign policy in a post-Bush, post-9/11 environment. The nature of such social structures and the complex relationship between these and political agency serve as the central concern of the Chapter Two, and the writings on the specific relationship between Obama and the discursive structures of US foreign policy and counterterrorism will be unpacked there in detail. However it is worth briefly outlining here some of the existing literature on War on Terror discourses and the potential

constraints these placed on the 44th president in moving America past his predecessor's foreign policy.

Jackson (2011, p. 390) identifies what he labels the “deep cultural grammar” of the War on Terror as that which was likely to inhibit Obama's capacity to affect significant change in US foreign policy. This grammar constitutes common understandings of acceptable ways of talking about America and its place in the world, acceptable ways of responding to the threat posed by international terrorism, and acceptable ways for the president to conduct him/herself in the context of this threat. Importantly, Jackson (2014) and others (Bacevich, 2002, 2010; Parmar, 2011) recognise the bipartisan nature of these understandings and point out that the nature of the terrorist threat was rarely questioned by influential Republicans or Democrats.

In this context, Michelle Bentley (2014a; 2016) and Silvina Romano (2011) both take the view that Obama mostly sought rhetorical change in US foreign policy after Bush, and specifically attempted to move away from the more extreme Bushian language on terrorism towards a more moderate vocabulary. As Bentley points out, Obama explicitly acknowledged “the language we use matters” in an interview with al Arabiya in 2009 (Obama, cf Bentley, 2014a, p.91), and attempted to avoid Bush's frequent Manichean oppositions of good Americans and evil terrorists (and terrorist sympathisers/‘harborers’⁶), as well as the perceived stigmatisation of Muslims at home and abroad. Bentley identifies three markers of continuity between Obama and Bush that can be traced back to the social, and particularly the discursive structures of the War on Terror. These are the pervasiveness of existing structures of fear (i.e. entrenched social and cultural understandings of terrorism as a serious threat) that constrain Obama and tie him to a particular language as well as certain policies; dominant expectations of how a president should act in this context that bind him to a particularly militarised role as America's ‘war president’; and finally rhetorical as well as bureaucratic commitments to existing War on Terror policies such as the ‘dumb war’ in Iraq. Both Jackson (2014) and

⁶ See Holland (2013a, p. 109) on the use of harbouring metaphors by US, UK and Australian leaders after 9/11 to “collapse the distinction between terrorists and the states where they were (deemed to be) based, trained or sheltered”.

Bentley (2014a) recognise the discursive and narrative power of Bush's legacy on Obama, with Bentley arguing Obama found himself "trapped" in Bush's narratives, leading to adopt the narrative of America's wars and ultimately accept his role as the 'war president' (2014a, p. 98). The nature of these constraints and the role of narrative and discourse in US foreign policy will be explored and unravelled in the following chapter in more detail, with the purpose of the thesis being to further our understanding of Obama's record in implementing discursive change in America's relationship with the Middle East, as well as his agential capacity to do so.

Whilst the above authors are often conscious of Orientalist tropes present in policies and discourse of the War on Terror (see for example Jackson (2005, pp. 47-59) on the civilisation and barbarism narrative of the War on Terror), they do not for the most part centre this in their analysis. Similarly, the revisionist arguments laid out earlier in this chapter make a compelling case about neo-imperialism in US foreign policy, and these have been convincingly applied to the War on Terror (see, for example, Harvey (2003, pp. 3-4) on the explicitly pro-empire arguments for interventionism made in the aftermath of 9/11 by Max Boot (2001), Michael Ignatieff (2003), and Niall Ferguson (2003)). Again, these writers recognise many of the racial, racist, and religious stereotypes that have driven debates on foreign policy, security and counterterrorism, but generally choose not to use the postcolonial conceptualisation of Orientalism as their main analytical tool for understanding American foreign policy.

Authors who have embraced a postcolonial critique of Orientalism as their analytical frame include Meghana Nayak (2006), who identifies 9/11 as a crisis moment in the American history which "radically destabilised the US sense of self". She and Deepa Kumar (2010) agree that, since 9/11, Orientalism has become dominant in American understandings of terrorism and Middle Eastern politics, with stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims underpinning discussions on foreign and security policy in the 21st century. For Nayak, this domination is seen in the reassertion of a US state identity built upon ideas of hypermasculinity, (Judaean-Christian)

religious codes of ethics⁷, and “the constitutive differences between self [and] other necessitating the forceful coding, interpretation and targeting of particular actors and politics as Islamic fundamentalists” (Nayak, 2006, p. 42). Nayak further argues that in the post-9/11 context, the American state and its prominent politicians were required to “participate in an Orientalist project” that infantilis[ed], demonis[ed] and dehumanis[ed]” the Eastern Other (ibid). Kumar reflects this argument but identifies five different ‘common sense’ markers of the new Orientalist discourses; namely the assumptions that “Islam is a monolithic religion”, that “Islam is a uniquely sexist religion”, that “the Muslim mind is incapable of rationality and science”, that “Islam is inherently violent”, and finally that “the West spreads democracy” while the Islamic world spreads violence and terrorism (Kumar, 2010, p. 254; 2012, pp. 41-62). Writing early in Barack Obama’s tenure, Kumar nevertheless concludes that while there was a rhetorical shift in the 45th president’s language – notably in his explicit rejection of Huntington’s ‘clash of civilisations’ thesis and in his acknowledgement of Islamic contributions to civilisation – “the continuation of Bush era policies in the Middle East and South Asia has ensured the dominance of Islamophobia in the public sphere” (Kumar, 2010, p. 272). Maryam Khalid also uses Orientalism as a critical lens “through which to critically engage with dominant war on terror discourses”, and ultimately “destabilise and unravel Orientalist and gendered justifications for intervention” (Khalid, 2011, p. 15). Khalid examines certain images in War on Terror discourses – namely, the images of “veiled oppressed Muslim women”, of “US soldier Jessica Lynch’s ‘rescue’ from Iraqi forces”, and of US soldiers’ abuse of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in making her central argument that “gendered Orientalism” creates racialised and gendered narratives of heroic, white, Western men rescuing voiceless and powerless Muslim women from the clutches of a barbaric and evil male Other, and in doing so constructs and reproduces a broader narrative of America as “enlightened,

⁷ See also Baumgartner et al (2008) and Croft (2011) for their studies on the influence of Christian Evangelicalism on the American sense of self and its role in the Middle East, as well as Khalidi (2004, pp.118-123) and Miller (2014) on the historic role of Protestant and Evangelical beliefs in promoting US support for Zionism and the Israeli state throughout the 20th century.

civilised and justified in its military interventions” in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia.

Douglas Little, writing broadly on the same subject, agrees with the arguments laid out above, but traces the influence of Orientalism on US foreign policy from Obama’s presidency, back before 9/11 to the Bush (Sr) administration (Little, 2016), and then even further through the 20th century as far as the Second World War (Little, 2008). Little uses Orientalism “to make sense of the complex and sometimes inconsistent attitudes and interests that determined US policy” in the Middle East (2008, p.2). In so doing he engages with official sources as well as cultural documents such as popular films and magazines to build his argument that Orientalist modes of thought have long dominated US interactions with the region. In his 2016 book, he focusses on the more recent presidents and their administrations in order to unpack how the “green scare” of Islamic fundamentalism has replaced the “red scare” of communism since the end of the Cold War. In doing so, he makes the case that each president since Bush Sr has initially made an effort to move beyond the Manichaeism of good and evil binaries in their respective foreign policies only to either announce new Middle Eastern threats or rediscover those established by their predecessors. In Obama’s case, Little argues this tendency manifested itself in an initial policy of “contagement” – i.e. ostensibly encouraging democracy in the Middle East, and engaging with traditional ‘enemies’ such as Iran, whilst simultaneously providing support for authoritarians such as Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak due to their strategic importance and opposition of religious fundamentalism – which ultimately comes to a head as America was torn in two directions by the Arab uprisings of 2011.

Other authors to have explicitly engaged with Obama’s politics and foreign policy by tracing its origins in Orientalist thought include Marina Espinoza (2018), who argues the colonialist attitudes necessary for justifying America’s drone programme and the civilian lives it takes, constituted state terrorism on the part of the Obama administration, Shampa Biswas (2018, p. 331), who exposes and deconstructs some of the “deep seated Orientalist suppositions” underlying media discourses on the P5+1 negotiations with Iran over its nuclear

programme between 2013 and 2014, Layla Saleh (2016) who traces some of the gendered ‘rescue’ narratives at play in official and congressional US discourses on women in the Arab Spring, and Noah Bassil (2019, p. 81) who focusses on media discourses but recognises Orientalist tropes in the construction of ‘new barbarism’, and the ways “ISIS and its horrendous crimes have been dehistoricised, depoliticised, and decontextualized in Western political discourse”, which he suggests have influenced Obama. The current thesis is interested in each of these phenomena, and will build on the work of these authors by specifically engaging with official, White House sanctioned, representations of otherness in the construction of identities of self and Other in the context of Obama’s ‘new beginning’ with the Muslim World, including his approach to the Middle East Peace Process and Iran (Chapter Five), the Arab Spring (Chapter Six) and terrorism (Chapter Seven). By studying official texts in each of these three contexts, the thesis contributes to this literature by establishing the development of identities, narratives and discourses, through the full eight years of Obama’s leadership, using a post-colonialist framework that pays particular attention to the Orientalist tradition. In doing so it will also gauge the extent to which the president has demonstrated strategic agency in adapting or deviating from these discourses in response to new events.

Ultimately, this thesis makes use of the post-colonial critique of Orientalism as a critical lens for studying continuity and change in US foreign policy discourse because of its utility in exposing not just the more extreme language, overt racism and neo-imperialism other authors have identified in the Bush administration’s War on Terror, but also in recognising what Rashid Khalidi (2004, p. 17) describes as the more nuanced and paternalistic narratives that see Muslims, Arabs and Middle Easterners as the heirs to “highly advanced cultures” that have been held back by “stagnation” and the “stifling embrace of tradition [and] religion”. It is these latter narratives that this thesis will argue in later chapters are constant in Obama’s articulations on the Middle East and the Muslim World throughout his eight years in office, and serve to justify and legitimise inconsistent but often interventionist foreign policies during this time. In contrast, the more extreme binary narratives of good and evil that dominated Bush’s post-9/11 rhetoric were mostly absent from Obama’s discourse in his first term until they returned first

in the president's attempts to make sense of the Arab Spring and Winter, and second in his efforts to create a meaningful narrative around the chaos of ISIL violence after 2014. Chapter Three will unpack the tradition of critiquing Orientalist discourses in more detail and relate this to critical studies of security and foreign policy before relating the exact methods of discourse analysis used in this study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a context for the thesis, through an exploration of the existing literature on the structures of US foreign policy both leading up to and at the time of Barack Obama's presidency. Through this exploration, the aim has been, first, to gain an understanding of the structural constraints on the president, and, second, to survey the existing literature on the extent to which it sees Obama as having demonstrated independent agency in departing from established Washington protocol and altering the course of US foreign policy.

The chapter began by considering the literature on the traditions of US diplomacy. First, dominant interpretations of American power see the superpower oscillating between realist and Wilsonian (or idealist) tendencies; with the former often dominating through the Cold War, as containment and deterrence of the communist menace was prioritised in Washington, and therefore acted as a structural constraint on US power, and the latter having influence on occasion, especially during the Carter presidency, and ultimately coming to prominence through Bill Clinton in the context of the lifting of said constraints in the 1990s under the liberal 'end of history'. Revisionist histories of US foreign policy were also engaged with, highlighting the argument that the narrative of alternating realist and idealist impulses downplays the constant theme of intervention and expansion running through Washington since (at least) the mid-twentieth century. Revisionist authors such as Williams and Bacevich make powerful arguments that such interventions often carry the benefits of expanding America's global presence and opening new markets for US corporations, even where official arguments are

made in terms of human rights, freedom and democracy. For Williams especially, America's growing economic interests are seen to be the ultimate structural influence on foreign policy.

Turning to the War on Terror, September 11th 2001 represents a key moment in the history of US foreign policy in that it presented the Bush administration – many of whose staff were drawn from the neoconservative Project for the New American Century – with the opportunity to drastically expand Washington's global presence through the establishment of worldwide counter-terrorist operations. In rejecting the constraints of international law, multilateral institutions, and human rights norms, the Bush administration distinguished itself from the diplomatic impulses of the Wilsonian tradition (Khalidi, 2004). Furthermore, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 saw the concept of 'pre-emption' further liberate the US from the constraining structures of domestic and international norms on the acceptable use of force (Daalder & Lindsay, 2005). Even so, as Bacevich argues, the importance of democratic and free-market expansion has remained a constant theme in US policy from Reagan through to George W Bush – once again demonstrating the power of economic structures in Washington diplomacy.

The chapter then surveyed the literature on Barack Obama's record as president. While most appraisals agree Obama made some effort to reign in the excesses of the Bush era and recommit America to international law and multilateral diplomacy, his grand strategy seems to have remained broadly in keeping with those of his most recent predecessors – especially when one considers the trajectory of the Bush administration's less aggressive and unilateralist policies in its later years (Pious, 2011). In terms of material structures on presidential agency, America's relative decline and the institutionalisation of Bush's War on Terror would appear to be constraining factors on Obama's ability to conduct his foreign policy on his own terms. On the one hand, the aftermath of the economic crash of 2008 combined with the rise of China and other rival nations appear to have led Obama towards a conventional 'realist' policy of offshore balancing and, in MENA, light touch interventionism relying predominantly on air power, UAVs, and 'special ops' forces. Having said this, the loss of relative power may also have enabled Obama in making the case for renewed multilateralism, and his preferred policy

of engagement with the rest of the world, and accommodation of even traditional enemies such as the Islamic Republic of Iran. On the other hand, in terms of the War on Terror, it is clear that some changes occurred within US foreign policy once Obama took office. In addition to the accelerated use of drone strikes, Obama initially concentrated the Pentagon's resources on Afghanistan and Pakistan, at the expense of Iraq, and there was also a concerted effort to drop the 'War on Terror' label from official language. Still, as Jackson (2011) and others have shown, when considering the detail of Obama's 'overseas contingency operations', there appears to be at least as much continuity as change from the Bush era. On one level this demonstrates the structural power of the institutions of the War on Terror – with the most obvious being the DHS. On another, this points to the more engrained cultural and discursive structures of American counter-terrorism and foreign policy in the Middle East that will be further discussed and unpacked in Chapters Two and Three.

In terms of Obama's place within the structures of US foreign policy, this literature review leaves open a number of possible conclusions. If it is the case, as McCrisken (2011) argues, that Obama never wanted to 'end' the War on Terror, this would suggest the 44th president has demonstrated his autonomy as an elite actor by recommitting America to a multilateral course whilst deliberately continuing on the broad path of global counter terrorism as laid out by his predecessor. Alternatively, it is possible that Obama demonstrated a degree of agency in establishing a broadly multilateralist foreign policy (potentially enabled by the material structures of the international arena), but could not escape the more entrenched and powerful structures of the War on Terror. Finally, a third possibility would be that Obama never saw ending the War on Terror as a plausible option. This last possibility would suggest that the structures of the War on Terror were so overwhelmingly powerful that Obama was incapable of imagining an alternative reality. Once again, this latter option points beyond the power of material and institutional structures, towards the importance of culture and discourse in constraining the president's agency. This thesis fills a gap in the literature here by using a discourse analysis methodology to trace the progression of changes to the discursive structures of US foreign policy, and to official constructions of identities and threats over the full eight

years of the Obama presidency, via the computer-aided analysis of 4,700 official White House texts. In doing so, it makes a second contribution by gauging the extent to which the president demonstrated strategic agency in adapting or deviating from these discursive structures in response to new events, including the Arab Spring and the rise of ISIL.

Finally, the chapter highlighted the analytical utility of the post-colonialist critique of Orientalism in the study of US foreign policy in the Middle East and the War on Terror. While authors such as Khalid, Little and Nayak have used such a framework to interrogate Bush era discourse, this has yet to be done for the Obama presidency taken as a whole. Bassil (2019), Biswas (2018), Espinoza (2018) and Saleh (2016) have all recently identified Orientalist tendencies in official and non-official discourses surrounding Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East on a smaller scale, each looking respectively at representations of ISIS, the Iran nuclear negotiations, the use of drone strikes, and the Arab Spring. This thesis is situated within this critical tradition, and makes a final contribution by using an explicitly post-colonial critical framework that can draw these efforts together and identify the legacy of the Orientalist tradition across Obama's language over eight years.

The following chapter will unpack the structure/agency nexus from a discursive ontological perspective. Considering US foreign policy through such perspectives, authors have conceptualised it as part of a series of related and culturally embedded national myths and narratives which actors must grapple with in order to pursue their agenda. Campbell's (1998) deconstruction of the American identity provides an example of a discursive analysis centring on the linguistic and cultural structures of US foreign policy. The chapter will then consider writings on the discursive structures of the War on Terror, as well as the president's theoretical agential capacity to manipulate these to his or her strategic benefit. Chapter Three will then make clear the critical lenses adopted by the thesis. To this end, the chapter starts by further unpacking the post-colonialist concept of Orientalism and establishing how it is used as an analytical tool for deconstructing dominant narratives of US foreign policy and a critical paradigm for understanding the particular influence of the discursive structures of US foreign

policy over Obama in the realm of Middle Eastern politics. The tradition of critical security studies and the concept of securitisation are then brought into the discussion in order to complete the critical framework before the specific methods of discourse analysis employed in this thesis are relayed in Chapter Four. Chapters Five, Six and Seven will then deliver the thesis's empirical findings.

Chapter two: Theorising discourse, structure and agency

People construct their own sense of source and credibility now. They elect who they're going to believe.

Tanya Somanader

The previous chapter served both to provide a historical context for Obama's presidency within the wider scope of US foreign policy, and to situate this thesis within the academic literature on American power. Much of this literature focusses on the material and institutional structures affecting US foreign policy and decision-making, with relative decline and the engrained practices and infrastructure of the War on Terror appearing to have acted as constraints on Obama's agency upon assuming the presidency in 2009. The chapter also highlighted the longer Wilsonian traditions of US foreign policy that seem to act as cultural and political influences on elite agency. Whilst the historically dominant Wilsonian tradition is most often associated with liberal values such as multilateralism and the spread of democracy, human rights, and open markets, revisionist authors such as Williams, Bacevich and Parmar have critiqued what they claim is America's imperial tendency towards constant military and economic expansion. In order to unpack the nature of these more ideational structures, the current chapter examines the concepts of discourse, structure and agency in relation to foreign policy.

The core questions that guide this thesis – 1.) how did the discursive structures of American foreign policy change between 2009 and 2016? and 2.) how did official constructions of identity and threat change over the same period? – concern the evolution of the discursive structures within which this policy emerges, and through which elite actors are able to legitimise and communicate decisions. How these structures exist, how they change and how they can be changed are all key problems that require unpacking. The purpose of the current chapter is to establish certain theoretical parameters around these problems, and in so doing provide an ontological framework for the exploration of continuity and change during the

Obama presidency. Following this, Chapter Three will then establish the critical standpoint of the thesis, exploring elements of post-colonialism and critical security studies to make the case that any examination of America's record in the Middle East must take into account the wider play of dominant cultural, racial, religious and imperialistic discourses that influence (elite) American understandings of self and Other in the region. With this done, Chapters Four outlines the methods used in responding to the research question before Chapters Five to Seven then relay the empirical finds of the thesis.

When talking generally of US foreign policy structure, this thesis refers to the overlapping and interrelated networks of shared ideologies, knowledges and assumptions that are constitutive of social understandings of the role and identity of the United States of America in the world. In posing and addressing questions on these intersubjective networks, the thesis evokes and relies heavily on the concepts of language, discourse, power and agency. The aim of this chapter is to contextualise these concepts in order to establish the groundwork of a robust framework for US foreign policy analysis. This chapter makes two core ontological arguments with regards to power, structure and agency; first, following Howarth (2013), that social structures are inherently unstable, contingent and incomplete; second, through their instability, these structures are essentially vulnerable to human articulatory acts of (re)production (or speech acts), labelled agency. From these arguments, the chapter makes a final claim that the US president has access to a higher degree of potential agency than most due to the political and cultural identities, privileges and power attributed to the head of state. It therefore follows that any investigation of continuity and change within US foreign policy must take into account the language of the head of state.

With the aim of defending these arguments, the chapter is split into two halves; the first focussing broadly on the nature of social structure, and the second taking a narrower interest in the mechanics of language and the formation of discourses and narratives from a foreign policy perspective, paying special attention to the case of the War on Terror, and how the policies it entailed were framed and sold to the public. The thesis commits to a discursive

ontology, and this decision will be contextualised and justified in the first section. Here, the closely related ideas of structure, agency, continuity and change are introduced and a brief overview of the debate around them is given, before the concept of structure is explored further from a discursive ontological standpoint. With the most basic theoretical foundation established, the second part of this chapter considers how the patterning of language can be conceptualised in general and then in application to the discipline of foreign policy analysis. Here, the concepts of (strategic) narrative and (national) identities are applied to the domain of international relations. Campbell's (1998) influential linguistic study of US foreign policy provides a template for the application of poststructuralist theory to the analysis of foreign policy discourses. This understanding of discursive foreign policy structures is explored through a brief review of the War on Terror discourses and narratives that ultimately functioned as Obama's discursive environment upon assuming the presidency in 2009 (Holland, 2014).

Finally, the thesis reserves an important theoretical space for the concept of strategic agency, and this latter section makes clear the rationale behind this study's focus on the president through a discussion of the nature of strategic agency and political (im)possibility in foreign policy, as developed by Roxanne Doty (1993), Jack Holland (2013) and Ron Krebs (2015) amongst others. The extraordinary degree of positive, productive power that is intertwined with the White House and the Oval Office and embodied by the US president is then critically examined. The chapter concludes in recapping the ontological understanding of structure agency and power that it develops, and reflecting on the potential for critical analysis that is then further unpacked in Chapter Three.

1. Structure, language and discourse

This thesis adopts what might be labelled a discursive ontology. The choice to adopt this label is informed in particular by Howarth's (2013) definition of the theoretical tradition, which is anchored in a unifying conceptualisation of social structures as incomplete, contingent and fluid formations (see also Doty, 1993, p. 6; Shepherd, 2008, p. 21). The critique of American foreign policy that is presented in this work is an interrogation of the production and

reproduction of knowledge and meaning surrounding the identity of America and thereby its social and political existence, understood in terms of its juxtaposition with, and difference from, various elements of otherness (see Campbell, 1998; Walker, 1993, Hansen, 2006). This is also in line with Nigel Thrift's Foucauldian view of 'social life' as "consist[ing] of a multiplicity of productive networks with greater or lesser power to align with and translate other networks" (Thrift, 2001, p. 71; see also Foucault, 1980, p. 122). When talking of structure, both this chapter and the thesis as a whole refers to an idea of the social close to that described by Thrift, and similar to that put forward by Laclau & Mouffe (1985); structure is taken to label the many interrelated and overlapping constellations and networks of meanings, identities and power relations accumulated and reshaped through the repetition of articulatory practices. The power of individuals to shape the systems within which they exist, and the power of structures to inhibit this, is a perpetual source of sociological debate. If, as Howarth (2013, p. 15) suggests, the "paradox of structure and agency is lodged in the very fabric of our social relations and must therefore be tarried or negotiated with rather than transcended", then a key aim of this chapter and this section is to negotiate a sufficiently grounded model of that paradox to meaningfully interrogate US foreign policy – and one which reserves a meaningful role for actors as well as respecting the constraining power of foreign policy discourses. This model will then be held to account by an empirical analysis of US foreign policy discourse in later chapters; the focus of which – on entrenched structure in the form of the War on Terror, Orientalist modes of representation, and on the high concentration of power in the institution of the US president – provides a unique opportunity for understanding the discursive structures at play in the continuity and change identified in Obama's policy in the previous chapter. This part of the chapter is split into two sections. The first focusses exclusively on the 'structure/agency' debate in social theory, and critically considers the positions of critical realists such as Margaret Archer and Roy Bhaskar, the 'structuration' theory advanced by Anthony Giddens, and Colin Hay's 'strategic-relational model', before settling on a conceptualisation of structure and agency close to that advanced by David Howarth (2013). The second section then goes from this overview of sociological discussion into a fuller

exploration of the more poststructuralist perspectives on structure through a consideration of both the structuralist accounts of formulated by the likes of Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Husserl and Heidegger and their later development by Derrida, Foucault, Laclau, Mouffe and others. This development of (post)structural theory then leads into the second part of the chapter which focusses on the dynamics and mechanics of language in relation to US foreign policy.

1.a. Theorising social structure: the structure/agency debate

This thesis works from three basic ontological premises concerning the nature of US foreign policy. First, ‘US foreign policy’ is taken to be a broad label for the collection of complex and overlapping networks of structures and social systems that govern and give meaning to ‘America’, its identity, and its place in the world. Second, these structures and systems are understood to be inherently unstable, incomplete and contingent due to their constant production and reproduction through social interactions. What it is to be ‘American’ is constantly changing, as it is (re)interpreted and (re)imagined by individuals, through social interactions which affect collective understandings and memories of the state (Campbell, 1998; Connolly, 1989). Finally, the president, as a human being, is acknowledged to be simultaneously a fundamental, constitutive part of these many complex structures and systems and a strategic actor with unusually privileged access to power through his status as president. This is an understanding of structure that allows human beings to be conceptualised as constitutive of the social systems they inhabit as well as having a strategic awareness of these surroundings. In other words, this thesis situates the President within, and as a part of instable structures of US foreign policy, whilst also recognising his (limited) strategic awareness of said structures¹. The concept of agency exists in the acknowledgement that beings, as individuals or groups, have the capacity to affect social reality, but not in the sense that critical realists such as Margaret Archer see actors or actions as ontologically separate from their structural environment. These premises are qualified by an awareness that the capacity of beings to

¹ As evidenced (for example) by Ben Rhodes’s acknowledgement of the US foreign policy establishment ‘Blob’, and Obama’s personal awareness of his core role as the nation’s ‘storyteller-in-chief (Samuels, 2016).

(re)produce their structural environment is not distributed evenly, and is always subject to context. In this uneven landscape, the president, through the historical, cultural and political importance of his position, would appear to have greater access to kinds of power required to (re)produce of US foreign policy structures than most. This in turn justifies the methodological decision to focus on official texts, which is explained in Chapter Four. The following sections provide a critical engagement with each of these premises, in order to develop them into a practical model for analysis. In the next section, the nature of the social world serves as the guiding theoretical focus for engagement with critical realist, structuralist and poststructuralist theories.

The notions of structure and agency have often been reduced through attempts to separate the two concepts (see Archer, 1988; Sztopka, 1993). ‘Critical realists’ have attempted this analytical distinction, labelled analytical dualism, in order to better conceptualise the effects individuals and groups of actors may have on their social surroundings. In studying the development of social systems, Archer, Bhaskar and Sztopka choose to conceptually isolate the dynamics of agency from the wider structure they are said to occur within. Archer’s (1988) theory of morphogenesis claims that social systems are unique due to their “capacity for radical restructuring” (Sztopka, 1993, p. 196), when subjected to human agency. Archer suggests a cyclical model for the study of systemic change, by which human agency both postdates the existence of structure and predates structural development. Under the banner of agency, Archer places the temporal and dynamic event of human interaction. Structure is in turn considered as the context and outcome of this interaction. Agency (re)shapes structure as well as transforming social agency itself, hence the cyclical nature of the model.

Critical voices have pointed to a perceived bias within morphogenetic theory towards structure and against agency (Brighi, 2013, p. 35; King, 1999). Whilst Archer’s structures are drawn out, backwards and forwards in time so that they pre-exist and post-date social interaction; agency is conversely thought of in terms of finite moments of (inter)action (see Brighi, 2013, p. 34). Though people or subjects have the capacity to modify their social

structures, this agency is fleetingly located in time whereas structures escape rigid temporal definition. This bias is indicative of the 'realist' or objective tendency of critical realism in that the approach theorises social structures as stable and enduring objects. It is particularly observable in Archer's concept of morphostasis (Archer, 1995, pp. 295-7), which allows for structures to be subjected to instances of agency without undergoing transformation. This imperviousness of social structure to human agency requires an objective understanding of structure itself (King, 1999). This in turn begs the question as to why structures change at all if they maintain an objective reality and can resist certain instances of subjective intervention. The paradox of the critical realist ontology is that it takes an objective understanding of structures that are social by definition. As a result it fails to appreciate the precariousness of these structures to their interpretation and reproduction by subjects. This thesis takes the view that when structures are reimagined as inherently instable, and – crucially – as incomplete; it becomes much simpler to understand and theorise their constant and unavoidable transformation through social interaction.

On the opposing side of the structure/agency spectrum, Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration asserts the idea of a duality of structure, in which the latter is both the medium and outcome of human agency (Giddens, 1979; Callenicos, 1985; Sztompka, 1993). Structures are on the one hand results of processes of human interaction, and on the other a framework that aids and restrains this interaction as it occurs. As this framework catalyses and contains agency, structuration (as a process) implies the continual formation and development of 'structure' as a sedimentary by-product of human interaction. This theory is allegedly borne out of an unacceptable "lack of a theory of action in the social sciences" (Giddens, 1979, p. 2) and consequently its emphasis is often on the power and knowledge of the agent (Callenicos, 1985). Structuration, for Giddens, requires the simultaneous location of agency within time and space, and the reduction of structure to a non-temporal realm. As a result, agency plays a lead role in Giddens's theory, with structure meanwhile being relegated to the supporting parts of the "unacknowledged conditions and unanticipated consequences of [human] acts" (Giddens, 1981, p. 171; Callenicos, 1985). There is a tension here between this portrayal of

unacknowledged structures and Giddens's prefacing claims that "every social actor knows a great deal about the conditions of reproduction of the society of which he or she is a member" (Giddens, 1979, p. 5). Contrary to Archer's model, structure is said to only exist in the 'generating moment' of social practices, whereas actors are brought to the fore as highly intelligent beings, filled with 'a great deal' of knowledge of their surroundings and gifted with both practical and discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1979; Sztompka, 1993, p. 79). Admittedly, Giddens pre-empts this argument by suggesting no claim has been made over the validity of this knowledge. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of socially knowledgeable actors with a conceptualisation of structure as a necessary yet unacknowledged and unforeseen by-product of interaction makes the theory of structuration somewhat problematic. Despite this issue, the theory of structuration is noteworthy due to the importance it places the practices and processes of social interaction through their centrality to the sedimentary construction of the social, and to their theoretical utility as the 'moments' in which structures can exist (Howarth, 2013, p. 106). Additionally, the facilitating qualities of structure in enabling social actions must be acknowledged alongside the more traditional and limiting conceptualisation of structures as inconvenient constraints to human activity. Whilst Archer's dualism enables a conceptually clear schematic of the interplay between actors and their systems, it favours structure and leads to ontological confusion. Giddens, on the other hand, provides valuable insight into the necessity of social structures but in doing so relegates their importance in relation to agency.

Situated between these two theoretical approaches, the 'strategic-relational' model advanced by Colin Hay, Bob Jessop and David Marsh claims to give equal weight to the concepts of agency and structure. Contrasting himself with Giddens, who is said to imagine structure and agency as "flip sides of the same coin", Hay adapts the metaphor to describe the two concepts as "metals in the alloy from which the coin was forged" which are, "in practice, completely interwoven" (Hay, 2002, p. 127). In this model, it is possible to separate structure and agency for theoretical and analytical purposes, however in practical terms one can only observe the "product of their fusion" (ibid). This is the relational aspect of the strategic-relational approach; in that agency and structure only exist in relation to each other and are

mutually constitutive. Hay takes care to differentiate between his own analytical dualism and the ontological dualism he attributes to Archer and other critical realists. This in turn, leads him to be sceptical of the pronouncements made on the situation of structure and agency in time and space (ibid). This declaration of ontological inseparability allows Jessop to move from 'structure' and 'agency' as separate concepts, to the hybrid ideas of "action setting" and "situated agents" (Jessop, 1996; Hay, 2002). In this way, agency is brought into the strategic-relational reworking of structure and structural considerations are introduced to agency. In so doing, the understanding of ontologically intertwined structure and agency is matched with a similarly nuanced analytical framework. Finally, this analytical step brings about the 'strategic' element of the strategic-relational approach; with the introduction of strategic actors, and strategically selective contexts. The strategic actor is then located within the structured and strategically selective context, thus, theoretically, transcending the dominant dualisms of social theory (Hay, 2002).

The introduction of strategy is especially relevant to the current thesis as it has the potential to aid a structural analysis of US foreign policy that may also be sensitive to the decision-making capabilities of key actors such as the president. The introduction of structural awareness to the concept of agency facilitates a conceptualisation of beings or subjects that nurture certain strategic goals. Although this carries certain analytical advantages, these are complicated by the theoretical closeness of 'strategy' to the vocabulary of rationalism. This has led to criticisms that the strategic-relational approach drifts too far from dialecticism towards rationalism, through its attachment to the concept of self-interest (Howarth, 2013, p. 257). Compounding this critique, is Hay's apparent treatment of ideas as "causal mechanisms" capable of "producing certain effects" (ibid); which stems from a conceptualisation of discourses as "structured sets of ideas... upon which actors might draw in formulating strategy, and indeed in legitimating strategy pursued for quite distinct ends" (Hay & Rosamond, 2002, p. 151; cf Howarth 2013). Nonetheless, both these points of contestation offer significant potential for theoretical development. Firstly, so long as the concept of strategy is separated from its association with objective rationality or 'reason', it can be fully compatible with

interpretivism. Secondly, although the language of ‘causality’ is at odds with the epistemological and methodological paradigms of post-positivism, the basic potential for ideas or discourses to make possible and to legitimise strategies is of key value to relativist foreign policy analysis (Doty, 1993; Krebs & Jackson, 2007; Holland, 2013).

This thesis takes the standpoint that this potential is best exploited by using a discursive theoretical approach. Although poststructuralism has been accused (not least by Hay, 2002) of neglecting to engage in anything but deconstruction, a discursive ontological perspective offers the potential for a more theoretically coherent, and analytically applicable, model of structure and agency. Poststructuralist understandings of structure and agency can be differentiated through the emphasis and importance they place on the symbolic and relational aspects of structure (Howarth, 2013, p. 152). Whilst they have been accused of neglecting the idea of the actor and the concept of agency, Foucault and others have made great efforts towards reconceptualising (the use of) power in the positive or productive sense, as opposed to the negative sense of structural constraint. This is often confused due to the location of the subject within the concept of structure, as a constitutive element. Social structures are understood to position and contextualise subjects within language and discourse. They remain however contingent to social activity due to their finite and incomplete nature. Crucially, the positioning of actors, identities and other elements within structure involves the “exercise of power and relations of domination”, thereby creating the path for a poststructuralist model of structured (or strategic) agency (Howarth, 2013, p. 152).

These ideas rely on an understanding of social structures and social orders as fundamentally fragile constellations (Howarth, 2013). Although they may endure and appear to be immensely strong, they are always subject and vulnerable to change through their (re)production. This is an ontological point that is neglected in alternative understandings structure, and is at odds with critical realism and Archer’s morphogenetic model. Giddens’s theory of structuration and even Hay’s strategic-relational approach also imply a more fixed and static portrayal of structure that inhibits their ability to understand and anticipate the flows of social reality. From this

ontological perspective, if agency is understood broadly as the capacity to affect change in a given structural context, then the significance of the subject or actor is increased rather than the reverse. In terms of strategic agency, the questions of what individuals ‘know’ of their structural surroundings remains a controversial point. Bennet (2001, p. 155), suggests that agency should designate the uneven capacity of beings to affect change “without quite knowing what [they] are doing”. Although the extent to which this knowledge is present, lacking or accurate is left open, this view is helpful in leaving enough room for actors to be aware of their surroundings and to attempt to affect the changes they might perceive to be in line with given interests. It is also important in its acknowledgement that the exact nature of the changes often remain obscured to the subject. The potentially strategic motivations of the actor are therefore accounted for, however this is qualified by its embeddedness within a(n) (inter)subjective and contingent context. Connolly concurs with and elaborates this view in describing a “distributed conception of agency” that involves “multiple modes and degrees of agency in the world” (Connolly, 2010, pp. 17, 22-3; cf. Howarth 2013). This last step allows the social theorist to acknowledge the irregularity of agential capacity; and to interrogate the concentrations of power and the dynamics of power relations within the social structure at the level of the subject. In taking President Obama as the focal point for analysis, the study acknowledges the uniquely high degree of agency located in the president through his political and cultural identity and position.

The choice to adopt a discursive ontology of structure and agency is therefore informed by the work of Howarth, Connolly and Bennett in developing and clarifying the crucial position of agency within the de-centred interpretivist ontology. The critical realist perspectives of Archer and Bhaskar and the agency-heavy approach of Giddens’s structuration theory are judged to give too much fixity to their conceptions of social structure, and each appears to favour one pole of the structure/agency nexus. The strategic-relational model advanced by Hay, Jessop and Marsh is more important to this understanding, with the introduction of ‘strategic actors’ being crucial to the focus of this study. These ideas are developed further in the

following section, which looks in detail at the concepts of structure, agency, power and language through the development of structuralism and poststructuralism.

1.b. Theorising social structure: poststructuralism and structuralism

The brief overview of sociological debate above goes some way to demonstrating the utility of the discursive ontology to the current study. The following section considers ontology more deeply, and develops the standpoint of the thesis through an exploration of structuralism and poststructuralism. This thesis analyses and critiques US foreign policy through the focal point of President Obama, via the official texts he produced and articulated during his time in office. This choice of focus is justified by the approach to concepts of structure and agency discussed in the previous section. If the president is considered through the perspective of Connolly's observations on the "multiple modes and degrees of agency", as head of state, his/her agential capacity is arguably unrivalled by any other individual. Agency, understood as the power to change structures, is negligible in the case of most individuals in comparison to the monolithic discourses of (inter)national politics. In the case of a US president however, the symbolic, cultural, political and institutional potency of the White House and the American nation may be channelled through a single human being (Krebs, 2015; Neustadt, 1990). As an example, convention dictates that if the president chooses to address the nation, television networks and media outlets across the country will ensure the population is listening (ibid). Articulations made by the president are therefore proportionately more likely to achieve discursive resonance (i.e. to be accepted and (re)produced by secondary actors (Barnett, 1999; Holland, 2013, pp. 52-55)) than those made by almost anyone else. This in turn means that the structures of US foreign policy, understood as the relatively stabilised constellations of meaning, identities and other discursive elements that order the identity of America in the world (Holland, 2013), are more likely to be disrupted and modified by Obama's articulations than those of any other individual. In making this choice this thesis makes an ontological commitment to a form of (sociological) realism. Importantly, it does not consider Obama to be either conceptually or ontologically external or separable from the world or structures of foreign policy. It accepts

that there is a human being, Barack Obama, who has a physical existence, and who through the use of signs and language, may contribute to the (re)production of certain social structures including those commonly grouped under the umbrella of American foreign policy. This acknowledgement is akin to Howarth's (2013, p. 10) 'minimal realism', which accepts the existence of the material but maintains that it is not possible to observe this existence objectively.

This theoretical position can be traced back to Husserl and Heidegger's writings on phenomenology as well as the structuralism of de Saussure's linguistic model and its later deconstruction by Derrida. Husserl and Heidegger establish that the human experience of reality is contingent on perception. That is, we become aware of our surroundings through a complex network of cognitive processes (Connolly, 2002). These processes cannot be divorced or isolated from our previous experiences of otherness and therefore we do not have access to an objective overview of our surroundings. In a similar way, De Saussure's distinction between signifier and signified makes clear that form dominates substance; that signs adopt meaning only in relation to one another, and not through any resemblance to their potential extra-discursive existence (Foucault, 1966). Within this relational ontology, the most pertinent approaches to understanding Obama's foreign policy are those rooted in an examination of the language he engages with as president. Language understood as speech or *parole*, is the medium through which the cognitive process of interpretation that occurs at an individual level is (imperfectly) communicated into the world. The analysis undertaken in this project will interrogate the signs and grammar present in President Obama's speech on the Middle East. This is done firstly to trace the fluctuations of dominant constellations (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Hansen, 2006) within the structures of American foreign policy discourse, and secondly, in an attempt to understand the (re)productive power accessible to the president in relation to said structures. Through a deconstructive analysis of Obama's speech/*parole* on terrorism, the study aims to understand the power relations that constitute the wider structures of language/*langue* at play in contemporary US foreign policy discourses. By studying official texts or articulations as individual moments of stability within wider discursive structures, the thesis is thus able to

respond to the research questions concerning changes to official constructions of otherness and threat, and the broader structures of official American foreign policy discourse within the 2009 to 2016 timeframe. The (re)productive capability of Obama is foregrounded in the analysis due to the privileged discursive position the president occupies. This thesis is an interrogation of power; and, however power is defined, the president of the United States of America is usually agreed to have access to a lot of it. There is no attempt to judge the truthfulness or accuracy of Obama's remarks. Instead, the rhetorical power and reach of the 'Bully Pulpit', and the related construction and maintenance of identities, narratives and discourses guides the analytical lens.

This thesis draws upon structuralist, poststructuralist and critical constructivist theories in developing its understanding of structure, language and discourse. The core premise of this understanding is the rejection of objectivity. Cox (1981) warns established theories are always subjective; being formulated in a political context, adhering to dominant power structures, and usually expressed to solve a given problem and achieve a given end. This thesis takes subjectivity further, and follows thinkers such as Nietzsche (1966) and Gramsci (1957) in arguing that language, both at the individual and cultural level, is in itself a(n) (inter)subjective philosophy. This understanding of language is common among nineteenth and twentieth century structuralist thinkers as well as those usually included under the umbrella of twentieth century poststructuralism. The structuralists can be grouped together by their shared appreciation of the linguistic model set out by Ferdinand de Saussure through his lectures in Geneva. Among the most influential of Saussure's core contributions to the foundations of structuralism and later poststructuralism is the theoretical distinction he makes between language and speech or *langue* and *parole*, and his dualistic conceptualisation of the linguistic sign (Saussure, 2013). Firstly, the differentiation between language and speech makes possible a semiotic analysis of structure and establishes a path towards structuralism. For Saussure, the label of 'language' or *langue* must be reserved to refer to the systems, ideas and rules that govern our methods of communication. 'Speech' or *parole* is then left as an alternate label to designate observable texts or the events of communication that occur in everyday life. Secondly, Saussure's well-known conceptualisation of the sign reflects this distinction in

establishing it as a two-part entity, comprised simultaneously of a material ‘signifier’ and an ideational ‘signified’. The ideational ‘signified’ refers to the meaning of the sign, as understood by the observer. Meanwhile, the material ‘signifier’ is an arbitrary sound-image, linked to the signified through its observable difference to other signifiers. The central importance of this distinction to later poststructuralists is in the admission that the signifier receives no meaning from its potential similarity to the signified. Instead, the differences between signifiers generate their linguistic value and make possible understanding and interpretation. This model has been critiqued, deconstructed and refined by the likes of Derrida (1978) and others, however it remains useful in articulating the ontological framework undergirding this analysis of US foreign policy.

Derrida’s critique of Saussure is demonstrative of the nuanced relationship between poststructuralism and structuralism, which Shepherd (2008, p. 175) succinctly summarises by describing the former as “building on” the latter, rather than being “hyphenetically separable” from it. Although his work is critical of Saussure’s approach, his examination is not destructive. Instead, Derrida deconstructs Saussure and in so doing develops and radicalises the structuralist understanding of language and the social. Derrida’s interrogation goes to the core of Saussurean structuralism, questioning the concept and existence of language itself, and asking whether language can be distinguished from anything else within the universe it signifies (Derrida, 1978; Howarth, 2013, p. 38). The concept of a fixed structure of language is abandoned completely, as the idea of a transcendental or central signified is rejected. As a result, the domain of signification is “extended infinitely” (Derrida, 1978, p. 280). The poststructuralist rejection of fixity remains a vital ontological acknowledgement if structure and agency are to be adequately interrogated. The impossibility of fixed or objective meaning requires that signs take their significance from difference. As words, phonemes or images are linked together and juxtaposed, they acquire relative meaning which can become increasingly stable as these linkages and differentiations are reproduced. This leads to the system of entrenched binary oppositions – right/wrong, male/female etc. – that underlies language and Western vocabularies, and which Derrida seeks to denaturalise and deconstruct. In this

ontology, agency is the potential capacity of actors to reinforce or rupture these stabilised relations.

Beyond Derrida, the rejection of fixity is also demonstrated in Lacan's critique of Freud which speaks of the constant "sliding of the signified under the signifier" (Lacan, 2006, p. 149; Howarth, 2013, p. 28). Lacan's analysis demonstrates the potential abundance of meaning 'under the signifier'. Whilst the signified is finite and may be relatively stable within a given moment, it is fundamentally unstable and cannot exhaust the potential meaning of the signifier (Howarth, 2013). This idea is also present in Lévi-Strauss's structuralist account of the 'floating signifier' (Lévi-Strauss, 1987). For Lévi-Strauss the floating signifier encapsulates the excess or surplus of signification; again highlighting the theoretical inexhaustibility of meaning a subject might give to or take from a given object or signifier. The upshot of this is that a tension is uncovered between the signifier and the signified; or as Howarth phrases it, a 'rift' is opened between the two that "destabilises the fixed connection between our concepts (signifieds) and their signification in language via various carriers of sense (signifiers)" (Howarth, 2013, p. 35). This is also picked up by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), whose ontology relies on the instability of social formations. Crucially, they argue the links forged between discursive elements are contingent rather than fixed; thus opening the possibility for a 'finite, uneven and incomplete' social order. Within the context of this thesis, the analysis of official texts can demonstrate changes to discursive structures and constructions of identity and threat by identifying patterns of relative stability across texts, and within the flow of official language (Holland, 2013, p. 12).

A number of other key contributions Derrida makes to the poststructuralist understanding of language are identified by Howarth (2013, p. 40). Firstly, the idea of a 'fully constituted system' is put into question. As a system, language was previously considered as a product of interaction, is now reconceptualised as an active process or production and reproduction. As a consequence, Derrida allows for a poststructural analysis that can be appreciative of the ambiguity of language. Rather than a concrete structure of fixed relationships between signifiers and signifieds, the language-system becomes fluid and unstable. These qualities are

captured in the idea of ‘undecideability’. Secondly, Saussure’s understanding of the relationship between signifier and signified is problematised. Derrida asks whether the signifier and the signified can exist independently, and suggests that for Saussure the location of an ‘ideal’ signified is impossible. Thirdly, Saussure is also said to privilege speech over writing as his argument depends on speech being closer to thought and therefore a more accurate representation of the speaker’s mind. This is problematic for Derrida who instead attempts to disrupt the privileged positions behind these assumptions so as to enable a critique that does not favour speech and the speaker (Howarth, 2013, pp. 38-44). These three points are of great importance to the current study. The ontological decentring of language highlights the gravity of Obama’s remarks on foreign policy; instead of representing or misrepresenting the ‘truth’ of world politics, the president can be understood as (re)producing the geopolitical via his articulations. Additionally, the question of the relative value placed on written text and speech has become increasingly relevant with the technological advances made possible with digital communication (see Gofas & Hay, 2010). Speeches made by the president are now reproduced and distributed much quicker than before; and these are easily available in text and video format (through countless sources) to anyone with access to the internet. The creation of a presidential Twitter account (POTUS, 2015) during Obama’s second term in office is a key example of the changing sphere of communication and discursive (re)production.

The decentring of language described above dictates that signs and signifiers are more ideational and relational than objective. Words and labels are understood to acquire meaning through linking and differentiation, and therefore hold no ‘true’ meaning. This in turn means that the choices actors make between various possibilities of language in order to give meaning to their surroundings, affects the reality of their situation. This is the theory behind Nietzsche’s (1966, p. 26) claim that “where there is similarity of language... there is similarity of thought”. This claim illustrates in the broadest sense how the structure of any language reflects the common philosophy of the culture in which it develops. Nietzsche writes on the “spell” grammatical functions hold over expression and imagination, and points to what he describes as the differences in “tempo” (ibid, p. 40) between the main European languages and the affects

he sees this having on the formulation and expression of ideas that are products of the cultures they develop in. These observations must be read critically however, as Nietzsche also held “physiological valuations and racial conditions” as influential in the formation of ideas (ibid, p. 26). The objectivity of objects, which is frequently called upon in materialist critiques of the relativist ontology, is nonetheless disrupted when confronted with the Nietzschean observation on the subjective differences between European languages. The words and phrases that make up a vocabulary work as a shorthand for corresponding concepts, emotions and memories, that are necessarily contingent on culture and environmental factors (Connolly, 2002; Fairclough, 2001). As a result, communication, translation and interpretation can never be perfect. The language we use enables and limits our ability to understand and give meaning to our surroundings.

For Nietzsche, this is the ‘philosophy of grammar’, or the view that the subjectivities inherent in representations of reality exist within language itself, as a monolithic history of culturally produced concepts, expressed in words and phrases. For Gramsci, this is part of the war of position for political power. Differentiated to the territorial war of movement associated with dramatic revolutionary moments such as the storming of the Bastille, or the October Revolution, the war of position refers to a “cultural conflict involving ideology, religion, forms of knowledge and value systems” (Fontana, 2008, p. 93). For Gramsci, the war of position can explain why a Bolshevik style revolution was unlikely to succeed in Italy unless it was supported by sustained efforts to change the hegemonic structures of culture, language and politics in Italian society. When one uses and repeats words/sound-images, one refers to and affects a language that is the result and record of centuries of cultural, ideational and linguistic development. Language therefore becomes a site of meaning-making that structures our thoughts and our existence. It is not enough to accept that what we say and how we say it matters; we must acknowledge that what we say creates and recreates our reality. The specific language used by speakers in relaying information is demonstrative of the sum of historical attitudes and beliefs held on a smaller scale, which is synthesised from experience and which carries distinctive particularities. For example, when legislation on immigration is framed in

the language of security and counter-terrorism, it demonstrates the culture of its creation and gives an insight to the individual prejudices of the author (Bigo, 2002). Gramsci summarises this in his thoughts on the relationship between hegemonic discourse and the philosophy of the individual: “various philosophies of the world exist and one always makes a choice between them... the choice and criticism of a conception of the world is itself a political fact” (Gramsci, 1957, pp. 60-1), and later: “each individual is not only the synthesis of existing relations, but also the history of these relations, the sum of all the past” (ibid., p. 78). For the purposes of foreign policy analysis, it is important to deconstruct the individual’s use of language in order to interrogate personal biases as well as the cultural context in which these biases develop. This recognition of the micro-political aspects of language is a crucial step in appreciating the role of strategic agency within, above and below the more constant flow of hegemonic discursive structures (Hay, 2002). In order to understand the capacity of the actor in a foreign policy context however, it is necessary to theorise the (in)stability of language at the broader level of narratives and discourses. The purpose of the second half of this chapter is to provide a theoretical grounding for these concepts.

2. Language and foreign policy structure

The remainder of this chapter looks specifically at the structuring of language as it applies to the production of foreign policy knowledge. This is done in relation to the concepts of narrative, discourse and strategic agency. This half of the chapter is split into four parts. The first of these outlines the concept of narrative and unpacks the writings of scholars of foreign policy on the opposition of self and Other within the wider construction of national and international stories. The second part places these theoretical arguments within the empirical context of 9/11 and US foreign policy during the War on Terror. This serves both to provide a ‘real world’ application of the theory, and to set out the discursive foreign policy setting Obama inhabited on taking over the presidency from George W Bush. The third part then focusses on the concept of strategic agency, and the construction of strategic narratives by foreign policy elites, in order to theorise Obama’s agency. Finally, the fourth part of this section draws this

discussion out further, by unpacking the specific platform available to the president of the United States of America.

2.a. Narrative and foreign policy

As the processes of linking and differentiation that generate meaning are (re)produced over time, structures will achieve a degree of relative stability, and the formation of narratives and discourses occurs (Holland, 2013a, p. 12). For the purposes of this study, narrative is used to refer to the way disordered social events, experiences and identities are ordered into coherent and meaningful accounts of causation, succession and resolution. Narratives are socially produced stories or myths that enable humans to understand their environment (Edkins, 2013; Krebs, 2015, p. 2). As an example, the narrative that 9/11 was inflicted on America by evil terrorists because of a hatred of certain freedoms, is one possible way (among many) of giving meaning to the disordered events surrounding acts of physical destruction that took place on September 11th 2001 (see Holland, 2009). Relatedly, discourse is used to refer to the wider constellations of meaning that are drawn upon in the formation of narratives. Continuing the above example, the 9/11 narrative draws upon the discourses that America is a land of freedom, that there is such a thing as evil, and that terrorists seek to kill civilians. These discourses have been produced and reproduced over many years, and as a result they hold a relatively high degree of stability in American and Western culture. For Doty, discourses “delineate the terms of intelligibility whereby a particular reality can be known and acted upon” (cf Shepherd, 2008, p. 20). When the chaotic events of 11th September 2001 took place, Americans reached into the knowledge resources contained in these discourses and used them to structure the disorder into an understandable storyline (Croft, 2006; Holland, 2009). How foreign policy narratives form, how certain narratives and discourses dominate others, and the role played by elite actors in these processes, are key areas of concern for the current thesis.

The linguistic system of binary oppositions critiqued by Derrida is particularly noticeable in foreign policy narratives and discourses due to the persistent othering of the ‘foreign’ from the national or domestic ‘self’. Bulley (2014), Campbell (1998) and Der Derian (1989) identify

the self/other binary as the cornerstone of international relations, recognising it as the linguistic foundation from which the major discourses of foreign/domestic, security/threat, national/international acquire meaning. Der Derian (1989, p. 4) refers to the reproduction of the self/other nexus under the label of intertext, arguing the mutually defining link between ‘alien and indigene’ is central to all studies of diplomacy and conflict. For Campbell, foreign policy is a process of (re)writing the identity of the national self, via an opposition to a foreign, threatening Other. The purpose of foreign policy is not to eliminate threat, but to enunciate it, thereby giving purpose to the state (Campbell, 1998, p. 10). Bulley in turn conceptualises foreign policy as ethics, determining how we “relate to others, to strangers, to those who are different, and to otherness in general – even otherness within our own community or our ‘selves.’” (2014, p. 173). Derrida (1961) deconstructed culturally embedded binaries through the process of ‘making strange’; that is the denaturalization of common concepts in order to appreciate the instability of meaning. Der Derian (1989, p. 4) applies this to foreign policy to “disturb the habitual ways of thinking and acting ... to provide new intelligibilities and alternative possibilities”. In the case of the US, America’s threatening Other is variously recognised as the European, the English, the Native American, the communist, the criminal and the terrorist throughout American history (Campbell, 1998). Connolly (1989) uses the 1492 discovery of the American landmass to illustrate the functions of otherness in governing knowledge on the world. In his example Europe, Columbus, his crew or any ‘Old World’ identity can take on the qualities of the self, and the New World, the physical terrain or the native population are externalised and opposed to that imagined identity. Connolly visualises the self/other relationship as a(n) (inter)text, to highlight its instability. A text can be re-traced, added to, subtracted from and amended to nuance its meaning in the same way the self/other relies on interpretation and reproduction.

In all these writers’ understandings of foreign policy, the common factor is the recognition not just of the relationality of language but of the processes of linking and differentiation made specifically between a self and an Other. In each case there is an image of nationhood or patriotism associated with the collective self and a contrasting strangeness imposed on the

Other. These oppositions are the core building blocks of the dominant narratives of US foreign policy. The reproductions of various possible selves and Others provide Americans with a cast of stock characters to signpost the disorder of global relations. Each episode of American history has a key villain or Other who is not only responsible for the nation's troubles but is given character flaws that explain why they insist on causing so much harm. The English were corrupt and greedy, the Russians were godless, terrorists are evil and ISIL is a death cult. In every case, it is in the nature of the Other to do harm to America. Unsurprisingly, the dominant narratives of foreign policy rarely question the actions of the self, and those narratives that are more introspective are often marginalised by more comfortable scripts.

In David Campbell's words, "understanding involves rendering the unfamiliar in the terms of the familiar" (Campbell, 1998, p. 4). This means that in order to acquire meaning, the disorder of global events must be fitted into understandable narratives that draw upon the familiarity of existing discourses. Edkins reflects this same view in her statement that "reality has to be narrativised to be understood" (2014, p. 284-5). It follows that in order for policy programmes to garner and maintain popular support, these must also be embedded into understandable and communicable narratives (Krebs, 2015; Holland, 2013). For Campbell, the very existence and identity of the state is contingent upon its appearance within these narratives, and especially upon "the constant articulation of danger through foreign policy" (Campbell, 1998, p. 13). In dramatic terms, the state is usually cast as the hero in the dominant narratives of foreign policy, and as the hero, it requires a threatening villain to give its character a purpose. If there is no villain then the foreign policy story/narrative will quickly unravel and the necessity of the hero/state may fall into question. In political terms, without a dangerous Other it becomes more problematic for the state to take resources from the population whilst maintaining support. For example, following the fall of the Berlin wall, the longstanding narrative that America was locked in a moral struggle with Communism became impossible to maintain, and policy makers found it more difficult to justify spending on 'cold war' programmes such as missile defences (Campbell, 1998, pp. 195-9). A decade later, the new

narrative that positioned Al Qaida as America's dangerous Other was followed by massive defence spending, emblematised in the creation of the Department of Homeland Security.

In *Writing Security* Campbell's main contribution to the literature on foreign policy discourse is his exploration of the importance of fear, danger and otherness to the existence of the state. Adopting a poststructural ontology, he starts from the position that neither danger nor the identity of the state are ever fixed (Campbell, 1998, p. 31). Foreign policy is "retheorised as one of the boundary-producing practices central to the production and reproduction of the identity in whose name it operates" (ibid, p. 61). Foreign policy reifies and objectifies the self through articulations of danger. Danger, which is more threatening than simple otherness, forces a boundary on the imagined community of the self. In order for the self to be under threat, a boundary must be drawn between it and the threatening body. Fear of the Other draws the various elements of the self closer together, and makes their identity clearer. This leads Campbell to interrogate both the production of fear and the identity of America in his analysis of US foreign policy. America being a largely abstract concept, he argues it is defined more by absence than presence, and therefore by the representations of the feared Other more than by any defining characteristics of the self. The identity of America as it stands now is therefore informed by the historic constructions of the otherness of the Old World as much as it is by the fear of Communism in the 20th century or the threat of terrorism in the 21st. There is a myth of America that is closely intertwined with the history of Puritanism and the voyage of the Mayflower in 1660. The ideas of a chosen people, of destined progress, of a new Eden and American Jerusalem are all bound up in the representations of England and Europe as corruptly oppressive to the religious purity symbolised by the Mayflower. Campbell calls this the "transformation of geography into eschatology" (Campbell, 1998, p. 107); with the reproduction of this myth, the foreign Others that the Puritans encountered in the New World became hindrances to their manifest destiny. As the identity of America is continually represented, (de)formed and reproduced over time, this myth is reproduced with it, and the discourse that America has a unique destiny can be used to inform the discourses of the Second World War, the Cold War or the War on Terror. This is how the unfamiliarity of 'fascism',

‘communism’ or ‘terrorism’ is rendered in terms of the familiar. In each rendering the new threat becomes part of the collection of familiar discursive resources that will help the nation to understand the next.

Along with Puritanism and Manifest Destiny, the rhetoric of the frontier is identified by Campbell as frequently evoked in US foreign policy. Stemming again from the arrival in the New World, the colonial language of barbarism was used by the white occupiers to make sense of their encounters with native peoples. The same language of a ‘civilising duty’ that was used to rationalise the oppression of ‘Indians’ in the mainland was also used to justify US colonialism in the Philippines under Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt (Campbell, 1998, p. 135). It also appears in the mid and late 20th century in relation to America’s excursions into Korea and Vietnam. Campbell argues that the US obsession with the threat of communism found roots in the conflict between the ‘civilised’ principle of private ownership and the ‘barbaric’ theft of collectivism. The imagined frontier thus becomes “the ever-shifting boundary between ‘barbarism’ and ‘civilisation’, ‘chaos’ and ‘order’” (ibid, p. 146). Again in this discourse, the faults of the Other illustrate the difference between the two identities. The discourse tends to legitimise the actions of the self as a necessary step towards the progress of the Other. This makes possible a number of foreign policy narratives that follow the general theme of the White Man’s Burden; reproducing a ‘common sense’ that America, as the civilised nation has a duty to civilise others. These narratives appear in the discourses surrounding US activity in the Philippines, Korea and Vietnam, but also in the language of the War on Terror, in labels such as Operation Enduring Freedom and Winning Hearts and Minds.

2.b. Discursive structures of the War on Terror

The reproduction of foreign policy discourses and narratives is theorised in cyclical terms by Stuart Croft (2006). Taking 9/11 as a case study, Croft develops a ‘crisis cycle’ to illustrate the contest between potential foreign policy discourses. This cycle draws on Colin Hay’s idea of crisis as “a moment of *decisive intervention*, a moment of transformation” (Hay, 1996, p. 254; emphasis in original), rather than as the culmination of contradictions. Hay and Croft both

recognise that a combination of contradictions can be socially sustained whilst allowing for the co-existence of different understandings of crisis. For Croft, a crisis such as the September 11th attacks is characterised by a competition between multiple narratives to give meaning to events (these authors also influence Krebs's (2015) understanding of 'unsettled narrative situations'). Eventually, a 'decisive intervention' is made, and a single narrative may achieve dominance or hegemony over the competition. In this context of domination, the state or authoritative body may arrive at a new strategic trajectory that must fit in with the 'common sense' – or the taken for granted knowledge – of the new hegemony; institutions are restructured accordingly and a period of stability will follow. Eventually, Croft theorises, contradictions within the dominant narrative will surface, contesting narratives and discourses will make inroads into the status quo and a new crisis moment and decisive intervention may be made possible (Croft, 2006, pp. 80-1).

In the case of 9/11, Croft argues the decisive intervention was successful by early 2002, pointing in particular to the January State of the Union address (ibid, p. 122). The initial contradiction of narratives following the destruction on September 11th has been explored by Holland (2009). Using statements taken from media outlets, and particularly interviews with members of the public as '9/11' unfolded, Holland theorises a void of meaning as people struggled to find a narrative that could sufficiently explain what was happening in New York. In the media, on rolling news channels, presenters initially failed to do anything more than repeat what they were seeing on live video feeds. Frequently, Holland's popular sources relied on film culture references to put words to their experiences. Amid a general acknowledgement of disbelief, 'Hollywood' and 'science-fiction' cultural resources such as *War of the Worlds* and *Independence Day* were used by by-standers to describe how the destruction appeared to them (ibid, pp. 279-80). The absence of decisive intervention enabled the phase of 'void' to continue until September 11th was eventually framed as crisis by the somatic marker of '9/11'. As the more prominent narratives on 9/11 shifted from the initial incomprehensibility of the events, to the later inexplicability of the acts, the discursive setting became conducive to questions (and narratives) concerning the why and who of the crisis rather than the what.

Finally, a decisive intervention was made by President Bush, who was able to construct the particular narrative of crisis that would become known as the War on Terror. To create this narrative, a cast of heroes and villains was deployed including terrorists and their harbourers, and America and its allies; a storyline was developed of a moral struggle between these characters, representing good and evil, with war being declared on the latter; and a geographical setting for this struggle was constructed, with Afghanistan and Iraq becoming the battlefields upon which the war would be fought.

Reflecting on the stabilisation of the discourse, Jackson conceptualises the War on Terrorism as consisting of a finite but immense number of “texts, words and symbols” that informed the common sense of US and western security officials (Jackson, 2005, p. 17). Like this thesis, Jackson’s study focusses on the ‘official’ face of the discourse, and as such prioritises statements made by high-level politicians, bureaucrats and soldiers as well as documents circulating among lower-ranking government employees. Through his analysis, Jackson identifies four overarching ‘metanarratives’, commonly drawn upon in post-9/11 texts (ibid, p. 40). The first of these metanarratives made 9/11 and the War on Terror understandable by relating it to the Second World War, and to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In this interpretation and reproduction of September 11th 2001, America was once again made the defender of freedom and democracy, and the agents of terrorism were transformed into 21st century fascists comparable to Hitler and Mussolini in the 1930s and 1940s. This narrative was frequently employed by the Bush administration to make sense of the Taliban’s role in Afghanistan and would later be pivotal in constructing Saddam Hussein as the equivalent of Hitler in the Middle East. 9/11 itself was venerated as a date that would resonate in American history along with 7th December 1941, with parallels frequently made between the two unforeseen attacks on US soil. The second metanarrative ordered the events by relating the ‘new’ struggle between freedom and terrorism to America’s older struggle against communism throughout the cold war. According to this perspective, the leader of the free world had taken up its duty to fight against the godlessness of socialism. Whilst there had been a theoretical possibility, following the defeat of Nazism in 1945, for the US to retreat into isolationism and

leave Russia to mould the post-war consensus, this (according to the logic of the metanarrative) would have been irreconcilable with America's core values. By the same logic in 2001, the US might have chosen not to engage Al Qaida and the Taliban, however the common sense of national duty dictated this was a political impossibility. This is the narrative dissected by William Appleman Williams (1972), reapplied to the world of international terrorism. Just as America had a responsibility to safeguard developing nations from Sovietism, it then became necessary for it to act as the world's policeman where 'Islamic Extremism' posed a threat to Western norms. In the third narrative, terrorism was painted as a threat to the neoliberal advantages of globalisation. The final metanarrative is a continuation of the longstanding opposition of civilisation and barbarism in Western discourse. The critique of this narrative lies at the heart of post-colonial tradition, and will be explored in the following chapters.

The articulation of crisis through the reproduction of these four metanarratives stabilised the War on terror discourse. For Croft, this stabilisation is the development of the "new strategic trajectory" for American power and is seen in a phase of institutional restructuring. The most glaring evidence of restructuring can be seen as early as October 2001 in the invasion (and subsequent occupation) of Afghanistan, and the creation of the Office of Homeland Security, on 7th and 8th October respectively. The passing of UNSC Resolution 1386 in 2002 gave UN-backing to the formation of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, solidifying the War on Terror's international dimensions and providing a geographic space for the conflict. The Office of Homeland Security was further expanded and institutionalised into the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) following the enactment of the Homeland Security Act (HSA) on 25th November, 2002. The HSA, divided into seventeen titles, establishes the DHS, the National Homeland and Security Council, the Directorate for Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection, as well as the Critical Infrastructure Information and the Cyber Security Enhancement Acts of 2002. HSA's titles cover a wide array of domains including border control, "transportation security", emergency responses, air travel and the "arming of pilots against terrorism", "science and technology in support of Homeland Security", and "the treatment of charitable trusts for members of the

armed forces”. The first budget document for DHS (Bush, 2003, p. 7) requests \$37.7bn for the 2003 financial year, calling the figure “a down payment on a larger set of homeland security initiatives that will be described in the national strategy and reflected in the 2004 and later budgets.” The economy of the War on Terror is responsible for the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Americans (and non-Americans), with DHS alone employing over 240 000 people as of 2015 (DHS, 2019). Each of these individuals has a stake in the continuation of the War on Terror, as do the private and public corporations which constitute the military-industrial complex.

Restructuring also takes place at a cultural level, through the celebrity of symbols such as the colour-coded Homeland Security Advisory System, the narratives adopted by CNN, MSNBC and other mainstream news outlets, and in the popularity of (counter) terror-themed fiction in film (*The Dark Knight*, *Hurt Locker*), television (*24*, *Homeland*, *The West Wing*), and countless thriller novels by the likes of Tom Clancy and James Patterson (Croft, 2006; Dodds, 2008; Jackson, 2005). These institutions play central roles in reproducing and institutionalising the metanarratives of the War on Terror. Holland (2011) has explored how a particular episode of *The West Wing* (‘Isaac and Ishmael’), broadcast three weeks after 9/11, attempted to teach its audience how to think about 9/11. In the episode, the ‘White House’ is placed under lockdown after an unspecified incident, and a visiting class of high school students takes on the role of the American public, expressing their concerns about terrorism to the men and women running the country. The students were portrayed as confused and scared, but ultimately good-natured and intelligent. Through the hour-long episode, the stories invoked by President Bush to making meaning of 9/11 were (re)told by the fictional Democrat administration of Michael Sheen’s President Bartlett. This is done most notably through Jackson’s WW2 metanarrative in the mantra “when you think of the Taliban, think of the Nazis” (Sorkin, cf Holland, 2011, p. 96), but also in the frames of civilisation and barbarism – “Islamic extremism is to Islam what the KKK is to Christianity... It’s the Klan, gone medieval” (ibid, p. 94), and in the opposition of good/heroic Americans to evil/cowardly terrorists – “Killing yourself and innocent people to make a point is sick, twisted, brutal, dumb-ass murder... we don’t need martyrs right now.

We need heroes. A hero would die for his country but he'd much rather live for it" (ibid, p. 100). The popular and cultural (re)production of official narratives aids the domination of alternative realities. *The West Wing* lending its political power, as a 'left of centre' cultural institution and hypothetical Democrat government to the policies of the actual 'right of centre' Republican government, was an example of Gramscian hegemony at play. As the social blocs of the Bush administration, Republican and Democratic factions of Congress, mainstream news broadcasters, and cultural and artistic institutions formed an alliance in the weeks after 9/11, in embracing the narratives of the War on Terror discourse, dissenting voices were marginalised and became illegitimate (Holland, 2011; Croft, 2006; Krebs & Jackson, 2007).

Croft's cycle theorises that the dominance of the crisis narrative may eventually become destabilised over time as new contradictions arise and dissenting narratives gain in support and legitimacy. Thus, the move to expand the War on Terror from Afghanistan into Iraq from 2003, was met with greater popular protest and public dissent (Croft, 2006, pp. 172-186). Similarly, as human rights abuses became synonymous with names like Guantanamo Bay, Bagram and Abu Ghraib, the myth that America was fighting for liberal Western values also became easier to counter. As civil liberties were eroded by the PATRIOT Act, accusations of 'un-Americanism' could increasingly be levelled at proponents of the War on Terror, as well as its opponents. By the late 2000s, as the occupation of Iraq was increasingly perceived as too costly, with none of the promised weapons of mass destruction having been found, Barack Obama was able to find political capital in the narrative that Iraq was a 'dumb war' (Aaronson, 2014; Obama, 2009). Examples of counter-narratives in film can be seen in Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) documentary, or more subtly in George Clooney's *Good Night and Good Luck* (2005), which recreated 1950s McCarthyism for the War on Terror audience. Barack Obama succeeded George Bush as president seven years after the events of 9/11, at a time when, according to Croft's theory, the crisis narrative should have been relatively weak due to the accumulation of years of contradictions. In theory, the accumulation of contradiction enables the creation of a new crisis moment with the opportunity for another decisive intervention of the kind made by the Bush administration in 2001. However, there is a strong

body of literature suggesting Obama was indeed constrained by the discursive structures he encountered on entering the White House.

As the previous chapter outlined, at a policy level, the events of September 11th 2001 marked a fundamental change in how America conducted itself in the world (Aaronson, 2014). For Bacevich (2002), the attacks on the World Trade Center provided the neoconservative faction of the Bush administration with the opportunity it needed to break free of the constraints of conventional Washington doctrine and aggressively work to bring about the new American century. For more liberal authors such as Ikenberry (2002), 9/11 was a moment of shock and more fundamental rupture in US foreign policy that risked tearing apart the “fabric of the international community”. The Bush administration framed 9/11 as an act of war (Andréani, 2004), and in doing so curated a narrative in which certain (militaristic) foreign policy reactions were required and others were made unacceptable (Jackson, 2006). The embeddedness of the central narratives and frames of threat and identity recorded by Croft, Jackson and others, works as a constraining structure, hindering any agent’s capacity to alter US foreign policy (Forsythe, 2011, p. 768). Furthermore, it can be seen to work in three major ways; through the institutionalisation of legalistic and bureaucratic frameworks within the War on Terror (Jackson, 2014; Bentley, 2014a), through the reinforcement of core identities and perceptions of threat in official discourse – which is often interpreted and reproduced by media outlets (Jackson, 2005; Croft, 2006), and through the internalisation of these narratives by public audiences (Solomon, 2014; Forsythe, 2011).

When the Obama administration announced it would no longer use the phrase ‘War on Terror’, the use of the word ‘war’ as well as the militaristic ideology this implies, retained its place in the president’s language. There was still a military campaign to be fought and this would require a strong ‘war president’ to ensure the battle would be won. This can be seen in the president’s language in responding to the failed Christmas day 2009 bombing of a passenger plane in New York, when he reminded Americans “We are at war. We are at war against al-Qaida” (Obama, cited in Desch, 2010). Obama’s rhetorical may have been limited

by the previous eight years' constructed knowledge of how the president could act, and what being strong looked and sounded like in post-9/11 America.

The way in which 9/11 was initially framed, and the language, grammar and identities that became engrained in US discourse on the War on Terror, continued to influence people's ability to understand US foreign policy today. This discursive structure was important both in understanding how people (whether at an elite or popular level) think about the role of the US in the world (Bentley, 2014a; Jackson, 2005), and in understanding how a powerful actor such as the president is able to alter the direction of foreign policy whilst keeping a democratically sufficient proportion of the population 'on side' (Krebs & Jackson, 2007; Holland, 2013b).

Jackson identifies four core narratives² interwoven with the framing of 9/11 as an act of war that were strategically manipulated by the Bush administration and continued to play crucial roles in defining acceptable post-9/11 US foreign policy at the time of his writing in 2006. These are: "terrorism as war", "the terrorist threat", "good Americans and evil terrorists" and "the good war" (Jackson, 2006, p. 165). The first of these, the 'terrorism as war' narrative, is a seemingly logical expansion of the similar framing of 9/11. It evoked cultural memories of US military history and experiences of conflict, and was used to identify Bush as a 'war president', and made possible and necessary a strong military response from the armed forces (Andréani, 2004; Bentley, 2014a; Jackson, 2006). The second narrative, concerning 'the terrorist threat', fed off the initial public shock and later outrage that was provoked by the attacks (see Holland, 2009). Jackson argues that this was essentially an act of securitisation, in which fear and moral panic were intensified and directed towards the 'terrorist' identity. This further enabled the legitimisation of a military response – which would soon be seen in the invasion of Afghanistan – as well as a series of security and surveillance measures, the passing of emergency legislation such as the PATRIOT act, and the mobilisation of state resources these would require (Jackson, 2006, pp. 167-172). Conversely, it served to indefinitely delegitimise and silence potentially critical or dissenting voices from the government's political

² Not to be confused with the four metanarratives used to make sense of 9/11.

opposition (Krebs & Lobasz, 2007). The ‘good Americans and evil terrorists’ narrative facilitated the violence that would follow, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq, further established the parameters of acceptable state action, and, drawing on the foundational myths surrounding the essential benevolence and righteousness of the American nation, discursively united the population in their common struggle against the forces of evil (Jackson, 2006; see also Cambell, 1998). Finally, the “good war” narrative is described by Jackson as fitting with a longer narrative identified by Lawler (2002), which has historically been appealed to in casting wars as defensive last resort, and therefore justified in the context of post-20th century laws and norms of conflict. Whilst these narratives set the tone of USFP for years to come, the geographic location of the threat within the Afghan borders, and later in Iraq (via the demonisation of Saddam Hussein as an individual) created the political possibility of the invasion of both sovereign spaces (Solomon, 2009; Ralph, 2009; Krebs & Lobasz, 2007; Andréani, 2004). On taking office, President Obama had to contend with the enduring cultural power of these embedded narratives if he was to achieve any meaningful change from Bush-era foreign policy.

The reverse side of the various threat narratives was the (re)enunciation of the national identity. The US was the nation of freedom, and that was why ‘they’ hated ‘us’ (Sjostedt, 2007; Krebs & Lobasz, 2007; Solomon, 2009). The world was immediately split between America and its supporters on one side, and the terrorists and those states which ‘harboured’ them on the other. 9/11 became its own foundational myth (Croft, 2006; Silberstein, 2002; Hughes, 2003; Jackson, 2014) which drew the imagined community together and was added to the existing myths of manifest destiny and American exceptionalism (McCracken, 2003; Forsythe, 2011; Marsden, 2011). With the terrorists representing ‘evil’, ‘barbarism’ and fear, the American identity was able to absorb all the positive qualities that the terrorists lacked (Solomon, 2009). This rhetorical linkage and the sense of unity it created were especially strong due to the existing mythology surrounding American exceptionalism. Marsden (2011) argues that Obama changed or at least attempted to change the way in which the US conducted itself within the structures of the War on Terror, however he would not be able – and probably was

not willing – to depart from the foundational myths of exceptionalism, destiny and innocence because the War on Terror was simply the latest grand strategy for maintaining American leadership. A range of authors have however argued that 9/11 is a foundational myth and as such did fundamentally change the way the US viewed itself as actor. From the new myth a collection of ideas, assumptions and ‘common sense’ about how (usually rather than if) the War on Terror should be fought were created. One of the most fundamental of these assumptions is that the War on Terror is in fact a war (Bentley, 2014a; Desch, 2008).

At this point it is conceptually helpful to shift perspective from the top-down view of how official discourse works to the bottom-up approach of considering how popular discourse, foundational myths, culture and emotion manifest themselves, and crucially how these manifestations enable and constrain elite agency. The use of fear to enable controversial state actions has been explored in great detail by Barry Buzan (2007), and is a major focus in David Campbell’s (1998) study. After 9/11, a cultural fear of the terrorist threat to national security played a key part in legitimising the use of overwhelming state resources to fight the War on Terror (Boyle, 2011). This fear was arguably manipulated by the Bush administration to maintain popular support for the subsequent military actions and unusual and pervasive security practices. Zbigniew Brzezinski (2007) has argued that the ‘genie’ of fear was ‘let out of the bottle’ after 9/11. Whilst its role in the manipulation of a key audience was largely beneficial for Bush’s foreign policy, it could not be disregarded by Obama and neither could it be easily dismantled or left behind (Bentley, 2014a).

Beyond fear, Forsythe (2011) has argued American exceptionalism and the manifest destiny myth are part of strong tradition of providential nationalism that binds US society to its foreign policy. Forsythe expands on Kissinger’s idea of America’s ‘moral faith’ (Kissinger, 1994, p. 50), to theorise that the US cannot sustain major engagements that are not justified by the popular sense of moral duty, or the unique responsibility of American civilisation to the world (Forsythe, 2011, p. 779). On the other side of this coin, certain administrations, such as that of George Bush Sr. with regards to Iraq, have arguably been pushed into interventionist causes

by the force of this popular sense of national duty. The offices of state are thereby bound to the will of the people and specifically to the popular interpretation of America's role in the world. It follows that any failure by Obama to achieve the changes in foreign and counter-terrorist policies that were anticipated on his election could have been prompted by the continued perception in some areas that controversial practices were a necessary part of America's fight against international terrorism. This argument was certainly used by many of his Republican rivals and led to severe difficulties between the president and Congress (Forsythe, 2011, p. 783).

The discursive structures of US foreign policy are therefore more complex than the simple manipulation of language by an elite actor to coerce an audience into tolerating controversial policies. At a ground level, there is an internalisation of this fear and other basic assumptions that constitute the War on Terror and bind elite actors towards a certain way of doing things. This is what Solomon (2014) refers to as "affective investment in the War on Terror". If we accept that 'the War on Terror' is a dominant or hegemonic discourse informing how the US can respond to the threat of terrorism (Solomon, 2009), then we must also accept that in a democratic state, the population's inclusion in this discourse gives it a certain power over the extent to which a statesperson can deviate from accepted War on Terror rhetoric and practice. This is what has been termed 'affect' in Lacanian writings (Solomon, 2014; Lacan, 2006). The process of identification, Lacan and Solomon argue, always involves some level of satisfaction at arriving at a comfortable linguistic label for an abstract experience of emotions, and some level of frustration at the failure to communicate these emotions as they are felt (Solomon, 2014, p. 113). In terms of US foreign policy, a crisis moment such as 9/11 produces a shock of emotions in the individual people that make up the population. Solomon, following Lacan, argues these emotions are 'pre-linguistic'. Successful foreign policy such as the War on Terror must appeal to this emotional base, and make 'sense' of events using identities that offer sufficient levels of satisfaction amongst enough people to maintain political legitimacy.

Here, the question arises as to whether audiences are coerced into accepting the dominant discourse, or whether the discourse is instead the vocalisation of collective emotion at a given time. Sjöstedt (2007) argues in favour of the latter. For her, the ‘Bush doctrine’ was a product of its time, and merely reflected the social discourses of post-9/11 fear and anger. It was essentially the “right ‘identity’ story at the right time in terms of offering a ready-made narrative of what had happened, who was to blame, and what should be done” (Solomon, 2014, p. 111; Krebs & Lobasz, 2007). There is thus an element of personal emotion in reacting to crises events such as 9/11 that is important to the dominance of foreign policy discourses and therefore is important to foreign policy discourse analysis. Public feeling, or affect, was therefore important to Obama’s foreign policy as it had the capacity to both constrain actors from deviating from the ‘Bush doctrine’, but also empowered him with a springboard of potential popular backing, provided he was astute enough to manipulate people’s emotions into support for strategically framed policies (Holland, 2013b). The following section explores this relationship between elite actors and audiences through the concepts of possibility, legitimization, dominance and rhetorical coercion.

2.c. Political (im)possibility: legitimization, dominance and rhetorical coercion

In strategic terms, the ability to create a favourable story of self and threatening Other, and to have this accepted by a substantial audience, can be crucial in setting a foreign policy agenda. For Hansen (2006, p. 128), policy makers must ascribe meaning to abstract global events, by drawing on and creating a range of identities that can be arranged into coherent and accessible narratives of foreign policy. In developing this point, Hansen (2006) acknowledges that foreign policy decision-making operates on the basis of constructed self and Other identities; and employs the concept of policy-identity “constellations” to understand the nexus of texts that constitute foreign policy discourses. Policies are made possible and sold to an audience through the construction of a set of identities that can be linked together to tell a story or narrative that necessitates a certain action – for example, in 2001, the construction of the oppressed Muslim woman identity made possible a foreign policy of military intervention in Afghanistan (Terman

2017). Alternatively, Hansen elaborates her point with reference to the discourse surrounding NATO interventions in the Bosnian conflict. In her analysis, Hansen shows how the Balkan identity is linked to secondary 'barbarian', violent', 'underdeveloped' and 'irrational' identities, which are in turn differentiated from 'civilised', 'controlled', 'developed' and rational 'Europe' (see Hansen, 2006, pp. 37-8). In sum, this constitutes a policy-identity constellation which created the possibility of Western intervention in the former Yugoslavia.

Considered alone, the construction of policy-identity constellations is not enough to create the necessary political environment to make possible military intervention. The capacity of a foreign policy narrative to dominate alternative understandings of international events is an important factor in the legitimization of state force. In 2003, the dominant narratives of the War on Terror were pivotal in framing the invasion of Iraq as legitimate and necessary and a key part of this domination was located in the strategic framing of 'non-intervention' as dangerous and unpatriotic (Flibbert, 2006; Krebs & Lobasz, 2007). How certain narratives come to dominate others, and why these others fail, is the subject of an expanding constructivist literature, variously drawing on concepts including political possibility, legitimization and rhetorical coercion.

O'Laughlin & al. (2018) use the concept of strategic narratives as a means to interrogate these questions on the construction of foreign policy stories at the same time as identifying the strategic agency of elite actors. For these authors, "strategic narratives may be designed to elicit particular behaviour" on the part of the audience (Miskimmon & al. 2018, pp. 1-2). Writing in the same edited collection, Arsenault & al. (2018, p. 192) use the theatrical metaphor of a script to define strategic narratives as written to "bind actors to roles and hold them to expected ways of behaving", complete with "'or else' clauses", articulating the dire consequences of deviation from the official narrative. O'Laughlin & al. see this understanding of strategy as potentially compatible with "thick" constructivist, or even poststructural ontologies through a conceptualisation of actors as intelligent and highly reflexive whilst also being situated within incomplete and fragile discursive structures. Specifically, actors are understood as having the

capacity to “learn the subtleties of interaction including managing each other’s emotional states”, even as the consequences of their actions may be unintentional and unforeseen (O’Laughlin & al. 2018, p. 33).

Roxanne Doty’s work on political possibility has also influenced many of the authors interested in questions of possibility, legitimation and coercion. Doty’s (1993) study of US-Philippine relations is guided by her critical interest in discursive practices. Instead of asking why the US intervened in the Philippines, Doty instead considers how Americans came to “regard counterinsurgency measures as the only reasonable course of action” (ibid, p. 298). By interrogating a backdrop of social actors, discursive and social practices and processes of knowledge production, Doty attempts to uncover the “particular interpretive dispositions which create certain possibilities and preclude others” (ibid). This strand of foreign policy analysis is an interrogation of productive power, rather than a materialist survey of balances of hard power. Entrenched binary oppositions and the linguistic establishment of modes of subjectivity become the focus for an analysis that seeks to understand the “practices that enable social actors to act, to frame policy as they do, and to wield the capabilities they do” (ibid, p. 299).

On the relationship between political possibility and foreign policy, Holland (2013b) theorises three analytical moments: conceivability, communicability and coercion. Successful foreign policy is made thinkable, sold to an audience and closes down the discursive spaces in which alternative policies may be voiced. Holland uses this framework on Jackson’s (2005) basis that “the act of going to war is so costly as to require extraordinary discursive action to persuade audiences... of its necessity, virtue and practicality” (Holland, 2013b, p. 54). For Holland, Doty’s model addresses only one of the three analytical moments constituting political possibility. ‘How possible’ here speaks only to ‘how conceivable’ or how a policy is rendered in thinkable terms (Holland, 2013b, p. 52). In order for foreign policy to become politically possible and democratically sustainable, it must also be rendered communicable to the domestic audience.

For this second analytical moment, Holland draws on Barnett's work on resonance (1999), as well as Balzacq's (2005) work on speaker, audience and context as the 'three faces' of the securitisation process (which is unpacked in the next chapter). In order for foreign policy to be 'communicable', Holland argues strategically aware practitioners seek to target narratives at key imagined constituencies whose support, they suppose, will lend them legitimacy. This conception of communicability places great importance on the structural awareness of practitioners, drawing on Jessop and Hay's strategic-relational model. Barnett (1999) extends the understanding of 'making possible' to include the creation of "a cultural space for foreign policy to become desirable and legitimate." His model assumes foreign policy elites are "constantly attempting to guide political mobilisation toward a particular outcome and for a political goal by using symbols metaphors and cognitive cues to organise experience and fix meaning to events" (Barnett, cf Holland, 2013b, p. 54). Actors use frames to bring context and meaning to events but also to mobilise the support and action of target audiences. These audiences or imagined constituencies are generally smaller and narrower than the national population, with practitioners hoping to gain sufficient rather than total public support. If this is done successfully, the chosen narrative resonates with the necessary audience(s) and gains in reach and perceived legitimacy. Holland illustrates this through the case of UK intervention in Iraq, in which Tony Blair's discourse was strategically targeted at 'Middle England', in the hope that the mobilisation of this audience would lend sufficient legitimacy to the otherwise problematic invasion (Holland, 2013b, p. 59). The second analytical moment of political possibility therefore requires an understanding of the political and cultural structure in which the foreign policy is articulated, as well as the identification of strategically targeted audiences, in order to establish how foreign policy "resonates and as a result is granted legitimacy by an audience that could otherwise hinder or derail it" (ibid, p. 55).

The final analytical moment of possibility is located in the coercive rhetorical moves that make certain narratives dominant whilst marginalising others. Here, the Gramscian idea of a continuous war of position between competing narratives is used to theorise the discursive landscape. As a single narrative never enjoys a monopoly on political discourse, multiple

narratives instead compete for dominance over one another. Holland draws on Mattern (2005) to argue foreign policy dominance occurs when “its particular framings remove the cultural and discursive materials that opponents might otherwise have access to in order to formulate a socially sustainable rebuttal” (Holland, 2013b, p. 55). This occurs most often in the forms of rhetorical coercion, which suppresses resistance, and co-optation, which saps the potential for protest (Krebs & Lobasz, 2007, p. 126). The final analytical moment of political possibility therefore consists of making competing policy proposals politically impossible, by minimising and discrediting the discursive spaces in which they might be articulated. This is commonly attempted via appeals to the national identity and culture, and foundational myths of the kind explored by Campbell and Croft (Chowdhury & Krebs, 2010, p. 135; Holland, 2013b). This tactic can be seen in the deliberate evocation of America’s struggles against fascism and communism in the Bush administration’s marketing of the War on Terror (Holland, 2013a; 2013b). The intertwining of foreign policy with national identity is a powerfully coercive move when done successfully, as it resituates the debate away from what the policy may achieve towards an argument over what the nation should look like. As with achieving resonance, the strategic intelligence and structural awareness of the practitioner is imperative in establishing narrative dominance. Dominance is not therefore a given or an end-point of foreign policy, but a relative advantage in the discursive war of position that practitioners constantly strive to reach and maintain. Evidently not all practitioners have equal access to target audiences or are perceived to have equal legitimacy and authority on matters of foreign policy. The final section considers this imbalance and explains the decision to focus this thesis on the US president.

2.d. The president’s strategic agency

Amongst strategic actors, the American president has access to a unique level of power in US and world politics. In constitutional terms, the president holds executive power, the mandate of the American people and is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Whilst the power of the executive is legally balanced by the judiciary and the legislature, symbolically, culturally and politically, the holder of the presidency commands popular respect and attention

above that accorded to other institutions. This concentration of power means that as a strategic agent, the president has access to a greater platform from which to attempt to orchestrate the flow of foreign policy narratives and ultimately to legitimise policy. The rhetorical advantages associated with the presidency lead it to be nicknamed the bully pulpit (Neustadt, 1990). These can be categorised crudely into quantitative and qualitative elements. In quantifiable terms, thanks to the cooperation of the broadcast media, the president's words on foreign policy are likely to be heard by a larger audience than other actors (Krebs, 2015, p. 48). Less tangibly, the president enjoys access to a significant arsenal of cultural symbols that provides unparalleled authority to 'speak' foreign policy; that is to define security threats, to identify the national interest, to select policy responses, and generally to speak on behalf of the country (Williams, 2007; Goddard & Krebs, 2015).

Authority is a social relation that depends on an audience's understanding of an actor (Krebs, 2015, p. 48; Lincoln, 1994). If an audience perceives an individual to be relevant to, or knowledgeable on matters of foreign policy and security, they are more likely to hear and engage with the narrative the speaker (re)produces. If a speaker is accorded, or is able to attain sufficient authority, her rhetoric will be heard by a larger and more attentive audience (Buzan et al, 1998, pp. 27, 32). As the speaker becomes more authoritative, her narratives are more likely to dominate others, and ultimately her foreign policy is more likely to become politically possible. Whilst a larger audience is no guarantee that people will agree with a given narrative, it provides a greater number of secondary voices who may (re)produce that narrative, either by internalising it, or by attempting to argue its invalidity. Attaining a high degree of authority is of course largely dependent on the 'buy-in' of amplifying actors and institutions in the media, and therefore is made easier when the speaker has access to the cultural and symbolic power associated with the president. Holding an elected office is one factor that allows speakers to be portrayed as 'newsworthy' to (or by) media organisations. Holding the presidency, being named 'commander-in-chief', and speaking from the Oval Office make it impossible for 'serious' American broadcasters to deny the newsworthiness of the speaker (Krebs, 2015, p. 48-52). This is the nature of the bully pulpit. The presidency provides the strategic actor with

discursive tools that remain inaccessible to her opponents. Political skill and structural awareness remain crucial in making foreign policy possible, but the pursuit of discursive dominance is made simpler with access to the president's platform.

Despite the forms of power accessible to the president, the Oval Office does not always succeed in legitimising favoured policy. When Franklin Delano Roosevelt began delivering his 'fireside chats' in 1933, he was taking advantage of the growing presence of wireless radio sets in American homes, seeing it as a means to reach the people, untainted by the criticisms of the printed press (Craig, 2000, p. 156). As a result, by 1944 he was able to reach a huge audience with his broadcast addressing the Pearl Harbour attacks, and carefully craft a crisis narrative that explained events in Hawaii to the domestic audience and that would make possible US involvement in the European war. The fact remains however, that before the Japanese attack FDR had been unable to overcome the dominant non-interventionist narrative and persuade the nation to join the war. This foregrounds the question as to how presidential interventions can be decisive and successful in certain instances and meet with resistance in others. The FDR case is examined at length by Krebs (2015), whose analysis explores the relationship between three elements of foreign policy discourse: "the rhetorical demands of the environment; the material, normative, and institutional power speakers bring to bear; and the rhetorical modes they adopt" (Krebs, 2015, p. 5). Here again, the strategic-relational concepts of 'strategic agency' and 'strategically selective context' are evoked in understanding the fundamentals of the discursive war of position. The discursive landscape in which the speaker is situated, and the modes of communication she employs are as relevant as the reach and power of the presidency in determining the success and failure of foreign policy narratives.

Krebs proposes context is best theorised in terms of settled and unsettled narrative situations, whilst argumentation and storytelling (i.e. the crafting of narratives) are considered to be the two basic modes of communication. When one foreign policy narrative is particularly dominant, the narrative situation is settled. If the situation becomes unsettled, usually in the latter stages of Croft's crisis cycle, it becomes increasingly possible for alternative narratives

to challenge the status quo and gain dominant status. In order to make possible and legitimate a given foreign policy stance, speakers may choose either to argue their case within the existing narrative framework, or to attempt to tell a new ‘story’ in the hope of establishing a more favourable discursive context. Argumentation is essentially about making the case for a given policy either instrumentally, in terms of costs and benefits to the nation, or normatively, in terms of acceptable behaviour according to existing sets of values (Krebs, 2015, p. 37). Storytelling, the alternative mode of rhetoric, prioritises the construction of a meaningful world of foreign policy, through scene setting, the identification of key characters and the production of causal narratives (ibid, p. 38).

Krebs argues that good oratory consists of understanding the narrative situation and identifying opportune moments for storytelling and argumentation. In the case of FDR, although the president was a gifted speaker, his efforts to argue that Nazi Germany posed a threat to the US failed to mobilise the public to support action until the existing narrative structures were unsettled by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. After the attack, the public demand for storytelling increased in much the same manner as Holland (2009) demonstrates in the aftermath of 9/11. Importantly, Krebs acknowledges the strategic intelligence of the speaker is fallible, arguing Roosevelt’s successful intervention may have occurred earlier had the president been quicker to understand the non-interventionist platform was becoming increasingly untenable, and put greater efforts into constructing his own foreign policy myth, rather than labouring over an argument that relied upon the logic of the previously dominant narrative (Krebs, 2015, pp. 68-88). Finally, Krebs detailed analysis of domination in US security discourse is empirically important as its findings contradict the conventional wisdom that mainstream narratives endure until significant failures render them untenable. Instead the evidence suggests that failures impede change in US foreign policy, as politicians become entrenched in the discourses in which they have invested and critics are encouraged to engage in “narrow criticism that reproduces the [dominant] narratives” (Krebs, 2015, p. 5). Moreover, in times of success such as military victory, dominant narratives are more likely to be

successfully challenged as spaces open for more substantial contestation (Krebs, 2015, pp. 27, 175-90).

With the changing nature of the media landscape over the 20th and 21st centuries, the continued relevance of the bully pulpit has been called into question (Goddard & Krebs, 2015, pp. 35-6; O'Loughlin & al., 2018, p. 23). In comparison to FDR's intervention after Pearl Harbor, by the time the next major attack on American soil took place on 11 September 2001, George Bush addressed the nation knowing the majority of his audience had already seen the destruction in Manhattan replayed multiple times on rolling news channels, accompanied by the tentative narrative frames put forward by journalists and members of the public alike (Holland, 2009). Now, with the advent of social media, and especially instant mass-communication through the likes of Twitter and Facebook, it has been theorised that it may be harder for the president to claim authority on any given subject (Goddard & Krebs, 2015). With the proliferation of platforms, and therefore of alternative narratives, the president is faced with more potential opposition to keep at bay. In addition to the growth of 'non-official' foreign policy discourses, the president and the White House must deal with incredible advances in the speed of communication (Cohen, 2008; 2010; Farrell, 2012; Goddard & Krebs, 2015; Prior, 2013).

Barack Obama claims to have recognised only belatedly that at least part of the role of the president is that of narrator. In an interview with CBS in 2012, Obama states that an initial mistake of his presidency was to assume "the job was just about getting the policy right" and ignoring the importance of "tell[ing] a story to the American people that gives them a sense of unity and purpose and optimism, especially during tough times" (Boerma, cf Krebs, 2015, p. 50). This claim deserves to be approached sceptically as Obama had shown a considerable talent for oratory and particularly for storytelling before taking office. *The Audacity of Hope* was a story of America, whose appeal took its author into the White House. Obama was of course supported at the bully pulpit by an array of White House 'staffers', strategists and speechwriters who played various roles in honing and directing his message. Even had he been

as naïve as he suggests in the period immediately after his election, Jon Favreau and Ben Rhodes, his chief speechwriters, should have known exactly what their jobs would involve. In foreign policy, Obama took advantage of the strategic and story-telling awareness of Rhodes in particular. Beyond his ability to narrate a story, Rhodes has been portrayed as keenly aware of the changing nature of the media. In an interview with Dan Samuels (2016), the speechwriter suggested part of his role was to construct an image of the foreign that can be relayed by domestic journalists who know and understand little of life outside of the homeland. The rise of social media may have eroded the rhetorical dominance of the bully pulpit, however the 44th president continued to recognise and embrace his role as America's story-teller.

Conclusion

The previous chapter provided the historical and academic context for this research project. In doing so, it identified a gap in the literature on continuity and change in the Obama administration's foreign policy that could be filled by an analysis that focused on the discursive structures of US statecraft as they relate and are interwoven with Orientalism. The purpose of the current chapter has therefore been to unpack and unravel the complex relationship between social and discursive structures and elite agency in the context of American foreign policy, and in doing so, to establish the ontological and theoretical underpinnings of the thesis.

The chapter started by outlining the ontological groundings of the thesis. It first set out a 'minimal realist' view of social structures as discursive, with language, speech and ideas functioning as unavoidable mediators between objective reality and human beings' capacity to understand it. This is a standpoint set out in considerable detail by David Howarth (2013), who concludes that only subjective and intersubjective understandings of the real world are possible. Colin Hay's strategic-relational model is then used to make clear the role of human agency within the limits of this ontological standpoint. Rather than speak of actors and structures as ontologically separable (as, they argue, do critical realists such as Archer), Hay and Bob Jessop

think in terms of ‘situated agents’ and ‘action-settings’, in a model that would see Obama as both a part of the structures of US foreign policy, and with these structures forming an important part of the president’s own understandings and even his sense of self. Elite actors such as Obama are therefore conceptualised as capable of affecting major change in their structural surroundings, but only to the extent that they are willing and able to free themselves of hegemonic ways of thinking and that this is ultimately accepted by a critical mass of other people.

With this understanding of the structure/agency dynamic in place, the concepts of discursive structure and elite agency were then further unpacked, with structure being understood following Foucault, Derrida and Nietzsche’s writings on the power of language and ideas in producing valid knowledge on specific topics. This was then applied to foreign policy through the related ideas of discourse and (strategic) narratives via an exploration of the structures of the War on Terror, which also provided Obama’s discursive environment on first entering the White House. Finally, the authority of the president was examined through concepts such as the Bully Pulpit, and especially Krebs’ writings on the potential for elite actors in the US political system to affect structural change by identifying moments of discursive instability and making decisive strategic interventions at these crucial moments.

This chapter has explored the constraining effects of War on Terror structures on Obama, as well as touching on the more entrenched structures of American foreign policy as they have been identified by Campbell (1998), Connolly (1989), Croft (2006), Marsden (2011) and others. The next chapter will complete the analytical framework by setting out the critical perspective adopted by the thesis through a discussion on Orientalism and the tradition of post-colonialist critique. This discussion will draw on existing literature on the role of Orientalism both in War on Terror discourses and in the more historic frames of civilised/American self and Eastern/Arab/Muslim Other identities that are equally important if less studied in the language and structures of American foreign policy. This will then feed into a wider exploration of the concept of security as a site of political struggle before Chapter Four will make clear the

specific model of discourse analysis employed in arriving at the empirical findings relayed in chapters Five to Seven.

Chapter three: Colonialism, Orientalism and security as the site of a political struggle

[Europe] needs a costume... again and again, a new piece of prehistory or a foreign country is tried on, put on, taken off, packed away and above all studied.

Friedrich Nietzsche

The purpose of this chapter is to continue to build the analytical framework employed in this thesis. As Chapter One provided the historical and academic context for the thesis, and Chapter Two established its ontological groundings, the aim in this chapter is to establish the critical lenses guiding the research, before Chapter Four can then make clear the methods of discourse analysis used in addressing the research questions. The results of this analysis are then related in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. In laying out the critical stance of the analysis, the current chapter is structured into two parts. The first engages with the tradition of post-colonialism, and the second builds on this critical awareness by relating it to the discipline of critical security studies. In linking these two traditions – which have previously overlapped (see especially Bilgin, 2005; 2011; Jackson, 2005; Toros & Gunning, 2009) but too often develop in isolation from each other – the chapter makes a theoretical contribution: by making this link, the chapter is able to explicitly situate the Gramscian discursive struggle over the meaning and practice of security within the broader operation of (neo)colonialist power that forms the object of post-colonialist critiques. This is important because it enables the researcher to use the analytical tools of both traditions to deconstruct and disrupt the Orientalist ‘common sense’ that still permeates US security discourses on the Middle East, and to identify the roles of discursive structure and elite agency in furthering these hegemonic narratives.

The first part of this chapter explores the post-colonial literature on Orientalism and constructions of otherness and threat in Western and American foreign policy and counter-terrorism. The Western construction of the Orient as a place of barbarian otherness has been the subject of much analysis, most influentially in the works of Edward Said (1983; 1994;

1995). Applying this to the War on Terror, authors such as Gregory (2003), Little (2008, 2016), Nayak (2006) and Tuastad (2003) have critiqued the continued presence of imperialist and colonialist ideology in American and European foreign and security policy. Post-colonial critiques are explored in this section in order to highlight and denaturalise some of the more longstanding cultural and discursive structures of US foreign policy that may have influenced Barack Obama's ability and willingness to bring about his promised 'new beginning' in America's relationship with the Middle East. For the purposes of the later analysis, this is a necessary process to enable the identification of potential Orientalist tropes in official discourses.

In the second part of the chapter, the academic tradition of critical security studies is explored. Here, the 'Welsh school' project of human security, and the 'Copenhagen school' concept of securitisation are unpacked so that security can be understood as the site of a political and discursive struggle with the potential to mobilise huge reserves of state resources, and, conversely, to frame opposing voices as illegitimate and even dangerous. The critical security lens, with its tradition of drawing from post-colonialist, poststructuralist and constructivist writings serves as a bridge between the discursive studies of foreign policy and (counter) terrorism outlined in Chapter Two and the post-colonial approach. The concept of securitisation as a speech act serves as a robust analytical tool for identifying the play of elite actors within foreign policy structures, provided this refers to the cultural, historical and political context of the actor and audience (Balzacq, 2005; Wilhelmsen, 2017). The Welsh school tradition of centring the human experience and highlighting asymmetric power relations in security practice and discourse is also important in challenging official constructions of the Other, and disrupting the discursive creation of dangerous identities and suspect communities often via the (re)production of Orientalist narratives (Breen-Smyth, 2014; Heath-Kelly, 2013). Chapter Four will then announce the deconstructive method used in this thesis, which is inspired by the methodologies and analytical techniques developed by Roxanne Doty, Lene Hansen, and Jack Holland. With the analytical framework in place, the research findings will then be relayed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

1. Colonialism, Orientalism and imagined geographies

The War on Terror, governed by Western agents and played out in the Middle East, was an imperialist campaign fought in the 21st century (Barkawi & Laffey, 2006; Gregory, 2004; Harvey, 2003). This is the basis of the post-colonial critique of American foreign policy under Presidents Bush and Obama. There are, of course, countless and diverse views on the meanings of imperialism and colonialism. In this thesis, colonialism is an ideology that was central to the creation, maintenance and defence of colonies by Western powers through much of the 19th and 20th centuries. It is also a power relation that involves the production of hierarchised and boundaries between the civilised self and ‘native’ or ‘local’ Others. It is often violent, involving the performance of coercive power, although it also includes softer forms of control and the production of knowledge. As Nicholas Thomas states, “colonialism has always, equally importantly and deeply, been a cultural process; its discoveries and trespasses are imagined and energized through signs, metaphors and narratives... [Colonial cultures] are also expressive and constitutive of colonial relationships in themselves” (cf Gregory, 2004, p. 8). Imperialism, usually involving colonialism, has further economic, political and – according to Edward Said (1994) – cultural implications. In one of its broadest applications, Langer defines imperialism as “rule or control, political or economic, direct or indirect of one state, nation or people over other similar groups” (Langer, 1935, p. 67). Whilst initially helpful, this conceptualisation struggles to separate imperialism from colonisation, and offers little insight into the practice and experience of empire. Lenin (2010) and Hobson (1965) pioneered the economic theory of imperialism, with both seeing Western expansion as a product of capitalist systems in need of larger markets to offset domestic under-consumption and to supply raw materials for manufacturing. With the expansion of an empire, the metropole is able to flood the markets of its colonies with its own products, thereby securing the domestic economy. This is the image of imperialism adopted by Charles Beard (2004) and Williams (1972) in their critiques of American politics and diplomacy. Wallerstein’s (1974) world system theory and other neo-Marxist writers such as Hardt & Negri (2000) and Robinson (1996) also follow in

this tradition. Associated with the economic drive, is the political and social restructuring that occupying powers often impose on their empires. Said, through his many works, expands this by looking at the discourses of colonialism and the continuing cultural influences empire and imperialism hold over the populations and regions they touch. To this end, he examines social and cultural (re)productions of the Orient, as the West's most prominent and recurring portrait of the foreign 'Other'. This section considers the boundary producing practices that constitute the difference between East and West. A major part of these practices is located in the embeddedness of civilised and barbarian identities to Western conceptions of the self and Other.

The following section is split into two halves, with the first focussing on events and discourses before the War on Terror, and the second focussing on the post-9/11 era. As a consequence of this, the second half is also more concerned with Orientalism in the American context. The first of these halves starts by giving a brief overview of the West's history of colonialism and imperial expansion into the 'global south'. With this context in place, the dominant frames of self and Other in Western political discourses on the East are then reviewed in this light. The Orientalist tradition of othering is the most relevant to the aims of this thesis and so historic representations of 'Eastern' and 'Islamic' Others are of most interest here. The longstanding trope of foreign barbarism, opposed to European civilisation, is fundamental to both Orientalism and older Western ideologies and, as such, is unpacked in detail in this section along with its political and cultural past. The second half of this section then focusses more specifically on Orientalism in the American and post-9/11 context. It starts by exploring Bilgin's (2005) work on the discursive construction of the 'Middle East' and her argument that this process occurred in parallel with first European and then American security concerns in the region. This geographical aspect of the discourse is then unpacked further through a brief discussion on the concepts of spatialisation and Gregory's (2003) work on socially constructed zones of visibility and (in)visibility in the early years of the War on Terror. Following this, the characteristics associated with Tuastad's (2003) thesis of neo-Orientalism in the Bush era is considered alongside Nayak & Malone's (2009) work on the concept of American Orientalism

as a separate tradition to both European Orientalism and American Exceptionalism. With these various strands and interpretations of Orientalism in place, the remainder of this section then considers the growing literature on gendered Orientalism, and the overlapping but smaller literature on American power and Orientalism(s) in the age of Obama. The second half of the chapter will then turn to the notions of (in)security and securitisation in the context of US and Western foreign policy.

1.a. Western narratives of colonisation and barbarism

Whilst many forces in history have ventured into foreign territories for the purposes of plundering goods, European forces from the 16th to the 20th century distinguish themselves as particularly adept at remodelling the political and economic structures of annexed lands (Stavrianos, 1981, p. 36). Upon discovery of the ‘New’ World, Spanish colonisers were able to install a system of forced labour in order to strip the continent of precious metals. These were then shipped back to Europe at a human cost that ensured the almost total destruction of the local population in a matter of decades. The Puritans then established themselves in the North of the continent and quickly set about creating the ‘land of the free’, again at the expense of the native peoples (Hackett Fischer, 1989). What would eventually become the United States of America was “created as an empire, expanding across a large portion of an entire continent, displacing Native Americans and Mexicans and annexing territories in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans” (Isbister, 2003, p. 78). With the native population dwindling, Europeans began capturing and exporting African slaves to the Americas to guarantee a supply of primary resources (Williams, 1944). Africa would later be transformed into the battleground for the escalating rivalries between the ‘great powers’ in the 19th century race to annex and occupy as much foreign land as possible. The Berlin Conference of 1884-85 oversaw the official partition of territory between European nations, with the US also participating in proceedings and enjoying the resulting free trade guarantees (Miers, 1988). In Asia, Britain, through the Raj and the East India Company, restructured and exploited the economies and populations of the subcontinent from the mid-1700s to 1947. The ‘Great Game’ between Russia and Britain saw

frequent unsuccessful attempts to incorporate Afghanistan into their respective empires (Macrory, 2002). Finally, the British and the French infamously reorganised the Middle East as both parties capitalised on the decline of the Ottoman Empire from the late 19th century. Following the Revolt of 1916-18, Arab forces established a short-lived independent government in Damascus (Moubayed, 2015). This was undermined by the Balfour declaration of 1917 and ultimately ignored by the European powers to make room for French Syria and British Iraq. Further uncertainty was introduced after the Second World War, with the US-backed 1947 creation of the nation state of Israel in the former British Mandate of Palestine (Gerges, 2012, pp. 115-150).

The discursive and cultural results of this can be seen across the post-colonial world. These diverse nations remain grouped together in the Western imagination, linked by their imagined geographic, temporal and ethical otherness (see Hansen, 2006). The naming and definition of that which falls outside of the West is almost always performed by Western actors – for example, the ‘third world’ is generally attributed to French academic Alfred Sauvy, and the ‘Brandt line’ intended to distinguish the ‘developed’ North from the ‘developing’ South, takes its name from West German chancellor Willy Brandt. The secondary body is infrequently (re)invented as ‘the third world’, ‘the developing world’, ‘the global south’ or ‘the (semi-)peripheries’. In each case the speaker/observer understands and (re)produces the backwardness of the former colony from the viewpoint of the civilised coloniser. The labels (re)create temporal distance between the self and the Other, and as Stavrianos writes, “progress spreads like a contagion” (1981, p. 36).

Although these labels are relatively new, the process of global othering evidently did not start with the decolonisation of the 20th century, or even with the colonisation movements outlined above. Europe itself is a relatively new idea. Although the name predates much of what has been discussed so far in this chapter, it was only adopted popularly as a secular alternative to ‘Christendom’ from the 18th century (Davies, 1996, p. 6). Christendom as a label has more obvious connotations, drawing together an idea of civilisation that would eventually

evolve into the ‘developed world’, and banishing the ‘Moors’ and other apparently barbaric peoples to what now resembles the global south (Lyons, 2012), or what Du Bois named the ‘global colour line’ (Anievas, & al., 2015)

The purpose of this brief historical overview is to highlight some of the engrained racism and xenophobia within Western foreign policy and to denaturalise a few of the ‘common sense’ labels used to describe the modern world. Neo-Marxists and revisionists have made the case that Bush’s War on Terror was evidence of the American empire’s need for constant expansion. Bacevich (2002; 2010), Halperin (2011), McCormack (2011), Parmar (2011) and Wallerstein (2003) have highlighted the political economy of the war convincingly and are persuasive in demonstrating the kind of economic and political restructuring, particularly in Iraq, that could be labelled imperial control. The more Saidian cultural critique of the War on Terror recognises economic and military imperialism but also speaks to the racialised logics of the conflict, the skewed portrait of the Middle East, and the continued use of Orientalist tropes to sell violent foreign policy at home and abroad. The origins and continued relevance of these tropes are explored in the following paragraphs, with roles of othering, civilisational narratives and gendered portrayals all considered before the next section will review how post-colonial scholars have identified the legacy of Orientalism in the discourses of the War on Terror.

Said uses the term Orientalism to designate “several things, all of them in [his] opinion interdependent (1995, p. 2). Whilst historically Orientalism has commonly referred to an academic discipline, the definitions that are most important for this thesis are that which designates a “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"”, and that which describes a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (ibid, p. 3). The first recognises a tendency among European and American thinkers, writers, artists and policy makers to understand the ‘East’ and those people who inhabit it as fundamentally different from the ‘West’ and ‘Westerners’, and consequently to go about studying and writing about the Orient(al Other) in a way that is internally consistent despite lacking connection to

any ‘real’ place or people (Nayak & Malone, 2009, pp. 256-7; Said, 1995, pp. 2-3). Here, the Orient is seen as one of Europe’s “deepest and most recurring images of the Other”, and Orientalism as a structure of knowledge that divides the world into East and West, along a series of unequal dichotomies (Said, 1995, p. 1). The second definition understands these differentiations as both productive and performative, in that Orientalist writings produce and reproduce an intersubjective image of the Orient in the minds of their readers, and, in doing so, create a power relation between East and West that has (and continues to) justify and necessitate the latter’s colonial/military intervention to control, save, educate and civilise the former. In sum, in deploying Orientalist tropes, Said argues, the speaker (re)produces the differences s/he articulates.

The various processes that inscribe difference upon the East function in the same way as the discursive differentiation between self and Other identities outlined in the second half of the previous chapter. These are processes of othering based on entrenched binary oppositions, however, instead of (or, as well as) national identities being (re)written in the manner Campbell (1998) exposes, Said attempts to unravel the global identities of East and West, civilised and barbaric, enlightened and backward, that are added to and altered with every work of Orientalism.

The language of Orientalism is built on a self/other dichotomy that draws an imaginary boundary between the civilised “us” and “barbarians” (Said, 1995, p. 53), Said maps onto these imagined identities the basic values of “rationality”, “virtue”, “maturity” and “normality” for the European self and the opposing values of “irrationality”, “depravity”, “childishness” and “difference” for the barbarian Other (Said, 1995, p. 40). With these in place, it then becomes logical that Westerners must dominate and Orientals must be dominated (Said, 1995, p. 36). The West’s superior cultural and political position in the dominant discourse on the East made nineteenth and twentieth century colonialism legitimate “in the name of modernity, civilisation and progress” (Terman, 2017, p. 490). Orientalism encourages a categorisation of thoughts into

the binary identities of East/West, and whatever thought is Western is necessarily true, rational and scientific.

Whilst Said traces these processes of Orientalism as far back as the period of Europe's imperial expansion, and was aware of what Lyons (2012) labels the 'anti-Islam discourse' that can be traced back as far as the Crusades (2016, pp. 82-3), he was crucially explicit in recognising these tropes' continued influence on East/West relations and power dynamics throughout his lifetime (Said & Barsamian, 2003). Building on Said's work, Richard Jackson (2005, pp. 40-53) demonstrates the enduring relevance of these historical discourses in his identification of the four metanarratives he sees as constitutive of Bush's framing of 9/11 and the War on Terror, outlined in the previous chapter. Of these metanarratives, the opposition of civilisation and barbarism is the most deeply imbued with the language and history of European colonialism. As Salter (2002) shows, this particular trope recurs though much of Western foreign policy and international relations discourse. The barbarian label has its etymology in the Ancient Greek *βάρβαρος* – meaning strange or foreign, and is opposed to the citizen or *πολίτης*. The former term has historically been used to designate outsiders; either non-Greeks or those who did not belong to one of the greater 'civilisations'. For example, Edith Hall shows how Aeschylus painted the Persians as 'emotional, cruel and dangerous' and, in so doing, created an ethical space between their actions and those of the heroic Greeks (Hall, 1989, pp. 61-2). The latter has its root in the *polis* and Athenian systems of political organisation. It has since absorbed the markers of civilisation that link together Plato, the Republic and the enlightened study of the 'Classics' by European scholars. In current use, the barbaric is most often called upon to highlight and stigmatise that which does not belong within civilised society; or to explain obstructions to the benefits of globalisation (Rasmussen, 2002, p. 337).

This language of Orientalism (and the older anti-Islam narrative), following the traditions of Nietzsche and Gramsci, acts as an archive of accepted wisdom or common sense on Europe's Other and dictates how it exists in a world dominated by Europeans (Said, 1995, p. 203). Each addition to the archive comes from the West and orders the East. More than simply representing

the Orient, Orientalism “lays down the rules that enable one to ‘write, speak and act meaningfully’” on the subject (Agnew & Corbridge, cf Bilgin, 2005, p. 13). A discursive hegemony is thereby created in which the West holds power over the East, and those people who find themselves categorised as ‘Oriental’ are without a stake in the production of knowledge over their own reality. The Saidian tradition is critical in nature due to this appreciation of the asymmetrical power relations at work in such processes of knowledge production. For Said, “the European representation of the Muslim, Ottoman or Arab was always a way of controlling the redoubtable Orient” (Said, 1995, p. 60). As well as being a powerful and immense network of social structures, Orientalism, is therefore also a tool that may be used either consciously or otherwise by Western elites to structure the subaltern.

Said sees the hand of these Orientalist structures in his observations on the geopolitics of the Middle East, where Israel has become the figure-head of the European ‘self’ qualities, and the Arab states have been burdened, by the West, with the barbarian label:

Because the Middle-East is now so identified with... the simple-minded dichotomy of freedom loving, democratic Israel and evil, totalitarian and terroristic Arabs, the chances of anything like a clear view of what one talks about in talking about the Near East are depressingly small.

(Said, 1995, p. 27)

Western portrayals of the ‘Near East’, the ‘Middle East’, and/or the ‘Muslim’/‘Arab worlds’ as regions of similar backwardness and barbaric otherness constitute a form of Orientalism that relies on civilisational narratives. These are narratives which take global history as characterised by the emergence, rise and fall of various distinct civilisations, each existing “in isolation from [one another]” with their own “core set of values” (Kumar, 2012, pp. 257-8). In this paradigm, the West is imagined as the inheritor of the Greek civilisation outlined above, with its core values including “freedom, law, rationality, science, progress, intellectual curiosity [and] the spirit of invention” (ibid, p. 258). In contrast, other civilisations are assigned inferior characteristics in opposition to the superior West. As a result, the violence of the

‘Middle East’ is subjected to markers of barbarity that differentiate it from the sanitised, corrective violence imposed on the East by the forces of Western civilisation.

A consequence of these ever expanding archives of knowledge on the East is that speakers can draw upon them wherever, whenever, and to whatever extent it suits their message. The speaker is not compelled to recreate a full portrait of the Orient or the Barbarian in order to be understood by the audience. Neither, if we consider the structural power of hegemonic discourses outlined in the previous chapter, is the speaker or the audience necessarily aware of the discursive tradition from which they take support. An example of this is when Barack Obama claimed that on taking office he wished to appeal to Arabs and Muslims to “stop pretending that the cause of the Middle East’s problems is Israel” (Goldberg, 2016). Here he drew on and contributed to the aspects of the barbarian narrative that portray the Orient as a place of childishness, and its peoples as unreasonable and irrational. Whether this is done knowingly or otherwise is not immediately clear (and from the perspective of the dominated, is arguably unimportant). Nonetheless, the casual use of the Orientalist archive – what Said might label an instance of ‘latent’, as opposed to ‘manifest’ Orientalism (1995, p. 206) – demonstrates how the discourse of Eastern backwardness becomes part of the common sense of Western foreign policy. In such cases the goal of the analyst must be to deconstruct and make strange such accepted knowledge, and where possible to hold the speaker to account where they have failed to challenge oppressive narratives.

To pursue the point on Obama’s position as an intelligent, strategic actor relative to these discursive structures of Orientalism, while it is impossible to accurately know the thought processes of another human being, we can make certain assumptions based on the president’s educational background. Obama has some documented knowledge of post-colonialism, and even reportedly attended at least one talk by Edward Said – something that is not entirely surprising given the former’s enrolment at the University of Columbia in the early 1980s. David Maraniss’s (2012) biography claims the student Obama attended Said’s classes, but was unimpressed at least by his teaching method. As a presidential candidate, Obama was also

attacked in the press and by Republican rivals for having attended a lecture by Said, and for his friendship with the Palestinian scholar and activist Rashid Khalidi (Santora & Gootman, 2008; Wiener, 2008). Given this evidence, it seems impossible that Obama did not have at least some awareness of the history of colonialist and Orientalist thought in America and the West's interactions with the East.

It follows that where the data presented in this thesis suggests that Obama made use of Orientalist narratives in communicating and selling his foreign policies to multiple audiences, this is more than a simple reflection of the pervasive nature of hegemonic social structures. This is not to say that Obama was always consciously aware of the colonial origins of the tropes he deployed, or that he ever considered himself to be an Orientalist president. It is more likely that Obama's (potentially limited) awareness of Orientalism simply was not enough to immunise him from the appeal of US state security policies and practices on the Middle East that were ultimately based on the ontological and epistemological differences Said sees at the root of Orientalism. This is, broadly speaking, the difference between latent and manifest Orientalism, and similar to the accusations that Said places at the doors of Marx and Joseph Conrad: despite these authors' obvious dissent from colonial rule, "both have their views of the world shaped by the dominant ideas of their time" (Bassil, 2019, p. 83; Said., 1994). Still, the dominant ideas of Obama's post-Said world, are not the same ideas that surrounded Marx and Conrad. Where the data shows a more obvious and systematic use of civilisational oppositions, for example as Chapter Seven will argue is the case in official narratives on ISIL terrorism, this would suggest a more strategic appeal to Orientalist structures on Obama's part. The remainder of this section delves further into the Orientalist archive by examining the narrative of the barbarian Other as it appears in various historical and cultural contexts.

The Other as barbarian is studied by Campbell as part of the formation of the American identity. In the discursive creation of the "New World" following Columbus's arrival on the American continent. Campbell identifies two co-existent self/Other binaries that interact in the imagery of Native Americans: the "civilised/barbarian" and the "Christian/Pagan" (Campbell,

1998, pp. 102-3). The author highlights the problem posed by the Native American Other to the Spanish Christians, who were unsure whether they should be adopted into the Christian faith or enslaved as an inferior race. The first argument viewed the indigenes as “culturally virgin”; requiring instruction and education by enlightened Europeans (Todorov, 1984, p. 42). Campbell reasons that whilst the Christian/Pagan and civilised/barbarian identities overlap in the Europeans’ imaginations, the relative weight given to each one dictates how a Spanish foreign policy can be formulated. The pagan could become Christian (and therefore civilised) if he was capable of using reason to perceive the “true” faith. Conversely, a barbarian would be incapable of reasoning and so could not become either Christian or civilised. If the natives are assigned the pagan identity they can be civilised; if they are by nature barbarians, they can be enslaved (Campbell, 1998). This dichotomy should be compared with the language of barbarism associated with Orientalist discourse as critiqued by Said and Gregory. The propensity to paint barbarism as other to the Judaeo-Christian tradition still exists in popular discourses surrounding political violence in the Middle East. The process of dehumanisation, via the language of barbarism, is a discursive trait common to Spanish texts on Native Americans and to contemporary Western texts on Islamic fundamentalism when it comes to the retelling of unusual, abject violence, and will be explored in the remainder of this section. The following is an extract from Sepulveda’s argument against the prohibition of enslavement of the indigenous population:

Moreover, here is the truth of their savage life, like that of beasts: their execrable and prodigious immolations of human victims to demons; the fact of devouring human flesh: of burying alive their chieftains’ wives with their dead husband and other similar crimes.

(Sepulveda, cf Campbell, 1998: 100)

This text highlights the historical narrative of barbarism as the Other to the Christian/European. It illustrates how the experience of unusual, abject violence, and the dehumanising narrative that gives meaning to it, can be fed into arguments in favour of violent policies at the expense of the Other. These same discursive functions extend to more recent Western texts on geographic otherness and violence and provide the common sense underlying

contemporary narratives on terrorism and western foreign policy. The metanarrative has evolved to become a ubiquitous device in the construction of identities of otherness. It is the subject of criticism in Gramsci's prison notebooks, as a foundational element in the ideology of the Italian North in regards to the South:

The South is a lead weight which impedes a more rapid civil development of Italy; the Southerners are biologically inferior beings, semi-barbarians or complete barbarians by natural destiny; if the South is backward, the fault is not to be found in the capitalist system... but is the fault of nature which has made the Southern lazy, incapable, criminal, barbarous...

(Gramsci, 1957, p. 31)

As with Sepulveda's text, the Other is inferior, uncivilised and fundamentally different to the civilised self. Criminality as violence is the trigger for the application of the barbarian label and once again the Other is unable to adapt to civilisation due to biological inferiorities, stemming from geographic location, which leaves no room for exception. The Other is dehumanised and therefore the self is empowered to do as it will. The same patterns of reaction to unusual violence, and geographic labelling are combined in the following quote from David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* – apparently one of President Obama's favourite films (Couric, 2008) – depicting the Western self's encounter with the Oriental Other. Here, Lawrence has just witnessed the killing of his local guide by the leader of a rival group. After hearing the explanation that the guide was illegally drinking from the assailant's well, Lawrence exclaims:

So long as the Arabs fight tribe against tribe, so long will they be a little people, a silly people – greedy, barbarous, and cruel, as you are.

(Lean, 1962)

Again there is unexpected, un-understood violence, abject to the Westerner, labelled barbarian and discursively separated from the self. Lean's film demonstrates the lack of comprehension from the European, who has little concept of tribal identities, or of the fact that he is trespassing on another's territory. In order make sense of his experience, Lawrence must situate it within the historic narrative of the civilisational struggle. Here, the dehumanising barbarian label is applied as much to the geography of the Orient as it is to the Arab peoples.

The barbarian label serves a function; it separates the self from the horror of violence. When violent acts are performed by the 'self', they are disguised in the discourse of nobility, sacrifice and the greater good. When these acts are forced onto the self, they are cast out as the sub-human condition of the Other.

The pattern is of sudden or shocking, abject violence, followed by the application of the barbarian identity, to a new or distant territory/Other, enabling a process of dehumanisation that empowers the self and legitimises further violence. Richard Jackson shows how this was pattern was carried into the post-9/11 discursive environment, as President Bush and his administration strove to fit events into the civilisational narrative. Jackson (2005, pp. 48-9) points to Ambassador Howard Baker's claim to a Japanese audience that 9/11 was a "strike against those values that separate us from animals," to the Attorney General's (re)production of the attacks as a "bright line of demarcation between the savage and the civil," and the president's warning that terrorists "hate all civilisation and culture and progress." This is then extended to frame the development of the War on Terror as part of the wider "fight to save the civilised world" (Bush, cf Jackson, 2005 p. 50). In so doing, the possibility of interventions into the 'axis of evil' is framed as part of the West's duty to save the South from itself, and to extend the realm of civilisation.

In the context of modern day statecraft, the most obvious consequence of the use of barbarian identity and the dehumanisation of the Other, is in these justifications of interventionist foreign policies based on lethal force. In the War on Terror, perpetrators of violent or terroristic acts are coded as barbarian in narratives which serve to justify retaliation. As the Other is dehumanised, so their actions and motivations are decontextualized, dehistoricised and depoliticised (Bassil, 2019), meaning that the reasons for their violence can be situated in deep character flaws and religious and civilisational differences. As a result, the potential socio-political roots of violence are rarely considered, and the lingering relevance of colonialism need not be unpacked. The following section considers how Orientalist discourses have survived into the 20th and 21st centuries. It does this by first looking at Pinar Bilgin's

(2005) study of the political construction of the ‘Middle East’ as a region in tandem with the decline of empire and the articulation of new threats to Western conceptions of security throughout the 20th century. This leads into a brief discussion on geographical representation and the spatialisation of politics before some of the post-colonial literature on the War on Terror and the Bush administration is examined in order to establish how these writers see Orientalist narratives at work in the political discourse of the time. The purpose of this is to establish the nature of colonialist narratives that were at play in US foreign policy discourses before Obama’s inauguration, so as to better understand the discursive structures he inherited from the Bush administration. This in turn allows for the more accurate discussion of Obama’s potential strategic agency in effecting change in foreign policy discourses in Chapters Five to Seven. Studies that have so far attempted to identify Orientalist narratives in the Obama administration are also considered in this section.

1.b. Orientalism and representations of the ‘Middle East’ since 9/11

Orientalism and representations of the ‘Middle East’ in the pre-Obama era

Looking specifically at the region that has become known as the ‘Middle East’, Pinar Bilgin (2005) provides an excellent critical study of the “constitutive relationship” between the social “invention” of the Middle East and changing “conceptions and practices” of Western security in the same area from the late nineteenth century through to the War on Terror. Bilgin traces the ‘Middle East’ signifier back to its first recorded use in the London *Times* in 1902 (where it was used in a series of articles to designate the perceived threat posed by Russia to Britain’s access to India via the Persian Gulf), through the creation of the Middle East Department of the Foreign Office in 1921 by Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill (to oversee the previously Ottoman territories of Palestine, Jordan and Iraq) and the establishment by the RAF of Middle East Air Command shortly after (this time in reference to North East Africa), ultimately to the mainstreaming of the term in the Second World War (Bilgin, 2005, pp. 67-74). The author goes on to demonstrate how the US experience of WWII and the creation of the state of Israel in 1947 helped to bring the Middle East into official and popular American discourses (ibid, p.

75; also Khalidi, 2004, pp. 118 -122). Further markers of the domination of the ‘Middle East’ as a regional label include the Eisenhower doctrine of military and economic aid for Middle Eastern nations in the 1950s, which was itself motivated by the strategic importance of the region during the Cold War and the consequent surge in government funded ‘Area Studies’ programmes in American universities and institutions (see also Said ,1995) as well as the First Gulf War and the attempted Arab-Israeli Peace Process in the 1990s (Bilgin, 2005, pp.75-77; 125-129). Bilgin effectively demonstrates that at every turn, the Middle East is defined and delineated by Western actors, who in doing so essentially cordon off entire regions of ‘otherness’ so that they can serve as a “shorthand to describe a part of the world that is crucial to [their] security concerns and interests” (ibid, p. 12).

These kinds of geographic and political assumptions, that guide, enable and support foreign policy decision-making, remain embedded in the colonial memory of encounters with the Orient. Ó Tuathail & Dalby (1998) mirror David Campbell in understanding the geopolitical as a set of representational and boundary producing practices. As with Campbell, the creation of a nation-state such as America is reconceptualised as a political act. As such, the geopolitical becomes a value-based ideology; the processes and practices of global mapmaking provide the ‘rules of the game’ for foreign policy decision makers and write a popular story of good and evil for the public and the mass media. This critical approach to the geopolitical is concerned with the ‘spatialisation’ of international relations (see Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992). The discursive creation of the international ‘world’, complete with spaces of security and insecurity, stability and instability, and good and evil, makes possible and necessary the practices of statecraft. Furthermore, as Bilgin shows, the characterisation of these spaces as either civilised, or dangerous and barbaric communities affects the kinds of foreign policies that may be pursued in different regions. Derek Gregory (2004; 2010) also writes on this phenomenon in the cases of Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq, arguing that where foreign spaces have been effectively constructed as terrorist (safe) havens, that are either explicitly or implicitly understood to be void of civilian peoples, it becomes difficult for critics to mount an argument against aerial bombardment whether justified in terms of national security or humanitarianism.

Gregory uses the idea of spatialisation to criticise the failure of American foreign policy to protect or even acknowledge non-Western civilians. To this end, he documents the othering of the Arab world through the construction of “zones of visibility” and “invisibility” in the cultural imagination of the Middle East. This is particularly well illustrated through the study of representations of the 2003 bombing of Baghdad by coalition forces; in this example the experience of civilians on the ground became a zone of invisibility for the American audience – geographic areas that were inaccessible to the media and untouched by the dominant narratives of the conflict. The civilian casualties of the strikes had no space in official or media narratives; instead, only satellite images of Baghdad were broadcast – for Gregory this meant the city was reduced to a series of targets on a map, with the occurrence of civilian casualties failing to register in the public mind (Gregory, 2004; 2010). The continuation of this pattern into the Obama administration can be perceived easily in its policy of underreporting civilian casualties of US drone strikes (Ackerman, 2016; Espinoza, 2018; Woods, 2015) .

Ó Tuathail , Agnew and Dalby are clear that they understand geopolitics as being informed by official and non-official discourses. Both of these contribute and draw from the wider “spatialisation of boundaries and dangers” that in turn shape and are shaped by our geographical imagination(s) – or our intersubjective understanding of the world of international relations (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, pp. 5-6). Articulations of foreign policy must therefore be understood as ‘situated reasonings’ that originate from a certain space and time, and are defined as much by the dominant logics of that environment as by the intentions of the speaker. This is closely associated with Said’s ‘traveling theory’ (1983), which insists that any theory must be understood “in the place and time out of which it emerges” (Said, cf Gregory, 1994, p. 9). Through this understanding, one of situated reasoning, one can see how Said recognises the agency of dissenters such as Marx and Conrad whilst still acknowledging the pervasive influence of Orientalist structures on their anti-imperialist arguments. In this way, Foucault’s power/knowledge nexus is extended to become a ‘discursive triangle’ with the inclusion of spatiality as a third element (see Gregory, 1994, p. 63).

The geographic or spatial particularities of the barbarian label, and the process of othering in the War on Terror, have been observed by Crenshaw (2014). Othering, when used in the American media response to acts of violence, has been shown to function differently in the portrayal of domestic and foreign assailants. American assailants are externalised from the self through a process of differentiation and comparison with their victims, whereas foreign militants, more often labelled “terrorists”, are linked to distant groups as a different category of other (Crenshaw, 2014). The second category builds and is built on Said’s civilisation/barbarism myth. The framing of violent acts also varies according to the location of the attack as well as the assailant’s origin. Terrorist attacks on Western targets are more prone to Islamophobic commentary; again furthering the East/West divide (Patrick, 2014). An example of this can be seen in news coverage of the 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris; which led American broadcaster *Fox News* to lament the existence of “hundreds of French “no-go” zones - neighborhoods where neither tourists nor cops dare enter – [in which] poor and alienated Muslims have intimidated the government into largely ceding authority over them” (de Vries, 2015). The language of barbarism and otherness is evident throughout this coverage; with references to “festered jihad”, “urban guerrillas” and “violent clashes between immigrant youths”, as well as the social stigmatisation of the Muslim population, through references to “polygamy”, “adultery” and “Islamic law” (ibid.); traditional features of the barbarian narrative of Orientalism as studied by Said.

In the context of the War on Terror, the repetitive construction of danger and threat from a broadly constant (Oriental) Other towards an equally constant (Western/self) identity leads Dag Tuastad (2003) to argue that after 9/11, Western political discourse was characterised by a “neo-Orientalism” and a “new barbarian thesis”. Tuastad work is centred on a critique of Robert Kaplan’s *The Coming Anarchy* (2000), in which Kaplan, a US military lecturer and consultant, expands on a civilisational view of world history to argue that violence is an inherent part of human nature, and a “trait” that can be “tranquilized” through the penetration of Western Enlightenment and “only when people attain a certain economic, educational and cultural standard” (Kaplan, cf Tuastad, 2003. p. 593). As Tuastad points out, this is very close

to Huntington's *Clash of Civilisations* thesis, which sees civilisations as tribes, and the Muslim one as especially violent and terroristic, due to features "innately embedded in the [particularly violent] Muslim religion" (Tuastad, 2003, pp. 593-4).

What Tuastad sees as the neo-Orientalism of the War on Terror shares with 'classical' Orientalism the same uncritical belief that Middle Eastern societies are especially prone to violence and resistant to Western style governance (i.e. "democratisation") and the same reductionist tendency to explain this in reference to, on the one hand, "an anarchistic ethos of segmentary kinship-based organisation", and on the other "the universalism and duty of submission of Islam" (ibid, p. 594). In other words, Muslim communities are seen as simultaneously (and contradictorily) too disorganised and tribal to fully adopt the Western state model, and too submissive to religious authority to commit to it. According to classical Orientalism, these intrinsic civilisational flaws are used to argue that Islam promoted "political quietism", "fatalism", "a lack of critique" and "despotism" (ibid). After the Western trauma generated by the Iranian revolution, neo-Orientalists modified this argument to highlight the supposed role of *sharia* in contributing to the Muslim world's refusal to accept the legitimacy of a political authority (ibid). This reductionist, dehistoricised and depoliticised argument has since been transposed onto the War on Terror via the writings of Pipes and Hall who argue that the 8th century codification of *sharia* continues to place such a high bar on political leaders in the 21st century that "any form of government will sooner or later be seen as illegitimate by Muslims" (ibid, p. 595).

Nayak & Malone (2009) see Orientalism in the discourse of the War on Terror particularly in George W Bush's adoption of narratives of good and evil, which serve to articulate who shall be saved by American power, and who must be destroyed by it. Furthermore, Bush's attempt to extrapolate the American experience as universal, and to project American desires and sentiments onto the 'good' subaltern also serves to sanction American military power. Even when Bush attempted to cleanse the image of what he once called a "crusade" against terror (Bush, 2001), his comments to the effect that America was not "at war" with Islam, and

that Muslims were just as good, peaceful or simply the same as us, still maintains an epistemological distinction between the self and the Other. The assumed ontological differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’ are visible in Bush’s “Orientalist belief that he knew not only what ‘they’ think and want, but also that ‘they’ have to be qualified and legitimised as similar to ‘us’... the assumed ontological differences require the qualifier that Islam, although not a part of ‘us’ is actually good” (Nayak & Malone, 2009, p. 258). Following the Orientalist tradition, the US sees the subaltern as ontologically different and then proceeds to study it accordingly – often through funded positivist research (see Tetreault, cf *ibid*). Consequently, it “employs authoritative epistemological claims and representations about Others’ bodies, habits, beliefs, feelings and political sensibilities, [to justify] interventions, sanctions and other actions within, across and outside of its borders” (Persaud, cf *ibid*, p. 256).

Nayak & Malone seek to disrupt (neo) Orientalist narratives in US foreign policy by examining the narratives of American Exceptionalism and American Orientalism “in tandem” in order to “better grapple with US hegemony, identity making and foreign policy” (2009, p. 254). For these authors, both of these myths are understood as discursive processes of differentiation. The first constructs the American self in contradistinction to the European Other – and thereby justifying America’s role as a unique nation, unaffected by the selfish empire building and entangling alliances of the Old World; the second works in opposition to the (Middle) Eastern world – which, through the construction of racial hierarchies and the kinds of reductionist and arguments outlined above, justifies and legitimises US interventionism in the Middle East. Consequently, the American strand of Orientalism is understood as different, though not completely separate from, the European strand. By studying these two related traditions in tandem, the authors make an effective argument that American Orientalism, when coupled with Exceptionalism, effectively ensures that only the US and not Europe can legitimately dominate and control the non-Western Other.

Little (2008; 2016) also writes from the basis that there is a specifically American strand of Orientalism, although his writings have attracted some criticism for failing to make greater

use of Said's analytical framework (Katz, 2003; Palmer, 2004). Little's works incorporate Campbell's (1998) thesis on the American self's perennial need for a threatening Other, and see Orientalist narratives on the Middle Eastern Other, or the 'green scare', as the latest iteration of the boundary producing practice. Specifically, this is conceptualised as a necessary process in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the consequent redundancy of the 'red scare' discourse, which itself filled the discursive void created by the allied defeat of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. This interpretation differs somewhat from that of Nayak & Malone therefore in that it sees American Orientalism as a recent development, and, to an extent, simply the latest episode in the nation's perpetual search for a sufficiently terrifying foreign bogeyman. Even so, the roots of the current embodiment of Orientalism are traced back as far as the McKinley era, and are identified in military experiences in the World and Gulf Wars, historical Protestant and Evangelical support for Zionism and a/the Jewish state, as well as cultural documents including popular films such as Disney's Aladdin.

Gendered Orientalism

Another important aspect to consider in the operation of Western power is the gendered discourses that also play key roles in justifying interventions in the East. While Said's writings incorporate some elements of gendered critique, especially in analysing the feminised Orient and the sexual fetishisation of Eastern women, for the most part, work on gendered Orientalism has been pioneered by more recent authors (see Nayak, 2006; Khalid, 2011; Rygiel 2007; Saleh, 2016; Terman, 2017; Zine, 2007). Of course, there are a multitude of ways in which gendered, racial and civilisational narratives intertwine and (re)produce aspects of each other. For the purposes of this thesis, those that cast Muslim women as the helpless victims of their misogynist male counterparts, and those that cast America(n soldiers) as their hypermasculine saviours, are most important because of the role they serve in legitimising interventions. They are therefore unpacked briefly below.

Meghana Nayak makes a poststructuralist case in arguing that the events of September 11th 2001 inflicted a symbolic violence on the identity of the United States of America, as well as

a physical attack upon its territory and people. Her analysis is also gendered in that it sees this destabilisation as triggering a “particular reassertion of state identity that pivots violently on gender and race” (Nayak, 2006, p. 42). As with Tuastad’s characterisation of neo-Orientalism, this reassertion involves coding the Oriental Other as ‘Islamist’, ‘jihadi’, ‘fundamentalist’ and/or ‘terrorist’. It also sees the self (re)built upon hypermasculine foundations, with Bush’s infamous militaristic pronouncements on America’s new leading role in the War on Terror drawing frequently on the imageries of frontier justice, warfare, heroism and bravery. The production of this binary opposition generates a powerful ‘post-traumatic’ narrative in which the injured US must respond to the insult of 9/11 by reasserting its masculinity through “participation in an Orientalist project that institutionalises gendered and racialised violence through the infantilization, demonization, dehumanisation and sexual commodification of the Other” (ibid).

The role of the “oppressed Muslim woman” identity in the post-9/11 discursive processes outlined by Nayak has been unpacked by Melisa Brittain (2007), Maryam Khalid (2011) and Jasmin Zine (2007). All of these authors deploy gendered interpretations of Orientalism as lenses through which to deconstruct the image of the Muslim/Middle Eastern Other in War on Terror era discourses. In doing so they identify the “oppressed Muslim woman” trope and link this to Western justifications for military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. This gendered Orientalist narrative “marks Other women as voiceless victims of a barbaric male Other enemy, and positions the USA as enlightened civilised and justified in its military interventions” (Khalid, 2011, p. 15). It therefore serves the need Nayak identifies, of reasserting the national self identity along gendered and racial lines. The masculinity of the self is (re)produced via the denial of agency of the Muslim woman, who is cast as the idealised victim of the barbaric male captors/oppressors. The construction of the oppressed woman creates an object to be saved by the heroic masculine self. Whilst this occurs within the temporal and political context of what Tuastad would call neo-Orientalism, it is nonetheless a (re)production of the thoroughly classical Orientalist ‘white saviour’ narrative, in which objectified and sexualised Eastern women must be rescued from their heathen male counterparts by European heroes.

Zine (2007) sees this narrative as ‘scripting’ the ways Muslim women’s “bodies and identities are narrated, defined and regulated” in the War on Terror (p. 27), and thereby establishing the ‘rules’ of female liberation in the Middle East. Of particular interest to Zine, are the ways in which liberal feminist discourses originating in the West have incorporated elements of Islamophobia and Orientalism in making the case for interventions, and in-doing so have “revitalised Orientalist tropes” of backwardness and immaturity (see also Terman, 2017). Muslim women are conceptualised here as subject to an ideological tug of war between this Orientalist narrative and the “religious fundamentalist” narratives and “puritan discourses that authorise equally limiting narratives of Islamic womanhood” (ibid). Whilst these narratives may appear to be diametrically opposed to one another, they both rely on the denial Muslim women’s agency. In seeking to speak for ‘oppressed Muslim women’, liberal actors effectively speak over them. Zine’s response to this is to support alliances between religious and secular feminisms that can challenge and combat both patriarchal and Islamophobic discourses by recontextualising the experience of Muslim women. Meanwhile, Brittain (2007) attempts to destabilise the image of the ‘oppressed Muslim woman’ by highlighting the equally artificial and socially constructed counter image of the ‘emancipated Western woman’. This can image can be seen particularly clearly in the early years of the Afghan and Iraqi wars, in the portrayal of white female US soldiers such as Jessica Lynch who become “tacit models of female emancipation”, and serve to illustrate the supposed benevolence and moral superiority and progressiveness of the west” (Brittain, 2007, p. 73; see also Khalid, 2011; Terman, 2017). However, even then, the white woman is still portrayed as vulnerable to the violent, barbaric male, as can be seen in the resurgence of colonial narratives in media discourses surrounding Lynch’s rescue from Iraqi forces in 2003 (Brittain, 2007; Khalid, 2011).

Orientalism in the Obama era

The recurring trope of the Muslim Woman in need of empowerment has been traced into the Obama era by Layla Saleh (2016) who identifies such narratives in official and US policy-makers’ discourses on women in the Arab Spring. Saleh echoes the arguments above in stating that “female Muslim vulnerability” has been centred in US foreign policy since the invasion of

Afghanistan. As a consequence, the presence of this “ever-needy subject of (implied) US aid and assistance” in representations of the 2011 popular uprisings is unsurprising, even given the supposed end of the ‘War on Terror’ era. Saleh’s thesis is that while female agency in the Arab Spring ought to be undeniable given the visible role of women activists, “Orientalism lingers” in the persistent notion, pushed home by US officials, that the very women who liberated themselves from authoritarian rule still required emancipation from the patriarchy and misogyny of their own societies. Specifically, Saleh identifies three recurring claims that feature heavily within US emancipation narratives; first that the patriarchal Arab World has lessons to learn from America and the West on the emancipation of women, second that it needs to be reminded of the existence and importance of specific rights, and third that the future of the region, and of the women located within it was so uncertain as to (potentially) require Western intervention (Saleh, 2016, p. 82). As with the examples from the Afghan and Iraqi cases, this again means that “the subaltern [still] cannot speak” (Spivak cf *ibid*; insertion in original) due to the Obama administration speaking for/over her.

Saleh subsequently makes use of Doty’s framework of asking ‘how possible’ questions to make the case that the deployment of the “liberation” narrative and the “Muslim woman in need of empowerment” identity serves to legitimise, and therefore make possible, potential US-led interventions in the Middle East and North Africa. While ultimately it was only the Libyan case in 2011 which saw overt military intervention, Saleh claims that the deployment of these narratives, which created a more nuanced paternalistic sense of “concern” for Muslim women, rather than the outright saviour narratives of Bush’s War on Terror, created an “open-ended” justification for humanitarian interventions in the region, that could be revisited for years whenever they were most likely to gain popular traction. Chapter Six of this thesis builds on Saleh’s research by using the large sample of White House texts to identify changes to such structures throughout and after the Arab Spring.

Other authors who have attempted to trace the presence of Orientalism in and around Obama-era policies include Bassil (2019), who focusses on the discursive construction of ISIL

in Western media, Biswas (2018), who looks at media discourses on the Iran nuclear negotiations, and Espinoza (2018), who is interested in the administration's justifications of its drone-based targeted assassination programme.

For Espinoza, the drone programme constituted a policy of state terrorism¹ against local populations living “under the drone’s gaze”, who had no choice but to go about their lives in fear of potential attack. The programme’s existence relied on racialised targeting logics that dehumanised the Other. For the author, this necessarily includes civilians living under the ‘drone’s gaze’, due to the frequent lack of visible difference between militants and civilians from the viewpoint of the drone (operator). According to these logics, and following the principles laid out in Foucault’s (2003) concept of biopower, civilians as well as militants, were ‘assimilated’ into a population that could be put to death in the name of national security. To the extent that civilian deaths were acknowledged, these were rationalised in terms of unavoidable collateral damage; this despite the practice of ‘signature’ or ‘crowd’ strikes, which enabled the CIA to target groups including unidentified “military-aged” men, provided they could be associated with “suspicious activity” (Espinoza, 2018, p. 383). For the most part however, Espinoza’s analysis demonstrates that the possibility of civilian casualties were minimised in official rhetoric through the use of scientific discourses of precision, objectivity, detachment and rationality, and the insistence that only those on a “kill list” were in danger of being attacked (ibid, see also Obama, 2013, Text 2120). This leads the author to identify a rhetoric/practice gap between the scientific language of officials (which itself (re)produces colonialist justifications for the use of force against ‘backwards’ populations) and the strikingly racial and Orientalist language attributed to drone operators in non-official settings².

¹ State terrorism is defined as state “violence directed towards or threatened against civilians – which is designed to instil terror or intimidate the population of people as a means of preventing or changing their political behaviour” (Espinoza, 2018, p. 383; see also Jackson, 2008, and Blakely & Rafael, 2016, cf ibid).

² Espinoza points to documentation of targeted communities and individuals being labelled “‘prairie dogs’, ‘barbarians’, ‘poor bastards’, ‘squirters’ and ‘savages’”, (Mayer, Gusterson, and Baggiarini, cf Espinoza, 2018, p. 382) and even children being reduced to “‘fun-sized terrorists’, or ‘terrorists in training’”(Pilkington, cf ibid).

In the context of the Iran nuclear deal, it is the diametrical opposition of the civilised ‘International Community’ (IC), led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Obama and the US, and barbaric/backwards, undemocratic Iran that leads Biswas (2018) to identify Orientalist civilisational narratives in media discourses on the negotiations between 2013 and 2014. Here, the civilised IC is portrayed as a rational, responsible and trustworthy actor whose members’ possession of nuclear weapons are an unfortunate necessity of the anarchical international system. In contrast Iran is characterised as an unreliable ‘bad actor’, whose pursuit of similar weapons stems from “entirely internally-generated national and regionalist projections which make their motivations suspect, aggressive and ultimately threatening” (ibid, p. 334). As well as the deployment of these old tropes to enforce a system of double-standards onto representations of the negotiations, Biswas points to the common reductionism at play in the characterisation of America and Iran’s relationship. As a result of which, the two nations’ “convoluted and complicated history,” which includes Washington’s early role in supporting nuclear research in pre-revolutionary Iran, is erased from the discourse in favour of dehistoricised narratives of longstanding and implacable enmity (ibid, p. 332).

Finally, Bassil (2019) exposes a similar resurgence of Orientalist tropes in media responses to the rise of ISIL from 2014. Specifically, Bassil locates these in the dehistoricisation, depoliticisation, and decontextualisation of ISIL violence on the one hand, and the subsequent explanation of this violence in the existence of ‘deep character flaws’ in the barbarian mind. Works including Graeme Wood’s *What ISIS Really Wants* (2015), and Haykel’s *The Rise of the Islamic State* (2014) are linked to 20th century Orientalist and neo-Orientalist tropes of the ‘wild Muslim’ in order to demonstrate the persistence of narratives that explain violence through the ‘medieval origins’ of Islam, and the particular tendency towards “fanaticism and savagery” that supposedly exists in Middle East. Even more nuanced commentaries by authors such as Patrick Cockburn, Seamus Milne and Peter Neumann, who make more historical and contextual arguments linking ISIL to imperial overreach and the consequences of neoliberalism, are argued to demonstrate a kind of latent Orientalism in their readiness to frame jihadism and Islamic violence as constant possibilities, even inevitabilities in the Middle

Eastern context. Bassil subsequently suggests Obama's efforts to "disconnect ISIS from Islam... failed mostly because of the pervasiveness of this Orientalist mode of thinking" in American political discourse (2019, p. 87).

The above authors highlight strands of Orientalist narratives and tropes in discourses surrounding various aspects of Obama-era policies on the Middle East, each of which will be examined in more detail in Chapters Four, Five and Six. These works suggest that whilst the play of elite agency must not be underestimated in assessments of US foreign policy, the latter cannot be estranged or considered apart from its embeddedness within wider colonial and Orientalist imaginations and cultural memories. This thesis argues that Obama's foreign policy, although presented as liberal, non-ideological and pragmatic, was firmly situated in a cultural understanding of the world that remained informed by the colonial experience in and of the Orient. In accordance with the strategic-relational model proposed by Hay and Jessop, this colonial past simultaneously formed a part of the discursive structure into which cases for policies and interventions into the Middle East had to be articulated and received, and served as archival resources for the Obama administration in strategically making the case for their policies, whether in the context of the Peace Process, negotiations with Iran, the Arab Spring or the rise of ISIL. In other words, Barack Obama and the other actors that made up his administration were simultaneously limited and empowered by the Orientalist structures around them, just as they were limited and empowered by their other discursive and material surroundings. Strategic agency is located in their capacity, on the one hand, to choose whether to craft narratives that appeal to the Orientalist elements of America's cultural memory (as opposed to, for example, narratives that might be built on a purely Exceptionalist national mythology), and on the other to either craft narratives designed to resonate in these Orientalist discursive structures, or to dissent and push back on them, and in doing so affect change in their discursive environment.

This thesis investigates Obama's foreign policy by asking how the discursive structures of US statecraft changed between 2009 and 2016, and how official constructions of identities and

threat have changed over this time. The first half of this section highlighted Orientalism as a major structure of US foreign policy and situated the research within the tradition of post-colonial critique. In addition to the important structures outlined above, an understanding of the discursive construction of security and insecurity, as well as the power relations involved in this, is crucial to questions of identity and threat. For this reason, the following section is concerned with critical writings on the contested concept of security.

2. Security as the site of a political struggle

Whether or not the idea of security is explicitly situated in the context of the Orientalist discourses outlined above, critical scholars have argued that it must be conceptualised as the site of an important political struggle. The dominant Western security ideology of the 20th and 21st centuries is inescapably intertwined with the notion of the nation-state, and the protection of sovereign borders from some form of threatening Other (Booth, 1991; Buzan, 2007; Campbell, 1998; Hansen, 2006). Since the Cold War, ‘security’ agencies around the world have absorbed huge resources in the name of the nation – often concealing their exact budget from the population. America’s National Security Agency adopts the slogan “Defending our nation. Securing our future”, but has never confirmed or denied the leaked estimate that it absorbed \$10 billion in 2013 alone (Gellman & Miller, 2013). In Britain, the Security Service (MI5) declares that its task is to “keep our country safe”, and to this end the 2015 UK budget gifted a mysterious extra £1.5 billion to the then new Joint Security Fund but did not disclose how this would be spent (Gardner, 2015)³.

The concept of national security is also drenched in military symbolism – having been adopted into the language of warfare, the hoarding of nuclear weaponry, and obsessive displays of military and naval power (Booth, 1991). Moreover, since the 1950s, the national security ideology has flourished in popular culture. Ian Fleming’s *James Bond* novels have developed

³ A typically obscure statement from the Treasury explained: "Security is the number one job of the government and the forces that threaten us do not distinguish between Whitehall budgets. So this fund will make sure the money goes to the right place" (Gardner, 2015).

into a huge transnational industry generating films, video-games and merchandise celebrating the secret and unaccountable activities of a hypermasculine state-sponsored killer under a duty to 'queen and country' (Dodds & Funnell, *From Casino Royale to Spectre: Daniel Craig's James Bond*, 2018; McCrisken & Moran, 2018). From the 1960s, television serials such as *Mission Impossible* and *The Man from UNCLE* have spoken to the romantic idea of secretive government agencies securing the nation from external threats. Both series were reinvented for a 21st century cinematic audience and continued to generate impressive box office revenues. Today, officials use 'national security' as a tool to shut down discussion; broadcasting the necessity and inevitability of otherwise questionable actions and manipulating opponents into a position where they can be vilified as enemies of the nation (Croft, 2006; Holland & Aaronson, 2014; Krebs, 2015). Nonetheless, the national security ideology has become increasingly opposed, with the interlinked academic projects commonly grouped together under the umbrella of 'critical security studies' offering a range of alternative perspectives, including some that incorporate the critical engagement with Orientalist and other Western-centric discourses that characterises the post-colonial tradition (see especially the sub-discipline of critical terrorism studies as well as Barkawi & Laffey, 2006; Bilgin, 2005; 2011; and Eriksson Baaz & Verweijen, 2018). The tradition of critical security studies is unpacked below, with particular attention paid to the 'Welsh' and 'Copenhagen schools' and the related concepts of human security, emancipation and securitisation as a speech act. These critical strands merit particular attention due to their utility in conceptualising both the Gramscian 'war of position' between competing discourses over the meaning of 'security' and the asymmetrical power relations at play within this struggle.

'Critical security studies' is a label for approaches to understanding security influenced by the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt school, used to challenge these dominant rationalist narratives on security (Buzan & Hansen, 2009; Krause & Williams, 1997). The critical approaches look to broaden and deepen understandings of security by refusing the centrality of the nation-state and disassociating the language and processes of security from traditional military strategy (Booth, 2007, pp. 149-172; Krause & Williams, 1997; Nunes, 2012). As a

result, the study and practice of security is opened up to address a range of ‘new’ issues such as health, climate change, inequality, gender, food security and bad governance. One of the successes associated with these movements is in the development of the principle of ‘human security’, which gained popularity as a core part of the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report (Hudson, 2010; Newman, 2010). This report was published following the end of the cold war and its contents resonated with the post-soviet discourses of the ‘new world order’ and ‘end of history’. It defined human security as “concerned with how people live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities – and whether they live in conflict or in peace” (UNDP, 1994, p. 23).

This move represents the adoption of a human-centred approach by significant NGOs and (to an extent) a number of state actors. The precise extent to which state governments indulged the human security project is contested. Canada and Norway were influential in establishing the Human Security Network in 1998, which, by 2014 included thirteen member countries (Tadjbakhsh, 2014, p. 2). Similarly, since 1994, these nations along with Japan and Switzerland have all at times based their foreign policies on the principle of human security (ibid, p. 4). Despite this, the most powerful nations continue to disregard human security and even basic human rights where it suits their agenda. American ‘exceptionalism’ manifested itself even before the War on Terror, with Washington notoriously reluctant to bind itself to any international treaties and organisations – from the ICC to the Campaign to Ban Landmines to the many UN attempts to coordinate a response to climate change (Ignatieff, 2005; Ralph, 2007; Ruggie, 2005). Beyond this its use of offshore detention centres, ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ and targeted assassinations in the War on Terror all fly in the face of the humanitarian principles the Wilsonian tradition of US foreign policy would traditionally seek to promote abroad (Ralph, 2013) .

Writing in Aberystwyth, Ken Booth (1991) had previously put forward the concept of humans as ‘ultimate referent’ of security – an idea which has been developed by Rita Floyd (2007a; 2007b), Richard Wyn Jones (1995), Andrew Linklater (2007), and João Nunes (2012)

amongst others. This ‘Welsh school’ of security studies seeks to deconstruct and disrupt the hegemonic nationalistic and militaristic discursive structures of state security regimes and attempts to put in their place new human-centric systems that are able to empower the vulnerable. For Booth, the language of the dominant theories of security have structured the world along statist terms, leaving little opportunity for humanitarianism. These rationalities organise the world into unitary state actors, defined by their relative hard power. As a result, political dialogue maintains and maximises government interests (Booth, 1991). As long as the geo-political is written in statist language, Booth argues, the status quo will be maintained and those humans who currently suffer as a result of statist security agendas will continue to be marginalised – resulting in a political environment in which unspecified billions of dollars can be poured into security agencies that defend ‘the nation’ whilst leaving many of its citizens struggling to get by. Meanwhile those humans unfortunate enough to be struggling outside of the sovereign border are dismissed as the concern of the Other.

The human referent represents a change in security theory and practice (Buzan & Hansen, 2009, p. 206). It is the antithesis of the Hobbesian ‘self-help’ doctrine; adopting an overtly ethical standpoint and refusing to assume the state will provide security for its own citizens. Where nationalistic theories are limited by the obstacle of sovereignty, this approach is attuned to human suffering across and within the borders of state boundaries. In this, the Welsh school is evidence of the political battleground that the concept of security presents. There exists a war of position between the two competing discourses, with the humanitarian movement disrupting the dominance of the nation-state (see Fontana, 2008; Gramsci, 1957). Human security means a purely military understanding of security is no longer viable as a human being’s security is as dependent on natural, environmental and civilian forces as it is on strategy and defence (Wyn Jones, 1995; Booth, 1991; 2005). With the human referent, it is no longer enough for state actors to maintain regional stability if these same governments are unable to provide citizens with food, shelter, access to healthcare and protection from natural disasters (Wheeler, 2000). It is also unacceptable for a US-led ‘coalition of the willing’ to topple an oppressive regime if it then fails to provide access to clean water, basic supplies and power, or

police the chaos following regime change – as was the case in Baghdad following the invasion of 2003 (Gregory, 2004, pp. 214-247). Furthermore the idea that a state could purchase ‘security’ by sacrificing some of the freedoms of their citizens (for example through the use of racially-targeted surveillance techniques) becomes difficult to defend.

Whilst the human security project has succeeded both in raising the profile of a number of non-traditional security threats, and in placing some normative constraints on the sovereign power of states⁴, it remains state-centric in approach and has been accused of losing touch with its critical roots (Newman, 2010). Furthermore, the post-colonialist and anti-empire critiques engaged with in the first section of this chapter demonstrate how ‘humanitarian’ arguments are easily exploited by powerful states not only to legitimise and justify military expansionism, but also to silence the subaltern. Nevertheless, its existence demonstrates the importance of the discursive struggle over the meaning of security – a concept which is of key relevance to the study and practice of US foreign policy. The following section develops the idea of this Gramscian struggle through an examination of the critical Copenhagen school concept of securitisation. This section will demonstrate that the concept fits with the understanding of structure and agency outlined in Chapter Two, and therefore can be incorporated into the analytical framework, provided it carries a critical awareness of the post-colonial power relations and discursive and cultural structures explored in the first section of this Chapter. It must be noted that the Copenhagen School’s theory of securitisation has recently been critiqued by Howell & Richter-Montpetit (2019), who recognise and attempt to excavate an underlying civilisational ideology in the opposition of normal (i.e. civilised) politics and the “state of nature” brought about via the articulation of the existential threat. Furthermore, these authors understand Buzan & al’s (1998) formulation of securitisation theory as defending and sanitising the (post)colonial and racialised violence committed by state and liberal actors provided this is done within the context of ‘civil’, ‘normal’ politics. This critique is important,

⁴ States clearly do not always abide by humanitarian principles, and yet advocates of the human security project would argue that where there is at least an attempt by representatives of the state to justify or explain the violation of these principles, this demonstrates the internalisation of norms on how states *ought* to act (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 892).

and is illustrated through the presence of civilisational tropes, the Eurocentric/white roots of the theory, and through references to Buzan & al's (1998) writings which appear to problematise social and racial justice movements as attempts to deviate from 'normal politics'. Here, the discussion of security as a speech act is positioned within the post-colonial theoretical approach outlined above, that is attentive to the production of power, and power relations between social, racial and cultural groups that are at once real and socially constructed. This awareness is also carried through in the final section of the chapter which turns to the critical terrorism studies literature on 'risky' and suspect communities in order to further highlight the power dynamics at play with the security war of position, and particularly the marginalising effects this can have on populations caught between self and threatening Other identities.

2.a. Security as a speech act

Borrowing from Alexander Wendt's famous statement on anarchy, Ken Booth wrote that "security is what we make of it" (Booth, 1994, p. 15). This observation creates two important questions; the first as to how security is made, and the second as to who has access to the means of production. The Welsh school tends to speak security in positive terms, with the ultimate goal of reclaiming what it means to study and practice security in the 21st century. This is a necessary project, however it is only one part of the contest over meaning. Following Howarth's (2013) model of discursive structure, the word *security* is like any other signifier in that its meaning is inherently unstable and incomplete. Its signified changes with each use – or (re)production – over time, and is dependent on speaker, context and audience. Despite this fragility, the incomplete relationship between signifier and signified can be "contained and stabilised through narrative[s]", such as those of national or human security (Schick, cf Nayak, 2006, p. 45; see also Howarth, 2013, pp. 241, 256-261; 275).

Still, as shown above, the security label is unique in the particular power it contains in its potential to free up huge resources for (usually) state actors. Over the last century, Western governments have used this potential to militarise the meaning and practice of security, and in doing so have taken public funds and used them to build forces strong enough to repel external

attacks on the nation. The Welsh school has attempted to subvert this. In recognising the potential of the concept, they have sought to securitise less fashionable issues such as climate change and health epidemics, and to re-politicise (or de-securitise) those ‘threats’ that have absorbed disproportionate levels of attention (Nunes, 2012).

Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde (1998) developed the concept of securitisation in their attempt to better understand the changeability of security and the politics of its meaning. These authors theorise securitisation as a speech act that enables extraordinary measures and frees up considerable (state) resources. To unpick this process, they establish three units of analysis: the speaker or ‘securitising actor’, the referent object, and ‘functional actors’ – meaning an audience whose actions hold sway over the practice of security (Buzan & al., 1998, p. 36). The securitising actor declares a given issue, such as terrorism, to pose a threat to a referent object and thereby suspends ‘normal’ politics, framing the issue as requiring a “special kind of politics” or positioning it “above politics” (ibid, p. 23). In so doing, the speaker aims to persuade the necessary audience of functional actors that certain measures should be taken, or certain resources should be spent to react to the articulated danger. In voicing ‘security’, the speaker therefore aims to change the social context⁵.

Key to the securitisation process is the binary opposition of threat and ‘referent object’. Any plausible security issue requires an object to threaten. Furthermore, the threat must be understood to be sufficiently severe in order for the securitising move to have an effect. For this reason, the Copenhagen school usually talks of ‘existential threats’ – that is phenomena which are said to threaten the very existence of a thing. Furthermore, the referent object must be accorded sufficient political, cultural, economic or other value in order for functional actors to care enough to accept the securitising move. For this reason, threats are usually framed as impacting severely upon a form of the self, in order to provoke the interpretation that “if we do

⁵ Recognising that the speaker is not always successful, Buzan & al. (1998, p. 25) distinguish the attempt (‘securitising move’) from the successful result (‘securitisation’).

not tackle this problem, everything else will be irrelevant (because we will not be here, or will not be free to deal with it in our own way)” (ibid, p. 24).

According to the Copenhagen school, this explains the dominance of the national security discourse. By framing external actors as threats to the existence of the nation, speakers are able to play on the patriotic impulses (and xenophobic tendencies) of their audiences. By contrast, when the Welsh school develop a counter-movement dedicated to highlighting the more mundane threats faced by ordinary human beings across the globe, it will not attract the same kind of attention. It is here that Booth’s optimism runs into an impasse. It may be true that security is what we make of it, but ‘we’ includes the state as well as a whole range of other actors who are liable to be manipulated into accepting measures to which they would otherwise object. Furthermore, there is still a strong risk of ‘positive’ human security narratives being co-opted by militaristic state actors (Newman, 2010). Establishing a dominant understanding of what is under threat, what is worth securing, and by what measures, is a process of negotiation and a discursive contest.

The Copenhagen school employs the concept of security sectors in order to analyse this discursive contest. Buzan & al. structure their seminal *Framework for Analysis* (1998) to explore five key areas. These are the military, environmental, economic, societal and political sectors. These sectors are chosen to be representative of different ‘types of interaction’:

the military sector is about relationships of forceful coercion; the political sector is about relationships of authority, governing status, and recognition; the economic sector is about relationships of trade, production, and finance; the societal sector is about relationships of collective identity; and the environmental sector is about relationships between human activity and the planetary biosphere.

(Buzan & al., 1998, p. 7)

Primarily, this is an analytical exercise, allowing the researcher to narrow the scope of interest whilst remaining committed to a broader definition of security (Buzan, 2007; Floyd, 2007a, p. 329). In cordoning off a given sector, the student is able to examine the discursive contests that exist in those particular human interactions, whilst acknowledging that security

carries different sets of meanings and values in different contexts. In short, the Copenhagen school recognises that the word/signifier 'security' takes on entirely different meanings/signifieds depending on whether it is spoken at the Pentagon, at a Greenpeace event or within the offices of the IMF or the World Bank. As a result, the researcher is able to concentrate on a given area and unpick the rhetorical moves of the most influential actors. This is in contrast both to traditional security practices which ignore any threat that does not impact on the state, and to those Welsh school approaches that seek to reinvent the theory and practice of security in a more fundamental sense. Despite this, the sectoral approach still carries the drawback that any attempt to carve out distinct spheres of interaction is necessarily arbitrary, subjective and inaccurate. Sectors overlap and flow into one another as key actors become stakeholders in new networks and the language and meaning constructed in one context reappear in another. Buzan & al. acknowledge this criticism as the cost of an analytically useful framework, however they do not explicitly engage with the relevance and influence of the historical, cultural and discursive structures whose presence permeates all of these sectors.

Thierry Balzacq (2005) attempts to bring in the study of structure and audience by reconceptualising these, along with political agency, as the "three faces of securitisation". Delving into the ontology and epistemology of securitisation theory, Balzacq argues that the concept of the speech act is overly concerned with the "rules" of the game of security, and therefore falls short of understanding the wider discursive negotiation between speaker and audience. For Buzan & al. securitisation, as a speech act, essentially requires a series of conditions to be met in order for the act to be 'successful'. As with placing a bet or naming a ship, "the utterance itself is the act. By saying it, something is done" (Waeber, 1995, p. 55). In this paradigm, security is a self-referential practice, or an "illocutionary act" (Balzacq, 2005, p. 177): the speaker need only understand the social context and speak/act under established conditions (the speaker/securitising actor must be seen to hold a position of authority and articulate an existential threat to a referent object in front of an audience with enough power to influence practice) in order for the securitising move to succeed.

Balzacq contests this model by reconceptualising securitisation as a “situated interactive activity”, and a strategic or pragmatic “action of discourse”. This ontological standpoint, which is close to the strategic-relational model developed by Hay & Jessop, speaks to the political struggle over the meaning of security, and steps back from the theory of securitisation as a silver bullet used to cut through ‘normal’ politics. In this context, security is recognised as the site of constant discursive wars of position. Strategic and resourceful actors make use of “various artefacts” in order to pursue any number of desired outcomes. These artefacts are, for the most part, rhetorical manoeuvres such as Krebs’s (2015) story-telling and argumentative modes, but also “metaphors, emotions, stereotypes, gestures, silence and even lies” (Balzacq, 2005, p. 172). Crucially, there exists a plurality of securitising actors potentially capable of (re)producing security knowledge. In acknowledging this, the securitising move is decentralised. Furthermore, the discursive practice of security, instead of being limited to a singular moment of articulation, becomes attritional and therefore more complex. Speakers compete to make sense of unfolding events, seeking to gain the support of audiences necessary to further their ends. As a result, they are capable of lying, exaggerating, concealing unhelpful ‘facts’ and discrediting their rivals, as well as drawing on longstanding archives of security knowledge such as the War on Terror and Orientalist discourses and cultural memories. For these moves to be effective, the speaker requires a degree of cooperation from the audience, and a basic understanding of the existing discursive context (even if this is not always entirely self-conscious).

In the securitisation literature, the ‘audience’ is often a blanket term used to cover any groups reached by the rhetoric of the securitising actor. In the traditional Copenhagen school it is synonymous with those ‘functional actors’ whose acceptance matters to the transition from normal politics to extraordinary ‘security’ practices (Buzan & al. 1998, p. 36; Floyd, 2016). In the context of security as a situated interactive activity, the agency of the audience(s) becomes increasingly important. The audience – including the general population as well as the media, press, corporate organisations, NGOs, local politicians, lobbying groups, unions, societies and other networks of peoples – are capable of internalising a ‘new’ articulation of security and

threat (resonance), or dismissing it out of hand. Furthermore, subdivisions of audiences may react differently to the same security ideas – most obviously depending on how their (party) political sympathies match those of the speaker(s). Building on Balzacq’s work, Côté (2016), Van Rythoven (2015) and Wilhelmsen (2017) have all sought to further unpack the role of audience and context in securitisation, with Wilhelmsen calling for a return to the poststructuralist roots of the theory, and Van Rythoven exploring the role affect and emotion plays in the audience’s acceptance of securitised logics. Similarly, Holland (2013a; 2013b) writes in terms of discursive ‘constituencies’ to make sense theorise the Blair government’s securitising moves in the run up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Holland argues that Blair framed Saddam Hussein as a threat, and linked his discursive response to a particular understanding of the British national identity. In so doing, he targeted his rhetorical efforts at the imagined discursive constituency of ‘Middle England’. This was a calculated effort, aimed at building a coalition (or social bloc, in Gramscian terms) of popular support upon the centre-ground of Westminster politics. By presenting himself as a representative of the conservative middle class, and appealing to such (apparently) Middle England ideals as ‘common sense’, pragmatism and moderation, Blair was able to co-opt the agency of that audience, and increase the likelihood that his security message would “resonate and mesh with the cultural terrain” (Holland, 2013b, p. 52). Such manoeuvring clearly requires a degree of political skill in terms of rhetoric and oratory, but equally as important is a sophisticated understanding of the speaker-context-audience nexus. The speaker must appreciate the discursive context in which she is situated, and be able to craft her message to resonate in that environment. Similarly, she must understand her target audience and be able to recognise the kinds of messages it is likely to understand, to identify with, and ultimately to buy into.

Use of (national) identity, culture, and ideas of self and other are extremely powerful to security actors in building these social blocs of support. The nation, as an imagined community depends on cultural myths to bind individuals together and to foster within them a sense of belonging and even duty to a larger entity (Anderson, 1991; Campbell, 1998). In the case of the United States this has been explored in depth in Chapter Two, with the first part of the

current chapter demonstrating the importance of colonial and imperial memories and discourses to national identity and culture. The discourses and mythology surrounding the national self have often evolved to draw together otherwise diverse peoples, and therefore attract a broad appeal through the creation of a sense of unity between members and adherents of different classes, ideologies, regions, religions and genders (Campbell, 1998). In theory, this presents the strategic actor with a ready-made tool for building coalitions of support across target audiences (Holland, 2013a; 2013b). By (re)producing self and other identities, speakers compete to (re)define what the nation is and what it is not. This in turn allows them to enunciate threats to the self and ultimately speak security.

Because histories of colonialism and imperialism are woven into the security cultures of Western states, the very narratives that serve to bind disparate groups together under the umbrella of the national identity also produce further boundaries that ultimately lead to the construction of gendered and racialised hierarchies of privileged and risky, or dangerous identities both within and without the context of the 'nation' (Heath-Kelly, 2012; 2013; Rygiel, 2007). For example, the security narrative that barbaric Islamist terrorists pose a threat to Western progress (re)produces Enlightenment and Orientalist narratives that inscribe ethical and temporal otherness on the East. In the War on Terror, Al Qaida, and later ISIL, were portrayed as stuck in the medieval past; resurrecting centuries old ideas of Caliphates and Holy Wars, and therefore required correction by the enlightened forces of the West (Bassil, 2019; Jackson, 2005, pp. 40-53; Tuastad, 2003). The constructed gulf between the liberal nations of the West and the barbaric Jihadis of the East creates a discursive void that must be filled with varying degrees of otherness (Hansen, 2006, pp. 33-48). The remainder of this section engages with the critical terrorism studies concept of 'suspect communities' to open up the construction of problematic, risky and dangerous identities in this discursive 'middle ground' between the self and the threatening terrorist Other.

2.b. 'Risky' identities and suspect communities

Both the sub-discipline of critical terrorism studies and the concept of suspect communities originate in the overlap between the academic traditions of critical security studies and post-colonialism (Breen-Smyth, 2014; Jackson, 2005; Toros & Gunning, 2009). As a result, the analytical concept of suspect communities fits well with the critical approach of this thesis, and offers a useful tool for shining a light on the asymmetrical power dynamics that simultaneously structure and are (re)produced through official pronouncements on security and terrorism.

The concept of suspect communities was developed by Paddy Hillyard (1993) to describe the experiences of Irish communities in 20th century Britain and Northern Ireland, who were singled out by state actors as potentially dangerous to the wider community under the political and discursive context of the Troubles. Hillyard documents at length how those with 'Irish' names, accents and other cultural and ethnic signifiers were disproportionately subjected to state and police attention in the guise of security checks, police stop and searches, arrests and surveillance. The validity of this attention is subject to debate, with defenders of the state insisting that republican terrorists were most likely to be Irish and therefore it was only rational that the police and security services should prioritise their resources accordingly⁶. The standard argument 'if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear' was used to dismiss the testimonies of Irish 'suspects' and nullify criticism and dissent. More critical authors have explored how successive British governments securitised Irish terrorism by framing the issue of dissident violence as a threat to the state, to the (British) people and to law and order, and thereby legitimised extraordinary counter-measures through legislation such as the Prevention of Terrorism Acts (Fisher, 2015, pp. 72-90; Heath-Kelly, 2012; Neal, 2012). The 'Irish' nature of the threat served as justification for the state in targeting these measures at an ethnically/racially defined population (Breen-Smyth, 2009; 2014; Heath-Kelly, 2012; Hillyard, 1993).

⁶ See for example Omand (2010) or Willis (2007) on the kinds of calculations that may guide state resources according to a risk-based approach.

Expanding on Hillyard's work on suspect community members' lived experiences of state security practices, more recent critical literature has focussed on the social construction of the suspect communities as a way to deconstruct harmful dominant discourses both on Irish communities in the Troubles and Muslims and Islam in the War on Terror. Marie Breen-Smyth (2009; 2014) has explored cases in which those who appear Irish have been subjected to discrimination, suspicion, fear, anger and abuse by members of the public. Following Pantazis & Pemberton (2009), and Hickman, Thomas, Nickels and Silvestri (Hickman & al. 2012; Nickels & al. 2012a; 2012b), she also uses the same template to explore the treatment of Muslims in Britain since the War on Terror⁷. Breen-Smyth's definition of suspect communities is based on the idea of the imagined community. Rather than as 'embodied groups' subjected to institutionalised and legalised discrimination by the state, Breen-Smyth leans on Anderson, Ó Tuathail and Said, in conceptualising a discursively constructed community that exists in the public mind. The imagined community is no longer confined to those who practice Islam, or who self-identify as 'Irish'. Instead people are liable to be coded as suspicious simply due to their association with problematic, dangerous or risky signifiers – for example a dark-skinned man with a beard may be (mis)understood to be Muslim, or a Scottish accent may be interpreted as Northern Irish (Breen-Smyth, 2014; Heath-Kelly, 2012). Pantazis & Pemberton include "race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, language, accent, dress, political ideology or any combination of these" in their list of possible factors that may lead to one's inclusion in the suspect community (2009, p. 649). The influence of Said and Ó Tuathail draws Breen-Smyth to compare the imagined/suspect community to Said's imagined geographies. "Both portray the Muslim world and Islam as backward, barbaric, antipathetic" (Breen-Smyth, 2014, p. 231), and this makes acceptable and necessary the suspension of normal politics and the subsequent use of extreme measures in both domestic and foreign counter-terrorism.

⁷ Pantazis & Pemberton (2009) drew from Hillyard's work to postulate that "since September 2001, Muslims living in Britain have replaced the Irish as the principal 'suspect community' for the state" (Pantazis & Pemberton, 2011, p. 1054).

In the North American context, Rygiel (2007) puts forward a similar argument in her work on security discourses and boundary producing practices in the War on Terror. Following 9/11, Rygiel exposes how gendered, Orientalist and racialised security narratives promoted by Canadian officials contributed to the construction of hierarchies of ‘dangerous’, ‘suspect’, ‘vulnerable’ and ‘safe’ identities within the context of the nation-state. At the far end of these the lurking presence of an “invisible enemy” within generates a public discourse in which “the need to ‘root out’ [these enemies] by identifying who does and does not belong to the community [becomes] a pressing concern” (ibid p. 145). In this context, the population is used by the state as a biopolitical tool of surveillance, Rygiel argues, “citizenship policies and practices” are deployed with the aim of protecting and providing identities. In the first sense, privileged identities, especially “white, western, male” identities are (re)produced and protected often through military narratives of heroism and sacrifice in the Middle East. In the second “policies and practices aimed at making populations more knowable and manageable” are enacted as a means of monitoring ‘risky’ groups, and intervening before ‘radicalised’ individuals can attack the state (see also Heath-Kelly, 2012; 2013).

This idea is picked up by Ali (2015) in her deconstruction of Britain’s ‘Muslim community’. Ali considers the function of ‘radicalisation’, as a counter-terrorist theory, in UK government policy, and argues that the common-sense questions that are raised in the aftermath of apparently terroristic events⁸ serve to produce the Muslim community as a governable political space. These questions, articulated to pinpoint the origin of the radicalisation process in the individual, create an imagined geography of ‘problematic’ ideas and people. Ali juxtaposes this with state practices of data collection, such as the national Census, to establish the idea of a governable entity “subject to intervention and management” (ibid, p. 140). The othering of Muslim spaces, as risky and dangerous, is argued to have created a state of “partial

⁸ Examples of these questions include “What mosques did these individuals attend? What books did they read? Did they follow a particular Islamic scholar [...]? Did they attend a university in which radical groups were known to operate?” (Ali, 2015, p. 139).

securities” in which security is granted to those that “match the profile of the ‘safe identity’” while “safety and protection diminishes” for “risky” individuals (Mythen et al., 2012, p. 13).

The concept of privileged and dangerous or risky identities as well the critical terrorism studies idea of suspect communities are therefore of particular use in studying the harmful consequences of securitisation and security discourses on the more vulnerable sections of society. Didier Bigo & Anastassia Tsoukala (2008, p. 5) use the stylisation (in)security to demonstrate their acknowledgement that any effort to maximise security by a given actor will inevitably entail results which “cannot be assessed from the will of the actor”. As a result a securitising move spoken by the American president with the aim of increasing security in a given area, or legitimising a specific security policy has the potential to increase or decrease threats posed to vulnerable groups irrespective of the intent behind it. In the War on Terror, the multitude of official and non-official actions taken to protect the nation were key to creating suspect communities. When security discourses (re)produce the colonial narratives of progress, civilisation and barbarism, it (re)defines the ‘rules’ of policing, creating a basis for racial profiling and suspicion of religions. The targets of this suspicion are the people who, in the Welsh project, should be the ultimate referent of security. However in the traditional practice of security they are at best redeployed as tools in the ‘fight against terror’ or at worst reimagined as sympathisers and enablers of the terrorist project. The acknowledgment of unintended consequences is important, however it must not be allowed to detract from an equal awareness and respect for the strategic agency and intelligence of privileged security actors who, given their supposedly progressive credentials, should know better than to draw on archives of racialised, gendered and Orientalist artefacts in the name of short term political gains.

Conclusion

If the purpose of the first chapter was to establish the academic context for the thesis within the US foreign policy literature, and the aim of the second was to develop its ontological standpoint on the questions of social and discursive structure and political agency, the contribution of the current chapter has been to set out a critical lens for analysing foreign policy

discourses under Barack Obama's presidency, before the methodological framework for this analysis is can be elucidated in Chapter Four. To this end, this chapter has situated the thesis within the overlapping and potentially complementary critical traditions of post-colonialism and critical security studies. In doing so, it has made a theoretical contribution by situating the Gramscian discursive struggle over the meaning and practice of security within the operation of colonialist power. This then enables the analysis to evidence the contemporary role of Orientalist tropes within official US foreign policy and security discourses on the Middle East and to unpack the asymmetric power relations at play in their (re)production, as well as highlighting the play of discursive structure and elite agency in perpetuating Orientalist 'common sense' in the 21st century context.

Drawing on the tradition of post-colonial critique pioneered by Edward Said, the first part of this chapter unpacked some of the history of European and Western colonialism and imperialism in the (Middle) East and linked this to the archival understanding of language and history articulated by Foucault, Gramsci and Nietzsche. Said's critique of Orientalism, as a discursive system for inscribing ontological and epistemological differences on the other, is crucially important here, as is the related trope of the Eastern barbarian threatening, or simply opposed to Western/European civilisation. The tradition of the barbarian narrative is particularly important to international relations (Salter, 2002) and the brief historical exploration of its political and cultural usage provided here is intended to make its presence more easily identifiable in the later analysis of contemporary foreign policy discourse.

The literature on more recent appeals to Orientalism in American foreign policy was then engaged with, again to establish the existing discursive terrain of colonialist narratives and imagery so that the presence of any of these strands in Obama's discourse can be identified in the analysis. To this end, Tuastad's neo-Orientalism (2003), Nayak & Malone's work on American Orientalism (2009), and Little's perspective that sees the 'green scare' as the latest episode in America's perpetual search for a threatening Other (2008; 2016) were all considered, as were the specific mechanisms of Orientalist discourses they identify. These include

civilisational narratives, tropes and caricatures of ‘wild Muslims’, discursive processes dehistoricisation, depoliticisation and decontextualisation of the ‘Arab/Muslim world’, and gendered Orientalist discourses of oppressed Muslim women, rescue narratives and Western/white saviourism. Finally, the most recent literature to identify Orientalist tendencies in the Obama era – in the context of drone warfare (Espinoza, 2018), relations with Iran (Biswas, 2018), the Arab Spring (Saleh, 2016), and the campaign against ISIL (Bassil, 2019) – was then engaged with, again to lay the foundations for later analysis.

The second half of this chapter then turned to the tradition of critical security studies in order to complete the critical lens of the thesis. Here, the Gramscian concept of discursive war of position (articulated in Chapter Two) was illustrated through the contested concept of security and the ongoing political struggle between national and human security narratives, as well as the struggle over critical and state-centric doctrines of human security. Within this Gramscian paradigm, the Copenhagen school concept of securitisation as a speech act is critically engaged with, and provided a means of highlighting the play of elite agency within the context of the discursive tug of war over meaning. Balzacq’s (2005) reconceptualization of securitisation as a situated interactive activity, or a strategic action of discourse is particularly useful here for maintaining the Copenhagen school’s appreciation of agency without losing focus on either the importance of discursive structures such as Orientalism, or the role of the audience in accepting or rejecting security narratives. Finally, the concept of suspect communities or ‘risky’ identities existing in the discursive spaces between the self and the threatening Other is unpacked. The literature on suspect communities is inspired by critical security studies and the tradition of post-colonialist critique, and provides a robust analytical tool for understanding the consequences of racialised and gendered security discourses in developing hierarchies of privileged ‘safe’, and ‘risky’, ‘suspect’ or ‘dangerous’ identities both within and without the territorial borders of the state.

In paying close attention to the presence of history in American foreign policy, and in doing this within the conceptual paradigm of the discursive war of position over the contested

meaning, and strategic and political importance of security, this thesis holds focus on the power struggle between elite actors and marginalised groups. The concept of securitisation as a strategic action of discourse and the post-colonialist appreciation of the pervasive nature of Orientalist structures, but also the strategic and rhetorical potential of archives of national identity and historical experiences of the ‘redoubtable Orient’, also helps to further an understanding of the interaction between the structures of American foreign policy and the powerful actors at the top of the superpower state. The next chapter will complete the framework for analysis developed thus far by making clear the methodological approach and the specific methods of discourse analysis employed in this thesis.

Chapter four: A methodology for deconstructing Obama's foreign policy narratives

This chapter unpacks the deconstructive method employed in this thesis before the research findings are relayed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. The analysis of official texts produced from 2009 to 2017 focusses on the (re)production and (de)stabilisation of foreign policy narratives and identities in official discourse. The model is designed to engage with official constructions of self, otherness and threat in US policy in the Middle East. The chapter is structured into three sections, with the first outlining the research design and defending the empirical focus of the thesis in relation to the research questions, the discursive ontological standpoint developed in Chapter Two, and the post-colonialist critical lens set out in Chapter Three. The second section then goes into the detail of the particular methods of discourse analysis deployed in the research process, drawing on the writings of Roxanne Doty (1993), Lene Hansen (2006), and Jack Holland (2013). Finally, the third part of the chapter develops the analytical concept of key moments, or key events, as utilised by Hansen (2006) and Krebs (2016). These instances, in which unpredicted events lead to significant changes in the discursive structure, serve to structure the analysis, with the two most obvious examples within the context of Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East – the Arab Spring and the rise of ISIL – providing the focus of Chapters Six and Seven. By unpacking official constructions of self and Other according to the methods developed below, this thesis will provide a greater understanding of the changes to official US discourse on the Middle East over eight years. Furthermore, by engaging with this problem from the ontological standpoint and critical lens established in the previous chapters, it will also help to understand the extent to which President Obama strategically manipulated foreign policy discourses. In one direction, this understanding is achieved through the identification of instances where Obama made use of existing archives of political and cultural knowledge to make possible his security agenda. In the other, the analysis also seeks to identify how structural factors inhibited him from affecting greater change in America's relationship with the Middle East, as these same archives of past foreign

policy experiences demand attention, despite being strategically unhelpful in the context of delivering preferred policy platforms. The research findings are relayed in the three remaining chapters.

1. Research design and data collection

- RQ1. How did the discursive structures of American foreign policy change between 2009
and 2016?
- RQ2. How did official constructions of identities and threat change over the same period?

The research questions guiding this thesis are intended to enable a deconstruction of dominant discourses of Obama's foreign policy and identify changes to these discourses over a period of eight years, or two presidential terms. As demonstrated in Chapter One, the discursive structures of American foreign policy and the War on Terror under the Bush administration have been explored and deconstructed at length, and in most depth by Croft (2006), Jackson (2005), and Holland (2013a). Whilst existing studies have attempted discourse analysis either on specific foreign policies during Obama's tenure (Bassil, 2019; Belova, 2016; Biswas, 2018; Espinoza, 2018), or on certain moments in this period (Jarvis & Holland, 2014; Löffmann, 2015; Saleh, 2016), these have been relatively limited in scope in comparison to the large sample of texts used in this thesis, and/or have not focussed on presidential discourse. Furthermore, with the notable exceptions of Bassil, Biswas, Espinoza, and Saleh, these studies do not incorporate a post-colonial lens that is attentive to Orientalist themes. There remains therefore a need for research on the historical development of official constructions of identities and threat in the Middle East over the full timeframe, which focusses explicitly on official White House discourse. This thesis fills this gap by using a critical discourse analysis methodology to trace the use of identities and linking and differentiation processes in presidential rhetoric on security and foreign policy over this period. The thesis is also concerned with the president's strategic agency in manipulating these discursive structures. The analysis presented in Chapters Five to Seven therefore focusses on the president's speech,

with texts taken from the Obama White House archive (White House, 2017) forming the corpus of the study.

Williams (1999, p. 258) writes that Foucauldian analysis involves “in so far as it is possible... the entire discursive practice, both contemporary and historical, which is relevant for the research in question”. This White House site holds approximately 4,730 documents in its collection of speeches and remarks, covering the period between President Obama’s first inauguration on 20 January 2009, and his final press conference of 18 January 2017. Belova (2016) has previously used this archive as the basis for a discourse analysis of Obama’s foreign policy towards Russia, although this was done on a much smaller scale of 149 texts that explicitly mentioned Russia between 2009 and 2012. The majority of the 4,730 texts included in the current sample are speeches delivered by Obama himself. In addition, remarks by the Vice President, First and Second Ladies, and a small number of senior officials¹ are also held in the collection. This amounts to a sample of approximately 600 texts for each calendar year of the presidency. This sample size is large enough to offer a substantial representation of official foreign policy discursive practice over this time, whilst remaining manageable with the aid of NVivo computer software for qualitative analysis.

This sample is selected to allow for the diachronic analysis of official discourse over the full period of Obama’s presidency (Brinton, 2003; Hyatt, 2005). Texts are limited to those attributed to the president and surrounding executive staff so as to focus the research on the strategic agency of the head of state. This corresponds to what Hansen (2006, p. 66) calls a ‘model 1’ analysis of a single self – that is, a study of the construction of the single American

¹ From the National Security Council (NSC), these officials are: National Security Advisors General James L Jones, Tom Donilon (previously Deputy NSA) and Susan Rice; Deputy National Security Advisors Denis McDonough (later White House Chief of Staff), Ben Rhodes (DNSA for Strategic Communications), Avril Haines, and NSA Spokesperson Mike Hammer; Homeland Security Advisors John O. Brennan and Lisa Monaco; NSC Senior Director Jeffrey Bader; and Special Assistants to the President Ned Price and Celeste Wallander.

Other officials whose speeches are included are Press Secretaries Robert Gibbs, Jay Carney and (Deputy) Eric Schultz; Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Senior Advisor to the President Brian Deese. The data sample also includes a small number of White House released transcripts of ‘deep background’ conference calls between journalists and anonymised official sources.

self identity and its related others – exploring only “official discourse and the intertextual links made within it”. Such an analysis is primarily concerned with the stabilisation of official discourse as evidenced through the rhetoric of those with the authority to sanction foreign policy decisions. An alternative approach would have been to include media and political opposition discourses, and even popular culture sources; and/or to broaden the research to cover the construction of multiple selves (e.g. Democrat and Republican, or American and European). These approaches could potentially have broadened the scope of the project to enable a greater appreciation of the play between discourses on a national, or even international, scale. Ultimately, however, the model 1 analysis is favoured as it allows for a deeper critical deconstruction of American foreign policy as it is produced at the highest levels of state, by those ultimately responsible for the course of diplomacy. The interrogation of power is of central import to this study, and the office of the president presents a unique case in the manipulation of positive power in the spheres of US foreign policy and international relations. Foreign policy makers (Doty, 1993), or ‘intellectuals of statecraft’ (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992), have a degree of agency in the agendas they choose to pursue and in the narratives they choose to engage with. The more elite actors, such as heads of state, enjoy considerable agential privilege, as well as access to a larger and more attentive audience than most could hope for (Krebs, 2015). The US president is especially privileged amongst elite actors due to the geopolitical primacy of the American nation. The ‘most powerful man in the world’; leader of ‘the greatest nation of earth’ and (therefore) the ‘free world’ are informal and questionable titles, usually bestowed by American citizens and media unto their elected leader. Nevertheless, they have meaning in that the world appears to listen to the president whenever (s)he chooses to make use of the bully pulpit (Neustadt, 1990).

The texts originate from the president’s speech and physical actions. In the great majority of cases Obama has delivered these messages in a formal context to a physical audience immediately visible to him, whether in the setting of a press conference or a more formal address, or sometimes in a closed setting, simply to camera. His message has then been relayed to a wider and much larger audience through a professional media network of print, broadcast

and online journalists and commentators, and through social media and word of mouth (Farrell, 2012; Goddard & Krebs, 2015; Prior, 2013). As Williams (1999, p. 3) states, texts are more than carriers of meaning and are never “transparent reflections of social subjects”. At each stage, the message is (mis)heard and (mis)interpreted before being (re)produced in another context. The link between audience and speaker can only be made through various intersubjectivities, making perfect communication impossible (Connolly, 2002; Fairclough, 2001). The decision to analyse texts at the moment of their enunciation by the president is taken so as to avoid this interference by secondary actors. As a result, the research focusses on the strategy of the speaker rather than the interpretive role of the audience. In an approach similar to that articulated by Belova (2016, p. 751), who in turn is influenced by Laclau & Mouffe’s (1985) understanding of strategy, the aim is to “examine how micro-level linguistic mechanisms of specific articulations operate to reflect and re-/shape the macro-level discursive processes”. The role of the audience is therefore captured in the research only in so far as the speaker can be shown to strategically adapt foreign policy messages to resonate with certain groupings of people.

A broader selection of data might have allowed for an understanding of the meaningfulness of foreign policy at a later phase in its development. Foreign policy analysts have studied discourse at the point of its appearance in news articles (see for example Ralph & al, 2016), however this approach risks complicating the analytical process, and compromising focus. Each political event is represented by a multitude of media outlets, often more than once, and the researcher is therefore exposed to the official message at the point of its (re)articulation by the media rather than the ‘original’ text produced by the political actor. This thesis takes the view that foreign policy is overwhelmingly a top-down process, directed by the head of state and his or her immediate entourage, and resisted by less privileged actors. As such, it takes transcripts directly from the White House website. Similarly, this analysis does not interrogate the more historical aspects of US foreign policy discourse (i.e. official texts which were produced before January 2009). Instead, it makes use of the existing secondary literature, as outlined in the previous chapters, to provide the necessary context.

This corpus of texts provides what Foucault (1966) calls the ‘archive’ of documents of US presidential discourse. In terms of homogeneity, the texts or units of enunciation themselves share a point of origin and perceived degree of authority (the White House), as well as a small number of speakers (the president, for the most part), and, in a broad sense, a common audience (the American public). For this reason, the sample provides an important resource to understand the discursive links between official texts, which in turn can illuminate the flux and (de)stabilisation of official discourse. It is inevitable that not all of these texts offer important/relevant data for this analysis. Many of the president’s pronouncements do not touch on foreign policy either explicitly, or implicitly through articulations of self and Other identities or expressions of threat. In order to address this issue, the analysis has been aided by NVivo computer software; enabling greater speed and dexterity in sorting and locating important articulations via the presence of key words. This process is outlined in detail below.

2. Analysis

This data was stored and sorted using NVivo 11 and 12 computer software. This software is designed for the purpose of qualitative research. It has been used here as a database, enabling quick access to the White House archive texts which were then sorted and categorised by date, speaker, location, theme, and similar variables, thus facilitating and accelerating the manipulation of data. Initially, this software was used for broad brush or ‘bucket’ coding (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 71). Specifically, its functions enabled the researcher to highlight the presence of designated key words in collected texts that would flag up their relevance to US foreign policy and the specific topics explored in this thesis. On this basis, a smaller, refined sample of approximately 2,300 texts was generated that could then be examined in greater depth and detail by the researcher. The set of key words that qualified texts for closer analysis are included in the table below. In addition to this, a number of texts were also included in this sample due to their origin in bilateral or other international meetings. These texts were included in the sample as this origin is taken to signify their importance to, and location within, US foreign policy discourse (regardless of which particular nations were included in any of the

specific bilateral/international summits). With regards to key words, these were chosen due to their prominence in US foreign policy on the Middle East and the ‘Muslim world’. Most of these are country or state markers, and are chosen as they are either the sites of protests during the Arab Spring, or the focus of Obama’s most important policies in the region (i.e. the wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, the Middle East Peace Process, and negotiations with Iran). Country/state signifiers are used for the most part, as opposed to more subjective and contested labels, to avoid prejudicing the analysis. Of course, this is not to say that nation-state labels such as Israel or Palestine are completely objective or free of contestation, however this remains the simplest and most obvious way to focus the research. Nevertheless, due to the continued importance of the ‘War on Terror’, four markers related to terrorism are included as key words. This is because the discourse on terrorism is of paramount interest to this thesis. Finally, ‘ISIL’ and al ‘Qaida’/‘Qaeda’ are included in the key word search while labels for other non-state militant groups such as Boko Haram and al Shabaab are not due to the unrivalled prominence of the former two groups/networks in US public discourse. Nevertheless, where these other groups appear in texts that have been flagged up for closer analysis, they are of course coded and included in the analytical process. Finally, it should be noted that the software was used to search not only for these words but also for variations on them, stemming from the same root (e.g. extremism/extremist, Egypt/Egyptian/Egyptians).

Country/state markers	Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen
Identity markers	al Qaida/Qaeda, Extremism, ISIL, Terrorism

List of key words used to flag up texts for further analysis

The purpose of the key words included in the table above was to enable the software to ‘flag up’ individual texts that were relevant to the research questions from the initial corpus of 4,730 for further analysis and coding. This was not the only means by which texts were flagged, as bilateral meetings, summits and speeches held in foreign nations were also included in this

narrower sample of important texts. This process of flagging up texts served as an aid to the analytical process. Once texts were flagged, either by the software due to the presence of key words, or manually according to the context of the original speech, these were then further inductively coded by the researcher. The decision to code inductively meant that the research process was not confined arbitrarily to the choice of key words presented here. Instead the investigation of foreign policy discourse evolved more organically to trace the key formations of meaning that featured in Obama's speech. While the choice of words was inevitably somewhat arbitrary, this did not therefore limit the scope of the research. Instead, the flexibility inherent to inductive coding allowed for analytical adaptation and reaction in the case that the discourse developed in a way that the researcher failed to anticipate.

In addition, while the key words generated a narrower sample of more important texts that merited greater analytical attention, their purpose was not categorical. A speech that mentioned 'Afghanistan' would be included in the same smaller sample as a speech that mentioned 'Iraq', 'terrorism', or 'Palestine', and would therefore be inductively coded in the same manner as any other text from this point. Texts were never isolated into distinct analytical categories according to which of the key words they featured. Instead, inductive coding allowed for key segments or passages of text to be highlighted and stored within the NVivo project. This meant that any given node could be selected by the researcher, who could then examine at length all of the individual passages of texts that had been accordingly coded. Alternatively, the researcher could observe the analytical process from the opposite perspective, by looking through a selection of full speeches to see all the various nodes that had been identified within them.

The NVivo programme was also used analytically, to code the data into key nodes, to search for important signifiers, and to track and trace the formation of linguistic patterns over time. Nodes are recurring discursive markers that represent the "points at which concepts potentially branch out into a network of sub concepts or dimensions" (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 75). In line with the principle of inductive coding, the codebook was continuously generated, developed and refined as the research took place. Once more, this means that the key words

outlined above served only as an analytical starting point, as important nodes could be created, deleted, merged and separated as more texts were subjected to analysis and the researcher gained familiarity with the corpus and understanding of the discourse. This approach therefore allowed for a more flexible and adaptable coding framework, according to which the analyst can maintain focus on changes to the structure of the discourse, and therefore on the interplays between structure and agency in US foreign policy. The most significant nodes are referenced in footnotes throughout the following three empirical chapters. A full list of these nodes, along with a non-exhaustive (for reasons of space) list of associated coded texts is also included in the appendix of this thesis. The hierarchical ‘coding trees’ that were used to order the nodes in NVivo are also visible here.

In terms of analysing the textual content of a foreign policy document, this thesis aims to interrogate the ‘meaningfulness’ of foreign policy decisions (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992). Whilst the computer software was used to handle the data on a macro level – through broad brush or ‘bucket’ coding – the more sophisticated analysis was done by hand. Manual analysis focussed on key events, or significant moments in the development of the discourse, and interrogates official attempts to render these meaningful, or “in the terms of the familiar” (Campbell, 1998, p. 4). This more detailed coding pays attention to the nuances in foreign policy articulations, as well as hypothetical alternative statements in an attempt to “break open the text” and disrupt the hegemony of settled discourses (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 72). The analysis adopts a similar approach to those detailed and used by Roxanne Doty (1993), Lene Hansen (2006) and Jack Holland (2013a; see also Holland & Wright, 2017). Following Holland’s (2013a, p. 12) analytical model; this research approaches texts as “moments of relative stability”, within the patterns of meaning production that contribute to foreign policy discourse. The first step in the analytical process is to search these texts for recurring linguistic markers, or discursive nodal points that feature heavily in official speech.

Where these recurring markers are visible, they have been inductively coded using NVivo. That is to say, where particular patterns of language and meaning reappear, or were expected

to reappear in the data, they have been highlighted and labelled, leading to the systematic creation of a codebook of nodes covering the eight year period of Obama's presidency. The more frequently texts are coded at these nodes, the more important these nodes are judged to be in relation to the broader official foreign policy discourse. From this identification, the analysis can then move on to considering the relationships between these markers in order to understand how they function in the construction of US diplomacy. As this codebook increased in size, nodes have been categorised, ordered and hierarchised into 'coding trees', in order to create a more organised and accessible record of the relationships between nodes. This means firstly that large nodes can be broken down into more specific variations, and secondly that prominent but unsurprising nodes – for example Obama's tendency to talk about American global leadership – can be broken down into more interesting 'sub-nodes' – such as multilateralist articulations of leadership that refer to 'engagement' and 'listening', and those that explicitly reserve the right to unilateral action. Finally, this allows an examination of how these nodes coalesce into narratives and structures (or policy-identity constellations) that developed the Obama administration's construction of identities and threat in the Middle East, through the hierarchy of spatial, temporal and ethical otherness they reproduced (see Hansen, 2006, pp. 33-7, 41-6).

The key point of interest driving this interrogation is the official construction of self and threatening Other identities. Hansen proposes a Derridean method of deconstructing the processes of linking and differentiation that constitute the meaningfulness of foreign policy. As with Campbell (1998), and other critical discursive approaches, Hansen's method focusses predominantly on the articulation of frontiers, and adds to this an appreciation for the degrees of otherness that demarcate the nation from the external. The thesis follows Hansen in aiming to deconstruct the policy-identity constellations of US foreign policy discourse. The purpose of the analysis is to make the policy-identity constellations (re)produced within the corpus appear strange and artificial. For example, rather than take for granted that America must defend itself from terrorists, the study places that 'common sense' into question. Rather than accept that a certain number of civilian deaths are acceptable in the world of national security,

the study asks how this has been constructed as 'normal'. To quote Williams, "the task of the analyst is to make the norm explicit, and thereby to destroy its status as a norm" (Williams, 1999, p. 8). This is in essence the Derridean technique of 'making strange' as advocated by Der Derian & Shapiro (1989) for the analysis of foreign policy.

As an analytical aid, Hansen (2006, p. 52) proposes the analyst focus on the 'basic discourses' or 'sub-discourses' of foreign policy narratives that "point towards the main points of contestation within a debate and facilitate a structured account of the relationship between discourses [and] their points of convergence and confrontations" (see also Ralph & al., 2017, pp. 880-6). In doing this, it becomes possible to consider a few key oppositions at a time, for example the American and the Terrorist, or the Civilised and the Barbarian, Security and Threat, and observe how they interact with each other, and compete for dominance in the foreign policy debate. Hansen's intention is that this approach enables the tracing of the formation of identity/policy 'constellations', so that the researcher might understand how certain foreign policies become possible, even inevitable, due to the identities of self and Other evoked in dominant narratives. In the context of the corpus collected for this thesis, there is less potential for 'debate' as administration officials are (at least) supposed to appear 'on message', and therefore minimise the appearance of contradicting one another. Still, the concept of basic discourses enables an analysis of how certain narratives eclipse and replace others over time, even within official discourses.

In order to denaturalise these constellations, and make evident these basic discourses, this thesis follows Doty's (1993) framework for deconstructing ideas of self and Other. Doty favours the analysis of presupposition, predication and subject positioning in breaking down and making strange the processes of linking and differentiation that contribute to policy-identity constellations. Presupposition is the appeal to pre-existing knowledge. This is recurrent in rhetoric on terrorism as speakers attempt to fit chaotic violence into a manageable arc or story (of war, good and evil, freedom and oppression etc; see Jackson, 2005; Croft, 2006). Beyond this, representations of Eastern terrorists frequently rely on presupposition of a certain

amount of Orientalist mythology (Bassil, 2019; Nayak, 2007; Tuastad, 2003). These appeals are often subtle, and the discourse analyst's purpose is therefore to denaturalise them. References to barbarism presuppose some understanding of the historic use of the word, and its association with Eastern geographies. This may be related to fact or fiction, art or pop culture. The analysis attempts to identify the traditions referred to and make strange the choice in assumed knowledge.

Presupposition is an important part of rhetoric that must be the focus of critical analysis. Every statement presupposes a certain amount of knowledge on behalf of the audience. At the most basic level, the speaker assumes the audience has a grasp of the vocabulary and language s/he uses. On a more ideational level, articulations of foreign policy will rely on the listener's previous knowledge of international relations and national identity. For example, on September 10, 2016, President Obama started his weekly address to the American people with the words:

Fifteen years ago, a September day that began like any other became one of the darkest in our nation's history.

Obama, 10 September 2016

Text 3382

This short statement takes for granted the audience's knowledge of what happened fifteen previously. It also assumes the audience's ability to pick out the events that became known as '9/11' as the relevant memory over, say, the Pentagon's inability to account for over \$2 trillion in spending – a scandal at the time that led Donald Rumsfeld, then secretary of defence, to label the institution's bureaucracy America's "adversary" on September 10th (Sirgany, 2002). By highlighting such instances of presupposition, the analysis is able to demonstrate how the speaker delves into the archives of US cultural and political knowledge to make sense of current events.

Alongside presupposition, predication is the assignation of specific qualities to subjects and objects. This is especially important to the construction of self and Other identities. Here, the

speaker uses predicates, adverbs and adjectives to colour the portrayal of subjects and discourse participants. Jackson (2005) explores this practice in the constant reproduction of ‘good Americans’ and ‘evil terrorists’ by the Bush administration after 9/11. Similarly, Chilton (2004, pp. 122-132, 138-140) has used predicate structure as an analytical tool for understanding the function of verbal ‘cues’ between speaker and audience both in the British context of Enoch Powell’s rhetoric on immigration, and in the American context of President Clinton’s discourse on NATO intervention in Kosovo. In both cases, the author examines how predicates work in building positive and negative identities, to the extent that violence may be legitimised against the ‘brutal’ or otherwise dehumanised Other. In Chilton’s analysis, predication closely linked to presupposition, as these verbal ‘cues’ serve both to characterise the Other and signify back to existing knowledge in the mind of the listener. Indeed, Chilton sees this as especially important due to the plausible deniability it lends the speaker, who, through the use of “minimal cues” may claim they “never *actually said* that”, despite evoking archives of problematic, imperialist or even racist tropes (ibid, p. 122, emphasis in original).

Finally, subject positioning is the third symbolic technology that Doty explores in her foreign policy analysis. This is an overtly spatial practice, and again contributes to the (re)production of geographical imaginations. Subject positioning is the technique speakers use to map discourse participants, objects and ideas. Often, this will involve the use of linguistic social deixes (Gee, 2011) – *I-here-now*; *you-there-then*, etc. – to embed subjects in spatial/temporal construction. Typically, the speaker would position herself alongside the intended audience in order to neutralise the imagined distance between the two (e.g. through the use of the pronoun ‘we’), and thus foster the idea of a shared ‘self’ identity. In foreign policy, this will frequently involve the creation of a distant and dangerous Other, which the speaker and audience must defeat together. This can then work alongside presupposition and predication to construct geographies of evil that exists beyond the safe ground of the national homeland which audience (‘you’) and speaker (‘I’) are positioned to share.

An examination of social deixes present in foreign policy discourse can make evident the construction of self and Other identities. The construction of subjects and objects in time and space can generate oppositions and neutralisations (Williams, 1999, pp. 6-7). For example, when an American president claims “We’ve delivered devastating blows to the al Qaeda leaders that attacked us on 9/11” (Obama, 2016), divisions are made between the speaker, the audience and the Other. The speaker and audience are bound together or neutralised in the ‘zero point’ of the here and now, and by their collective efforts in striking against their enemies. Meanwhile, al Qaeda leaders are banished into otherness, as a dangerous threat imagined in the spatial/temporal frame of ‘there and then’, provided by 9/11. Al Qaeda is foreign and other, dangerous but maintained at a safe distance by the efforts of the speaker and the audience.

These ‘efforts’ are imagined, in the sense that they are a story-telling device in the speaker’s narrative of Americans and terrorists, but ‘real’ efforts are also made by the discourse participants. Both the speaker and the audience play a tangible role in constructing foreign policy stories. The speaker must imagine and enunciate a script of signifiers in order to deliver a message to the audience. The audience in turn must play its own role in interpreting the sounds/images created by the speaker, and thereby constructing its own, imperfect image of the signified – which can then be relayed to further audiences. Discursive construction is therefore a social practice that demands the collaboration of multiple actors. Here the analysis is focussed on the text as articulated by the speaker. This is done because US foreign policy is in practice a top down process, with power concentrated in the presidency. Nevertheless, the president must be mindful of the audience. With this in mind, the discourse analysis presented here pays careful attention to the way in which Obama crafts his message for different audiences, whether these be domestic or foreign. Effective policy must anticipate and respond to the population. It is the speaker’s anticipation and response that is considered here, rather than the actual participation of the audience.

3. Key moments

The identification of change in the discursive structure of US foreign policy is aided and illustrated by the demarcation of a number of key events. These events are given prominence in the analysis due to their disruptive impact on US policy-identity constellations. Hansen defines key events as “those situations where ‘important facts’ manifest themselves on the political and/or the media agenda and influence the official policy-identity constellation or force the official discourse to engage with political opposition and media criticism” (2006, p. 28). These moments of destabilisation facilitate the diachronic tracing of discourses and narratives, allowing the researcher to understand the evolution of discursive structures, and how certain events led to changing articulations of policies and identities. Key events are those moments that require framing in order to render them meaningful. Theoretically, all moments must be fitted into a discourse in order for them to ‘make sense’. Nevertheless, some moments appear to fall into existing discourses more easily than others. Rarer, more problematic issues can appear to demand the president take on the role of the nation’s “narrator in chief” (Krebs, 2015, p. 49) and fit them into a plausible, familiar narrative. It is in these instances that strategic agency at the ‘micro level’ of individual official articulations is most visible, and the analyst is most able to work towards Williams’s goal of highlighting and therefore destroying the norm that is eventually produced and reproduced through the repetition of such linguistic patterns.

In addition to Obama’s inauguration in 2009, two particular major events have been used to structure the thesis into three corresponding time frames. The Arab popular uprisings of 2011 and the appearance of ISIL in 2014 correspond to the moments in Stuart Croft’s crisis cycle (2006) where established discourses become unsustainable in their existing form. The arrival of new international events “on stage without lines, without script, without character” (Lincoln, cf Holland, 2012, p. 1), required intervention, either to remodel the existing discourse so that it could make sense of unfolding events, or to impose a new dominant theory of the world. There is no violent cut-off date between the periods of analysis. As discourses progress organically over time, so these historic phases of production should be considered as permeable

and overlapping. This said, they are chosen and defined to enable an interrogation of official discourse that recognises the play of structure and elite agency in fixing the nature of American foreign policy from 2009 to 2016.

Beyond these two most major foreign policy events, other key moments can be identified through the appearance of new discursive markers/nodes in the discourse. Often this occurs in the immediate aftermath of what are ultimately framed as terrorist attacks – either at home or abroad, however they can also be seen in instances such as the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government in 2013 following which the US administration was forced to engage with opposition narratives that their own ‘red line’ had been crossed, and military intervention was therefore required. In such moments of discursive instability, American political culture demands that the president make an appearance in order to provide an official, authoritative voice on what has occurred (Krebs, 2015). This may happen on the same day as the event itself, or the president may delay the articulation of official understanding. Krebs labels these moments discursive opportunities to establish a strategically helpful narrative, and observes that the longer the president holds off on making an intervention, the more difficult (s)he may find it to impose such a narrative or craft a useful story, as media and rival political actors can hope to take advantage of the discursive void. Furthermore, the head of state may be perceived to be neglecting their duty if an intervention is not made within the ‘acceptable’ window. Again, it is here that the play of strategic agency is most visible, both in the timing of the intervention, and in the particular use of narrative and identity that is deployed to make sense of new events. Where these narratives and constructed identities show continuity with existing dominant discursive structures, the analyst assumes this demonstrates either the hold of structure over the political actor, and/or that the actor sees a strategic political advantage in appealing to related cultural archives in building his/her message. When the opposite is true, and ‘new’ narratives disrupt the existing structures, the analyst can attribute this to the play of elite agency. Furthermore, where new patterns of identity/threat construction appear briefly only to later be replaced by more conventional narratives of US foreign policy, this would

suggest an attempt to achieve change on the part of the agent which is eventually neutralised or strategically abandoned in the face of powerful structures.

It may be the case that significant national or global incidents appear to require presidential remarks in and of themselves. Nonetheless, the purpose of critical discourse analysis is to disrupt the kind of common sense that makes this appear so, and to denaturalise the grammar of official interventions. The analyst must avoid assuming that a violence is political or terroristic in nature and therefore obviously requires intervention, independent of cultural and political norms. Despite this, certain moments require official framing because of these norms, because of the grammar of American politics, and because of the failure of existing narratives to explain what has happened, and inevitably because of the political danger of rival actors framing events into strategically unfavourable counter-narratives. For the purposes of analysis the identification of such moments is aided not just by the potential appearance of new discursive markers, but also by the structure of the White House routine. Where the collection of texts deviates from the usual agenda of Weekly Addresses, bilateral meetings and awards ceremonies, to include the president's remarks on a given occurrence, it is likely that the administration chose to exercise their rhetorical prerogative. In short, where the president deviates from routine, this often suggests the occurrence of an important event. Of course the process of framing and narrative building is usually spread over different interventions, and often appears in routine events. Aside from such instances as the State of the Union address, the administration frequently uses routine speaking events to make reference to ongoing issues. In these cases, NVivo is again efficient in identifying where signifiers reappear in routine instances, and how they have developed therein.

Key moments are ultimately characterised by the appearance of 'new', or previously forgotten signifiers or linguistic arrangements that are used by speakers to make sense of new events. The analysis asks how discursive patterns change with articulation and seeks to locate 'new' constructions of identities and threats that emerge from these moments. Hansen writes that the "stable links" that sustain policy-identity constellations "are constructed through and

in response to discursive practices, practices which vary and depend on human agency, not on abstract functionalities” (2006, p. 27). In this case, the practices of identity and threat construction that contribute to the (re)stabilisation of such constellations following key moments, are the sites in which power, structure and agency can be seen (Shepherd, 2008, p. 24). In this way the analysis is able to trace changes in the discursive structures of US foreign policy between 2009 and 2016, and to identify the changes to official constructions of identity and threat that occur within this.

Conclusion

This thesis adopts a deconstructive method, focussing on the construction of foreign policy-identity constellations in official discourse. This method follows the models provided by Lene Hansen and Jack Holland, and adopts analytical techniques used by Roxanne Doty (1993), John Paul Gee (2011), and Paul Chilton (2004). The research is especially interested in the political possibility of American foreign policy and follows Doty and Holland in asking ‘how possible’ questions, instead of ‘why’ elites made their decisions. To this end, the analysis focusses on the discursive construction and (re)production of policy-identity constellations around key events or moments in US foreign policy. This focus on key events, as developed by Hansen and Krebs is particularly interested in those moments in which the discursive environment is disrupted or unsettled after the occurrence of new events which have yet to be “rendered in the terms of the familiar” (Campbell, 1998, p. 4) and “narrativized” so that they can be “understood” (Edkins, 2013, pp. 284-5).

The research model is designed, following Williams’s Foucauldian instruction, to investigate, as far as it is possible, the “entire discursive practice” of official foreign policy articulations on the Middle East in the period of Obama’s presidency (1999, p. 258), and to examine the strategic agency of the president and surrounding elites, in seeking to narrativise reality. As a result, the corpus of analysed texts is comprised of 4,730 speeches made by the president between 2009 and 2016, with the existing literatures on Orientalism and US foreign policy discourses on security and the War on Terror, providing the historical context. The

analysis engages critically with official constructions of otherness, threat and danger through a discourse analysis of these texts. It makes an important contribution to the literature by identifying moments of (in)stability in the discourse, and tracing ‘new’ articulations of foreign policy-identity constellations that ultimately create and sustain the ‘common sense’ of US foreign policy discourse on the Middle East. By ‘making strange’ instances of presupposition, predication and subject positioning, it becomes possible to unpack micro-level processes of linking and differentiation in official articulations that (re)produce identities of self and Other, as well as security and threat. In doing this, the study also highlights macro-level changes to the discursive structures of US foreign policy that can be perceived in patterns across the larger corpus of texts.

By employing this analytical model, this thesis will therefore provide a greater understanding of the continuity and changes present in official US discourse on the Middle East between 2009 and 2016. Furthermore, by engaging with this problem from the discursive ontological standpoint and post-colonialist critical lens established in the previous chapters, it will also help to understand how President Obama strategically manipulated foreign policy discourses and narratives to make his decisions politically possible while grappling with long-standing structures of US foreign policy. The presence of strategic agency is visible in moments of change in the discourse. Structural constraints on agency are identified through the presence of official narratives, basic discourses and identity constellations that briefly challenge the ‘common sense’ of US foreign policy, but are later silenced, modified or replaced by articulations which ultimately reinforce hegemonic discourses. Finally, in cases where this initial challenge is absent, we can judge that the actor either recognised but never sought to contest these structures – whether because they were perceived to be too powerful to contest or too strategically useful to ignore – or alternatively that their ‘common sense’ had been internalised.

The outcome of this analysis is set out in the following three chapters. Each of these is centred on a particular key event in the timeframe of US foreign policy discourse. Chapter Five

focusses on texts originating in the initial period of Obama's presidency, taking his election and inauguration as a key moment, and investigating the official construction of Middle Eastern reality in the period following this. This chapter investigates the construction of identities of self and Other around the Middle East Peace Process, and the Iran negotiations due to their importance to Obama's foreign policy, as claimed by the president and his close advisors and confidants. Evidently, both of these processes continue throughout the period of Obama's presidency, however the focus here is predominantly on articulations before the Arab Spring and ISIL became "distractions" from Obama's foreign policy priorities in the region and elsewhere (Goldberg, 2016). Chapter Six then covers the period from the start of the 'Arab Spring' in 2011 to the summer of 2014, in which ISIL began to be constructed as a major threat to (inter)national security. The final chapter then relays findings from the analysis of data covering the period of ISIL's 'arrival' on the world stage to January 20th 2017, when Obama handed over the presidency to Donald Trump.

Chapter five: America, Western progress and the Middle East

The previous chapters served to outline the analytical underpinnings of this thesis, with the first providing an historical and academic context for the research, the second establishing the discursive ontology at the core of the investigation and the third situating the study within the critical traditions of post-colonialism and critical security studies. With the methodological framework established in the previous chapter in place, the empirical findings of this thesis are relayed in the following three. These chapters follow a structure which is both thematic and broadly chronological, with the first dedicated to the deconstruction of the core narratives of self and Other dominating Obama's Middle Eastern policy as he enters office, and the second and third tracing the structural changes to US foreign policy discourse in response to two key events: the Arab Spring of 2011, and the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from 2014. Each of these chapters traces prominent constructions of self and Middle Eastern otherness around these events, as they appear in the narratives and policy-identity constellations employed by the Obama administration to communicate its favoured policies at these times. Chapter Five does this through the lens of US policy on the Middle East Peace Process and Iran's nuclear capabilities – two policies which (along with the campaign against al Qaida and Osama bin Laden) were priorities for Obama in the Middle East upon entering office (Lynch, 2011c; Rhodes, 2019, pp. 11-20). Chapter Six then examines the identities and narratives that were deployed by officials to make sense of the dramatic street protests of 2011, and the political turmoil across North Africa and the Middle East that followed. Finally, Chapter Seven traces dominant constructions of self and Other with regards to terrorism, taking the rise of ISIL as a key moment, and considering how these identities operated both before and after this event.

This structure is adopted because it enables the tracing of changing constructions of self and Other over three timeframes, following the key moments/events approach set out by Lene Hansen (2006) and employed by Ron Krebs (2016). By examining how constructions of otherness in the Middle East develop to accommodate new events, the study responds to the

two research questions. Throughout these chapters, the thesis will demonstrate that the core narrative underlying President Obama's discourse on the Middle East and the Muslim World is an Orientalist one that opposes the American/Western self and the Arab/Muslim Other. Having said that, this narrative does not remain constant throughout the eight years, and the specific constructions of otherness that support it are also subject to change, first in making sense of the Arab Spring, and then again in narrativising the violence of ISIL.

Over the next three chapters, the thesis argues there is a constant 'latent' Orientalist logic which provides the foundations for Obama's discourse on the Middle East from 2009 until the end of his leadership. This stems from the pervasive influence of longstanding Orientalist structures on US foreign policy (Little, 2008; 2016; Nayak & Malone, 2009), and causes Obama to (re)produce an image of the Middle East, and its inhabitants, according to a system of ontological and epistemological differences similar to that unravelled by Said. According to this logic, Obama represents 'good' Muslims and Arabs as wanting the same things as the Americans and Europeans, but still sees them and their leaders as childish and impulsive, and therefore prone to favour short-term gains over long-term progress, and likely to blame the US and Israel for domestic problems. This latent Orientalist discourse also (re)produces civilisational and stagnation narratives (Khalidi, 2004; Kumar, 2012; Tuastad, 2003) by speaking of Muslims as the heirs to 'great civilisations' that have been held back due to bad leadership and a lack of Enlightenment or reformist values. The 'rescue' narrative (Khalid, 2011; Saleh, 2016) is also prominent in this discourse, as 'good' Muslims, both male and female, are portrayed as hostages held by tyrannical leaders, who would deny them their universal rights. Finally, a gendered Orientalist discourse which sustains the 'oppressed Muslim woman' identity (Brittain, 2007; Khalid, 2011; Zine, 2007) is also present here. In each of these cases, Obama and his administration constructed policy-identity constellations which cast America as supporting the liberation of a sympathetic image of the Muslim/Arab Other. Through these constellations, they ended up speaking for (and therefore over) the very people they claimed to be emancipating.

As time passes, this apparently unthinking foundation of Orientalist logic is joined by a more obvious and unapologetic (re)production of colonialist tropes. These tropes became more pronounced after the Arab Spring and then were clearly deployed strategically in the official response to ISIL. The use of civilised/barbarian identities was most obvious here in the portrayal of tyrannical Arab dictators during the Arab Spring and brutal, barbaric terrorists throughout the Arab Winter. This was reinforced by a growing narrative throughout the Arab Winter that saw Muslims as inherently risky (see Breen-Smyth, 2014; Heath-Kelly, 2012; 2013) due to their potential to fall back into ‘tribal’ and ‘sectarian’ (and therefore violent and pre-Western) identities. From 2015, as attacks on European and American soil become increasingly frequent and devastating, this was opposed by a construction of the self that was even more marked by its civilisational superiority. This can be seen especially in the aftermath of the November 2015 attacks in the French capital.

This thesis argues that the first of these variations on Orientalism is the result of structural influence on elite agency, following which the ‘common sense’ that the Muslim/Arab world and the Middle East is ontologically different from the West was seen as unproblematic by US decision makers and therefore went unchallenged in official rhetoric, and thereby justified intervention, and more generally a kind of imperialistic paternalism. By contrast, the second, more explicit or manifest form of Orientalism (Bassil, 2019; Said, 1995, pp. 201-225), which grew more dominant over the course of the Obama presidency, occurred as a result of strategic elite action, and was used to justify American military intervention in Libya, Syria and Iraq.

The current chapter will explore the boundary between East and West in Obama’s early discourse, and attempt to make clear the metanarrative of civilisational progress that the 44th president (re)produces. The chapter argues that an overarching narrative of East to West human progress supplies the common sense, or accepted knowledge to America’s interactions with the Other in the first years of the Obama administration. This narrative relies on articulations of self and various Others, and the chapter proceeds to unravel the policy-identity constellations at play in its articulation by focussing on three separate but interrelated spheres. The first part

of this chapter focusses on the articulation of national self as it can be perceived in speeches following Obama's election and inauguration, announcing the 'new era of engagement' in American foreign policy. The second and third focus on the articulation of self, Other, security and threat in official speech on the Middle East Peace Process and Iran respectively.

As stated above, these latter two issues are singled out due to their importance to Obama's early foreign policy in the Middle East. The policy-identity constellations he constructed in talking about both issues are indicative of his world view on democracy, progress and East/West relations. Furthermore, this chapter will show that America's relationship with Iran and Israel are fundamentally intertwined as Iranian and Israeli identities were both opposed and co-constitutive in US foreign policy discourse under Obama.

This chapter contributes to the thesis and the literature on US foreign policy by making three observations on the official (re)production of self and Other identities in the Middle East. First, it argues that the construction of the national self drew upon Western and Enlightenment ideals of reason, maturity, universalism and tolerance. Secondly, and in line with this vision of the self, the research shows how the Obama presidency was framed as an historic moment in the progress of the nation, during which a 'new era' of US foreign policy could begin. Following the logic of American Exceptionalism, and as a consequence of the universalist ideal, this historic moment was framed as important not just in the development of the nation, but also as representative of a more global human progress. Third, this chapter argues that two distinct but connected Eastern Others were produced, through processes of linking and differentiation, in opposition to the national self. These Others both drew upon archives of Orientalist discourses, and (re)produced 'good' and 'bad' Muslim/Arab identities. The 'good' Other identity was much closer to the national self (Hansen, 2006, pp. 33-48), linked to it through the ideal of universalism and through the 'basic truth' that all humans yearn for the same things, regardless of culture, religion or geography. Still, its construction relied upon a latent Orientalist narrative in which the Eastern Other was seen as backwards or stagnant behind its European counterpart, immature, and in need of Western assistance in its own

empowerment. This image of otherness can be seen in the administration's representations of 'ordinary people' across the Middle East. Meanwhile, the 'bad' identity was used to represent selfish and corrupt leaders, who put their own interests before that of their populations. As such it was opposed both to the national self, and to the image of the 'good' Other. This identity was more obviously taken from Orientalist archives of Eastern tyranny and Islamic/Arab resistance to Western styles of governance. It can be seen most obviously in official portrayals of the Iranian regime, but also in the description of organisations such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

Through the (re)production of these various identities, the chapter finally argues that Obama articulated a geography of the West as a place of learning, progress and democracy, in opposition to an Eastern region of backwardness, oppression and childish otherness. Furthermore, the construction of the Orient as a place of former 'great civilisations' sustained a narrative of East to West progress in which 'stagnant' Muslim societies had failed to develop at the same pace as the West. In doing so, he supported an Orientalist 'civilisational' narrative that saw Western societies as more advanced than their Muslim and Arabic counterparts, and decontextualised this from the history and influence of colonisation. This narrative of East to West progress has historically enabled Western policy in the Middle East, by establishing a discursive context in which Western state actors have moral and intellectual authority over the Muslim world (Biswas, 2018). In the Middle East, Israel was closely linked to America whilst Iran served as its polar opposite. Meanwhile, Palestinians and other groups of 'ordinary (Muslim/Arab) people' were left to occupy a middle ground of otherness, separate from the maturity and seriousness of the West, but assumed to desire the same things, and therefore accorded the potential to narrow this gap. This potential was aided by Obama's exemplarist version of American Exceptionalism (Brands, 1998) that imagines the self as more advanced as a result of human effort and design rather than by providence or divine right. As a result, it left open the possibility that Arab peoples and societies may attain a Western level of advancement, provided they commit to a level of seriousness, maturity and cooperation defined and dictated by the Obama White House. Iran, in contrast, was consistently portrayed as a direct threat to Israel's security via its nuclear programme and its ties to Hamas and Hezbollah.

Conversely, Israeli aggression was justified by its proximity to dangerous neighbours, of which Iran was imagined to be the most belligerent and unstable.

As the remaining chapters of the thesis demonstrate, these initial processes of identity construction are key to understanding the development of Obama's foreign policy discourse throughout his tenure as president. Chapter Six will build on the analysis relayed here by tracing how these various identities were adapted and changed to make sense of the Arab Spring. It will argue that whilst the core identities, broadly speaking, remained in place, they nonetheless underwent important changes through and after 2011, that served to make politically possible the idea of Western intervention in the Middle East. Chapter Seven will then unpack how these identities changed again in response to the rise of ISIL.

1. Qualities of the self: An ethical but rational America

The 'Obama Doctrine', to the extent that it has been defined, has been often been portrayed as pragmatic and anti-ideological (Gerges, 2012; Kloppenberg, 2011; Lizza, 2011). In his campaign and during the early years of his presidency, Obama encouraged an image of himself as a critic of the US foreign policy establishment, seeking to open new dialogues with old foes such as Iran, and bringing a more even-handed approach to the Middle East (Gerges, 2012). According to James Mann, his team of aides (dubbed the 'Obamians') consciously saw themselves as "a new generation in American foreign policy" (Mann, 2012, p. xix), opposing and resisting the sprawling 'blob' of the US foreign policy establishment (Rhodes, 2019; Samuels, 2016). The extent to which this initial independence existed, and if so, how far it was eroded by the establishment and domestic opposition remains contested, but authors including Gerges (2012), Lizza (2011) and Walt (2017) have documented how Obama's supposedly reactive foreign policy was overtaken by the unravelling of Israeli/Palestinian negotiations and the sudden Arab uprisings of 2011 – leading some to accuse the administration of lacking any strategy in the region (Lynch, 2011c).

This chapter argues that the Obama doctrine was underpinned by a subjective and ideological understanding of US/Muslim relations. Furthermore, it makes the case that Obama's rhetoric (re)produces identities of self and Other that are informed by the colonialist and racialised discourses highlighted in Chapter Three. In the case of the self, from the very start of his presidency, Obama (re)created an image of America as a civilised and enlightened actor on the world stage. This rational image, which draws on both Exceptionalist and Orientalist discursive traditions (see Nayak & Malone, 2009), was strategically useful in creating a narrative of changeover from the "excesses" of the Bush era War on Terror to the "more morally acceptable, more focussed and more effective" foreign policy of the Obama administration – even where the two president's policies appeared to be in alignment (McCracken, 2011, p. 781; see also Jackson, 2011; Zalman & Clarke, 2009). Simultaneously, those actors and bodies which stood in the way of the president's vision were accused of unseriousness, childishness, and even of co-opting post- and de-colonial arguments for short-term political gains. This portrayal of the irrational Other also served a strategic purpose in redirecting the blame for any political disruption away from the Obama administration. The following section of this chapter engages with the image of the self that is constructed through the discourse and rhetoric of the Obama administration. These processes of identity construction are examined through the analytical lens of Lene Hansen's (2006) policy-identity constellations.

Discourse analysis of official texts from the first two years of Obama's presidency reveals an image of self constructed from three distinct but overlapping claims. First, the 44th presidency is imagined as an historic moment of positive change in the course of American foreign policy¹. Second, US foreign policy is tethered to the recognition of 'universal truths' and 'basic principles' of human nature – specifically, the desire of all peoples to enjoy predominantly negative freedoms regardless of faith or culture. This claim to universalism is itself rooted in the Exceptionalist tradition, which sees American democracy as uniquely

¹ This statement reinforces Obama's wider philosophical claims of linear human progress encapsulated in his favourite quote "the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice" (Hayes, 2018).

successful in achieving governance by the people and for the people (McCracken, 2003; Nayak & Malone, 2009; Restadt, 2014). Third, a final theme places reason and dialogue at the heart of American diplomacy. These distinct strands of foreign policy discourse were superimposed and intertwined so as to sustain the idea of Obama's America as a rational yet ethical actor, furthering the progressive course of human history not just because it was the right thing to do, but because it was in its national interest. This idea of 'enlightened self-interest' (Anderson, 2014) had the dual functions of selling internationalist policies to a reluctant, post-Bush domestic audience, and sanitising continued military action under a humanitarian, universalist banner.

These supposedly objective truths were neither invented by the Obama administration, nor were they entirely pre-existent. Instead, they were the result of decades of intertextual development and (re)production of the kind described by Campbell (1998) and Der Derian & Shapiro (1989). This thesis argues Obama's statements of 'truth' were drawn from deep archives of Wilsonian and Jeffersonian articulations on the national self, created by his predecessors and the wider US foreign policy establishment. Furthermore, these drew on and (re)produced colonialist discourses on the superior, enlightened self as explored by Little (2019; 2016) Nayak & Malone (2009) and Tuastad (2003) amongst others. This first half of the chapter explores how the self was created along these lines before the second examines how this was contrasted with various Eastern Others in the cases of the Middle East Peace Process and the Iran nuclear negotiations. The chapter concludes by arguing these identities were strategically deployed by the president and members of the administration to promote hegemonic understandings of self and Other and thereby set the ideological ground rules (or 'common sense') of America's relationship and dealings with the rest of the world.

1.a. Change we can believe in: The Obama presidency as an historic moment

Barack Obama's first presidential campaign framed the 2008 election as an historic moment in the course of American (and world) history. His campaign book, *The Audacity of Hope*, and slogans ('Yes, we can' and 'Change we can believe in') framed the contest for the Oval Office

as something of a referendum on America's course in the 21st century (Desch, 2010; Parmar, 2011; Singh, 2012). In foreign policy terms however, the nature of the specific changes Obama sought to affect was often left open, with Obama often referring to himself as a “human Rorschach test” onto which observers could project any range of imagined policies (McCracken, 2011; Singh, 2012, pp. 21-38). The candidate Obama preferred to campaign on domestic policy, with speeches like ‘A More Perfect Union’ articulating a Jeffersonian desire to prioritise the pursuit of democracy and economic prosperity at home (Holland, 2016; Mead, 2002; Obama, 2008a). Nonetheless, after seven years of aggressive wars on terrorism, the senator from Illinois's critical stance on the Iraq war, and his promises to engage with nations such as Cuba and Iran led him to appear more dovish than both Hillary Clinton – the establishment favourite in the Democrats primaries, and the Republican nominee, John McCain. Despite his reluctance to engage with ‘identity politics’, his decisive victory over McCain in November of 2008 was “hailed by many as symptomatic of a new-era of ‘post-racial’ politics” (Parmar & Ledwidge, 2017, p. 373; see also Pinderhughes, 2009). The discourse analysis presented in this chapter shows that despite Obama's reluctance during his campaign to talk about specific changes beyond the domestic frontier, the idea of the 44th presidency as a transformative moment was reproduced throughout Obama's first term in office, and often with regards to the potential for peace in the Middle East.

Throughout 2009, the White House put out a series of speeches in which the 44th presidency was presented either as coming at a pivotal moment in human history, or as representing an historically important event in its own right². This sense of rupture is built in part from Obama's own credentials – as the first Democrat President in eight years, the first black president ever, and a harsh critic of the previous administration's foreign policy – and in part from context of the time – most obviously characterised by the global financial crisis of 2008, but also by non-traditional or ‘21st century threats’, such as climate change, pandemics, cyber threats, nuclear proliferation and (of course) terrorism³. Building on the rhetoric of his campaign, Obama came

² Node: Progress\Obama presidency as historic moment, opportunity.

³ Node: Global security\21st century threats.

into the Oval Office using the same language of hope and optimism to sustain the idea that the moment of his presidency was one of historical importance. This was exemplified in his remarks to the joint session of congress:

As we stand at this crossroads of history, the eyes of all people in all nations are once again upon us – watching to see what we do with this moment; waiting for us to lead.

Those of us gathered here tonight have been called to govern in extraordinary times. It is a tremendous burden, but also a great privilege – one that has been entrusted to few generations of Americans. For in our hands lies the ability to shape our world for good or for ill.

Obama, 24 February 2009

Text 0041

Using Doty's (1993) methods for analysing foreign policy discourses, one can see how Obama used subject positioning and presupposition to develop the importance of the moment in the mind of the audience. The speaker positioned himself alongside Republican and Democrat representatives, and situated both temporally at the "crossroads of history" – implying a critical juncture in the course of America's development. To achieve this, he presupposed knowledge of the threat posed by the financial crash, and lay a moral imperative on the audience to act in cooperation with the speaker. The predicate "in extraordinary times" again amplified the gravity of the moment and elevated the discussion above the realm of ordinary politics (Buzan & al., 1998). The speakers, here and elsewhere, deployed the negative image of the financial crash and other security threats to systematically reinforce the notion that the current moment was, in one way or another crucial, to the development of the nation, and by extension, the world. Through the logic of binary opposition, the already revered status of the president was raised even further to meet the gravity of the occasion.

In Obama's language, these new 21st century threats were distinguished from previous dangers predominantly by their transnational quality. The experience of the global financial crash, and the potential for threats such as climate change, terrorism and nuclear proliferation to cross borders in the future was exploited by the president to enable him to speak in terms of

global, as well as national security⁴. For the domestic audience, the creation of this ‘new’ threat environment rendered the unilateralism of the Bush era obsolete. Instead, the transnational nature of these dangers were framed as leaving Obama’s preferred multilateralist doctrine of engagement and accommodation the only plausible foreign policy. According to Krebs and Lobasz’s (2007) framework, this is an example of rhetorical coercion, in which the speaker attempted to “remove the cultural and discursive materials that opponents might otherwise have access to in order to formulate a socially sustainable rebuttal” (Holland, 2013, p. 55). By building the importance of the moment, Obama forced his Republican opponents into a discursive space in which, by voicing dissent, they ran the risk of being seen by the public as failing to step up to the historic occasion or doing the ‘wrong’ thing with this critical moment.

The extract cited above is taken from a speech made to a domestic audience, however, Obama regularly articulated the same array of threats in front of international audiences (prominent examples include speeches to the UN General Assembly (Text 0374), at the G20 (Text 0377), and on accepting the Nobel Prize (Text 0486)). Once again, by making clear their transnational nature, Obama was able to exert his rhetorical authority over the audience. As before, by positioning himself, and by extension America, alongside international partners and in opposition to global threats, the speaker attempted to remove the discursive materials available to his potential opponents for dissent. As a result, a discursive space was created in which America’s allies could either engage with Obama’s multilateralist vision, or, within the logic of his global security narrative, be cast as irresponsibly pursuing their own narrow interests at the expense of the international community. Such potential nationalism was doubly ostracised – on the one hand for being selfish, short-sighted and irresponsible, and on the other for being stuck in a bygone (imaginary) era in which threats could be contained within sovereign state borders. In the language of subject positioning, Obama created temporal and ethical difference between himself and his potential opponents, placing America on the ‘right side of history’ and locating detractors in the less enlightened past (Hansen, 2006). As this

⁴ Node: Global security.

chapter will go on to show, the use of ethical and temporal difference to problematise hostile states, and especially Iran, was a recurrent trope in Obama's foreign policy discourse, which borrowed heavily from Orientalist portrayals of the Other.

The final theme used to push home the idea of the Obama presidency as an historic moment was that of the potential for a new era of progress. Despite the 'new' dangers of the 21st century, in Obama's early language, history was inextractable from human advancement. This was true on a technological level, as new developments in communications and social media were constantly narrativised in a positive way⁵. It was also articulated on a more philosophical level as the 'new era' was linked to ideals of peace, democracy and opportunity and differentiated from the indignities of the past.

Speaking to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in May of 2009, Vice-President Joe Biden once again painted the 44th presidency as a pivotal moment in global affairs and linked America to its international allies. In this example however, the emphasis was placed on the positive potential Obama's presidency offered for the future of the planet:

A little over a hundred days ago, our country started on a new path. The citizens of this country made a very fundamental decision. And it began with the historic inauguration of the 44th President, Barack Obama, but it grew -- it grew out of the determination of millions of Americans who desperately wanted to change not only the direction of our country, but quite frankly, the trajectory that the world was on. That's what the Obama-Biden administration has set out to do, a lofty goal but an absolutely minimum required task -- to change the direction of this country and all the trajectory of the world. We not only want to do it here at home; we believe our fate is inextricably tied to the direction the world is moving in

Biden, 5 May 2009

Text 3560

Biden (re)produced an image of America and the world that hinged on the passage of time, and foregrounded the role of human agency in setting the course of history. He built on Obama's concept of choosing "what we do with [the] moment", and developed it into a

⁵ Node: Progress\Technology and Peace.

discussion on the trajectory of history and the nation. The language was that of decision-making and direction, with the election of the new president portrayed as a trigger-event, switching the tracks of American foreign (and domestic) policy for the better. The precise nature of the change was left unsaid in this text, nevertheless, the narrative that Obama's first term represented a pivotal moment in human and American history was overwhelming. This was also tied up in an incredibly optimistic belief in the power of ordinary people to generate positive change through the exercise of bottom-up democratic power – a belief supposedly validated by Obama's grassroots campaign victories over better financed 'establishment' candidates in 2008 (Levenshus, 2010; Panagopoulos & Francia, 2009; Stout, 2010)⁶. Within the context of this narrative of progress, the election of the first African-American president could only be interpreted as further proof of the upward arc of human development – epitomised in Obama's favourite paraphrasing of Martin Luther King Jr: "the arc of history is long, but it curves towards justice" (Barone, 2016). According to this logic, it stood to reason that the new administration would be instrumental in ensuring progress continue.

In the context of the Middle East, the meaning of the 'historic change' that Obama's administration intended to bring was most evident in the president's April 2009 address to the Turkish parliament, and the later June speech at Cairo University (Texts 0112; 0219). During his election campaign, Obama had promised to reach out to the Muslim World by delivering a major address from a 'Muslim country' within the first six months of his presidency. Titled 'A New Beginning', but allegedly referred to within the White House as "the Muslim Speech" (Rhodes, 2019, p. 51), the Cairo text in particular was an overt invitation to Muslims worldwide to put aside the "problems of the past" and commit to the road to Progress via open-dialogue with Obama's America. These texts also marked the new president's first interaction with the Middle East as well as his first major discursive intervention into the Orient.

⁶ See Parmar (2014) for a more critical evaluation of Obama's own establishment credentials and sources of funding in both the 2008 and 2012 election campaigns.

Again, the passage of time features heavily in the speaker's language. Here however, in contrast to the previous examples in which America was placed at the forefront of human progress, the emphasis is on the past achievements of the Muslim world:

I am honored to be in the timeless city of Cairo, and to be hosted by two remarkable institutions. For over a thousand years, Al-Azhar has stood as a beacon of Islamic learning; and for over a century, Cairo University has been a source of Egypt's advancement. And together, you represent the harmony between tradition and progress...

As a student of history, I also know civilization's debt to Islam. It was Islam – at places like Al-Azhar – that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment. It was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra; our magnetic compass and tools of navigation; our mastery of pens and printing; our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed.

Obama, 4 June 2009

Text 0219

The Cairo speech was positively received by liberal audiences, many of whom perceived it as demonstrating a marked difference from the Bush administration's more hawkish and less measured language on the Middle East (Hamid, 2017). Nonetheless, even at the start of his presidency, Obama's language was not entirely free from the influence of Orientalist tropes. John Hobson (2015, p. 83) has previously used Nicolas Guilhot's notion of 'conceptual proxies' to illustrate how the discursive opposition of tradition and progress (or modernity) have replaced older 'taboo' labels such as civilisation and backwardness that previously sustained the border between Europe and the Other in international theory. Reflecting on the speech in the final year of his presidency, Obama made these proxies clearer as he claimed one of the "real problems" faced by Muslims was that "some currents of Islam have not gone through a reformation that would help people adapt their religious doctrines to modernity" (Goldberg, 2016). Through statements such as these it becomes possible to see how Obama's discourse on the Middle East conformed to Said's (1995, p. 3) definition of Orientalism as a "style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and [...] 'the Occident'". Even as Obama attempted to reach out to the Other, his calls

for a new beginning remained rooted in the colonial logics of the past. Furthermore, the difference between East and West or Muslim and American/European worlds was most clearly articulated in temporal terms. Obama paid tribute to ‘Islamic’ contributions to ‘civilisation’, but consistently situated these in the past. An example of this was evident in the “light of learning” metaphor, which framed Eastern intellectual endeavours as “paving the way” for the European Renaissance and Enlightenment.

Obama’s defenders might claim that this was the opposite of a colonial narrative, in that it paid tribute to Islamic and Eastern civilisation and rejected the stereotypical portrayal of the Oriental Other as backwards and barbarian. Certainly, this would not fall under Said’s ‘manifest’ strand of Orientalism, which unapologetically portrays the East as inferior to the civilised and enlightened West. Neither does it fully correspond to the Huntingtonesque neo-Orientalism critiqued by Tuastad (2003). However, by situating the contributions of the Other in the past and (re)producing the idea that Muslim development has been held back by tensions between tradition and modernity, the speaker does not avoid reinforcing the narrative of stagnation that sustains much Orientalist thought (Khalidi, 2004, p. 17). As a result, it is likely here that Obama was unable to escape these discursive structures.

The Cairo speech also evidenced the power relations at play in Said’s definition of Orientalism as a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (1995, p. 3). Over the course of his 60-minute address, Obama’s agency was on display as he used his platform to map the Muslim world as he saw it, and thereby created the political landscape on which the next eight years of his foreign policy would play out, and the rules by which it would develop. Having separated the Muslim world from its non-Muslim counterpart, the most powerful man in the world proceeded to dissect it into a cartography of seven “core issues”: violent extremism, nuclear proliferation, women’s rights, religious freedom, the “situation between Israelis, Palestinians and the Arab world”, democracy and economic development. In each region, Obama diagnosed the problems of the Orient before constructing a cure, usually in the form of the adoption of ‘universal’ American values by Muslim countries

and peoples. Through these offers, the address was coloured by conditionality. The imagined difference/distance between East and West could be reduced thanks to the opportunity provided by the historic moment of Obama's presidency. Even so, this could only be achieved through the Other's willingness to adopt these universal American values. The following section outlines the nature of these values, deconstructs the intersubjective assumptions underlying their articulation, and begins to demonstrate how they were deployed to establish the framework for Obama's 'new era of engagement' with America's traditional foes.

1.b. Universalism and exceptionalism: Linking America to 'ordinary people' around the world

The United States has been one of the greatest sources of progress that the world has ever known. We were born out of revolution against an empire. We were founded upon the ideal that all are created equal, and we have shed blood and struggled for centuries to give meaning to those words – within our borders, and around the world. We are shaped by every culture, drawn from every end of the Earth, and dedicated to a simple concept: E pluribus unum – 'Out of many, one.'

Obama, 4 June 2009

Text 0219

In foreign policy terms, a key part of Obama's claim of difference from the Bush administration rested upon his willingness to exercise power multilaterally. In part, this was a pragmatic stance intended to minimise the costs of war in an era of relative decline and a harsh economic environment (Gerges, 2012; Kitchen, 2014; Quinn, 2014; Walt & Mearsheimer, 2016). In terms of rhetoric, however, this was sold to an international audience as part of the resetting of America's relationship with the wider world⁷. Especially in early speeches from 2009, Obama and his staff stressed that America was willing to listen to friends and adversaries, in order to renew the Atlantic partnership and engage with meaningful solutions to longstanding problems such as the Arab-Israeli conflict or Iran's pursuit of nuclear

⁷ Node: American self\Reset, new start.

capabilities⁸. This has been interpreted by some as evidence of a pragmatic, realist doctrine (Gerges, 2012, Lizza, 2011; Quinn, 2014), with the administration (prior to the Arab Spring) stressing its commitment to regional stability via its support for the sovereignty of key allies, irrespective of the democratic or authoritarian modes of governance⁹. Through his discourse and language however, from the moment of his inauguration, Obama constructed an ethical image of the national self from Jeffersonian republican ideals, and the tradition of American exceptionalism¹⁰. These American values were then (re)framed as ‘universal’ and were therein used to establish an ethical link between the US self identity and the ordinary people of the world. This section deconstructs this image and begins to demonstrate how it was used to set the terms of ‘engagement’ in Washington’s favour.

Although Obama came under fire from right-wing quarters for failing to show sufficient enthusiasm for the idea of American exceptionalism¹¹, he was still happy to discuss American values in front of domestic and international audiences alike. In part, the expression of values permitted the administration to differentiate itself from the Bush era, and further contribute to the narrative of the 44th presidency as a historic moment of change. Speakers insisted upon America’s exceptionality whilst reserving enough space to criticise the hard Wilsonians and neoconservatives of the Bush cabinet (see Mann, 2004; 2012) who, in their view, had seriously damaged Washington’s international reputation over the previous eight years. Obama frequently spoke of great nations occasionally ‘losing their way’, as a narrative emerged that America was indeed exceptional, but never perfect, as evidenced by some elements of the War on Terror and the ‘dumb’ war in Iraq¹². Where the previous administration had interpreted exceptionalism as exemptionalism from international law and other constraints faced by lesser

⁸ Nodes: Global security\American leadership\Engagement, listening; Muslim world\Listening and engagement; Progress\New era (of engagement); Iran\Dialogue.

⁹ Node: Middle East regional (in)stability\Realism.

¹⁰ Nodes: American leadership\Exceptionalism not declinism; American self\Exceptionalism.

¹¹ The president famously stated “I believe in American exceptionalism just as I suspect, the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism” to an audience in Strasbourg on 3 April 2009 (Text 0101), and was met with predictably hostile criticism from conservative commentators (Löfflmann, 2015, pp. 316-8). Gerges (2011) claims that after this, Obama paid more care and attention to the exceptionalist narrative.

¹² Node: American self\Exceptionalism\America is exceptional but not perfect.

nations (Ralph, 2007; 2013), Obama instead claimed to understand the importance of these laws and norms and the need for Washington to lead by example¹³. In line with this stance, the Bush-era use of ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ was condemned, and efforts were made to close the Guantanamo Bay detention centre – although internal accounts suggest these attempts were ultimately sacrificed for domestic political reasons, as Democrats prioritised the passage of the Affordable Care Act through Congress (Bruck, 2016). This ethical distancing of Obama from Bush allowed the former to maintain the optimism around his campaign for a domestic audience whilst also evidencing his commitment to the ‘new start’ between America and the wider world.

Aside from what could be described as the short-term political tactic of contrasting himself with Bush, Obama appears to have bought into the Jeffersonian interpretation of exceptionalism more broadly (Holland, 2016). Despite criticism of previous administrations, he frequently championed the values of the Republic, and articulated a vision similar to that of the ‘City on the Hill’ when describing the national self and the relationship he saw between the US and aspiring democratic movements across the globe¹⁴. Obama was not immune from the tendency of political figures to speak of the founding fathers and the model of democracy developed over the centuries since the revolution in quasi-religious tones (see Marsden, 2011; 2013). Within this narrative of Jeffersonian or exemplarist exceptionalism, certain aspects of American democracy were foregrounded as particularly worthy of reverence and emulation. These include the representative relationship between leaders and the population, as well as the freedom from Old World corruption and tyranny that the revolution sought to escape (Holland, 2016, pp. 41-2; Mead, 2002, pp. 174-218). Additionally, Obama sold the myth of a ‘post-racial’ America (Ledwidge & al., 2014) by celebrating American freedoms of expression, religion and enterprise, no matter the background of the individual.

¹³ Node: American self/Exceptionalism/Exemplarism.

¹⁴ Node: Jeffersonian mission to build democracy at home.

Even when speaking in realist terms (before conventional wisdom suggests the Arab Spring forced a change in the administration's stance on democracy promotion (Dueck, 2015; Gerges, 2012; Hamid, 2017)) Obama frequently suggested that the American model of governance was the best available, even if other nations must be allowed to pursue their own models independently. Of course, it is unlikely that any US president would ever deliberately and publicly talk down the American republican model or suggest another country had perfected a better system of democratic governance, nevertheless it is important to recognise Obama's Jeffersonian tendencies as these were crucial to the discursive processes that were deployed to link America to the ordinary people of the world, and which are deconstructed below. These links were constructed via an understanding of human nature that saw all people, regardless of political, cultural or historical context, as yearning for the specific set of rights and freedoms afforded under the American social contract. This, in turn, was informed by a teleological view of history which placed America and its democracy at the forefront of human progress.

The idea of human progress as an irresistible force¹⁵ was founded on the assumption of 'universal truths' and 'basic principles' of human existence, which bind the peoples of the world irrespective of nationality, culture or religion¹⁶. In Obama's foreign policy discourse, the American self is often a broad construction, linked to the universal desires of all peoples and individuals as well as to the unique qualities of the American nation or citizen (although it must be acknowledged that Obama is capable of delivering patriotic, verging on Jacksonian utterances on the national identity – especially when dealing with subjects such as terrorism or the military¹⁷). The repeated enunciation of universal truths and basic principles in US foreign policy discourse served to minimise the degree of otherness separating foreign Others from the American self (Hansen, 2006). The US under Obama recognised and (re)produced a ground level of human commonalities that linked ordinary people across the globe. As a result, a universalist or transnational identity was (re)produced.

¹⁵ Node: Progress.

¹⁶ Nodes: Global security/basic truths; Universalism.

¹⁷ Node: Jacksonianism; see also Chapter Seven.

The core link between America and the peoples of the world is particularly visible in texts delivered to international audiences, such as the UN General Assembly (UNGA) or the Nobel Committee (Text 0486). For example, Obama stated to the UNGA:

I pledge that America will always stand with those who stand up for their dignity and their rights – for the student who seeks to learn; the voter who demands to be heard; the innocent who longs to be free; the oppressed who yearns to be equal.

Obama, 23 September 2009

Text 0374

Here, the transnational identity was formed by minimising the ethical distance between America and the ordinary people of any given country. The speaker foregrounded liberal concepts such as dignity, rights, equality and democracy¹⁸, and (re)created a link between America, whose exceptionality stemmed from its success in pioneering these ideals (McCriskin, 2003; Restad, 2014), and the less fortunate peoples of the world, who aspired to have such opportunities¹⁹. The link came from the apparent universal human desires for freedom and equality, dignity and education, democratic engagement, and economic opportunity (or free-market capitalism) and inevitably also suggested a negative Other identity in the shape of the tyrants and other corrupt forces that denied the people their rights and freedoms. These particular processes of linking and differentiation were informed by the exemplarist tradition of American exceptionalism (Brands, 1998; McCriskin, 2003, p. 2). Rather than adopt the vindicationist tone of his predecessor, Obama followed in the tradition of Alexis de Tocqueville, in emphasising the uniqueness of the republic, and the example it set to the rest of the world. In this vision, America's exceptionalism lies in its democratic model of self-governance, and its independence from entangling alliances.

This narrative takes its roots partly from Jeffersonian and Wilsonian traditions foreign policy traditions (see Tucker, 1993). Before Obama, both George W Bush and Bill Clinton saw

¹⁸ Nodes: American self\Commitment to democracy; Global Security\Human rights; Values central to USFP; Values central to USFP\Dignity.

¹⁹ Node: Universalism\Aspiration and opportunity.

democracy promotion (and economic expansion) as a key American interest (see Ambrose & Brinkley, 2011; Hyland 2009), with Bush's 'Freedom Agenda' famously claiming to eliminate the difference between the nation's values and interests (Gerges, 2012, p. 72). Understandably wary of the anti-American sentiment generated by the neoconservative approach to democratisation, Obama spins a narrative whereby foreign peoples are free to choose their own path to progress.

Democracy cannot be imposed on any nation from the outside. Each society must search for its own path, and no path is perfect. Each country will pursue a path rooted in the culture of its people and in its past traditions... There are basic principles that are universal; there are certain truths which are self-evident – and the United States of America will never waver in our efforts to stand up for the rights of people everywhere to determine their own destiny.

Obama, 23 September 2009

Text 0374

Here, the universalist narrative serves the purpose of disguising the Western, liberal cultural frame in which 'democracy promotion' is embedded. The speaker developed the idea of a hands off, *laissez-faire* American foreign policy, in which all societies were free to pursue their natural ambitions according to their cultural preferences. Universal principles and core truths about human beings were presented as the independent variables ensuring that humanity progresses forwards, so long as selfish tyrants are kept at bay. Washington need not strong-arm the world into accepting neoliberalism, because Western liberal society was simply the benign culmination of fundamental and universal human wants. Nevertheless, there was still a clear power structure at play here, as Obama, on behalf of America, spoke for (and over) the people whose desires he claimed to understand. By insisting on the universality of American values, he removed the possibility of dissent by essentially dismissing any critical speaker as unrepresentative of 'real' people. As a result, even as he allowed that "each society must search for its own path", he established the existence of certain constraints beyond which deviation from the American model would become unacceptable.

The (constructed) benevolence of Western liberal society can be seen especially when dealing with European partners. Whether in the context of NATO partnerships or on a bilateral basis, Obama regularly emphasised the ‘shared values’²⁰ which linked the identities of America and its European allies, referring to the acknowledgment of the same universal truths as outlined above, as well as the common commitment to representative democracy. This linking process was consolidated by the articulation of shared histories and shared sacrifices in developing and defending these values²¹, with regular references to common experiences of the Second World War, the Cold War, and the War on Terrorism, or more historically, to the roles played by nations such as France in the founding of the American state.

The claim that these values were universal allowed the speaker to reject suggestions of Eurocentricism. The extract below demonstrates how this framing was used to dismiss the anti-imperialist critique of Western hard and soft power:

It was this insight that drove drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights after the Second World War... And yet too often, these words are ignored. For some countries, the failure to uphold human rights is excused by the false suggestion that these are somehow Western principles, foreign to local cultures or stages of a nation's development.

Obama, 10 December 2009

Text 0486

Cultural differences, although acknowledged, were presented as secondary to universal truths: humans cannot be denied “the right to speak freely or worship as they please; choose their own leaders or assemble without fear”. Furthermore, these universal truths were linked to the ideal of peace, to the extent that European post-war freedom and liberal democracy were held responsible for post-war peace, and America was said to have “never fought a war against a democracy” (ibid). This ultimately (re)produced and sustained the intellectual foundation for a neoliberal ‘end of history’ (see Fukuyama, 1992), and a transnational identity that was closely linked to the self. Having created a starting point from supposed universal human aspirations,

²⁰ Node: Global security\Multilateral defence based on shared values.

²¹ Nodes: Global security\ Shared history; International cooperation\Shared sacrifices.

and identified a popular hunger for democratisation and economic liberalism in Iran and the Middle East, Obama produced the logical conclusion that the non-Western world was destined to surrender to the Western democratic model, as tyrannical governments succumbed to the democratic demands of their populations. America then, only needed to offer encouragement and the occasional helping hand to the ‘ordinary’ people of the world as they worked to transcend the restrictions of illiberal politics.

The existence of a transnational identity, as well as its proximity to the national self, can be perceived in Obama’s acceptance of the Nobel Prize in 2009. In his acceptance speeches, the president was forced to marry American leadership and liberal militarism with the pacifist ideals of the Nobel committee. Obama squared this circle by linking America and the world together, via the United Nations and the Nobel Committee, and opposing these to the selfishness of individual nations and leaders. As a result, the international identity was prominent in both of Obama’s acceptance speeches. Speaker, nation and people were linked through the same universal values and basic aspirations – which were solidified into a respect for democracy and human rights. Meanwhile, (unjust) war, nuclear weapons, tyranny and illiberalism were all othered, both ethically and temporally.

I do not view [the Prize] as a recognition of my own accomplishments, but rather as an affirmation of American leadership on behalf of aspirations held by people in all nations...

I also know that this prize reflects the kind of world that [previous laureates], and all Americans, want to build – a world that gives life to the promise of our founding documents...

And that is why I will accept this award as a call to action – a call for all nations to confront the common challenges of the 21st century.

Obama, 9 October, 2009

Text 0395

In his later official acceptance speech (Text 0486), Obama used the concept of Just War to differentiate (acceptable) American and international interventions from historic cases of (unacceptable) empire building and unprovoked aggression. In doing so, the president embraced the great liberal tradition of using the examples of 1930s fascism and the Second

World War to imbue his own actions with a borrowed sense of moral imperativeness (see Jackson 2005; 2006; Lawler, 2002). Along with the defeat of fascism symbolised by WW2, the fall of the Soviet Empire and the Berlin Wall were recalled to illustrate the progressive arc of history. Ideals of “liberty and self-determination, equality and the rule of law” were said to be on the advance, coupled with a rise in free-market capitalism that again gifted a Fukuyama-esque ‘end of history’ dynamic to Obama’s early discourse. Crucially, these interventions were defended through the securitisation of the transnational identity. Just War was presented as a necessary response to unjust war, which posed an existential threat to ordinary people. Responsible, enlightened nations of the West had no choice but to intervene when backwards, violent regimes of the third world rejected international norms and law. America’s identity, and the supposedly benign nature of its own military power came from its embodiment of universal, liberal ideals. In this narrative, the US acted not for imperialistic reasons or for the pursuit of power but because it was morally right, and because, as Obama claimed in his 2010 State of the Union address, its “destiny is connected to those beyond our shores” (Text 0530). For these reasons, America took “science and education and innovation” to “Muslim communities”, and helped “developing countries to feed themselves” (ibid). There was also a neoliberal economic aspect to this argument, in which the expansion of free trade and open markets was read as increasing the well-being, and opportunities available to ordinary people both at home and abroad. This in turn was seen as reducing the likelihood of people contributing positively to tolerant and inclusive societies rather than being radicalised into extremism²².

The narratives unpacked above demonstrate how the ethical aspects of the American self were discursively constructed, and how they were pivotal in establishing and maintaining close links between this and the transnational identity of ‘ordinary people’ across the globe. Under Obama however, an equally important part of the self identity came from a discourse of rationalism. The section below evidences the centrality of rationalism in the American self and

²² Nodes: Violent extremism\Deprivation breeds extremism.

explores how this was deployed to lend authority to the speaker over less ‘serious’, and more childish Others.

1.c. Enlightened self-interest: A rational, ethical foreign policy

The narratives of universalism, exceptionalism, and the Obama presidency as an historic moment supported and were supported by the main theme of the administration’s early foreign policy: America’s liberal values existing in harmony with a rational and self-interested approach to the rest of the world²³. Obama developed a liberal view of the world, in which states were seen as capable of cooperation, and institutions capable of overcoming anarchy, because of shared interests on the one hand, and the basic and universal truths outlined above on the other. In the first respect, the new range of 21st century threats outlined above and the increased interdependence of societies across a globalised planet was taken as proof that the nations of the world had no choice but to cooperate if they intended to secure their own national interests. From this logic, Obama articulated a narrative according to which it was in America’s national interest to engage with international partners and pursue multilateral solutions to transnational problems²⁴. In the second case, the core belief in universal basic truths allowed for the characterisation of a transnational identity which was so closely related to that of the American self that the promotion of liberal democratic values, freedom and self-governance by the US could be read as synonymous with the rational pursuit of national security by Washington. According to this logic, the liberation of ordinary people from anti-democratic regimes across the world made it more likely that governments would eventually be formed whose members saw their own values and interests as allying with those of America²⁵.

Obama’s discourse on this subject echoed the Wilsonian tradition in deliberately narrowing the imagined space between ‘soft’ liberalism and ‘hard’ realism (Gerges, 2012, p. 72). In

²³ Nodes: Global Security\American leadership\Realism, idealism balance.

²⁴ Node: Global security\Multilateralism based on shared interests.

²⁵ Nodes: Global security\Basic truths\Basic truths are foundations of peace; Global security\Basic truths\Universal desire for freedom and opportunity.

Holland's words, there was a "heartfelt assumption" here that "inside every enemy, there is an American waiting to get out" (2016, p. 41). There was also a Hamiltonian streak present, which according to Mead (2002, pp. 99-131), recognises the importance of human rights and liberal institutions, but sees the maintenance and expansion of international trade and free markets as the bedrock of both American economic power and global peace and stability²⁶. Above all, Obama sought to portray his America as a superpower that was rational as well as being ethical.

The 'new era' heralded by the 44th presidency was (linguistically) marked apart in terms of foreign policy by the new administration's willingness to engage old enemies as well as allies, and to 'listen' where the previous government had dictated aggressive doctrines such as the Freedom Agenda and the War on Terror²⁷. White House staff consistently talked of the importance of communication, and of their receptiveness to the needs of the rest of the international community, with a recurring narrative forming to claim that diplomacy and deals between nations were the correct route to peace²⁸.

These themes developed an image of a rational and pragmatic foreign policy, which was earnest in seeking to make the world a better place but remained happily unencumbered by ideology. This sold a foreign policy rooted in dialogue and diplomacy, and relying heavily on the idea that even the most anti-American of regimes – such as Iran, Cuba, Venezuela and perhaps even North Korea – would put aside decades of political and cultural enmity as they recognised the strength of Washington's arguments for cooperation. When appealing to such traditional enemies for cooperation, Obama showed a strategic agency in putting aside the language of shared values, histories and sacrifices which he frequently used when addressing allies, and instead foregrounded the shared interests that could be found between any parties. Hostile or 'repressive' regimes were claimed to require a new path or an open door to bring them in from the cold, and Obama constructed a narrative in which the identification and pursuit of these common interests was the means for new cooperation.

²⁶ Node: Hamiltonianism.

²⁷ Nodes: Global Security\American leadership\Engagement and listening.

²⁸ Node: Global security\Diplomacy and deals are the route to peace.

Whilst acknowledging that “painstaking diplomacy” was needed to engage with difficult parties, Obama staked his doctrine of engagement on the assumption that the international community could persuade them that cooperation would lead to mutual benefits. Progress, he argued, came from rational and pragmatic outreach, rather than emotional outrage and moral righteousness, or the “satisfying purity of indignation” (Obama, Text 0486). The foundations of this world view lie in the Enlightenment belief that objective truth can be reached through rational debate – a belief that was articulated throughout the discourse²⁹.

The portrayal of the self as rational, reasonable and capable of solving problems through debate and dialogue was central to the construction of the European self in colonialist and Orientalist discourses (Bilgin, 2005; Kumar, 2012). The contrast between the Western rational self and the immature, impulsive Other was an important element of the power dynamic between colonised and coloniser that enabled imperial violence and supported the administration of Eastern territories. By framing the self as inherently reasonable, the speaker was able to lay the blame for any failure in dialogue and/or cooperation at the door of the Other, and thereby absolve themselves of any responsibility for negative outcomes. This pattern can also be seen in Obama’s discourse. Where engagement failed or looked likely to fail, this could be blamed on the irrationality of Others, which in turn could be explained away as stemming either from the corrupt foibles of power-hungry elites (as was often the case in Iran, North Korea, and later in Russia), or, more fundamentally from the Other’s immaturity as demonstrated by its willingness to blame America for its problems, and its uncivilised fear of losing its culture and identity³⁰. The latter was an explanation that drew again on the principles of the Enlightenment. Emotions such as fear are understood to stand in the way of reasoned debate, as is the ‘backwards’ impulse to identify oneself above all with a (non-Western) religion, tribe or sect (Tuastad, 2003). Finally, Obama’s stated willingness to use force as a last resort furthered the construction of the rational and mature self, and completed the exercise of

²⁹ Node: Progress\Enlightenment, reason.

³⁰ Nodes: Global security\American leadership\Frustration with expectations and perceptions of US; Ibid\Critics are hypocritical.

discursive power over the Other. The mantra of diplomacy backed by force fed into the narrative of a balance between realism and idealism, in which hard power could be utilised (unilaterally if necessary³¹) where engagement had failed. It also demonstrated a shallowness in Obama's New Era, by making clear the realities of global power dynamics even as the US claimed to be reaching out, engaging and listening to the rest of the world. As Obama reached out to previously hostile parties, he skewed the terrain on which discussions would take place by portraying himself as reasonable and mature, and reserving the right to use hard power if and when the Other failed to live up to the American standard of acceptable behaviour.

Thus far, this chapter has focussed on the portrayal of the national self. In exploring the self, and its relationship to the rest of the world, the case has been made that US foreign policy discourse under Obama (re)produced basic and universal truths that linked America, via its exceptional status, to the ordinary peoples of the world under a sympathetic transnational identity. Obama was thus able to link the US to its partners and allies, as well as to the populations of those nations who traditionally were opposed to Washington on the world stage. Furthermore, these constructed truths served a strategic purpose in creating a common-sense basis for the diplomatic engagement of these hostile countries. In practice, the engagement and accommodation of such parties, and the failure (from a Washington perspective) of certain groups to commit to dialogue, were persistent sources of frustration to Obama and his administration (Gerges, 2012, Rhodes, 2019). As such, the discursive (re)production of a network of illiberal and irrational Others was required to make sense of diplomatic failures. The second half of this chapter explores images of the Other in US foreign policy discourse specifically in relation to two issues that were priorities for Obama in his approach to the Middle East: the Arab-Israeli conflict and the negotiation of a deal on nuclear power with Iran.

³¹ Global security\American leadership\Diplomacy backed by force; Global security\American leadership\Right to unilateral action.

2. Qualities of the Other: Israel, Palestine and Iran

2.a. Israel, Palestine and the two-state (non) solution

The ongoing conflict involving Israel, Palestine and neighbouring states has long acted as the frontline in popular imaginations of the West and the Orient (Said, 1995, p. 27). Furthermore, the ‘special relationship’ between the US and Israel has been the lynchpin of Washington’s grand strategy in the Middle East since President Truman lobbied the UN to recognise the creation of the Israeli state in 1947 (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008; Gerges, 2012; Little, 1993). President Obama, like President Clinton before him, was keen from his inauguration to make the resolution of that conflict a priority, and was overt in seeking a ‘two-state solution’, that did not threaten America’s ties to Israel, or its long-held commitment to Israeli security. Authors such as Fawaz Gerges have argued that at least until 2010, Obama’s stance on this conflict was substantially more even-handed than the ‘Israel first’ approach that had been endorsed by Washington administrations from Reagan through to George W Bush. Indeed, outside of America, much of the optimism that surrounded Obama’s election in 2009 came from his apparent willingness to take a stronger stance with Israel and to seriously engage with the demands of Palestinians. Whilst this optimism was short lived, and Obama quickly resorted to the ‘Washington playbook’ on Israel after 2010 (and especially amid the distractions of the Arab Spring), the following section focusses in the main on Obama’s early discourse on the Peace Process. In doing so, it outlines the major identities (re)constructed and deployed by Obama to narrate the conflict, and uses these to deconstruct the ‘common sense’ claims and assumptions that support US foreign policy discourse on the special relationship with Israel, and then with regards to the two-state solution.

Israel, America and the ‘unshakeable’ bond

During the early period of the Obama administration, official spokespeople constructed an imagined geography of the Peace Process populated by multiple identities – the most important of which being Israel, the US, the Palestinian people and leadership, Israel’s neighbours (i.e. the ‘Arab states’) and Iran. From the time of his first major articulation of the conflict in May

of 2009, when Benjamin Netanyahu, and later Mahmoud Abbas paid official visits to the White House, the president developed these identities by processes of linking and differentiation that relied on appeals to the audience's pre-existing knowledge of both the 'special relationship' between America and Israel, and the entrenched securitisation of Israel's existence among hostile Arab/Muslim states (see Abulof, 2014). The following section focusses on the construction of the Israeli identity and its discursive association with the American self. It deconstructs the 'unbreakable' or 'unshakeable bond'³² between the two nations by unpacking three key elements of Israel's identity as it was (re)presented in official discourse: its Jewishness, its democracy, and its binary opposition to various existential threats.

First, a substantial part of the Israeli identity rested upon its status as the world's only Jewish state³³. Khalidi (2004, pp.118-123), Little (1993), and Gerges (2012) have all written on the cultural origins of American support for Zionism (i.e. the creation and maintenance of a Jewish state), and Mearsheimer & Walt (2008) provide an extensive examination of the influence of the Israeli lobby on US foreign policy in the late 20th and 21st centuries. In the Obama administration's discourse, historical narratives of America's responsibility to Israel and the Jewish people dominate its characterisation of the Middle East and draw together and intertwine what might otherwise be separate Jewish, Israeli and US identities. Speakers persistently repeated that Israel was a key US ally, and tied this assertion to America's (and the world's) post-Holocaust responsibility to the Jewish and Israeli people³⁴. Past experiences of the Holocaust and the Second World War linked the US and Israel together along the lines of past traumas, shared values, and common enemies/persecutors. This was supported by an older claim in support of Zionism, which articulated the historic right of Jews around the world to a Jewish homeland³⁵. In addition, the discourse of friendship was used by Obama and Biden in developing the theme of personal, emotional and family ties between members of the two

³² Node: Israel\Israel as key US ally\Unbreakable bond.

³³ Node: Israel\Jewish state.

³⁴ Nodes: Israel\Israel as key US ally; Israel\Israel as key US ally\Post-Holocaust responsibility.

³⁵ Node: Israel\Historic right to Jewish homeland.

governments as well as drawing attention to the Jewish diaspora in the US and the importance of migration between the two countries³⁶.

An example of the discourse of personal friendship that ran through the Obama administration's rhetoric on Israel can be seen most vividly in a recurring anecdote often used by Joe Biden towards sympathetic audiences. An example of this can be read in the vice-president's remarks to AIPAC at its 2009 annual conference (Text 3560). Here, Biden used the language of personal friendship, family and history to substantiate the bond between America and its "most treasured ally, Israel". This was interwoven with a narrative of Biden's life in which his personal "commitment" to Israel "began at [his] father's dinner table", developed through a meeting as a young senator with Golda Meir and Yitzhak Rabin, and was nurtured through "personal friendships" with Shimon Peres and 'Bibi' Netanyahu³⁷. In terms of subject positioning, the effect here was to (re)produce the emotional ties between the two national identities by minimising the discursive space between Israeli and American politicians, and by extension their citizens. Whether the intended audience was domestic or international, the speaker highlighted the shared experiences of the two nations' leaderships, and demonstrated (and (re)produced) America's understanding of its partner's national identity from a deeply personal perspective.

In addition to the intertwining of Israeli and Jewish identities, a second important element of Israel's identity in official discourse was rooted in its association with democracy³⁸. Edward Said (1995, p. 27), Dag Tuastad (2003) and many other post- and de-colonialist authors have written on the importance of democracy in Orientalist and neo-Orientalist representations of

³⁶ Node: Israel\Friendship.

³⁷ Node: Israel\Israel as key US ally\Unbreakable bond\Biden family story. It is worth noting that the theme of personal friendship with Prime Minister Netanyahu specifically is also recurrent in both Obama and Biden's discourse (node: Israel\Personal relationship with Netanyahu) with the former becoming a source of frustration for Obama as it was increasingly called into question by the press and Republican opposition (McCoy, 2015). An obvious example of this can be seen in the 2012 Vice-Presidential debate between Joe Biden and Paul Ryan, in which the former used his 30 year personal friendship with 'Bibi' to deflect the latter's criticism of the Iran nuclear deal (NPR, 2012).

³⁸ Node: Israel\Israel as democracy.

the Middle East, and its proximity to previous discourses of Western civilisation. Tuastad (2003, pp. 591-2, 594) in particular demonstrates how the supposed lack of democratic institutions within Muslim and Arab societies is used to demarcate these from the realm of civilisation, to argue that Islam and democratic governance are incompatible, and even to question Palestinian “psychological readiness” for democratisation. Similarly, Lloyd (2012) and Reynolds (2017) have both explored how the democratic label permits Israel to be simultaneously considered a “normal” Western democracy, and a “unique” case as an “outpost of civilisation as opposed to barbarism” (Herzl, cf Lloyd, 2012, p. 62). In Obama’s speech, the articulation of democratic values further bound Israel to the US according to the American values and universal truths explored in the first section of this chapter. As a result, any ethical otherness separating the two entities was reduced to a minimum.

Finally, the constructed identity of Israel was reified through its binary opposition to a number of regional and global threats. Whilst the articulation of historical discourses of Jewish and Israeli oppression outlined above were necessarily situated in the past, they were also linked, justifiably, to the contemporary dangers faced by Jews and Israelis, stemming both from global antisemitism and regional threats from neighbouring state and non-state actors. Historical connections that were evoked through recollections of the Second World War and the holocaust also (re)enforced the idea that America’s modern day funding of Israeli military defences was part of the nation’s longstanding moral duty towards the Jewish people, and therefore beyond reasonable or valid critique.

In the case of the Biden speech, this process can be seen in the following extract:

That commitment began when the United States of America emerged from World War II as the preeminent economic, political, and military power in the world, and one of our great Presidents, Harry Truman, reached out to a tiny, struggling state, emerging from the ashes of the Holocaust, and recognized the state of Israel...

The bond between Israel and the United States was forged by a shared interest in peace and security; by shared values and to respect all faiths and for all faiths and for all people; by deep ties evidenced here today among our citizens, both Christian and Jew; and a common, unyielding commitment to democracy.

The narrative of US-Israeli kinship is intertwined here with the broader narrative of the Obama doctrine as ‘enlightened self-interest’, or multilateralism based on shared values and shared interests³⁹. In terms of *realpolitik*, the existence of a strong, Western-allied state at the heart of the Middle East has served American geostrategic interests since the days of Truman. The remembrance of past suffering allowed Biden to cast this alliance as the realisation of US values, and therefore more than the cold calculation of national interests. Here, the existence of the state of Israel was securitised in itself, through its situation amid a ‘tough’ or ‘hostile neighbourhood’⁴⁰. The framing of the politics of the Middle East, with the Israeli identity constructed as a tiny minority surrounded by a hostile Arab/Muslim/Oriental Other, presupposed the threat posed by the latter to the former. Through texts such as these, Israel’s security was framed as a ‘unique case’, requiring special attention from America in order for it to survive in such a hostile environment⁴¹.

Beyond these regional dangers, global antisemitism was also articulated as a threat to the Israeli identity in Obama’s discourse⁴². In addition to the danger posed to Jews across the world, antisemitism was explicitly framed as a threat to the State of Israel, through the claim made on multiple occasions that the denial of Israeli statehood was in itself antisemitic⁴³. Of course, because a number of state and non-state actors in the Middle East and elsewhere have historically refused to recognise the State of Israel, this in turn linked the regional threats faced by the state to the racism faced by Jewish people across the globe. A related narrative can also be traced through the official discourse, of an ‘international effort’ to isolate or delegitimise Israel, especially through the UN; and in response to which the US was claimed to ‘stand alone’

³⁹ Node: Israel\Shared interests.

⁴⁰ Node: Israel\Tough neighbourhood.

⁴¹ Node: Israel\Israeli security as unique case; Israel\Israel as key US ally\US commitment to Israel’s security.

⁴² Node: Israel\Need to combat antisemitism.

⁴³ Node: Israel\Need to combat antisemitism\Denial of Israeli state is antisemitic.

in supporting the rights of the Jewish state⁴⁴. These rhetorical moves made concrete the necessity for a Jewish state, to act as homeland for the Jewish diaspora, and therefore problematised criticism of the Israeli government or of the ‘special relationship’ between Israel and the US.

Last, a more immediate threat to the Israeli identity was located in the everyday experience of the Israeli people⁴⁵. Here, imagery of “missiles flying out of Gaza”, and the looming possibility of Iranian aggression – always linked to the latter’s potential development of nuclear weapons – were framed as everyday dangers faced by Israelis and especially their children⁴⁶. This in turn made possible the seemingly logical but nevertheless depoliticised and dehistoricised claim that “no nation on earth” would tolerate such attacks on its territory⁴⁷. Again, this legitimised both Israeli foreign policy and American financial and military support for this, framing it as an unavoidable and justified consequence of Palestinian and Arab aggression.

Combined, these discursive constructions contribute to the sentiment that it was America’s moral duty not just to support, but to actively contribute to the military defence of the state of Israel to ensure its continued survival. More than this, the ‘unshakeable bond’ with Israel was framed as a constituent part of the American identity itself. The interrelation of Israeli and Jewish identities, the repetition of the longstanding Western trope of Israel as a lone outpost of true democracy in an otherwise authoritarian region, and the articulation of a series of existential threats to the Israeli state and people all contribute to the (re)production of strong links between Israel and the image of the US self deconstructed in the previous section. As Mearsheimer & Walt (2008, pp. 3-6) argue, it was not, in 2008, likely that a US president or presidential candidate would seriously call into question the US-Israeli alliance, and indeed candidates have historically been far more likely to argue in public over who has shown more

⁴⁴ Node: Israel\International attempt to isolate and delegitimise Israel; Israel\US stands alone in support of Israel.

⁴⁵ Node: Israel\Real threat to Israeli people.

⁴⁶ Nodes: Iran\Iran is a threat to Israel; Israel\Children; MEPP\Missiles flying out of Gaza.

⁴⁷ Node: MEPP\Missiles flying out of Gaza\No nation would tolerate this.

support for Israel than to question it. Even so, the image of Israel unpacked above demonstrates a lack of break from past US foreign policy discourses, and highlights again the hollowness of Obama's rhetoric on the new era of engagement in the Middle East. Despite the new administration's claims of a new beginning based on "a sustained effort to listen to each other... [and] to respect one another" (Obama, Text 0334), and despite what Gerges (2012, pp. 114-150) characterises as a more even-handed initial approach to the Middle East, the Obama White House still relied upon broadly the same construction of the Israeli identity and its connection to the US as the foundation for his foreign policy discourse.

As Gerges (2012, p. 119) observes, a lack of commitment to genuine change on the part of the US and Israel was made obvious after May 2010, when the Netanyahu government's announcement of plans for new settlements in the West Bank on the first day of Biden's visit to discuss the Peace Process, failed to provoke a serious response from the Obama administration. For Gerges, this was evidence of a rhetoric/policy gap, according to which Obama was happy to talk about change in idealistic terms but was unwilling, as a foreign policy realist, to ultimately deliver it. This chapter takes issue with this characterisation, and instead argues that while there may have been some superficial changes in Obama's rhetoric at the start of his tenure, the lack of policy change that Gerges describes can be read as entirely consistent with a similar lack of a fundamental challenge to the constructed identities which supported American foreign policy discourses on Israel. This absence of fundamental challenge, even in 2009, suggests entrenched discursive structures held significant power over Obama as a human agent, and points towards his internalisation of them even at the beginning of his presidency. Having said this, because this data represents such an early period it does not offer clear evidence as to whether Obama was unable to mount this challenge due to his internalisation of these structures before assuming the presidency, or whether he made a strategic decision at the start of his tenure to spend his political capital elsewhere.

With regards to the Peace Process, this led to a basis for negotiations and an imagined ultimate resolution to the conflict in which Israeli state violence was not only contextualised,

politicised and historicised, but also sanitised through its association with ‘Western’ or ‘democratic’ values. In contrast, the Palestinian existence was always removed from any kind of historical context and Palestinian violence was explained and delegitimised as resulting from character defects and an imagined lack of commitment to the two state solution. The following section unpacks the official representation of the Peace Process and in doing so argues that the imperative to change behaviour was placed largely at the door of Palestinians and the Arab states. It also evidences the roots of this discourse in Orientalist logics that have long undergirded the asymmetric expectations placed on Israelis and Palestinians in realising a two state solution.

The Two state solution: A Historic opportunity for ‘serious’ cooperation

Whilst US and Israeli identities were closely linked in official discourse, the Palestinian identity by contrast often acquired meaning through its connection to the Peace Process and by its differentiation from Israel (see Lloyd (2012) on the inseparability of Palestine from Israel in the Western imagination). This section unpacks official representations of Palestine and Israel in the context of the Peace Process and evidences the ways in which the White House exercised discursive power over all associated parties. It finds that the construction of unequal identities by the Obama administration tended to legitimise Israeli concerns over those of Palestinians, and frequently associated the Palestinian identity with traditional Orientalist markers of the barbarian such as childishness and violence. As a result, the discursive landscape upon which the Peace Process was imagined and had to be played out was imbalanced in favour of Israel as the ‘civilised’ American ally.

Focussing on the Palestinian identity first, an obvious difference from White House articulations on Israel can be recognised in the tendency of officials to speak of ‘Israel’, using the proper noun, as a subject and object in its own right (e.g. “our commitment to the security of Israel is rock solid” Obama, 2012, Text 1543) whereas the existence of Palestine as a historical, geographical or legal entity was rarely acknowledged. Instead, the administration referenced the Palestinian people, Palestinian interests or Palestinian behaviour, rather than the

associated territory/nation. Where the noun ‘Palestine’ was used, it was usually in reference to a potential future sovereign state existing in peace alongside the State of Israel (e.g. “a viable Palestine, a secure Israel” Obama, 2011, Text 1162).

Secondly, whilst the Israeli identity was privileged through its close linkage to America via the language of historical ties and democratic values, the Palestinian identity, when it was positively articulated, was drawn from the same archive as the transnational identity set out in the first part of this chapter. This enabled the development of a link between the US and the Palestinian people, however this was never on the same level as the privileged cultural and historical association accorded to Israel and the Israelis. The Israeli identity therefore constituted a much closer Other than the Palestinian identity (Hansen, 2006, pp. 33-7). Instead this was the same articulation of universalism that tied the Obama administration, through its assertion of basic values, to the ‘ordinary people’ of the world, and therefore enabled its officials to speak for and dictate the desires of the Other whether in Palestine or elsewhere. Rather than speak in the language of shared history, or unshakeable bonds, the language of future potential was applied to the Palestinian identity, and was important both in building the broader narrative of 2009 as a historic moment of opportunity, but also in developing a theme of economic development being held back by conflict. Palestinians were coded as aspirational, entrepreneurial, and innovative, seeking opportunities to put their talents into developing businesses and technologies⁴⁸. The US and Palestinians were thereby linked together by their ‘natural’ neoliberal impulses, rather than any deeper cultural commitment to one another.

These links had of course been complicated by the 2006 electoral victory of Hamas, which Washington refused to recognise. This in effect gave rise to two diverging US policies towards Palestine; one which sought to isolate and weaken Hamas in the West Bank, and another which sought to strengthen and engage Fatah and Mahmoud Abbas’s leadership in the West Bank (Brown, 2010, pp. 47-8; Panetta, 2015, pp. 422-6; Roy, 2011, pp. 42-3). This divergence was reflected in (and legitimised by) Obama’s discourse, in which there were effectively two

⁴⁸ Nodes: Palestinian identity\Aspirations.

Palestines; one in the West Bank, accorded the title of the Palestinian Authority and governed (comparatively) responsibly by Abbas, and another in Gaza, hijacked by the terroristic and irresponsible Hamas, who are accused of preferring to destroy Israel rather than commit to building Palestine⁴⁹.

The claim that the US and its allies preferred to build rather than destroy was a recurring statement in Obama's discourse. Its reversal, that America's foes, and especially violent non-state actors were more likely to destroy than build was also a prominent accusation that was deployed both in and beyond the conflict in Israel and Palestine (and therefore also appears in the next chapters)⁵⁰. These were also Orientalist tropes that reflected and reinforced notions of Arab stagnation and the incompatibility of Islam with democratic politics and civic culture (Khalidi, 2004; Tuastad, 2003). Even though the Obama administration presented the tendency towards violence and destruction as a conscious choice and therefore not an innate character flaw, it was always the openly Islamic Hamas that was designated as violent, destructive, irresponsible, and terroristic, and the comparatively secular Fatah that benefitted as the apparently more reasonable and constructive partner (despite the latter's own use of violent methods, not least against Hamas).

The binary opposition of those who would build and those who would destroy is emblematic of the embeddedness of the metanarrative of progress in Obama's speech on the Peace Process. The theme of progress was often articulated as a transition from a state of childishness to a superior state of mature seriousness and respectful engagement that would sustain the pursuit of a two-state solution⁵¹. In May 2009, when Abbas and Netanyahu were first invited to Obama's White House, the president spoke to the latter about the possibility of peace relying on the key players' abilities to put their childish impulses aside, and commit to "serious negotiations" with one another:

⁴⁹ Nodes: MEPP\Hamas as obstacle to peace; MEPP\Hamas as terrorist organisation; Palestinian identity\Two Palestines.

⁵⁰ Node: Progress\Build vs destroy.

⁵¹ Node: MEPP\Grow up.

We have seen progress stalled on this front, and I suggested to the Prime Minister that he has an historic opportunity to get a serious movement on this issue during his tenure. That means that all the parties involved have to take seriously obligations that they've previously agreed to... There is no reason why we should not seize this opportunity and this moment for all the parties concerned to take seriously those obligations and to move forward in a way that assures Israel's security, that stops the terrorist attacks that have been such a source of pain and hardship, that we can stop rocket attacks on Israel; but that also allow Palestinians to govern themselves as an independent state, that allows economic development to take place, that allows them to make serious progress in meeting the aspirations of their people.

Obama, 18 May 2009

Text 0189

This thesis argues that Obama's idea of serious talks and the broader notions of hard work and seriousness in the context of advancing the Peace Process⁵² served as conceptual proxies (Guilhot, cf Hobson, 2015, p. 83) for the Orientalist idea of Western maturity opposed to Eastern childishness in the Middle East. The president's statements above mirror a similar theme from his inauguration speech, summed up in his use of the biblical quotation "the time has come to put aside childish things" (2009, Text 0001), and which can also be recognised in the Goldberg (2016) interview referenced earlier in the chapter, in which Obama spoke of the need for Arabs to "stop pretending" their problems stemmed from Israel, and his desire to "create a space for Muslims to address the real problems they are confronting". This latter quote not only suggested a lack of seriousness and/or maturity on the part of Palestinians, but also reinforced the Orientalist caricature of Muslims/Arabs as having a "proclivity to blaming others for [their] own shortcomings and failure" (Patai, cf Tuastad, 2003, p. 592).

As in the construction of the self, the here and now was framed as a moment of significance and potential in global and regional history, and this was evidenced by the alleged unsustainability of the status quo⁵³. The problems and failures of the past were blamed on both Israelis as well Palestinians, and on their apparent choices to be less than serious about the

⁵² Node: MEPP\Hard work and seriousness; MEPP\Serious talks.

⁵³ Node: MEPP\Historic moment and opportunity; MEPP>Status quo is unsustainable.

prospect of peace. This narrative was constructed from the perspective of American involvement in the Middle East, with progress being made in Oslo, under Bill Clinton's supervision, then stalling under Bush Jr, before it could be made again as the Obama administration kick-started renewed talks between parties (see Khalidi, 2004, pp. 118-149, for an engaging rebuttal of this narrative). With new American leadership (and its new initiative of listening and engaging with international partners) it was assumed that any problems of the past could be overcome, provided Arabs and Israelis demonstrated the necessary commitment. Whilst this narrative appeared to present the new administration's approach as a more even-handed one, it must be understood as existing entirely within the discursive context of the unequal construction of Palestinian and Israeli identities deconstructed above. Even as Obama called for both Israelis and Palestinians to put aside the childishness and immaturity of the past, it was the Israeli identity whose existence was securitised, and whose actions were constantly prefaced with American claims of its right to defend itself from constant threat⁵⁴. Meanwhile, Palestinians were portrayed as suffering indignities and aspiring to the creation of their own state, but rarely as under existential threat from the exercise of such Israeli rights⁵⁵.

The language of seriousness and commitment further permeated Obama's early discourse on the Peace Process through the appointment of Special Envoy George Mitchell, based on his previous experience in the negotiation of the Good Friday Agreement. As he demanded seriousness from regional partners, Obama simultaneously reinforced the US self's authority on the matter via the (re)production of its own 'serious' credentials. Both Mitchell, and the wider American involvement in Northern Ireland were used as evidence of the Obama administration's commitment and expertise, as well as effectively dehistoricising the Palestinian experience through the suggestion that its knowledge of a European civil war was transferrable onto the Middle Eastern context⁵⁶.

⁵⁴ Nodes: Israel\Right to defend itself.

⁵⁵ Nodes: Palestinian identity\indignities; Palestinian identity\Palestinian aspiration, education, business, dignity; Palestinian statehood.

⁵⁶ Node: MEPP\Hard work and seriousness\George Mitchell.

With Washington's authority over the Middle East established, the administration's solution to the conflict rested firmly on the idea of a two-state solution based on "1967 lines, with mutually-agreed swaps", a concept which Obama unpacked in the following extract from a 2011 speech to AIPAC:

By definition, it means that the parties themselves – Israelis and Palestinians – will negotiate a border that is different than the one that existed on June 4, 1967. That's what mutually agreed-upon swaps means. It is a well-known formula to all who have worked on this issue for a generation. It allows the parties themselves to account for the changes that have taken place over the last 44 years. It allows the parties themselves to take account of those changes, including the new demographic realities on the ground, and the needs of both sides. The ultimate goal is two states for two people: Israel as a Jewish state and the homeland for the Jewish people and the State of Palestine as the homeland for the Palestinian people -- each state in joined self-determination, mutual recognition, and peace.

Obama, 22 May 2011

Text 1168

This concept of 1967 borders (or pre-occupation borders, as Obama referred to them up until September of 2010) with mutual swaps served as the common sense underlying the Peace Process under the Obama administration (Rhodes, 2019, p. 144), and was often presented as the "only possible solution", or the "only fair solution" to the conflict⁵⁷. The mutual acceptance of these contested borders – albeit subject to negotiated territorial swaps – became Washington's litmus test of both parties' seriousness even before they entered into dialogue. For Israel, such an acceptance would mean halting the expansion of settlements in Palestinian territories⁵⁸. For Palestinians, this meant accepting significant loss of territories associated with the Nakba.

In the extract above, this formula was presented as the labour of professionals. The goal was for each party to respect the other's sovereignty and to govern its own territory responsibly.

⁵⁷ Nodes: MEPP\1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps; MEPP\Two state solution urgently needed; Ibid\Only possible and or fair solution.

⁵⁸ Node: MEPP\Settlements.

In other words, Palestine was eventually to join Israel and the US as a functional member of the civilised international community of nation-states, but only through its acceptance of Washington's authority and Israeli territory. Where parties such as Hamas failed to acknowledge and legitimise the American knowledge claim, they were dismissed as not being 'serious' partners for a future peace despite their democratic mandate. This contributed to a discourse of mutually-agreed swaps that was gradually consolidated by Obama and his staff into a narrative in which Israel's main interest was in the pursuit of security via the maintenance and defence of the Jewish state, while, Palestinians sought to realise their human and economic potential through the establishment of a functioning and independent state alongside Israel. To put it more succinctly, the official narrative was that Israeli occupied territories could be traded for 'security' from the Palestinians⁵⁹. Again, this promoted and maintained a common sense in which Israeli state violence was rationalised (and funded) by the US as legitimate self-defence, while Palestinian non-state violence, which might just as easily be rationalised as resistance to an illegal occupation, was judged to be a choice and a marker of irresponsibility even when it was not designated as outright terrorism (Dunning, 2015; Jackson, 2016).

Beyond territorial disputes, behavioural 'swaps' also formed a key part of the administration's discourse on the Middle East. The identities of Israel and Palestine were (re)constructed through repeated processes of linking and differentiation with regards to their respective expectations and responsibilities in the Peace Process. This can be seen particularly clearly in Obama's September 2009 address to the UN General Assembly. Here, the president claimed "some" progress had been made with Palestinians having "strengthened their efforts on security", and Israelis having "facilitated greater freedom of movement of the Palestinians" but still called on the latter to "end incitement against Israel" and announced "America does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements". He concluded by articulating the imagined end point of the Peace Process:

⁵⁹ Node: MEPP\Two state solution\Security and territory.

Two states living side by side in peace and security – a Jewish state of Israel, with true security for all Israelis; and a viable, independent Palestinian state with contiguous territory that ends the occupation that began in 1967, and realizes the potential of the Palestinian people.

Obama, 23 September 2009

Text 0374

Here, both identities were characterised by the gestures they are required to make towards the other. Israel must stop building settlements in Palestinian territory and offer freedom of movement to Palestinians in order to make progress on this count. Conversely, Palestinians must make efforts to stop incitement – the longstanding claim that Palestinians, and especially children were being taught to hate Israel in schools, Mosques and other public spaces (Moughrabi, 2001; O'Malley, 2017) – and offer security to Israel in order to reciprocate. ‘Settlements’ and ‘incitement’ were thus shorthand signifiers for core markers of the two nations’ identities, with the narrative being that progress in these areas were the true markers of seriousness.

These assertions served to add a further dimension to the accepted knowledge underlying what a ‘serious’ effort to ‘solve’ the long-standing conflict might look like. It is possible to deconstruct the basic elements of these identities. The difference between a ‘Jewish state’ for Israelis and an ‘independent state’ for Palestinians signified different standards of acceptable outcomes for both parties. For Palestine, the existence of a state was enough, for Israel, further guarantees were required. Whilst the goal of security was associated with both future states, the articulation of difference between Israel’s pursuit of “true security” (from incitement etc.) and the “realisation of potential” for Palestinians exposed once more the unequal playing field Obama curated.

This also highlighted how the transnational identity developed in the first section of this chapter either allowed or led US speakers to impose supposedly universal neoliberal values upon the Palestinians. The Obama administration projected its ideology of Wilsonian universalism onto the Palestinian people, defining their ‘aspirations’ in the simplest and most anodyne terms: namely freedom of movement and the ability to contribute to the nation’s

economic development⁶⁰. In this sense, the ‘ordinary’ people of Palestine were understood as belonging to the transnational identity, and therefore sharing in the same non-threatening, capitalistic desires that formed the foundations of the American Dream. Conversely, the violent and overtly religious members and supporters of Hamas were chastised for preferring to destroy rather than build. For the majority of ‘good’ Palestinians then, it was enough that they were ‘dignified’ with a functioning state of their own.

This matters because, whether Obama’s claims were accurate or not, they were still imposed onto the Arab identity instead of being a reflection or amplification of genuine Palestinian voices. These identity constructions therefore complied to Nayak & Malone’s characterisation of Orientalist structures as showing “internal consistencies” but lacking any deep or complex representation of the Palestinian people (2009, p. 256). The imposition of these values reduced the complexity of Palestinian politics down to one homogenous group in the American mind – a group that was broadly sympathetic to the US and its neoliberal grand strategy despite its regional interests in the Middle East. Most importantly, these rhetorical processes effectively silenced Palestinian dissent by producing a boundary between ‘serious’ and ‘unserious’ voices. This boundary functions similarly to the ethical borders between chaos and order, or barbarism and civilisation, which Campbell uses to demarcate the idea of America in its interactions with the Other (1998, p. 146). Through these borders, critical voices could therefore be dismissed as lacking commitment to positive change, or placed beyond the pale of acceptable and civilised discourse by their association with Hamas and other groups who would ‘prefer to destroy than build’.

The discursive ground upon which the two-state solution was constructed was therefore skewed by the colonial subjectivities involved in the construction of Israeli, Arab and Palestinian identities. Israel on the one hand was imagined through the lens of the unshakeable bond it shared with the US, through personal and familial ties, a shared history and horror of the holocaust, and its modern day status as an island of democracy in an otherwise authoritarian

⁶⁰ Nodes: Palestinian identity\Entrepreneurialism.

neighbourhood. Palestinians on the other hand existed without a state, and therefore the creation of a 'viable' one served as the endpoint of negotiations in American eyes. Furthermore, the traditional markers of Orientalism – childishness, nefariousness and unreliability – coloured the US understanding of the Palestinian approach to negotiations, with issues such as Hamas violence and incitement seen as evidence of a lack of seriousness towards the Peace Process. Despite this, ordinary Palestinians were imagined as sharing the same basic aspirations and impulses as Israelis and Americans. Undergirded by the more fundamental narratives of universalism and progress, this assumption provided the logic behind the Obama administration's steadfast belief that it was only a lack of commitment and seriousness on the part of others that prevented a long term peace from being negotiated.

These intersubjective identities formed the basis of the common sense approach to peace embodied by the two state solution, and led to a failure to recognise the more structural factors at play when parties failed to 'take seriously' the American path to progress. The underlying fragility of this logic was eventually evidenced, as Gerges (2012) notes, when the Israeli government broke Obama's own definition of seriousness by announcing the construction of new settlements on the eve of Joe Biden's visit in May of 2010, and was rewarded by a subsequent softening of Washington's policy position and language on the Peace Process.

This chapter has thus far focussed on the construction of US, Israeli and Palestinian identities in the first years of the Obama administration, however a significant part of both the American and Israeli constructed identities rests upon their discursive opposition to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and therefore has yet to be explored. Up until (and arguably after) 2011, the Islamic Republic of Iran, constituted America's major threatening Other in the region – along with al Qaida, and possibly North Korea at a more global level. Furthermore, Obama stated on multiple occasions that alongside the Peace Process, preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons was his priority in the Middle East upon assuming office (Rhodes, 2019). The remainder of this chapter therefore focusses on the official discourse surrounding nuclear negotiations with Iran.

2.b. Negotiating with the barbarians: The Iran nuclear deal

Iran's identity, as it existed in American foreign policy discourse from 2009, developed largely from its potential nuclear capabilities on the one hand, and from its exclusion from the international community (IC) on the other. As such, despite the substantial change in policy Obama oversaw (Hurst, 2017), Iran remained one of the more prominent embodiments of a threatening Other in the pre-Arab Spring period of the Obama presidency. This final section will demonstrate that much of its characterisation was drawn from the existing narrative of Progress that permeated foreign policy discourse under Obama, as well as Orientalist imaginations of the irrational and childlike barbarian, separated both ethically and temporally from the enlightened, responsible self. After protests erupted in Iran following disputed elections in 2009, the Iranian government was also rhetorically separated from its people, and was increasingly labelled illegitimate by the Obama administration.

Iran as a nuclear threat

Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon would not only be a threat to Israel and a threat to the United States, but would be profoundly destabilizing in the international community as a whole and could set off a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that would be extraordinarily dangerous for all concerned, including for Iran.

Obama, 18 May 2009

Text 0189

The Obama White House's language on Iran was immediately securitised. The official discourse that framed talks on the nuclear programme, was predicated on the common sense logic that without American intervention, the Islamic regime was, or would sooner or later become, a nuclear threat in the region, and therefore an existential threat to a number of referents, the most obvious and immediate of which being the state and population of Israel⁶¹. From this securitised logic, Obama articulated the conclusion that would become the cornerstone of his rhetoric on the negotiations, and on Iran more broadly: that America would

⁶¹ Nodes: Iran\Iran is a nuclear threat; Iran\Iran is a threat to Israel.

never allow it to obtain nuclear weapons⁶². By establishing this securitised logic from the start, Obama quickly set the bounds of political (im)possibility for the next eight years (Doty, 1993; Holland, 2013b).

Against the backdrop of this fundamental, securitised logic of (im)possibility, a more nuanced narrative of Iranian self-interest emerged. Despite the history of enmity between the two nations (Biswas, 2018; Quinn, 2014; Solomon, 2016; Tirman, 2009), Tehran's human capacity to act in its own interests was framed as its saving grace from the first days of the Obama administration. In the context of the 'new era of engagement', the attempt to reach a deal with Iran on its nuclear programme became a focal point of the new administration's foreign policy. The foundations of this deal lay in Obama's belief in the rationality of the Iranian leadership, in the existence of mutual interests shared by Iran, the US and the IC, and ultimately in the latter's ability to place effective sanctions on the former should it continue in its existing course of action. All of which were sentiments that supported and were supported by the articulation of national self unpacked in the first half of this chapter. For example, in May 2009 (Text 0107), Obama stated, "my administration will seek engagement with Iran based on mutual interests and mutual respect. We believe in dialogue". Despite Obama's faith that a diplomatic solution could eventually be reached, the Islamic Republic's leadership was systematically spoken of in Orientalist terms, as the idea of nations having rights and responsibilities concerning the pursuit of nuclear power was used to widen the imagined ethical distance between Iran and those members of the IC already in possession of nuclear arsenals⁶³ – this despite a lack of clear evidence Iran had been pursuing such capabilities at the time (Hurst, 2017, p. 292; Risen & Mazetti, cf Solomon, 2016, p. 100).

At a global level, Iran was repeatedly contrasted with the IC, as embodied by the United Nations and the P5+1⁶⁴ negotiating group. The IC identity was built using the language of rules, responsibility and cooperation, all of which are traditional markers of maturity and civilisation

⁶² Node: Iran\Iran will never obtain nuclear weapons.

⁶³ Node: Iran\Rights and responsibilities.

⁶⁴ The permanent five members of the Security Council, plus Germany.

(Biswas, 2018; Salter, 2002). Additionally, the language of reason and intelligence differentiated the IC from the Iranian leadership in the same way that serious and unserious partners for peace were distinguished in the context of the Arab Israeli conflict. Reason and dialogue enabled the community of nations to recognise their ‘shared interests’, and therefore to develop a ‘shared commitment’ to non-proliferation and regional stability⁶⁵. The adoption of, for example, UNSC resolutions 1887 and 1929 on 24 September 2009 and 9 June 2010 respectively, were held as proof of the global community’s maturity and unity in the face of Iranian (and North Korean) selfishness and recklessness in pursuing nuclear capabilities. Obama used resolutions such as these to claim “we have never been more united in standing with the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China and Germany in demanding that Iran live up to its responsibilities” (2009, Text 0377). In so doing, he bound America to its international partners, and (re)created an image of Iran as a pariah state⁶⁶.

The presupposed knowledge of the ‘rules of play’ when it came to atomic capabilities were occasionally explained in simplistic terms such as below:

These rules are clear: All nations have the right to peaceful nuclear energy; those nations with nuclear weapons must move towards disarmament; those nations without nuclear weapons must forsake them.

Obama, Sept 25 2009

Text 0378

Within the logical framework of Obama’s discourse, it was of little consequence that the P5+1 negotiating team was made up of five of the world’s nine nuclear powers, with the sixth being the only one without a permanent seat on the Security Council. Similarly, Washington’s longstanding policy of refusing to acknowledge Israel’s nuclear programme, as well as frequent rhetorical links made between Iran and North Korea – another ‘rogue’ state pursuing nuclear capabilities – helped frame Iran as an aggressive, destabilising force in the region, as opposed to just another rational state actor seeking to balance the hard power of its immediate

⁶⁵ Node: Iran/Diplomatic solution/Rationality and shared interests.

⁶⁶ Node: Iran/Multilateral approach to isolating and putting pressure on Iran.

geostrategic rivals⁶⁷. America in turn provided the mirror image for this, as it became almost synonymous with the international community in the official discourse⁶⁸

The articulation of these simple rules was pivotal in the creation of a neo-Orientalist image of dangerousness and irresponsibility attached to the Iranian identity. Biswas (2018), Fayyaz & Shirazi (2013), and Rasti & Sahragard (2012) have previously shown how a similar image of Iran, again opposed to the IC, was (re)presented in western media discourses at this time. In the official data examined in this thesis, recurring markers of the Iranian character to this effect included idea of mistrust or untrustworthiness and unreliability⁶⁹. Iran was portrayed as unreliable when it came to promising action on a nuclear deal, and as having a history of agreeing to terms only to renege on its commitments at a later date, a point which Obama highlighted by citing President Reagan's phrase "trust, but verify" when dealing with the Islamic Republic (Obama, 2009, Text 0223). At a regional level, Iran was regularly positioned in proximity to Hamas and Hezbollah, with the link between the sovereign state and the (US-designated) terrorist organisations used to undermine its credibility⁷⁰. Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah, and after 2011, the Assad regime in Syria, as well Houthi forces in Yemen, were often portrayed as an alliance of destabilising actors, more interested in creating chaos than bringing about a more prosperous future for the people they represented. In addition to building its status as a threatening Other, Iran's association with non-state militants and rogue regimes served to place in question its reliability as a negotiating partner. Taken as a whole, these images made appear logical and natural a strong and recurring narrative deployed by Obama to insist that the burden of responsibility was on Iran to take on a more acceptable role in the region in order for negotiations to progress, and for the sanctions placed upon it to be lifted⁷¹.

When the Iranian regime broke the rules laid out by the more mature members of the international community, the imposition of sanctions quickly followed (see UNSCR 1929).

⁶⁷ Node: Iran\Destabilising the region; Iran\Belligerent; Iran\Iran and North Korea.

⁶⁸ Node: Iran\Iran vs IC.

⁶⁹ Node: Iran\Mistrust.

⁷⁰ Node: Iran\Supports terrorism.

⁷¹ Node: Iran\Burden is on Iran to take on responsible role.

This same constellation of identities was reinforced as the sanctions were framed as a multilateral effort, demonstrating the seriousness of the IC in dealing with the contravention of its own rules⁷². The Iranian government was spoken of as facing a choice as to whether to move forwards or backwards in its relationship with the more mature and responsible members of the IC. This progressive option was marked with the language of meaningfulness and commitment, and was opposed to the discovery of the “covert” facility in Qom (Obama, 2009, Text 0378).

As Iran continued to diverge from Washington’s preferred path, America and the IC took on the role of enforcer:

Now, these diplomatic efforts have also strengthened our hand in dealing with those nations that insist on violating international agreements in pursuit of nuclear weapons... That's why the international community is more united, and the Islamic Republic of Iran is more isolated. And as Iran's leaders continue to ignore their obligations, there should be no doubt: They, too, will face growing consequences.

Obama, 28 January 2010
Text 0531

The identities of America, the IC, and aspiring nuclear nations were again linked and differentiated along the lines of (ir)responsibility, and particularly in their childish inability to understand that sanctions would always be the logical consequences of their actions⁷³. This follows the Orientalist construction of the barbarian as either incapable of following the ‘correct’ path set out by the coloniser, or wilfully resistant to Western attempts to impose order and respectability (Said, 1995; Tuastad, 2003).

Iran as an oppressor of its own people

Despite this portrayal of the regime, the Obama administration’s criticism of Iran was broadly reserved to accusations of immaturity, regional level threat and rule-breaking at least for the first half of 2009, with the official mantra being that the US was willing to dialogue as

⁷² Node: Iran\Multilateral approach to coordinating sanctions.

⁷³ Node: Iran\UNSCR 1929 as logical result of Iranian behaviour.

long as Iran demonstrated its own willingness to engage⁷⁴. However, after the disputed presidential election of June 2009, and the subsequent emergence of the ‘Green Movement’ of protests, Obama’s policy-identity constellation shifted to incorporate a sharper binary opposition between the (oppressive) Iranian regime and the (progressive) Iranian people⁷⁵.

I think all of us were moved by the demonstrations of courage and hope that were expressed in Iran after these elections. We have no interest in meddling in the rights of people to choose their own government, but we will speak out forcefully when we see governments abusing and oppressing their own people. And I think this is another example in which the Iranian government delegitimized itself in ways that continue to reverberate around the world.

Obama, 24 September 2010

Text 0864

Whilst Obama initially sought to measure his language when asked about the protests, he changed his approach after images emerged of 26-year-old Nedâ Âghâ-Soltân dying in the street having been fatally shot at a demonstration in Tehran (see Obama 2009, Text 0247). In response to (social) media portrayals of public unrest met with state violence, Obama sought to frame both these and later events around a narrative of the regime preventing its population from joining the IC. The key player in this new context was the Iranian people, as courageous heroes, pursuing the universal rights and aspirations for better life and justice Obama had spoken of in Cairo⁷⁶. Following the pattern established in the discourse on Israel and Palestine, the Iranian protesters were framed as speaking for the wider Iranian people, who naturally wished for the same basic rights and dignities that formed the basis of the American social contract. In contrast, the Iranian government was once again the backwards villain, who, having previously rejected the IC and its international obligations, then showed its oppressive hand in the violent crackdown on its own people⁷⁷. In a recurring narrative that conformed to the Orientalist trope of Islamic stagnation, the regime was positioned as standing in the way of

⁷⁴ Node: Iran\US wants to dialogue.

⁷⁵ Node: Iran\Leadership opposed to People.

⁷⁶ Node: Iran\Iranians deserve universal rights.

⁷⁷ Node: Iran\Oppressing own people.

progress, and denying the people their potential as a “great civilization”⁷⁸. This new constellation ultimately helped to reinforced the image of Iran as irresponsible and immature as related to the nuclear negotiations, as Obama branded the government as “on the wrong side of history”, and “delegitimising itself” in the eyes of the world⁷⁹. In a further development of the sympathetic transnational identity deconstructed in the first part of this chapter, the US and the IC were therefore linked to ordinary Iranians and differentiated from the oppressive regime, not just in terms of ethical otherness⁸⁰, but also in a temporal sense, along the narrative of human progress. The regime was designated as the obstacle to regional stability and development, holding Iranians back with ‘fear’ and ‘tyranny’ when they could have been contributing to the nation’s economic prosperity.

Marking Nowruz in 2012, Obama underlined this temporal difference by referring to an “electronic curtain” of internet censorship, used by Tehran as “a barrier that stops the free flow of information and ideas into the country, and denies the rest of the world the benefit of interacting with the Iranian people, who have so much to offer” (Text 1563). The president thereby positioned the regime as standing against the basic rights, freedoms and aspirations of its people on the one hand, and against the historic progress of (communications) technology on the other. In the context of the Arab Spring (the discourse surrounding which is analysed in the next chapter) internet and communications technology became intrinsically linked to the ‘wave of protests’ towards democracy. Obama drew a connection between the Iranian regime’s opposition to America’s universal values and its practice of placing restrictions on the internet thus allowing the speaker to frame Iran as backwards in terms of both social and technological progress. Obama therefore portrayed Iran as violent, tyrannical, untrustworthy and immature. In other words, the stereotype of the tyrannical, unfathomable barbarian leader was redeployed to make sense of Iranian regime’s oppression of its people and ‘irrational’ pursuit of nuclear

⁷⁸ Node: Iran\Regime denying Iran’s potential as great civilisation.

⁷⁹ Node: Iran\Delegitimising itself; Iran\Wrong side of history.

⁸⁰ Nodes: Iran\US is on the side of Iranian people; Iran\US supports universal principles.

capabilities in the 21st century. This characterisation presented the Iranian government as a threat to the internationalist aspirations of the Iranian people.

In contrast to the Islamic Republic's repressive backwardness, the American self and the wider IC was linked with many of the same traditional markers of Western progress and values set out in the first half of this chapter and from their contrast with, and condemnation of Iran's "violent and unjust suppression of Iranian citizens" (Obama, 2010, Text 0598). Most notably these identities were characterised as rational, enlightened, patient and pragmatic, and therefore opposed to the selfish impulsiveness of Iran's leaders. Biswas's (2018, pp. 332, 336) study sets out how Obama either spoke or was framed as speaking for the 'world', and how narratives on these negotiations in Western media were frequently dehistoricised and decontextualised as the US and Iran's "convoluted and complicated history" was rarely unpacked, leading to one party, validated by its leader's Nobel Prize, being portrayed as pursuing "global peace and security" with the other "digging in its heels to maintain its (always suspect) nuclear capability". The data analysed here finds similar narratives in the official discourse, with America characterised as pursuing a diplomatic solution, motivated by its principles balanced with a pragmatic, realist analysis of events⁸¹. The language used evoked the childishness and recklessness of the Iranian regime, whilst the US and the IC maintained a pragmatic balance of realism and idealism. As the Other engaged in terrorism and childishness, Washington was portrayed as thinking in the long-term and being above any petty concerns with short-term gains. The attachment to realism was used most often to sell the policy of engagement to sceptical, and especially conservative elements of the domestic audience, and was often reinforced with assurances that military options were never 'off the table' in the mission to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons⁸². Once again this demonstrates the double ethical standard where Western violence was sanitised and rationalised as necessary and preventative, while Iran's links to violent groups were referred to as evidence of its irresponsible and destabilising behaviour.

⁸¹ Nodes: Iran/Diplomatic solution; Iran/Diplomatic solution/Deal through principled diplomacy.

⁸² Node: Iran/Military options.

As negotiations neared an end, before the final Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was signed on 14 July 2015, Obama framed what he hoped would be the final deal within this same narrative of hard and principled diplomacy. Recurring nodes around the final deal include claims that it was the result of strong and responsible American leadership, and that it would be irresponsible to walk away from the deal diplomacy achieved⁸³. Building on this narrative, Obama also strategically positioned Republicans in Congress as siding with Iranian ‘hardliners’ – who he claimed were also opposed to the deal, and could therefore be opposed to the ‘moderate’, Western-educated Hassan Rouhani (Biswas, 2018, p. 357) – following the publication of their letter to the Iranian government signalling their intention to revoke the deal once in power (Cotton, 2015)⁸⁴. As with the Middle East Peace Process, notions of hard work and pragmatism were also attached to the deal, which was held up not as perfect but as the ‘best option available’ and as proof that sanctions ‘worked’ in international relations⁸⁵.

The official discourse on the Iran deal therefore was informed by and (re)produced a logic inspired by Orientalist knowledge structures which positioned the Islamic Republic as ethically and intellectually inferior, as well as temporally behind the American/Western self. Iran was connected to similarly unreliable, illegitimate and violent actors in the form of, for example, North Korea, Hamas and Hezbollah, and opposed to the self and the international community, as well as its own people. Following the trend evidenced earlier in this chapter, the US self and the IC were linked and drawn together, along with the Iranian people, who ultimately constituted a part of the transnational identity exposed above. Finally, the deal and its makers were celebrated as rational, pragmatic, mature and responsible, in contrast to both Iranian ‘hardliners’ and the Republican senators who opposed it.

⁸³ Node: Iran\Diplomacy has brought deal, irresponsible to walk away; Iran\Diplomacy has brought deal, irresponsible to walk away\US leadership.

⁸⁴ Node: Iran\Republicans siding with Iranian hardliners. See also Hurst (2016) and Opperman & Spencer (2018) on congressional discourses on Iran.

⁸⁵ Nodes: Iran\Diplomacy has brought deal...\Best available option; Iran\Diplomacy has brought deal...\Hard work; Iran\Diplomacy has brought deal...\Proof sanctions work.

Conclusion

This thesis asks how the discursive structures of US foreign policy changed under Barack Obama, and how official constructions of otherness and threat changed during this same period. The analysis presented in this chapter contributes to this discussion by setting out how these structures existed at the beginning of Obama's eight year tenure, and in the context of the major issues that marked the Middle East at this time. It does this through an original analysis of Obama's speeches, and those of other White House officials across this time. Chapters Six and Seven will then go on to investigate variations in the discourse following the Arab Spring and in relation to different terrorist Others.

This chapter has shown that progress permeated US foreign policy discourse under Obama, and served as a metanarrative explaining America's interactions with the Orient and the Muslim world. This affected the national self identity from the very start of Obama's tenure as his presidency and the election of the first black president, were framed as historic moments in American and global history. This fed into a narrative of a 'new era' under Obama, and specifically one of engagement with America's friends and rivals alike. This new approach was then made to appear logical and necessary when faced with a new range of transnational '21st century threats' that required a multilateral response under US leadership. America was also linked ethically to the people of the world, who were joined together under a sympathetic transnational identity by the same basic truths, and their yearning for the same aspirations and universal values that were pioneered by the exceptional nation. Finally, the self was framed as pursuing a rational but ethical foreign policy, with shared values and shared interests forming the basis for multilateral cooperation.

The existing literature has often pointed to materialist structures (Kitchen, 2014; Quinn, 2014), to Obama's pragmatic or non-ideological attitude (Gerges, 2012; Lizza, 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; Hurst, 2017), or to a Jeffersonian tradition of building democracy at home (Holland, 2016) to make sense of Obama turn towards multilateralism and engagement. This thesis however builds on and contributes to the post-colonialist literature on US foreign policy by

highlighting the colonialist roots of this articulation of self and its opposing Other across Obama's discourse.

In opposition to the self, two distinct Arab/Muslim Others can be perceived in the discourse. One, largely sympathetic, is attributed to the 'ordinary' Arab/Muslim people of the world, who are constructed as sharing a desire of universal/American. Another, attributed to 'bad' Arab/Muslim leaders, and especially associated with Hamas and the Iranian government, is ethically differentiated from this. Even when spoken of sympathetically however, the Arab/Muslim Other was often distanced temporally by the Obama White House, and was cast as not as far along the 'arc of progress' as the American/Western self. This can be seen in Obama's language on the Middle East and especially in his Cairo address, in which he crafted an historical and geographical narrative of progress which started in the Orient, with Islamic learning in the Middle Ages and was carried through to Europe in the 18th century and finally on to America in the 20th and present day. This address demonstrated the neo-colonial power relations at play in US foreign policy, as the 'issues' of the 'Muslim world' were set out by Obama, along with solutions that ultimately relied upon the Other adopting the 'universal' values embraced by America and the 'international community'. This narrative relied upon themes such as (Eastern) tradition and (Western) modernity that have previously been identified as 'conceptual proxies' for more overtly colonial notions such as civilisation and backwardness (Hobson, 2015). This thesis argues that this was an example of Orientalist structures holding sway over Obama, as, even when he attempted to create a positive portrayal of Islamic civilisation, he did this by framing the contributions of this civilisation as temporally distant in comparison to the (apparently) more recent contributions of American and European cultures.

Portrayals of the Other were unpacked in more detail in the contexts of the Middle East Peace Process and the Iran nuclear negotiations. In the Israel/Palestine context, we can see that the Israeli and American identities were closely linked, with family, cultural and historic ties used to bond the self and the Other, as well as a shared attachment to democratic values. In

contrast, the Palestinian identity drew its link to the US self in the same way as the sympathetic transnational identity referenced above – that is to say, from the same ‘basic truths’ Obama held to be universal. Palestinians were therefore broadly characterised as pursuing the same aspirations towards negative freedoms as he had attributed to ordinary people across the globe. Furthermore, the use of force by the Israeli military was sanitised and justified as ‘self-defence’, necessary to protect the Israeli citizenry from the ever-present threat of Arab violence. The use of force by Palestinian and Arab forces was contrastingly decontextualised as Hamas and other militant organisations were cast as irresponsible obstacles to the Peace Process, who had no interest in supporting ordinary Palestinians. As a result, a narrative of two Palestines emerged, with one led by the mature, moderate and relatively secular Fatah in the West Bank, and the other hijacked by the reckless, selfish and fundamentalist Hamas in Gaza. Again these constructions of otherness (re)created two distinct Arab/Muslim identities, and drew upon Orientalist archives of knowledge, as the ‘seriousness’ of actors in and around the Peace Process was gauged by their relative (im)maturity, and failures in negotiations were attributed to the lack of commitment of the Other.

Finally, in addition to being framed as a nuclear/existential threat to Israel and America’s regional allies, the Iranian state identity was differentiated both from the ‘international community’ and the Iranian people in Obama’s language. The negotiations with Iran were framed as contingent upon Iran’s capacity to act in its own self-interest, and in doing so cooperate with the P5+1 rather than face further sanctions and ostracism from the international community. Nonetheless, links to groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and later Assad’s Syria, were used by Obama to frame Tehran as irresponsible, and as a rule-breaker, thereby placing upon the Other the burden of correcting its behaviour before negotiations could proceed. Furthermore, after the discovery of the Qom enrichment site, and the imposition of further sanctions in 2009, Obama crafted a narrative that cast Iran as immature or childlike in its failure to recognise the logical consequences of its rule-breaking actions. After the eruption of street protests following disputed elections, the opposition of the Iranian people and leadership became more marked, in a pattern that followed the similar opposition of Palestinians and

Hamas. From this point, Iran was cast as an oppressor of its own people, standing in the way of their potential as a great civilisation, in a move that again drew from and (re)produced civilisational discourses and stagnation narratives on the Muslim Other. At the same time, the Iranian people, like the Palestinians, were linked to the transnational identity through their attachment to basic truths and universal values, while the regime was differentiated ethically and temporally, and positioned as an obstacle to human progress.

This chapter has shown how these identities were constructed in such a way that allowed Washington to pursue a foreign policy that was consistently framed as ideologically neutral. Within this policy-identity constellation, the American identity was tied to the acknowledgement of basic principles, and allied to the international community and the progressive efforts of the global population – whether this was in Iran, where the people protested an illiberal regime, or in Palestine, where ordinary people’s legitimate aspirations were obstructed by bad leadership. A narrative in which rationality and maturity allowed America and its allies to make progress whilst childishness, and irrationality in the Iranian regime, and the Israeli and Palestinian leadership prevented them from committing to the correct path forward. Despite the president’s liberal, progressive, and anti-ideological credentials, all of these character traits were drawn from the archive of Orientalism and colonial myths of civilisation, barbarity and backwardness. As such the discursive structures of official US foreign policy at this time were marked by a latent Orientalism. Chapter Six explores how this discourse changed and was adapted through official articulations and interpretations on the Arab Spring, in the contexts of (attempted) revolutions in Egypt, Libya and Syria, as well as subsequent narratives on US foreign policy in the region. Chapter Seven will then present an analysis of the official discourse on terrorism, both before and after the arrival of ISIL onto the international stage.

Chapter six: America and the Arab Spring

I think history will end up recording that at every juncture in the situation in Egypt that we were on the right side of history

Barack Obama

The wave of protests that swept North Africa and then the Middle East from early 2011 marked a new phase in American foreign policy. Protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria took the world apparently by surprise and eventually led to regime changes, civil and proxy wars, and foreign interventions across the region. As events developed, US foreign policy had to be adapted and American interests revalued. At the same time, official discourses underwent similar changes as new, and often chaotic events had to be narrativised into an understandable order for domestic and international audiences alike (Campbell, 1998; Edkins, 2013, O’Loughlin & al., 2018).

The previous chapter presented an analysis of official foreign policy discourse on the Middle East focussing on Obama’s priorities in the region before the discursive landscape came to be dominated by the ‘Arab Spring’. It did this by tracing the (re)production of identities of self and Other in representations of the Middle East Peace Process and Iran’s pursuit of nuclear capabilities. The current chapter further responds to the research questions on change in US foreign policy discourse, identity and threat construction by examining representations of various events, actors and spaces in the context of the Arab Spring – which this thesis takes as an example of both a key event (Hansen, 2006) and an example of Krebs’s (2015) ‘unsettled narrative situation’ – and tracing how these same identities underwent change or remained the same, as well as identifying the emergence of ‘new’ identities where they occur. Through this process the chapter also deconstructs the strategic narratives deployed by the Obama administration to make sense of events and sell new policies to domestic and international audiences.

The chapter finds that once the Obama administration realised the scale of the uprisings, Obama's team were quick to frame the protests as the inevitable consequence of an irresistible popular demand for liberal democracy in a region characterised by dictatorships. This was a seemingly natural interpretation of events based on an understanding of the world which hinged on the portrayal of the sympathetic transnational identity exposed in the previous chapter. Within the framework of a Middle East that is 'stagnant' (Khalidi, 2004) or situated temporally behind the West, it appeared logical that the 'ordinary people' of the Arab and Muslim worlds had seen the benefits of Western civilisational progress and democratic governance, and sought to liberate themselves from the authoritarian backwardness imposed on them by their rulers. A narrative subsequently emerged in which the East was maturing, and beginning to follow the path of reason, enlightenment and democracy laid out by the West.

This chapter is split into three parts, each focussing on a distinct phase of the official reaction to the Arab Spring. The first section examines the initial reactions to protests in Egypt and Libya in which Obama was required to fit chaotic events into a narrative that could be easily understood by key audiences (Edkins, 2013; Hansen, 2006; Krebs, 2015). The second then considers the next phase in which a wider coherent narrative of the Arab Spring began to take shape and a prospective military intervention in Libya was made thinkable and communicable to domestic and international audiences (Holland, 2013b; Holland & Aaronson, 2014; 2016). Finally, as military intervention in Libya was deemed a 'success', and the unrest in Syria gave way to a prolonged civil/proxy war, the last section of this chapter explores official language on the Syrian conflict, focussing on the regime's embodiment of barbarity, and the role of powers such as Russia, Iran and Hezbollah as ethical Others to the international community and the American self.

This chapter argues that the Obama administration articulated the Arab Spring as a struggle between forces of progress and backwardness across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Building on an existing discursive framework that inscribed difference temporally between the East and West (Borg, 2017), Obama and other elite actors (re)produced the key

identities of self and Other developed through its discourse on Iran and the Middle East Peace Process to create a teleological script for the Arab Spring. This was achieved by (re)producing the positive transnational identity previously applied to the imagined community of ‘ordinary people’ across the world, and applying this to the Arab Spring protestor. The largely constant protestor identity could then be opposed to various ‘regime’ identities. In the case of the Mubarak government in Egypt, the official US portrayal of the historically friendly regime was comparatively benign. This contributed to an initial narrative in which protests were framed first as an ‘opportunity’ for the government to demonstrate its responsiveness to its people, before this became unsustainable and the language of democracy and an ‘orderly transition’ began to emerge. In contrast, Libya and Syria were linked together with Iran, as oppressors of their populations and obstacles in the path of human progress. Here, these regimes assumed the traditional characteristics of the barbarian tyrant as colonialist and Orientalist language gradually became more marked in official discourse.

These identities served two strategic purposes. First, they made possible and legitimate a selective (but historically consistent) American foreign policy in the Middle East and North Africa for a domestic audience. Second, they were used to coerce the international community into supporting Washington’s interests in the region. By linking the protestor to ‘universal values’, and contrasting this with the tyranny of hostile regimes, Obama manoeuvred allied states and organisations such as the United Nations into a position where they must either support his narrative or be seen as opposing basic human rights and freedoms. As the unrest dragged on, states which supported barbaric regimes – notably Russia in connection to Syria – were shamed by their association. Rather than contextualising and historicising the Arab revolts (see Bassil (2019) on contextualisation as a means of disrupting Orientalist power structures), or presenting a consistent ethical evaluation of authoritarian regimes – including US allies – facing revolts at the time (see Little (2016), or Wearing’s (2018) efforts to explain this ethical ambiguity in the British context), the Obama administration instead opted to (re)produce a cast of characters along a dividing line of human progress with itself at the vanguard. In so doing, the image of the barbarian was once again deployed as the threatening Other of Western foreign

policy. In keeping with Said's conceptualisation of Orientalism as a "style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (1995, p. 3), this was only ever applied to dictatorships that also happened to oppose US interests. Furthermore, the longer Gaddafi and Assad clung onto power, the starker Obama's language became, as he shifted from a latent representation of Middle Eastern ontological difference (i.e. one that was influenced by the wider Orientalist structures of US culture and foreign policy) towards a more manifest portrayal of caricatured barbarian tyrants (i.e. a portrayal that shows more evidence of strategic use of Orientalist tropes by the elite agent). With these arguments presented, Chapter Seven will then go on to unpack how the barbarian identity was then recycled once again after 2014 to make sense of ISIL, and how this came to be contrasted with a more overtly civilisational representation of the West and its culture following attacks in Europe and the US.

1. Different reactions to uprisings in Egypt and Libya

Whilst the uprisings of 2011 began in Sidi Bouzid after the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi, the Tunisian protest movement did not feature strongly in official US texts from the period. In contrast, Obama and his administration spoke frequently on events in Egypt and Libya from January to March of that year, leading Arsenault & al (2018, p. 193) to remark that these became the archetypal cases of correct and unacceptable government reactions to protest respectively. This section first considers the Egyptian case, to establish how the Obama administration modified its language in reaction to, and to make sense of, the growing protests against President Mubarak. With this done, reaction to the Libyan case is then compared and contrasted. The analysis finds that whilst the identity of the protestor remained largely constant from Egypt to Libya, the Mubarak and Gaddafi regimes were clearly differentiated according to their willingness to accommodate political, social and economic reforms. Most clearly, the Egyptian regime was largely trusted to bring about reform by itself, and even when Obama called on Mubarak to step down there was never any serious criticism of the military regime as it extended beyond the president. In contrast, the Libyan crisis was immediately securitised through the articulation of threats to US interests and assets, the Libyan people and the

universal norms and values critiqued in the previous chapter. As a result, intervention and potential regime change was made thinkable and communicable in Libya whilst it remained a political impossibility in Egypt. The chapter argues this inconsistent foreign policy was made to seem consistent and logical by the Obama regime via the diverging construction of ‘regime’ identities outlined below.

1.a. An opportunity for responsive reform in Egypt

This moment of volatility has to be turned into a moment of promise. The United States has a close partnership with Egypt and we've cooperated on many issues, including working together to advance a more peaceful region. But we've also been clear that there must be reform – political, social, and economic reforms that meet the aspirations of the Egyptian people.

Barack Obama, 28 January 2011

Text 1020

When Egyptian protestors took to the streets of Cairo on 25 January 2011, they presented a dilemma for the US state department. Washington had long enjoyed a strategic alliance with the Mubarak regime and both diplomatic convention and the logic of realpolitik required it stand by its regional ally and favoured broker in the Middle East peace process (Dueck, 2015, pp. 75-82; Lynch, 2011a; 2011b). On the other hand, as the previous chapter shows, since 2009, the Obama administration had promoted a line of responsible and responsive governance in the Middle East, framing itself as on the side of ordinary people through its attachment to universal values and basic truths. The world had seen President Ben Ali of Tunisia stand down in the face of public dissent a week earlier, and the Egyptian protestors were evidently pursuing more than incremental political reform. The protests in Tahrir Square therefore posed a test of Obama's claimed commitment to ‘universal’ values and his capacity to strike the balance he had promised between ‘idealist’ and ‘realist’ foreign policy.

Considering the strategic interests at play, it is unsurprising that Obama strove to remain neutral between the regime and its people as long as this was politically possible¹. Rhetorically, this was achieved first by stressing the need for restraint and non-violence from ‘both sides’, second, by articulating responses in the language of universal rights and basic human truths, and third, by creating an idea of protest as an ‘opportunity’ for the Mubarak government to demonstrate its responsiveness to the Egyptian people².

From 28 January, Obama constructed the American self as an interested bystander to the dialogue between Egyptians and their leaders. The US was characterised as “closely monitoring the situation” out of its “first concern [of] preventing injury or loss of life” (Obama, 2011, Text 1020). The framing of non-violence as a priority enabled the speaker to then make demands of both the protestors and the regime without appearing to support either over the other. First, Obama “call[ed] upon the Egyptian authorities to refrain from any violence against peaceful protestors”, then he insisted on the “responsibility” of the protestors to “express themselves peacefully” (ibid). By responding in this way, Obama produced a border between Egyptians and their leaders, and in doing so reinforced the idea of America as the Middle East’s moral arbiter, conferring upon it the right to define acceptable behaviour in an internal dispute within a sovereign nation. Even as this was done, the ‘non-violence as priority’ narrative also reinforced the asymmetric power relations between people and regime by placing equal requirements on both. Despite (or, as Obama might claim, because of) their relative weakness and vulnerability in the face of the Egyptian state and military, protestors were warned that “violence and destruction will not lead to the reforms that they seek” (ibid). Here, it would have been possible to craft an alternative narrative that contextualised the protests, or at least emphasised the historic violence inflicted by Mubarak and the military onto the population, in the same way that later narratives would frame popular revolts against Muammar Gaddafi and Bashar al Assad. Instead, the White House established a discursive and moral framework in

¹ Node: Arab Spring\Egypt\US backs Mubarak government and reforms.

² Nodes: Arab Spring\Egypt\Basic truths; Arab Spring\Egypt\Non-violence a priority; Arab Spring\Egypt\Opportunity for the government to demonstrate responsiveness; Arab Spring\Egypt\Universal rights.

which the US was able to position itself alongside protestors whilst also limiting their scope for acceptable action. Acceptable protestor activity was therefore immediately restricted to the realm of the non-violent, with the logical consequence that any end to the stand-off would have to be dictated by the very military regime Egyptians were seeking to depose, and, as it turned out, in dialogue with the US (Dueck, 2015, pp. 77). This discursive process therefore conforms to Said's description of Orientalism as a style for ordering and governing Eastern spaces. America's decision to lend its moral authority to 'both sides' laid a pathway to an eventual situation in which while Mubarak himself eventually stepped down, the military regime that he headed was able to maintain a great deal of its power as they were cast as the secular guardians of the Egyptian state apparatus, and something of a responsible broker between the Egyptian people and their most visible oppressor. The lingering power of the army was made unavoidably obvious two years later as the democratically elected but (from a Washington perspective) problematically Islamist new president Mohammed Morsi was himself ousted in a military backed coup, and replaced in the following elections (after Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood had been outlawed) by the secular and Western-trained former soldier, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (Eltahawy, 2019).

Obama's second rhetorical move was to embed the Egyptian protests in the language of universal rights and values. This vocabulary was borrowed from the discourses on the Middle East explored in the previous chapter. Themes of common humanity, basic rights, and universal values dominated the Cairo address of 2009, and the previous chapter demonstrated how these were used to explain the Middle East and foster support for US policies towards Iran, Israel and Palestine. The US had thus committed to the idea that all peoples, irrespective of race or religion subscribed to the same basic ideas about rights, dignity, and opportunity. This knowledge claim was easily transposed onto the new Egyptian reality. The protests took America and the Western world by surprise, but by fitting them into the prefabricated narrative of human nature, Obama was able to hold them up as the proof of his grand theory of human progress.

In the Egyptian setting, these values were repeatedly expressed as a belief that the Egyptian people had universal rights. These were regularly enumerated as rights to freedom of assembly and association, freedom of speech, “the ability [of Egyptians] to determine their own destiny” (Obama, 2011, Text 1020), and (responding to restrictions on digital communications) “the freedom to access information” (ibid, Text 1022). These liberal values linked the American self to the protestors who, at least in the official discursive context, embodied them. Obama drew this link with phrases such as “we stand for universal values” or “the United States will continue to stand up for democracy” (ibid). As Bogaert (2013), Joya (2011), and Teti (2016) have observed, the positive social rights that Egyptian protestors demand were eclipsed from Western narratives, as the slogan “*‘Aish, Horreya, Adala Egtima’eya*” or “Bread, Freedom, Social Justice” was reduced down to the more negative and traditionally American focus on neoliberal freedoms from the state.

Finally, the protests were constructed as a positive opportunity for the Mubarak regime to voluntarily introduce incremental “political, economic and social reforms that can improve [Egyptian] lives and help Egypt prosper” (Obama, 2011, Text 4572). Central to this construction was the idea of (legitimate) aspirations which, in turn, was closely tied to the concept of opportunity³. Obama took on the voice of the Egyptian people and assumed he spoke for them in claiming that Egyptians wanted “the same things that we all want”, whether these are political, social or economic reforms, or more poetically “a future that befits the heirs to a great and ancient civilization” (Obama, 2011, Text 1020)⁴. The protests were thus understood in the wider narrative of Arab peoples, and especially young people, expressing their natural predisposition towards liberal American aspirations. The years of complex frustrations expressed by Egyptians not just in Tahrir Square, but previously through decades of protests, strikes and coordinated industrial actions (Alexander & Bassiouny, 2014; Bogaert, 2013) were reduced to the ‘basic truth’ that every person desired the freedom to go to school, speak her mind and run a small business. This again should be understood within the broader theme of

³ Nodes: Arab Spring\Egypt\Aspirations.

⁴ Node: Arab Spring\Egypt\Egypt’s people will determine Egypt’s future\A great civilisation.

US foreign policy discourse on the ‘legitimate aspirations’ of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, and young Iranians living under an anti-Western regime. However, in contrast to the Iranian case, where an oppressive regime was imagined to be actively opposed to its own population, Washington here constructed a problem that could be resolved simply by encouraging a benevolent dictatorship to allow its people a few more basic freedoms. With this done, order could be restored and business in the Middle East would continue as normal.

Obama was aided in constructing this discursive framework by the use of human dignity as a strong theme in both protestor and media discourses (Anderson, 2011; Lynch, 2011a; 2011b). By emphasising the most basic and universal demands of the protestors, he was able to obscure the popular dissatisfaction with 30 years of neoliberal rule which was a key factor in bringing people onto the streets (Alexander & Bassiouny, 2014; Bogaert, 2013; Joya, 2011; Moghadam, 2013). America thereby sold a narrative of the Arab Spring in which protests against an ally became an opportunity for Mubarak to demonstrate his responsiveness – and, tacitly, for the regime to demonstrate that Washington was right to fund and support an authoritarian regime.

This narrative encouraged a minimum of political and economic reforms, and only insofar as those complied with the Washington consensus. Despite his claim that “Egyptian voices must be heard”⁵, Obama failed to use his platform to amplify these voices. Instead, he reduced their demands into the most basic language of universalism. The required state response therefore became a negative one – the removal of constraints, as Obama asked for the removal of barriers on free speech, trade and business⁶. The imagined outcome of this narrative was a free(er) Egypt in which the aspirations of its people could finally crystallise into innovation and economic growth.

This prioritisation of order over justice eventually subsided to calls for regime change, or an “orderly transition that is responsive to the aspirations of the Egyptian people” by January 30 (Obama, 2011, Text 4574)⁷. Up to this point, Washington had hedged its language to cover

⁵ Node: Arab Spring\Egypt\Egyptian voices must be heard.

⁶ Node: Arab Spring\Egypt\Aspirations\economic reforms.

⁷ Node: Arab Spring\Egypt\US supports an orderly transition (responsive to aspirations).

the possibility that concessions from the Mubarak government would be enough to pacify protest. As this possibility became less credible, the administration broadened its language from the vocabulary of basic truths and universal rights, towards support for an ‘orderly transition’ towards ‘genuine democracy’. By 11 February, after newly appointed Vice President Omar Suleiman announced Mubarak’s resignation, Obama finally went as far as to declare “Egyptians have made it clear that nothing less than genuine democracy will carry the day” (Obama, 2011, Text 1029).

This rhetorical ambiguity later made it easier for Obama to retrospectively frame the US as consistently on the side of democracy, and therefore on the right side of history⁸. The mantra that Egyptian voices had to be heard, and as the regime lost credibility, that “Egypt’s future will ultimately be decided by Egypt’s people”⁹, positioned Washington as the model of measured restraint, offering nothing but “moral support” to a young and vibrant generation of Egyptians demonstrating their natural hunger for neoliberal democracy (Obama, 2011, Text 1034). That Mubarak was a key geopolitical ally in a volatile region of hostile regimes was disguised by an ethical foreign policy that followed ‘core principles’, obeyed ‘universal values’ and recognised ‘basic truths’ common to all humanity. Instead a narrative was constructed whereby “peaceful protests led to dialogue, led to discussion, led to reform and ultimately led to democracy” (ibid). The fact that the White House would have been content had the final stage never been reached was omitted from the official narrative.

1.b. Securitisation of the Libyan case

First, we are doing everything we can to protect American citizens. That is my highest priority...

These actions violate international norms and every standard of common decency. This violence must stop...

⁸ Nodes: Arab Spring\Egypt\US is on the side of democracy; Arab Spring\Egypt\US was always on the right side of history; Arab Spring\Egypt\A historic change made by Egyptian people.

⁹ Node: Arab Spring\Egypt\Egypt’s people will determine Egypt’s future.

This is not simply a concern of the United States. The entire world is watching, and we will coordinate our assistance and accountability measures with the international community.

Barack Obama, 23 February 2011

Text 1044

In contrast to the Egyptian case, the president's language on Libya showed little evidence of patience for the Gaddafi regime. The most immediate difference in the framing of the Libyan protests is that they were situated within the frame of US national security. The presence of American workers on the ground alongside European counterparts, provided a justification for immediate action that was not used in Egypt or Tunisia. This security framing appealed to the national and cultural memory of Gaddafi and Libya as antagonists in the American mind. Rhetorical appeals to memories of the 1988 Lockerbie bombing, in which 179 Americans died, provided the cultural and emotional foundations for Obama to frame Gaddafi once again as an enabler and sponsor of terrorism, and an enemy of the nation. Although this was complicated by a politics of 'normalisation' under his immediate predecessor (Schwartz, 2007), the president was still able to make use of his platform to appeal to the popular imaginary of the tyrant dictator as a murderer of innocents/Americans.

The initial framing of the response to protests in Libya was a clear example of a securitising move. Obama, the securitising actor, framed Colonel Gaddafi and his regime as existential threats to a number of different referent objects: the Libyan people, American assets and interests, and wider regional stability, as well as more abstract ideas about American values and the credibility of the international community.

The most urgent of these referents was the population of Benghazi. Gaddafi's threat to eradicate vermin in the city (Black, 2011; BBC News, 2011) was seized by the president and reproduced to justify immediate military action¹⁰. Benghazi was presented as "home to 700,000 men, women and children who sought their freedom from fear" (Obama, 2011, Text 1088). This statement served two purposes. First, it raised the prospect of genocide as the likely result

¹⁰ Node: Arab Spring\Libya\Gaddafi must go\Gaddafi has made his intentions clear\Rats.

of inaction (this is what Arsenault & al. (2018) label the ‘or else’ clause) as the 700,000 became an equal number of potential graves should America and the international community fail to act. Second, it co-opted the voices of hundreds of thousands of Libyans to the liberal cause as the pursuit of freedom became causally linked to the potential genocide. Gaddafi’s reputation as “a prison warden, part tyrant, part buffoon” (Ajami, 2012, p. 59) was exploited to construct a narrative in which Benghazians were trapped on the brink of mass-slaughter at the hands of a mad and unpredictable dictator. Unlike Ben Ali and Mubarak in Tunisia and Egypt, Gaddafi could not be trusted either to step aside or to refrain from massacring his own people. Instead he was characterised in a similar way to President Ahmadinejad of Iran: infantile and irresponsible; and willing to let his people suffer if it might help him defy America and the international community. Obama borrowed from his language on Iran by emphasising the wrong choice made by Gaddafi. As with Ahmadinejad, Gaddafi, when met with the force of progress, chose to respond with brutal force and repression. Unlike Mubarak and Ben Ali, the tyrant dictators were both portrayed as unable to recognise or appreciate the potential of their people. Instead of responding to legitimate aspirations with substantial reforms, they use their militaries to attack and imprison innocent civilians, arrest and abuse journalists, and even attack hospitals and patients in “a campaign of intimidation and repression” (Obama, 2011, Text 1074)¹¹. By presenting the reality of state oppression and the potential for future mass-slaughter, Obama securitised the Libyan revolution. Framing events in this way produced a strong narrative whereby Western military intervention was required to ensure the survival of the Libyan population as the referent object¹².

Holland & Aaronson (2014; 2016) have shown how this was balanced with the threat to national security in order to maximise the resonance of calls for intervention. The authors argue US and UK political elites raised humanitarian and national security interests alternatively, alongside appeals to values and credibility in order to minimise the discursive spaces from which critics might voice alternative interpretations of events (Holland & Aaronson, 2016, p.

¹¹ Node: Arab Spring\Libya\Unacceptable violence against civilians.

¹² Nodes: Arab Spring\Libya\Responsibility to Protect; Arab Spring\Libya\Inaction risks atrocities.

17). From his first speech explicitly on Libya (Text 1044), Obama made reference to his national security team, immediately suspending ‘normal’ dialogue by elevating the issue above the realm of the political (Buzan, & al., 1998). This security framing continued throughout the discourse on Libya, and was justified in the most immediate sense by the presence of American citizens on the ground¹³. In framing events in this way, Obama transformed the imagined geography of Libya into a place populated by Americans who were then exposed to real imminent dangers. This speech act reduced the distance between the threat (Gaddafi) and the domestic audience, and undercut any potential argument that the US had no reason to involve itself in another foreign entanglement. From the first days of the crisis, Obama established his priority as the protection of American lives and frequently returned to America’s responsibility to act when its interests were at stake. This was in contrast to the Egyptian case, in which the avoidance of violence was said to be the top priority. Obama drew on his mantra of realism wedded to idealism to merge America’s ‘interests’ and ‘values’ in Libya, with the Gaddafi regime cast as threat to both. This then set the stage for military intervention to secure both.

The detail of the storytelling at play in selling multilateral intervention in Libya to different audiences is unpacked in the following section of this chapter. However, in order to understand the case for intervention, it is necessary first to unravel the broader narrative of the Arab Spring that began to take form around the same period, and against which this case is made.

2. Towards a coherent narrative of the Arab Spring

The following section examines official discourse on the Arab Spring after the initial phase of reaction has passed. By March of 2011, Presidents Mubarak and Ben Ali had stood down in Egypt and Tunisia, and their counterparts in Libya and Syria were making increasingly clear that they were unlikely to follow suit. Along with its allies, the US would intervene in Libya on 19 March, starting a process that would culminate in the death of Gaddafi and a declaration of liberation six months later. In Syria, the Assad regime’s violent response to protests would

¹³ Node: Arab Spring\Libya\National security.

lead to a civil war and calls for another Western intervention. This section is split into two parts, the first analysing how Obama constructed a cohesive account of the Arab Spring as an historic moment of change, and the second deconstructing the strategic narratives and identities that were put in place to sell intervention in Libya within the wider narrative of the Arab Spring, whilst disregarding similar events in allied nations. It supports Arsenault & al. (2018) in arguing that the initial representations of Egypt and Libya outlined above came to serve as opposing identities representing correct and incorrect responses to popular change. These identities (re)produced and reinforced the latently Orientalist metanarrative of East to West progress identified in Chapter Four. The Arab Spring was constructed as a momentous step towards progress and maturity taken by the ordinary people of the Middle East, which reduced the ethical and temporal difference between East and West. Arab regimes were then defined and differentiated by their capacity and willingness to introduce ‘progressive’ liberal reforms. Finally, a more manifestly Orientalist strategic narrative is produced whereby those ‘brutal’ and ‘barbaric’ regimes that would stand in the way of progress must be removed by the civilising military force of the international community.

2.a. The Arab Spring as an historic moment of change.

On December 17th, a young vendor named Mohammed Bouazizi was devastated when a police officer confiscated his cart. This was not unique. It’s the same kind of humiliation that takes place every day in many parts of the world — the relentless tyranny of governments that deny their citizens dignity. Only this time, something different happened. After local officials refused to hear his complaints, this young man, who had never been particularly active in politics, went to the headquarters of the provincial government, doused himself in fuel, and lit himself on fire.

Barack Obama, 19 May 2011

Text 1162

The above quote, taken from a speech to the State Department, shows how Obama was able to spin a cohesive narrative thread of the Arab Spring as a singular event characterised by identifiable liberal heroes and driven by respectable causes that were easily understandable to

a Western audience. What Obama frequently referred to as the ‘extraordinary changes’ in the Middle East and North Africa¹⁴ started with the actions of Mohammed Bouazizi, a “young vendor” prevented from conducting business by a corrupt official¹⁵. The young entrepreneur was humiliated by a (female) agent of the state, and denied both his dignity and his private property in the form of a confiscated cart. The president made an effort to remove any traces of ideology from his story, emphasising a previous lack of interest in politics. Bouazizi is constructed as a perfect martyr for neoliberalism: untainted by Islamist or socialist dogma and demanding only his ‘basic human right’ to exchange goods in a free market. The hero is then struck down by a corrupt system, led by a tyrannical government. His death “ignited a movement” (Obama, 2011, Text 1309) towards political and economic reform that, it was hoped, would ultimately bring democracy and free-trade to a stable and civilised Middle East¹⁶.

Bouazizi’s story, as told by Obama, is representative of the more coherent grand narrative of the Arab Spring that crystallised through 2011 and forced a sense of familiarity and order onto the protests. The Washington-constructed identity of protestors, whether on the streets of Tunis, Cairo, Tripoli or Damascus, was contingent on a discourse of neoliberal frustrations with the rule of Arab dictators¹⁷. Deploying the same universalist logic previously applied to Egypt, Obama and his staff spoke of protestors as pursuing the same basic rights and principles that had been developed, supported and defended by America around the world. The protests were imagined as a natural expression of these universal desires irrespective of the diverse historical and political contexts within which they emerged¹⁸. As in Egypt, Palestine and Iran, these universal values were mostly expressed as negative freedoms that could be conceded by the state: freedom of speech, religion and assembly and equality of opportunity and between sexes. The idea of *karama* or dignity was also a strong theme in many of the protest movements and was important in the cultural resonance of Bouazizi’s story (El Bernoussi, 2015; Hashemi,

¹⁴ Node: Arab Spring\Extraordinary changes.

¹⁵ Node: Arab Spring\Bouazizi martyr narrative.

¹⁶ Nodes: Arab Spring\Opportunity for democracy; Arab Spring\Opportunity for free trade; Arab Spring\Political and economic reform.

¹⁷ Arab Spring\Protests as demands for basic human rights.

¹⁸ Node: Arab Spring\Protests as expression of basic truths, aspirations.

2013, pp. 209-212; see also Barnett, 1999, on resonance). This concept has a long and complex history, which, in the Egyptian context, El Bernoussi has traced back as far as the nationalisation of the Suez canal in 1956. Nevertheless, its potential vagueness (at least when decontextualised for a Western audience), and the implied sense of individual struggle against state oppression meshed well with the official US rhetoric on negative freedom and liberal reform. As Hashemi has argued, ‘Arab indignity’ at a collective level is just as important to regional politics and is “associated with a set of common historical experiences” including “European colonialism and imperialism” obstructing Arab self-determination and the prospect of a post-WW1 pan-Arab state, as well as the advent of “Western support for the national rights of Jewish settlers in Palestine over those of the indigenous Palestinian population” (Hashemi, 2013, p. 210). Of course, in the White House discourse on dignity, the concept is only applied in the context of the individual, and therefore can also be achieved by the gifting of negative freedoms and economic reforms to the people by the state¹⁹.

The representation of protestors and their motivations in this way was part of a process of linking ordinary Arab people to the US self that started earlier in Obama’s tenure and was exposed in the previous chapter. Here again, Arab people were taken as a homogenous group and embedded within the larger international or transnational identity of humans who, by their nature, shared America’s universal values and were empowered by its commitment to basic liberal principles. The US self was also (re)produced in a way which linked it to the international Other, as the Obama administration regularly attributed their decision making to the nation’s principles and values, and made reference to America supporting democracy, and being ‘on the side of people’ as opposed to having a particular political or geostrategic stake in events²⁰.

The related and opposed differentiation of these same people to tyrannical governments in Syria, Libya and Iran made the link to America appear stronger. Protests were thus framed as

¹⁹ Node: Arab Spring\Protests as expression of basic truths, aspiration\Dignity.

²⁰ Nodes: Arab Spring\America is on the side of people; Arab Spring\Principles and values guiding US action; Arab Spring\US supports democratic transitions.

an historic moment of change in US foreign policy discourse²¹, marking a new phase in the Arab/Muslim people's civilisational journey towards Western democratic governance. They were imagined and articulated as the embodiment of natural human progress and the unavoidable consequence of repressive, anti-democratic governance. Obama and the administration repeatedly labelled the uprisings as some form of 'historic change' or 'historic moment', or a 'new chapter' in 'our common history'²². The protests of 2011 take on the role of a watershed moment between the backwards, anti-democratic postcolonial Arab politics of the past, and a new era of vibrant, liberal democracy driven by the same irrepressible human urge for progress Obama had placed at the heart of his foreign policy discourse from 2009. The Arab Spring becomes a metaphor for the reduction of temporal and ethical difference between East and West.

For the region, today's events prove once more that the rule of an iron fist inevitably comes to an end. Across the Arab world, citizens have stood up to claim their rights. Youth are delivering a powerful rebuke to dictatorship. And those leaders who try to deny their human dignity will not succeed.

Barack Obama, 20 October 2011
(shortly after the lynching of Muammar Gaddafi)
Text 1364

You saw recently what was happening in Egypt – people with Facebook and Twitter led an entire revolution in their country. And we were watching it live on television. Twenty years ago, 30 years ago, that would have been impossible.

Barack Obama, 14 February 2011
Text 1033

This narrative was consolidated by the president's efforts to emphasise the role of youth in pushing for change, wherever protests occurred. When narrativising pivotal events from the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi to the extra-judicial killing of Muammar Gaddafi, Obama made efforts to highlight the agency of youth at every turn (see Texts 1162 and 1364

²¹ Node: Arab Spring\Arab Spring as historic change, embodiment of progress as human nature.

²² Node: Arab Spring\Arab Spring as historic change\New chapter.

for examples). A ‘new generation’ was said to be at the forefront of a movement for change that was sweeping and reshaping the region²³. Playing on the same theme, the progressive arc of history narrative was compounded by the refrain that new technologies made possible this movement for change²⁴. Communications technology and social media were said to have been used by ‘the youth’ to coordinate and organise protests in a short space of time. Obama suggested that American companies like Facebook, Twitter, Apple and Microsoft should be credited with kindling a desire for democracy and open markets in the hearts of oppressed peoples, who otherwise would not be aware of what Western civilisation had to offer them (according to Ben Rhodes (2019, p. 100), Obama once remarked privately that “he’d prefer that ‘the Google guy’ [Wael Ghonim] run Egypt”). This narrative is deeply rooted in the US Democrats liberal ideology, in which the combination of youth, technology and opportunity can only culminate in growth, employment and the economic integration of formerly marginalised populations. This is in contrast to the official representation of protests in Iran outlined in Chapter Four, according to which the government’s censure of online communications acted as an “electronic curtain” against the advance of democracy. By centring the role of youth and technology, Obama reinforced the idea of the Arab Spring as a journey from the past into the future. In doing so, he once again demonstrated the extent to which Orientalism was engrained in his foreign policy, by further (re)producing an ideology that takes for granted not just the West’s ontological difference from the East, but also its developmental and political superiority.

Even with this optimistic reading of the Spring, a possible cloud on the horizon for domestic audiences remained in the form of potential ramifications for the Peace Process and America’s relationship with the Israeli leadership. Nevertheless, the characterisation of human and especially youth driven change allowed the claim to be made that the ‘extraordinary transformations’ rocking the Middle East presented a moment of opportunity for the Peace

²³ Node: Arab Spring\A new generation.

²⁴ Node: Arab Spring\Technology made this possible, inevitable.

Process rather than an obstacle or complication²⁵. Within the administration, accounts suggest this optimism was felt predominantly by the more junior ‘Obamians’, and liberal internationalist ‘hawks’ such as Anne-Marie Slaughter and Susan Rice, while more senior establishment figures were more anxious about the consequences for America’s regional interests (see Kitchen, 2012, pp. 55-7; Mann, 2012, pp. 261, 264-6; Rhodes, 2019, pp. 99-108). At least in the case of Egypt, this optimistic narrative also minimised the importance of popular frustrations with Mubarak’s foreign policy towards Israel in bringing people onto the streets in the first place (Ajami, 2012; Lynch, 2011b). In Obama’s speeches however, there were no contradictions between America’s commitment to Israel and its support for the people demanding change across the region because both of these stemmed from the same deeper commitment to progressive and universal values. The discursive linking of the US to the Arab people in this context drew on the same themes of common principles, values, and basic human truths that the previous chapter identified in the Israel/America policy-identity constellation. As before, with regards to Palestinian interests, any remaining unease with regards to Israeli security was mollified by the constant insistence that American support for protestors extended only to their ‘legitimate’ aspirations towards security as well as economic and political freedoms²⁶. This phrasing was first deployed as a means to separate (what the White House deemed to be) acceptable Palestinian demands from those expressed by Hamas and its supporters. Once again, the effect was to limit and curtail the scope of protestors to diverge from the American sanctioned understanding of acceptable forms of governance and political organisation.

By mid-2011 then, the Obama administration had succeeded in curating an easily understandable narrative to explain the widespread unrest in the Middle East that hinged on the same universal values and basic truths that characterised Obama’s foreign policy discourse in the previous years, including with regards to Israel, Palestine and Iran. Because this narrative characterised protestors as an homogenous group, that pursued similar legitimate aspirations,

²⁵ Node: Arab Spring\Opportunity for Middle East Peace.

²⁶ Node: Arab Spring\Legitimate aspirations and grievances.

negative freedoms and ‘dignity’ irrespective of context, this could be used to justify an extremely selective foreign policy approach to unrest. Both the Bahraini and Yemeni governments’ long-standing status as American allies effectively protected them from American interference regardless of the realities of popular unrest and state repression on the ground (Miller, 2014). Unsurprisingly, characterisations of these regimes did not feature heavily in the official discourse, and where they are mentioned, it was only to state that the respective governments should show restraint, and respect their citizens human rights, whilst also acknowledging their “legitimate interest in the rule of law” (Obama, 2011, Text 1162). Conversely, entrenched political enmity between the US and the Gaddafi and Assad regimes meant a domestic audience would be more receptive towards the prospects of leadership changes in Libya and Syria, and diverging government identities in the region became obvious. The second half of this section deconstructs the strategic narrative for intervention made by the Obama administration before and throughout the NATO bombing campaign in Libya.

2.b. A strategic narrative for multilateral intervention in Libya

According to accounts of discussions from the time leading up to the Libya intervention, Obama was caught between members of his administration on Libya, notably between the ‘liberal hawks’ Hillary Clinton, Susan Rice and Samantha Power on one side, and ‘foreign policy realists’ led by Robert Gates, and including Tom Donilon and Denis McDonough on the other (Dueck, 2014, pp. 82; Mann, 2012, pp. 284-290). Obama’s personal preference for multilateralism, ideally in which America could lead interventions ‘from behind’ dictated that a sufficient coalition of support was necessary from European allies and regional partners. For domestic audiences, the moral contradictions within the administration’s selective approach to the Arab Spring could be explained by contrasting national memories and knowledges of the relevant nations that made up the American imagined geography of the Middle East. For the international audience however, a selective blindness with regards to government repression could have been more problematic. Whilst Nicolas Sarkozy and David Cameron were both

keen to intervene in Libya in principle, the idea that the European powers would take the lead in any potential multilateral effort remained a hard sell (Dueck, 2014, p. 82).

The coherent narrative of the uprisings outlined above, in which the ordinary peoples of Libya, Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen alike pursued the same basic aspirations towards self-governance, security, human rights and economic opportunity, functioned in part to make military interventions against governments that could be characterised as repressive or tyrannical seem more appealing to liberal internationalist audiences. By reducing the complex demands and frustrations of tens of thousands of people – otherwise divided by nationality, ethnicity, religion, and location – into the same basic ideas of freedom, dignity and independence, the White House could then make basic knowledge claims about the ‘responsiveness’ of Arab governments that made possible (non)intervention. In the case of America’s allies such Bahrain and Yemen, governments were said to have done enough to suggest a commitment to the path of political and economic reform, thereby saving them – at least temporarily – from serious international consequences. Mann (2012, p. 273) has previously noted how ‘reform’ became a signifier for ‘not revolution’ and ‘not regime change’ that was used by the administration to reassure regional allies they would not be abandoned like Mubarak. In the cases of Libya and Syria however, whilst both regimes made similar statements about reforms, both were said to be made in bad faith, and in contradiction to the reality of oppression and violence on the ground. For example, Obama stated in May of 2011 “false reform announcements, such as ending the emergency law but then expanding the scope of arrests without even the pretense of judicial warrants, also do not satisfy the demand for change in Syria” (Text 4593). The official discourse simultaneously minimised differences between groups of protestors whilst emphasising the ethical distance between friendly and antagonistic governments. Enough difference was built into the discourse to legitimise different foreign policies in each country.

Strategic narratives can be understood as scripts written to “bind actors to roles and hold them to expected ways of behaving” (Arsenault, & al., 2018, p. 192). In the lead up to military

intervention in Libya, President Obama, alongside his counterparts in Britain and France, built a powerful story to sell their desired foreign policy to a range of audiences. Having voiced the idea that Gaddafi was a threat to American interests, universal values, and his own people, Obama and his speechwriter – who is said to have “agitated” the more reluctant president towards intervention – worked to produce and communicate a coherent narrative/script to set out the case for multilateral intervention and establish the “dangerous” consequences of inaction (Landler, 2013)²⁷. The purpose of this was to garner support from the public and to bind key domestic and international actors into compliant roles.

As Holland & Aaronson (2014, 2016) have shown, political elites in the US and Britain strategically deployed various referents in order to maximise resonance and minimise scope for criticism from the media and political rivals. As well as speaking intervention in the language of national security, Obama took care to construct a values-based narrative in favour of aggressive force²⁸. Often, this is aimed at the international audience, and is done in such a way as to manipulate America’s partners into collaborating with and reinforcing the White House narrative. In such instances, Obama closes down the discursive space in which an alternative interpretation could be formulated by embedding his foreign policy in the liberal values that international organisations such as the UN are founded upon. These values are in turn contrasted with the tyranny and barbarity of hostile regimes in the Arab Spring, and often with Gaddafi’s personal identity as a tyrant and a threat to his own people²⁹. Once again this draws on the colonial narratives of western civilisation and order as the vanguard against Oriental backwardness, brutality and chaos. It also marks a shift in Obama’s language, from the well-meaning but latently Orientalist and reductive representation of sympathetic Arab protestors, towards a more manifest caricature of Eastern barbarism, that in terms of a strategic agency had a clear utility when it came to selling policy.

²⁷ Node: Arab Spring\Libya\Multilateral response.

²⁸ Nodes: Arab Spring\Libya\Multilateral response\Intervention to allow transition to democracy; Arab Spring\Libya\Multilateral response\Intervention for freedom; Arab Spring\Libya\Multilateral response\Intervention responding to threat to common humanity.

²⁹ Node: Arab Spring\Libya\Brutal regime; Arab Spring\Multilateral response\Freedom from tyranny.

The pre-existing claim that American values provided moral anchorage for US foreign policy under Obama served as the groundwork for the ethical argument for intervention. The characterisation of these values as universal helped the speaker to communicate the pro-intervention message abroad and pressure the international community into action. This pre-empted the accusations of American expansionism often levelled at the Bush administration, making it more difficult for anti-imperialist arguments to gain credibility³⁰. The effect of this was to (rhetorically) force the international political elite into supporting the American position.

That's how the international community should work... everybody stepping up, bearing their responsibilities, carrying the costs of upholding peace and security. That's what it means to be united nations. That was the vision imagined by the founders of this institution.

Barack Obama, 29 March 2011

Text 1091

In much the same way as Bush told the world they were either with America or with the terrorists after 9/11, Obama told his audience they were either with him, or against the values and ideals the UN was created to defend. Were America or the international community to fail to respond to Gaddafi's brutality with the use of military force, Obama warned, they would be "sending a message" that tyrants around the world could murder their own people with impunity³¹. Opponents of intervention were therefore manoeuvred into a discursive space in which they had to choose between submitting to his narrative or facing accusations of complicity with despotic regimes. His international peers and rivals could either commit themselves to opposition, or accept his script, thereby binding themselves to the set of actions he prescribed.

In the past we have seen him [Gaddafi] hang civilians in the street and kill over a thousand people in a single day.

³⁰ Node: Global security\American leadership\US expansionism is a myth.

³¹ Node: Arab Spring\Libya\Inaction would send a clear message to tyrants; Arab Spring\Libya\Multilateral response\Must ensure accountability.

On 17th March 2011, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1973, imposing a No Fly Zone over Libya and authorising “all means necessary” to protect civilians. Two days later, a NATO-led coalition comprising seventeen sovereign states began air-strikes against Libyan forces. Addressing the nation shortly after this (see especially Texts 1074, 1079 and 1088), Obama used his platform to locate America at the head of an international effort in Libya³². Despite initial reluctance for any intervention that wasn’t led by European powers, American leadership was quickly established as a fact while the international character of the mission, as well as the refusal to put ‘boots on the ground’ and the invitation offered by the Libyan opposition National Transition Council (synonymous in the discourse with the Libyan people) allowed this ‘multilateral’ war to be separated from the unilateralist ground war in Iraq³³. International support was also used to reassure domestic American audiences that the US would not be ‘footing the bill’ for yet another foreign entanglement³⁴. Building on earlier narratives of Gaddafi’s track record of violence, the threat of an impending humanitarian crisis, and even genocide in Benghazi, justified the war as the case was made and sustained for intervention. The city’s population of 700,000 is transformed by the intervention from a landscape of potential graves into a celebration of what the international community can achieve through American leadership.

This script was finally embedded within the broader ‘arc of history’ narrative. While the US administration first shied away from explicit calls for Iraq style regime change, and instead focussed on the language of atrocity prevention, the idea that Gaddafi could remain in power quickly became an impossibility in the context of the official discourse³⁵. Instead, the idea of a democratic transition emerged as the most likely and preferred outcome, and became a

³² Node: Arab Spring\Libya\Multilateral response\US leadership.

³³ Nodes: Arab Spring\Libya\Multilateral response\UNSC1973\International effort; Arab Spring\Libya\Multilateral response\UNSC1973\Invitation from Libyan people; Arab Spring\Libya\Multilateral response\UNSC1973\No US ground troops.

³⁴ Node: Arab Spring\Libya\Multilateral response\US leadership\But not US burden alone.

³⁵ Node: Arab Spring\Libya\Gaddafi must go.

metaphor for the Libyan people's journey towards Western style governance. Obama and the administration repeatedly grouped Libya together with Tunisia and Egypt – often drawing attention to Libya's geographic positioning between the two – with the latter both characterised positively as having “inspired the world when their people rose up to take control of their own destiny” (Obama, 2011, Text 1088)³⁶. Obama used this grouping to suggest that what was true for the latter must also be true for Libya. In this way, the Libyan uprising was firmly framed as a constituent part of the wider Arab Spring. The uprising against Gaddafi's regime was yet more evidence of the irrepressible human urge for liberal democracy as pioneered by America. Libya was framed in the narrative of human liberation from oppressive regimes and the overhaul of tyranny became a teleological project. For the domestic audience, America needed only to lend a helping hand as the Libyan people found their own path towards democracy. For the international audience, this was a warning not to take the ‘wrong side’ in the war between progress and the past.

By mid-April, this narrative developed to explicitly include calls for regime change, as shown most obviously in an opinion piece co-authored by Obama, Cameron and Sarkozy, published simultaneously in newspapers from the three countries (2011, Text 4591). The same threads of narrative carried through into this phase, with the addition of a series of knowledge claims that were used to establish a new unacceptable scenario should Gaddafi not be removed from power. In this article, the three leaders claimed their military action “prevented a bloodbath” in Benghazi and protected “tens of thousands” of Libyan lives³⁷. Furthermore, the tyrant narrative continued at this time with Libya being situated in the distant past as a result of state violence. Misrata was said to be under a “medieval siege” as Gaddafi tried to “strangle its population into submission” (ibid). As the stated goals of the intervention shifted, the op-ed asserted that any future scenario in which Gaddafi remained in power had become “unthinkable” since the passing of the UNSCR 1973 a month previous. The Western leader's strategic narratives subsequently carried a new threat or ‘or else clause’ in the form of an

³⁶ Node: Arab Spring\Libya\Egypt, Tunisia and Libya.

³⁷ Node: Arab Spring\Libya\Intervention saved lives.

imagined chaotic future for a Libya led by the illegitimate Gaddafi. In this scenario, should the US and its allies fail to commit to the overthrow of the regime, despite this not being a part of their UN mandate, the country would become a failed state, and a lawless safe-haven for terrorists, similar to Afghanistan³⁸. As a result, the path to Libyan success became contingent on both Gaddafi's departure and a continued NATO military presence.

The remainder of this chapter looks at the period after the initial wave of uprisings in order to gauge how this positive narrative of the Arab Spring survived and was adapted to account for developments in Libya and Syria respectively. The Libyan case is unpacked first, to show how the country was declared 'liberated' thanks to Western intervention, and how Gaddafi's death became the final proof of the value of Obama's doctrine of multilateralism. Then, the chapter finally exposes how the language of violence, choice and illegitimacy was used to build an Orientalist image of Bashar al-Assad as a barbarian, clinging onto power at the expense of his own people. This section also considers how the 'red line' around chemical weapons, despite never being enforced served to separate Assad further from the civilised, Western-led international community.

3. After the Spring: Freedom in Libya, a barbarian in Syria

3.a. Libya liberated

By autumn of 2011, official language on Libya had shifted from optimism towards triumphalism. Significant rebel military gains that would ultimately end in Gaddafi's death and a declaration of liberation from the National Transitional Council, saw elite actors modify their tone towards self-congratulation with Hillary Clinton famously summarising "we came, we saw, he died" (Daly, 2011). That shift was achieved through the creation of yet another 'historic moment', via the opposition of Libya's negative past under the old regime, with a present and future marked by the freedom and opportunity that was promised from the start of the Arab

³⁸ Node: Arab Winter\Libya\Risk of failed state.

Spring³⁹. Again, official rhetoric (re)produced the longstanding themes of universal rights opposed to tyranny, with Obama remarking in a key speech that after “four decades of darkness”, the Libyan people were finally able to “walk the streets, free from a tyrant”, “[make] their voices heard” and “shape their own destiny” (2011, Text 1302). Here the president took care to emphasise the role of the people in the revolution and war, occasionally using gendered language to highlight female agency in toppling the dictator⁴⁰. Obama remarked “it was Libyan women and girls who hung flags and smuggled weapons to the front”, thereby signalling that the new future for Libyans was also a victory by and for women in the ‘Muslim world’ (ibid; see Saleh, 2016, on the role of gendered Orientalism in selling interventions in the Arab Spring).

A second marker of apparent success was Libya’s re-integration into the international community – which Obama signalled by referencing symbolic images such as the inclusion of the new flag at the United Nations (2011, Text 1302). In the official US discourse, the people inspired and led the revolution, but it was thanks to the international community that they were able to seriously fight and win the civil war. As a result, ‘Libya’ took on the characteristics of its people and was absorbed into the sympathetic transnational identity highlighted in the previous chapter. This was possible because the protestors and opposition fighters were always imagined as a proxy for the Western self, pursuing the same values upheld by America and its allies. The signifier ‘Libya’ from the moment of liberation referred to a different signified – the Libyan people. The old meaning – the tyrannical, barbarous Libya of Gaddafi – was then on confined to the past and used to reify the optimism and opportunity associated with the ‘new’ nation.

This new understanding of Libya overlooked the reality of the situation on the ground. Clearly, despite claims that the country had been ruled by one man, the regime was more than Muammar Gaddafi, and the Libyan people were never a homogenous group (Chivvis, 2014).

³⁹ Node: Arab Spring\Libya\Libya liberated; Arab Spring\Libya\Libya liberated\Historic moment; Arab Spring\Libya\Libya liberated\New era of promise and freedom; Arab Spring\Libya\Libya liberated\Old regime.

⁴⁰ Node: Arab Spring\Libya\Libya liberated\Credit to Libyan people.

Obama repeated the reductive image of a single protestor identity because this fit with the strategic narrative of the Arab Spring, and the older, broader official discourse on the Middle East. As far as the White House was concerned, Libyans shared the same universal aspirations as each other and as everyone else. While notes of caution were sounded on the risk of violent extremism, the overriding message was that multilateral force, with American leadership, had succeeded in helping a nation reclaim its place in the global community⁴¹. With this done, the people could be left to realise their aspirations with minimal oversight. When Gaddafi was finally found and murdered on the street, his lynching was held up as proof “that the rule of an iron fist inevitably comes to an end” (Obama, 2011, Text 1364). According to the official narrative, the extrajudicial killing of Gaddafi, and wider success in Libya, was proof of the power of human aspiration and the consequent unsustainability of non-democratic rule, as well as the strength of the international community when led by a responsible America⁴².

The final section of this chapter turns its focus to events in Syria, and traces how the official understanding of the fall of Gaddafi, as well as the broader representation of the Arab Spring explored throughout this chapter, are identifiable in the discourse on the Assad regime. It demonstrates that the experience of Libya provided the Obama administration with an archive of knowledge from which it constructed a moralistic narrative on Syria that placed Assad on the ‘wrong side of history’ in comparison to both the international community and the protestors he sought to suppress. Finally, it argues that this moralistic narrative draws from an increasingly stark lexicon of Orientalist imagery to present Assad as brutal, violent and barbaric.

⁴¹ Node: Arab Spring\Libya\Libya liberated\Thanks to international community; Arab Spring\Libya\Libya liberated\Thanks to US leadership.

⁴² Nodes: Arab Spring\Libya\Gaddafi’s death shows success of international intervention; Arab Spring\Libya\Gaddafi’s death is end of regime, victory for Libyan people.

3.b. The Assad regime as barbarian

As the official language on Libya changed over time, so the representation of Syria and the unfolding political crisis developed in reaction to new realities on the ground. To begin with, the Obama White House (re)produced broadly the same policy-identity constellations it had previously applied to Libya and Iran, in constructing a familiar narrative of choice, this time applied to Bashar al-Assad. As Assad refused to step down voluntarily, representations of Syria pivoted quickly towards violence and the perceived breaking of norms by the regime. Simultaneously, two diverging future paths were established for Syrians: one in which Assad, despite his reluctance, could be persuaded to engage in a “democratic transition” towards a new, stable and inclusive governance; and another in which the country and wider region would be destabilised by the ensuing political fallout. Following this first phase of foreign policy-identity construction, the official discourse shifted once more. In a second stage, the discursive landscape was largely dominated by three distinct but complementary narratives: that Assad must step down or be removed from office, that events in Syria posed a credible threat to US (and Israeli) national security, and that the international community had a responsibility to act in response to violence within Syrian sovereign borders. Finally, and in addition to this, the discursive construction of the ‘red line’ around any potential use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime created the expectation of a future US-led military intervention that was never fulfilled.

Choice, violence and diverging future paths

The idea that President Assad was confronted with a simple choice in the face of popular unrest resonated well with President Obama’s favoured narrative of the post-Bush America as a rational yet principled actor, newly willing to engage with traditionally antagonistic states. Syria-US relations had been strained almost since decolonisation, having been marked amongst other things by anti-communist interference under Eisenhower, culminating in a failed US/UK backed coup in 1957 (Blackwell, 2000; Jones, 2004), the severing of diplomatic ties following the Six Day War, and Washington’s designation of Syria as a state sponsor of terrorism from

1979 (Rabil, 2006, pp. 41-5, 65; US Department of State, 2018). In addition to this the Ba'athist regime remained in a permanent state of war with the state of Israel, whose sovereignty it had never recognised (Reuters, 2008). Despite this, the western-educated Bashar al-Assad had been perceived to be more liberal, focussed on economic reform, and therefore willing to engage with the West than his father Hafez, whom he succeeded in 2000 (Hinnebusch, 2010, pp. 3-4; Leverett, 2005). Bashar's subsequent retrenchment into Machiavellian realpolitik following the Iraq War was emblematic of what Obama saw as the failures of his predecessor's unilateralism (Hinnebusch, 2010, p. 4; Kabalan, 2010, pp. 30-3). Following the uprisings then, the Obama White House crafted an initial narrative in which Assad might choose either to introduce sufficient reforms, or to leave office voluntarily, if pressure could be applied by the international community⁴³. Assad was therefore framed as having a choice over the future of the country and his place in it. As in the Libyan case, efforts were made to emphasise an 'escape-route' for Assad: should he do the 'right thing' as defined by Washington, regime change might be avoided. Simultaneously, a parallel strategic narrative was aimed at the members of the international community, who were asked to choose whether or not they would come together to send the message that Assad must change his behaviour – or, in starker terms, whether they would choose to side with Assad or the protestors⁴⁴.

As in Libya, the nature of this choice changed with the passage of time, until ultimately the narrative shifted to that of a missed opportunity. First, the protests were framed as an opportunity for the government to introduce political and economic reforms, but later this turned into a choice between a peaceful transfer of power or sanctions and intervention at the hands of the international community. Ultimately, Obama was left to insist that Assad had made his choice and now 'must go'. However, as Ralph et al. (2016) demonstrate in the UK context, this kind of rhetorical manoeuvre only succeeded in opening up a gap between stated ends and available means for the states concerned.

⁴³ Node: Arab Spring\Syria\Assad has a choice.

⁴⁴ Nodes: Arab Spring\Syria\International pressure to convince Assad; Arab Spring\Syria\IC has a choice: support Syrians or their oppressors.

To drive home the urgency of this choice, the official language on the Syrian regime then articulated boundaries between America and Syria (and their respective allies) along the lines of violence and (il)legitimacy. The scale, nature and results of the Assad regime's violence was contrasted with the supposedly reluctant and responsible use of force by the US and the West. It is at this point that one can begin to perceive the president's agency in adopting a more manifestly Orientalist tone on Assad's violence. Here, the language of barbarity featured heavily in accounts of Assad's violent methods as the classic orientalist distinction between civilisation and barbarism was easily transposed onto the White House's narrative of a brutal dictator turning the weaponry of the state onto his own people. This brutal portrait of the tyrant was contrasted with the same positive articulation of the protestor identity unpacked earlier in this chapter. As in Libya, the official narrative was that ordinary people were being punished for the crime of insisting on their universal rights. As a result, the Syrian leader was positioned in the past, as a backward figure, opposed to the popular movement towards progress that his regime sought to stamp down. The framing of the Arab leader as a brutal tyrant and these processes of temporal othering drew on clear Orientalist linguistic traditions, however it must be noted that, at least at the beginning of the Civil War, Obama's shift towards more racialised language was limited to focus on the regime itself.

[O]rdinary citizens, in Tunisia and Egypt and beyond, [...] are changing and challenging their governments through peaceful protest, even as they are sometimes met with horrific brutality, as in Libya and Syria.

John O'Brennan, 29 June 2011

Text 3811.

So far, Syria has followed its Iranian ally, seeking assistance from Tehran in the tactics of suppression.

Barack Obama, 19 May 2011

Text 1162.

When speaking of regime violence, Obama used terms like 'horrific', 'brutal' and 'murder' to separate the regime and its tactics from what might be considered the normal or acceptable

use of coercive state power by other governments⁴⁵. In addition to this emotional language that was deployed to code the Syrian army's actions in a particularly visceral way, the language of (il)legitimacy was also used to produce a border between acceptable and unacceptable governance⁴⁶. Delving into this theme of Assad's illegitimacy, early recurring discursive nodal points include references to human rights abuses, to Assad killing "his own people", and to the regime's general untrustworthiness⁴⁷. This contributed to the common sense context in which the announcement of reforms by the government in May of 2011 could be dismissed as false by the American president. Both the language of brutality and illegitimacy play significant roles in Said's Orientalism, as well as the more recent works on American Orientalism since the War on Terror by authors such as Dag Tuastad (2003) and Meghana Nayak (2006). In the context of the Obama presidency, while the theme of brutality or barbaric violence can be easily identified in official statements on Libya and Muammar Gaddafi, the label of illegitimacy was more obviously attributed to Iran, and to a lesser extent the authority of Hamas in Gaza. Not coincidentally, Syria's links to Iran were explicitly used by the Obama administration to further discredit the Assad regime⁴⁸.

The ethical linking of Iran and Syria, the two main antagonists in US foreign policy discourse, effectively co-opted the support of Tehran's critics for the purposes of the Syrian debate. In contrast, when speaking of the Syrian people, descriptors such as 'brave', 'courageous' or 'innocent' were foregrounded⁴⁹. The victims of violence were often categorised as 'men, women and children', dying for universal values whilst Assad killed out of self-interest. Gendered language also had a role, with women, alongside (their) children, deployed as symbols of innocence to compound Assad's crimes. This in turn is reminiscent of how Western media and the Obama administration framed the shooting of Nedâ Âghâ-Soltân

⁴⁵ Nodes: Arab Spring\Syria\Assad identity\Brutal; Arab Spring\Assad regime's actions are unacceptable\Horrific regime violence.

⁴⁶ Node: Arab Spring\Syria\Assad's actions are unacceptable.

⁴⁷ Nodes: Arab Spring\Syria\Assad identity\Untrustworthy; Arab Spring\Syria\Assad identity\Human rights abuses; Arab Spring\Syria\Assad's actions are unacceptable\Killing own people.

⁴⁸ Node: Arab Spring\Syria\Syria following ally, Iran's tactics.

⁴⁹ Node: Arab Spring\Syrian identity\Bravery, innocence.

during the 2009 Iranian election protests. Gyori (2013, p. 485) remarks Âghâ-Soltân “died on camera [...] without uttering a word, becoming a blank screen, onto which, professional and amateur media pundits could project their ideological biases”. As then, these Syrian victims were most often reduced to their gender and their perceived values, as their names and other details that would differentiate them from the universal protestor identity were written out of the official discourse.

From this discursive foundation, Obama concluded that Assad had indeed lost his legitimacy and therefore had to stand down or be removed⁵⁰. Following this, two diverging future paths were constructed depending on whether Assad would leave. Should he step down, the US administration set out a scenario in which Syria would move towards democracy and peace through a process of dialogue that would include all of the nation’s various religious and ethnic groups⁵¹. Unlike the Egyptian case, the idea of an outcome that did not include a transition towards some form of democracy was seen as unacceptable, due to the claimed preferences of the Syrian people⁵². Alongside this, an opposite potential future was simultaneously constructed to act as the ‘or else’ clause should Assad decide or be allowed to cling on to power. In this negative scenario, the White House stressed the loss of control by the Assad regime, and the descent into chaos and anarchy that would follow⁵³. The ensuing instability risked spilling over into an already volatile region and creating a power vacuum in which extremism could thrive. Again, this narrative relied on Orientalist tropes of the Middle Eastern tendency towards violence, mirroring the logic displayed in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, the subject of Said’s earliest critiques (Said, 2007).

⁵⁰ Node: Arab Spring\Syria\Assad must go.

⁵¹ Nodes: Arab Spring\Syria\Assad must go\...And hand over to democratic transition; Arab Spring\Syria\Cooperative approach to end violence.

⁵² Node: Arab Spring\Syria\Syrians want democratic transition.

⁵³ Nodes: Arab Spring\Syria\Assad’s actions are unacceptable\Loss of control; Arab Spring\Syria\Risk of instability and spill over; Arab Spring\Syria\Risk of instability and spill over\Risk of extremism.

With our international partners, we'll continue to tighten the noose around Bashar al-Assad and his cohorts

David Cameron & Barack Obama, 13 March 2012

Text 4598

Towards the end of 2011, as it became clear that Assad would not leave power easily, and sustained Russian opposition continued to prevent another Libyan style multilateral intervention, there was another shift in the discourse. After this time, Assad's negative identity, national security, and the urgent need for a coordinated international response became the three main threads of Obama's language.

Within this context, the data shows that many of the same narratives, or discursive nodal points, were carried through from the initial period of the civil war, however a selection of these become more prevalent. For example, the declaration that Assad 'must go' was supported by a more frequent coding of the dictator as barbaric or barbarous as time went on – and this barbarity came to be framed as requiring intervention in itself⁵⁴. Similarly, the recurring nodes that Assad was “killing his own people” and had lost any legitimacy he might once have had to sustain a future government were increasingly prevalent⁵⁵. All of these statements were then compounded into an encompassing narrative that Assad had caused the unfolding civil war by responding to protests with state violence⁵⁶. Syria was then confirmed as a national security issue⁵⁷ through the articulation of potential terrorist activity that in turn emerged from the previous discourse on the risk of instability in the region. Even before ISIL became a prominent feature of the rhetoric in 2014 (see Chapter Seven), the Obama administration made more frequent references to the risk of Syria being used as a base or 'safe haven' for extremists and

⁵⁴ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Assad must go\Barbarous; Arab Winter\Syria\Assad must go\Regime's barbarity requires intervention.

⁵⁵ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Assad must go\killing own people; Arab Winter\Syria\Assad must go\No legitimacy for future government.

⁵⁶ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Assad caused civil war.

⁵⁷ Nodes: Arab Winter\National security framing; Arab Winter\Syria\Threat to national security.

terrorists after 2011⁵⁸. In addition to the spectre of al Qaida, al Nusra, and ISIL, Syria's links to Hezbollah (and Iran) were also used to establish the Civil War as a national security concern⁵⁹.

With Assad's brutal and barbaric identity embedded in the discourse, and the threat to US national security articulated, Obama was then able to develop a strategic narrative for multilateral action and thereby apply rhetorical pressure to America's international partners. Assad's loss of control and legitimacy was contrasted with the righteousness of America, drawn from its values and its commitment to dialogue and engagement. In line with Arsenault & al.'s (2018) understanding of strategic narratives, the US administration attempted to bind its partners to roles that would either support or participate in intervention (and likely regime change) by regularly evoking the ideas of humanitarianism and a humanitarian duty, and repeating the notion of an international responsibility to prevent, and respond to large scale violence in Syria – violence for which Assad is clearly responsible (according to the official narrative)⁶⁰. At the same time, Obama accentuated the role that regional and international partners were playing in the proxy war, and in working towards a political transition towards democracy⁶¹. This move empowered him both to reassure a sceptical domestic audience that they were not about to take on sole responsibility for yet another unwinnable conflict in the Middle East, and to satisfy the international audience that this was not a case of America unilaterally imposing its will on another strategically useful section of the Muslim world. As such, it conformed to the broad narrative of Obama's multilateralist approach to world politics (Kitchen, 2014; Quinn, 2014), and did not disrupt the existing theme of a new era of engagement in US leadership outlined in Chapter Five. Both of these accusations were preemptively delegitimised by Obama's assertion that he would be criticised either way, and

⁵⁸ Node: Arab Winter\Base for terrorism; Arab Winter\Syria\Base for extremism.

⁵⁹ Node: Arab Winter\Syria\Hezbollah.

⁶⁰ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Humanitarian duty.

⁶¹ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Regional partnerships; Arab Winter\Syria\International effort to reach political settlement.

therefore that America's critics were hypercritical and/or lacked credibility and seriousness⁶². This separation of the mature, responsible, and humanitarian-minded US and its international partners from immature, hypocritical and callous critics was another instance of boundary production between civilised and uncivilised worlds, that showed Obama's strategic agency in crafting rhetorically coercive narratives (Krebs & Lobasz, 2007; Holland, 2013b), as well as the structural power of the civilisational and Orientalist linguistic archives that such stories speak to and are drawn from.

The memory of the fall of Gaddafi was also regularly evoked and related to the Syrian situation claimed as a demonstration of the unsustainability of tyrannical, authoritarian leadership in the face of popular protest. This in turn, combined and interwoven with Obama's grand narrative on the arc of progress explored in Chapter Four, paved the way for the claim that Assad and his supporters in Russia and Iran were on the 'wrong side of history' or were choosing the 'wrong path'⁶³. The Obama administration's characterisation of Russia and Vladimir Putin is particularly interesting in the way it changed over time, from the 2012 election campaign when Obama ridiculed Mitt Romney for claiming Russia was America's greatest threat (Haslett, 2019), to only a few years later when Obama was forced to answer questions on whether the world was facing "another cold war" after the invasion of Ukraine (Baker, & al., 2014). From the start, Russia's support for Assad was labelled a mistake, however this was initially framed as a mistake made in good faith, which could be corrected if the US and its partners were able to accommodate Moscow's concerns for a post-Assad Middle East⁶⁴. Later however, there was less patience in Obama's rhetoric, as he began to accuse Russia and Putin personally of acting immaturely and having passed the time where they could be forgiven for not 'facing facts'⁶⁵. Again, this was a process of othering that functioned along the lines of reason versus unreason, and built on the self's credentials as an enlightened ethical

⁶² Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Critics of US stance are ridiculous. See also: Global security\American leadership\Frustration with exceptions and perceptions of US; and *ibid*\Critics are hypocritical.

⁶³ Nodes: Russia\Deteriorating relationship\Russia is choosing the wrong path.

⁶⁴ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria-Russian opposition-Russian support for Assad is a mistake made in good faith.

⁶⁵ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria-Russian opposition-Time to face facts.

actor. Later, Putin was coded not just as irrational, weakening Russia's position through bad decision-making, but as cruel and brutal in his own right for willingly allowing and helping Assad to murder his own people⁶⁶. Obama's antagonists were thereby distanced both ethically and intellectually from the national/western self and its partners.

Finally, the taboo of chemical weapons (Bentley, 2014b) would become an important symbol of ethical difference between the 'civilised' West and the 'barbaric' Assad regime. On 20 August, 2012, President Obama responded to a question from NBC journalist Chuck Todd on US involvement in Syria with the following statement:

I have, at this point, not ordered military engagement in the situation. But the point that you made about chemical and biological weapons is critical. That's an issue that doesn't just concern Syria; it concerns our close allies in the region, including Israel. It concerns us. We cannot have a situation where chemical or biological weapons are falling into the hands of the wrong people.

We have been very clear to the Assad regime, but also to other players on the ground, that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. That would change my calculus. That would change my equation.

Obama, 20 August 2012

Text 1811

As can be seen in the text above, the 'red line' was drawn primarily in the language of national and regional security. Despite the clear ethical connotations of the chemical weapons taboo, it was the danger that their use might pose towards Israel and America's other regional allies that features most clearly at the time of the initial articulation. There was an implication that the (potential) use of chemical weapons affected the identity of the self ("it concerns us"), however, for the most part the language was that of security. This language can be seen across

⁶⁶ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria-Russian opposition-Russian support for Assad is a mistake made in good faith\Still a mistake, but Putin is also brutal.

the Obama administration's discourse, with recurring nodal points being national (US) and Israeli security, and the risk of terrorists gaining access to the Syrian arsenal⁶⁷.

In March and July of 2013, reports of Syrian forces using chemical weapons in the civil war led to renewed questioning on the concept of the red line. At that time, responses to such questions were typically framed in terms of rationalism, stressing the need to formulate an appropriate policy position based on a detailed and impassionate investigation of objective facts⁶⁸. Whilst the existing portrayal of Assad as a barbarian continued throughout the period of mounting public pressure, this was not drastically affected by the regime's apparent war crimes. Instead, Washington sought to calm any impulses for a rush to war, even going so far as to suggest that whilst potential chemical attacks should be investigated, they must also be seen in the perspective of the large scale damage caused by conventional weapons⁶⁹. Eventually however, Obama and the administration concluded publicly that they did have evidence of chemical weapons beings used⁷⁰:

Our intelligence shows the Assad regime and its forces preparing to use chemical weapons, launching rockets in the highly populated suburbs of Damascus, and acknowledging that a chemical weapons attack took place.

Barack Obama, 31 August 2013

Text 2227.

From this point on, the administration's language on chemical weapons became more emotional and affective⁷¹. Obama and his staff used a lexicon close to that previously deployed to make the case for intervention in Benghazi as terms such as "slaughter", "murder" and "massacre" were applied to "innocents", "women" "children" in the new Syrian context. Despite this renewed attempt to appeal to audiences' emotions into supporting action, Obama was still unwilling to take serious military action without international backing and in the face

⁶⁷ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\Threat to Israel; Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\National security framing; Ibid\Terrorism framing.

⁶⁸ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\Rational response.

⁶⁹ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\Rational response\Conventional weapons comparison.

⁷⁰ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\Rational response\There is evidence.

⁷¹ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\Emotional response.

of substantial domestic and congressional opposition (Dueck, 2015, pp. 142-3). Unsurprisingly then, the texts studied here demonstrate a clear attempt to shift responsibility for the enforcement of the red line back onto the ‘international community’⁷². Obama employed the language of multilateralism, referring to ideas such as international cooperation, dialogue and global security to frame chemical weapons as a global issue⁷³. As a result, the administration was able to mirror the policy-identity constellations deployed in relation to Iran and Libya to construct a geography of the Middle East in which a few dangerous rogue regimes were opposed to and isolated from the civilised, liberal and democratically inclined international community. Furthermore, he chose to speak to the ideals of international law, global norms, and the ‘rules based order’ in order to drive home the international (rather than America’s) ‘historic duty’ to ‘send a message’ that these could not be broken with impunity⁷⁴. As a result, the analysis presented here supports Bentley’s argument, that the ‘red line’ was “not a straight adoption of the taboo, but a case in which the very idea of the [chemical weapons] taboo has been rhetorically engineered to reflect and facilitate political interests” (2014b, p. 1034). In this way, the president attempted to securitise the credibility of the international community, and organisations such as the UN, in order to mobilise an international audience. According to this strategic narrative, the global community, by effectively permitting such a breach of liberal norms, risked ceding a part of its ordered, civilised domain to chaos and barbarism.

In addition to his attempt to shift the burden of intervention, Obama finally distanced himself from his own statements rejecting the imagery of a ‘red line’ altogether, in favour of the less evocative alternative phrase ‘game changer’⁷⁵.

So when I said that the use of chemical weapons would be a game-changer, that wasn’t unique to -- that wasn’t a position unique to the United States and it shouldn’t have been a surprise...

⁷² Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\IC’s red line.

⁷³ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\Multilateralism.

⁷⁴ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\IC’s red line\A message; Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\IC’s red line\Historic duty; Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\IC’s red line\Threat to regional stability and international norms; Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\Rules based order.

⁷⁵ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\Game changer.

By game-changer I mean that we would have to rethink the range of options that are available to us.

Obama, 30 April 2013

Text 2088

In the new context, the preferred policy response remained a continuation of the existing strategy to support opposition forces in the civil war. Despite talk of consulting Congress on hostile action, the administration was explicit in insisting there would be no boots on the ground, and the ‘red line’ was quickly redefined as referring to the arming of these forces rather than direct military action by the US⁷⁶. Finally, In keeping with the theme of rationalism, opposition forces were systematically designated as ‘moderate’⁷⁷. This served to separate America’s newfound allies from the ‘extremists’ (i.e. Islamists) who also fought against the Syrian regime. The moderate/extremist binary permitted the White House to make this distinction without reproducing President Assad’s narrative that Syria was fighting a war against ‘terrorists’ seeking the overthrow of a secular regime. The moderate label also fit well with Obama’s recurring claim that the only possible and acceptable outcome of the violence in Syria was an inclusive political transition towards democratic governance. All of this enabled Obama to maintain the American identity as an enlightened, civilised and rational global leader which stood with its allies against rogue regimes and human rights abusers, whilst continuing a policy of low cost civilian and military aid reinforced through limited air-strikes and targeted assassinations against non-state actors only.

Obama therefore created an inconsistent narrative around the Syrian civil war, which nevertheless enabled him to entertain the possibility of military intervention without ever explicitly committing to it. The president’s political agency is visible here in his emotional language, strategic narratives and appeals to the global ‘rules based order’ to foster support for international action – even if ultimately intervention was never triggered. Nevertheless,

⁷⁶ Node: Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\Game changer\Arming rebels; Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\Game changer\Congress; Arab Winter\Syria\Red line\No boots on the ground.

⁷⁷ Nodes: Arab Winter\Syria\Support for moderate opposition and humanitarian relief.

Obama's efforts served to once again assert Washington's moral authority onto the Middle East by falling back on the established Orientalist discursive structures to (re)produce the distinction of the ethical, civilised and rational West from the brutal, chaotic and irrational (Middle) East. By coding Assad and the Syrian regime as illegitimate and barbaric, and creating the ethical symbol of the 'red line', Obama asserted the West's ethical superiority and, therefore, its political authority in a way that relied upon and (re)produced old Orientalist imagery. The differentiation between 'moderate' and 'extremist' opposition forces also set up an ethical binary that problematised certain forms of religion in the region and reinforced Orientalist notions of backwards Muslims perennially at risk of succumbing to the pre-Western appeals of tribalism and sectarianism. This binary will be unpacked further in the following chapter in relation to (counter) terrorism and the rise of ISIL.

Conclusion

The research questions guiding this thesis ask how the discursive structures of US foreign policy changed between 2009 and 2016, and how official constructions of identity and threat changed over this same period. This chapter, which focusses on such change and continuity in the context of the Arab Spring, has shown how official US foreign policy discourse on the Arab Spring both (re)produced and was firmly embedded in the metanarrative of East to West progress critiqued in Chapter Four. From the first weeks of the uprisings, the Obama White House (re)wrote the Middle East as the site of an historic struggle between the forces of civilisation and tyranny, as well as progress and backwardness. In support of this, the identities previously constructed and used by the Obama administration in its discourse on Iran and the Middle East Peace Process were transposed and adapted onto the Arab Spring to make sense of the sudden wave of popular uprisings. These identities were (re)produced through their ethical differences (centred on willingness to accept universal values), however they also served to reinforce an imagined geography of the Middle East that was ontologically different and temporally and ethically 'other' to the West and America. The 'protestor' identity was understood as a modernising force that could narrow the temporal distance between East and

West. Meanwhile, multiple diverging regime identities were established across a spectrum of responsiveness/oppressiveness towards protestors and their demands.

The speeches analysed here have shown that these identities were perceptible from the start of the Spring, in the context of Egypt and Libya, and were later developed throughout the Syrian civil war. In Egypt, the articulation of such identities allowed Obama to position the US as supportive of protests, which were taken as proof of the validity of the progress narrative, even while lending its support, albeit in a muted fashion, to Mubarak and the military regime. ‘Ordinary’ Egyptians were claimed to pursue the same universal values and freedoms as endorsed by the US administration at the same time as Obama attempted to limit the protestors’ scope for action by insisting on ‘both sides’ responsibility to refrain from violence. Protestors’ calls for social justice were omitted from official statements which instead focussed on ‘legitimate’ aspirations towards negative freedoms and economic reform. Meanwhile, the Egyptian government was framed as a responsive actor that could be trusted to usher in these political and economic reforms. The articulation of temporal difference between Egyptians and the West, combined with the assumption of shared American/universal values is consistent with Edward Said’s understanding of latent Orientalism as a tool for structuring and ordering the East. As well as “rendering the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar” (Campbell, 1998, p. 4), Obama’s narrativisation of the Egyptian revolution was a style for exerting control on the Egyptian people. By emphasising some popular demands and silencing others, the US was able to keep an important ally (the Egyptian military) in power whilst claiming to support universal values.

As the Arab Spring played out, and a coherent narrative of a regional phenomena took form, the universal protestor identity became more entrenched in US foreign policy discourse and was applied to situations of unrest across the Arab/Muslim ‘world’. As before, a reductionist tendency is identifiable in the dehistoricisation and depoliticisation of the protestors’ and their demands, as exemplified by the superficial rendering of *karama* into the relatively empty signifier ‘dignity’, which was used to promote negative political freedoms and liberal economic

reforms. The official recounting of the Mohammed Bouazizi's death also demonstrated this depoliticisation as it turned the young man into a neoliberal hero by drawing attention to his (apparent) previous political apathy whilst celebrating his rejection of corruption and state controlled markets. At this time, the socially constructed view of protestors as a largely homogenous group that shared 'legitimate' aspirations to American/universal values was also used to assuage domestic anxieties about America's strategic interests and Israeli security in a potentially post-authoritarian Middle East. Meanwhile, Obama and his administration were able to articulate increasingly vivid and emotionally affective identities of the Assad and Gaddafi regimes that drew on longstanding Western cultural archives of the tyrannical Eastern ruler. In Libya, the situation was immediately securitised as multiple threats were articulated, with the most urgent being the danger of a potential genocide against the people of Benghazi. Here, Obama's strategic agency became visible as he shifted from a latently reductionist representation of Arab protestors towards narratives of brutality and barbarism that spoke to a more manifestly Orientalist discursive tradition.

These identities served two strategic purposes. First, they made possible and legitimate a selective (but historically consistent) American foreign policy in the region for a domestic audience. Secondly, they were used to coerce the international community into supporting Washington's interests in the region. By appealing to 'universal values' in the language of Western civilisation, Obama manoeuvred allied states and organisations such as the United Nations into a position where they could either support his narrative or be seen as opposing basic human rights and freedoms. In contrast, non-allies in the region, such as Libya, Syria and Iran, were linked together as barbaric oppressors of their populations and obstacles in the path of human progress.

The effect of these strategic interventions on the broader structures of American foreign policy was to (re)situate discussions on the Middle East within a more manifestly Orientalist framework. While this political move was inconsistently beneficial for Obama in terms of fostering support for multilateral interventionist policies, it raises further questions as to

whether the shift in discursive structure would survive beyond the context of the Arab Spring, and, if so, how it would affect official representations of future events in the region. The following and final empirical chapter considers these questions as they relate to terrorism, and asks how US foreign policy narratives were further adapted in order to account for the spectre of ISIL from 2014. It examines official discourses on the memory of 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, before turning to the construction of terrorist threats both before and after ISIL. A concluding chapter will then summarise the contributions and findings of the thesis, and the implications of these for future research.

Chapter seven: Changing terrorist identities

This final chapter focusses on the discursive construction of the terrorist Other and the threat of terrorism, by the Obama administration. For much of Obama's tenure as president, conventional wisdom suggested the terrorist threat was waning, with al Qaida losing momentum, Afghanistan and Iraq in a state of relative stability following close to a decade of foreign occupation, and Osama bin Laden eliminated by US Navy SEALs in the spring of 2011. However, this narrative of success had to be re-evaluated in the summer of 2014 when an off-shoot of al Qaida in Iraq declared a 'caliphate' after seizing territory across Anbar Province. By 2016, 'ISIL'¹-affiliated attacks had touched the West in France, Belgium and America, and US foreign policy discourse was adapted once more in order to narrativise reality and render new events understandable for foreign policy audiences (Edkins, 2013, pp. 284-5).

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the development of the terror narrative and changes in the construction of terrorist identities in official foreign policy discourse. In doing so, it provides the final part of the response to the main research questions. These questions asked how the structures of US foreign policy changed between 2009 and 2016, and how official constructions of otherness and threat changed in this same period. Chapter Five contributed to this interrogation by highlighting the discursive structures of US foreign policy as they existed at the start of Obama's presidency, as these could be seen in Obama's narrative of a new era of engagement with the Muslim World, and his language on the Middle East Peace Process and the negotiations with Iran. That chapter made the argument that these constructions were often reductive and revealed a 'latently' Orientalist construction of Muslim/Arab Otherness that was situated as temporally behind the American/Western self. The analysis presented in Chapter Six then demonstrated how these existing identities and structures were adapted and changed from 2011 in response to the Arab Spring. Through this timeframe, the ethical split between

¹ For consistency, this thesis adopts the acronym favoured by the Obama administration in lieu of other often used labels such as ISIS, Islamic State, IS or Da'esh. See Siniver & Lucas (2016) on the possible strategic reasons behind the Obama administration's decision to use this label.

the ‘good’ ordinary Muslim/Arab Other, and ‘bad’ or corrupt leaders became deeper and more obvious, leading to a starker and more manifestly Orientalist construction of Middle Eastern tyranny and threat, which was selectively applied to hostile regimes. This in turn served one strategic purpose for Obama in legitimising a relatively inconsistent foreign policy, and another in creating an ethical framework in which international audiences were forced to choose between supporting America, and supporting tyranny and barbarism. The final chapter explores how these structures and constructions of identity and threat existed in relation to terrorism, and how these changed again in response to ISIL from 2014.

The current chapter follows a roughly chronological three-part structure. The first section focusses on official language surrounding three major markers of the early discursive landscape on terrorism. These are the memory of 9/11, the wars that followed in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the assassination of Osama bin Laden in May of 2011 – all three of which can be traced back to the events of September 11 2001, and therefore have their origins in the Bush era. Because of this, they provide an opportunity to understand how Obama grappled with the legacy of his predecessor. The second section then turns to the official discourse associated with the terrorist Other(s) from 2009 up until Obama modified his language in June of 2014 to account for the establishment of ISIL in Iraq and Syria. As such, the data examined here can shed light on how Obama sought to make sense of new terrorist events that occurred on his watch, and how threat and identity constructions were relatively diminished during this time. Finally, the third section is dedicated to understanding the important discursive interventions that took place from 2014, as ISIL committed large scale attacks first in the Middle East, and then, from 2015, in Western Europe and America. In each of these sections, the social construction of related identities is explored, as the shifting images of the American and Western self, the terrorist Other(s), and the regional identities that populate the imagined geography of the Middle East are shown to be crucial in selling Obama’s foreign policy.

The chapter finds that the Obama administration re-framed the terrorist threat following the arrival of ISIL, by resituating the discourse firmly within the Orientalist imagery of violent,

barbaric otherness. The effect of this was to recharacterise the terrorist identity. Before 2014, Obama had portrayed al Qaida affiliates as amateurish and directionless, lacking a leader to replace Osama bin Laden, and losing whatever popular sympathy they might have had as America reached out to the peoples of the Middle East, who in turn were deposing old regimes and embracing liberal democracy as the Arab Spring gained momentum. Following the rise of ISIL, official language returned to a more dramatic discourse on the threat of terrorism. However, even after this shift, the old image of a freedom-hating, anti-American Jihadist, was somewhat left behind as the more Orientalist characteristics of Bush's terrorist (Jackson, 2005; 2011; Tuastad, 2003) were instead drawn out, developed and (re)produced. This chapter shows how this discursive strategy made it logical and possible for the US to 'go after' the barbarians in the Orient in order to 'degrade and destroy', as opposed to capture and bring to justice. Furthermore, the opposing characterization of the Western self as civilised and cultured established the counter-terrorist effort as a global project to a greater extent than the anti-American, anti-freedom discourse. This final element of the discourse provides the White House with an important tool in recruiting foreign actors into the 'international coalition to destroy ISIL'.

In response to the main research questions then, the analysis presented in this chapter shows once again how the initially present but relatively subdued Orientalist elements of Obama's discourse, and his construction of otherness and threat in the Middle East, became more exaggerated and developed after the rise of ISIL. Having previously drifted towards a more manifest Orientalism to make sense of Bashar al-Assad and Muammar Gaddafi's 'tyranny' and 'barbarity' in the Arab Spring, a further embrace of this tradition can be seen in the narrativisation of ISIL violence, which centred on the construction of a barbaric, diseased, medieval and nihilistic threat to an enlightened, cultured, civilised and progressive Western self. As this occurred, Obama also located the problems of extremism and terrorism within the Muslim population, and Muslim communities, who were framed as having a particular responsibility to confront and challenge ISIL's ideology. As a result, the 'good' ordinary

Muslim/Arab Other identity acquired a risky or suspect status and was positioned between the Western self and the ISIL terrorist Other.

1. Writing an end to the War on Terror

Decades from now, Americans will visit the memorials to those who were lost on 9/11... And they will know that nothing can break the will of a truly United States of America. They will remember that we've overcome slavery and Civil War; we've overcome bread lines and fascism and recession and riots, and communism and, yes, terrorism. They will be reminded that we are not perfect, but our democracy is durable, and that democracy — reflecting, as it does, the imperfections of man — also gives us the opportunity to perfect our union. That is what we honor on days of national commemoration — those aspects of the American experience that are enduring, and the determination to move forward as one people.

Barack Obama, 2011

Text 1284

1.a. Remembering 9/11

Starting chronologically, this first section of the chapter looks at how Obama interacted with the legacy of the Bush administration's discourse on terrorism. In doing so, it first examines official speeches relating to the memorialisation of 11 September 2001, before then turning to the inherited wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, and finally exploring official framings of the killing of Osama bin Laden in May of 2011. With this discursive context outlined, the second section will then explore official language on terrorism and associated threat construction from 2009 to 2014, as well as official responses to attempted and realised attacks on US soil during this timeframe. The third and final section of the chapter then analyses the official discourse surrounding the 'arrival' of ISIL on the world stage from 2014.

From his inauguration in 2009, President Obama used the national memory of 9/11 to (re)produce a patriotic image of the national self, and to sustain a sense of threat posed by a distant terrorist Other. This process of cultural production had multiple facets, and drew heavily on the existing discourse of 9/11 established under the Bush administration (see Campbell

(2002), Croft (2006), Holland (2009), Holland & Jarvis (2014), Jarvis (2010), Solomon (2009; 2012) on America's national and cultural memory of 9/11). Obama (re)crafted a Bushian narrative according to which a moment of rupture or crisis descended on American life, and irrevocably changed the nation's understanding of itself and its foreign policy (see Holland, 2009; Croft 2006). This current section evidences how the language of emotion and memory was used to achieve this and how a narrative of the American self was subsequently sustained. In doing this, the argument is made that Obama did not seek to disrupt these Bushian structures, at least in so far as they related to the culture of memorialisation surrounding 9/11 (Holland & Jarvis, 2014).

Recent US political convention dictates the anniversary of 9/11 be marked by the president through a series of ceremonies, speeches and addresses intended to commemorate the lives lost in the attacks as well as the members of the armed forces who have since been killed or injured through their involvement in the War on Terror. At such events, and on other occasions in which the memory of 9/11 was evoked, President Obama often called on the audience's cognitive resources in referring to violent and shocking images to paint an emotionally affective picture of chaos and violence intended to appeal to Americans' personal and socially constructed memories of September 11 2001. This can be seen in texts such as Obama's address at the 'Concert for Hope' on the tenth anniversary of 9/11 (2011, Text 1284) and across the data, where images such as "clouds of black smoke", "smoldering wreckage", "collapse", "fire" and "twisted metal" were used to trigger emotions alongside the recurring phrase "that terrible day", which became a short hand discursive marker for this shared national memory².

In the same contexts, the pre-9/11 period was often symbolised by the "bright September day" that was interrupted by the fall of the Twin Towers. At the Concert for Hope, Obama characterised the morning through references to the activities of ordinary Americans, and notably of people going to work and children going to school. The image of family life served in part to reinforce the imagined unremarkableness, even carefreeness of pre-9/11 America – a

² Node: 9/11\Emotional trauma; 9/11\That terrible day.

revision of history which scholars of US foreign policy discourse have identified as performing a key role in justifying the hugely expensive changes in security and foreign policy that constituted the War on Terror (Croft, 2006, Jackson, 2005; Jarvis & Holland, 2014). It also served to centre the family at the heart of the portrayal of American life interrupted³. The death toll of approximately three thousand lives was repeatedly expressed in terms of family members (e.g. “friends and neighbors, sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters”, Obama 2011, Text 1284); and the aftermath placed in a domestic setting (e.g. in the form of “the empty seat at the dinner table”, *ibid*). The family is of course a highly emotional trigger which spoke to the sense of tragedy and anger around the event, and underlined the imagined innocence of the nation in the face of the terrorist Other. Obama and his staff were thereby able to articulate the trauma of 9/11 at both a personal and a national level. The assault on the family was said to leave the nation “shaken to its core” and brought to bear “the darkest hour of our generation” (Obama, 2012, Text 1839; Biden, 2011, Text 380).

The symbolism here is not subtle, with darkness/light, and good/evil metaphors serving to underline the break in the historical narrative between pre- and post-9/11 worlds. Obama then filled the discursive space between history and the contemporary moment with a narrative of the ‘American journey’ since 9/11⁴. The American character was developed through the above references to families, but also to national unity, liberal values and the heroism of ordinary people in the face of terror⁵. Repeatedly, Obama posited a message that the “worst terrorist attack in American history brought out the best in the American people” (2011, Text 1273) – a narrative that drew from Bush era discourses on American heroism in the face of tragedy (Jackson, 2005). The constructed character of the American people as characterised above, served to create ethical difference between the national self and the cowardly terrorist Other. When developed, this crystallised into a narrative that the response of the American people was to refuse to live in fear, or to ‘let the terrorists win’ by sacrificing liberal values in the name of

³ Node: 9/11\Family.

⁴ Node: 9/11\American journey.

⁵ Node: 9/11\Character of our people; 9/11\Heroism; 9/11\Unity.

security. Despite the huge changes to the American security and defence infrastructure following 9/11 (Boyle, 2011; Croft, 2006; Pious, 2011), the nation's liberal and democratic credentials were claimed to have remained unchanged. This in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary in the form of, for example, the executive's eagerness to isolate the judiciary from the War on Terror (Ralph, 2009), continued use of off-shore detention centres and use of racial, ethnic and religious targeting in counter-terrorist surveillance (Onwudiwe, 2005; Pitt, 2011). None of this was allowed to affect the narrative that the US still championed the "timeless ideal that men and women should govern themselves" (Obama, 2011, Text 1284). Despite the subsequent 'forever wars' in the Middle East, Obama also repeated his predecessor's mantra that America would never be at war with Islam⁶, and thereby attempted to neutralise accusations of Islamophobia and racism from America's critics.

Stuart Croft (2006) writes at length how the retelling of 9/11 in the weeks and months following the events served to articulate a moment of crisis, which then justified the drastic changes in foreign and domestic policy that became known as the War on Terror. The original articulation of crisis encompassed a series of securitisation moves that deployed the same symbolic language of darkness and light, good and evil. Obama redeployed this imagery a decade after the event, and in doing so (re)produced the original justification for the War on Terror, even as he sought to distance his administration from that slogan (Aaronson, 2014). The 'common sense' that 9/11 constituted a watershed or crisis moment was therefore reinforced, as was the underlying logic behind the post-9/11 security apparatus (see Bigo, 2002) and America's continued military presence in the 'greater' Middle East (Bacevich, 2016). The "quiet professionalism" of the national security services working tirelessly away from the public spotlight (and without democratic oversight) was simply more evidence of the everyday heroism of the American people⁷. The work of the security services, law enforcement and DHS became an example of the courageousness of ordinary Americans in the face of terror when applied to the essential task of keeping the nation safe. Through the memorialisation of 9/11,

⁶ Node: 9/11\Never a war against Islam.

⁷ Nodes: Professionalism and heroism of security services; Terrorism\US identity\Tirelessness.

Obama interwove such characterisations of US soldiers and security professionals with stories of how firefighters and civilians risked and lost their own lives to rescue others from the wreckage of the World Trade Center. The data analysed here shows how this identity construction fed into an emotionally evocative narrative of a whole ‘9/11 generation’ of young Americans who responded to the attack on their homeland by enlisting to serve their nation in the fight against the perpetrators⁸.

These narratives (re)built the Bushian/Jacksonian idea of the innocent nation responding to an unprovoked and outrageous attack on its homeland. In the Jacksonian tradition and under the Bush administration, the highest levels of force were legitimate and justified in response to attack, not just as a means to neutralise threats but as a message to the rest of the world that America would not suffer assaults on its sovereignty (Mead, 1999; 2002; 2017). Obama has rarely been accused of being a Jacksonian president, and it is true that his characterisation of America as ‘exceptional’ but ‘not perfect’ demonstrated his belief in the need for restraints on US power, however he was also adept at using similar narratives to legitimise his foreign and security policies in the Middle East, as well as America’s right to act unilaterally when threatened⁹. In terms of structure, agency, continuity and change, the evidence does not suggest that that Obama sought to affect any great change in the discourse around 9/11. Rather, it shows either a willingness to maintain the Bush era framing of the terrorist attacks as a moment of rupture both in the American psyche and in the US’s relationship with the rest of the world, or at the least, a strategic choice not to challenge such powerful structures. The following section unpacks the legitimisation of US foreign policy through an examination of the language surrounding the two wars Obama inherited from his predecessor in Afghanistan and Iraq.

1.b. The American military in ‘AfPak’ and Iraq

It’s important to remember why we remain in Afghanistan. It was Afghanistan where al Qaeda plotted the 9/11 attacks that murdered 3,000 innocent people. It is the tribal regions along the

⁸ Node: 9/11\Our 9\11 generation.

⁹ Node: Global security\American leadership\Right to unilateral action.

Afghan-Pakistan border from which terrorists have launched more attacks against our homeland and our allies. And if an even wider insurgency were to engulf Afghanistan, that would give al Qaeda even more space to plan these attacks.

Barack Obama, 16 December, 2010

Text 0990

Closely linked to the retelling of 9/11 is the linguistic (re)construction of the US military identity. Following a similarly Jacksonian narrative, Obama built a portrait of the American soldier actively “taking the fight” to al Qaida in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Acting against the backdrop of the innocent nation myth, this aggressive, masculine narrative served to destroy America’s (feminised) ‘victim’ status (Khalid, 2011). The audience’s fears and anxiety at the greatest nation on earth having fallen victim to a small group of Saudi hijackers were alleviated through the heroic portrayal of the military venturing abroad to bring justice and (implicitly) vengeance to the nation’s enemies.

The candidate Obama had campaigned on promises to withdraw troops from the ‘dumb’ war in Iraq, and to bring a responsible end to the ‘necessary’ war in Afghanistan (Aaronson, 2014; Obama, 2009). In other words, we can conceptualise Obama in 2008 as a strategic actor who chose to confront and attempt to dismantle the discursive structures of the War on Terror as they related to Iraq, but embraced and (re)produced these same structures when applied to Afghanistan.

The president continued with this framing of his two inherited wars after entering the White House. Although he dialled down his criticism of the war in Iraq, Obama determinedly drove home the message that under his leadership, America would work to end that war responsibly, and with the resources this freed up, focus the military’s attention on the war of necessity in Afghanistan¹⁰. Here, Obama was consistent with the general lack of Democrat resistance to the Bush administration’s War on Terror as critiqued by Stuart Croft (2006, p. 122). Even after having won the presidency on a platform openly critical of the war in Iraq, Obama was

¹⁰ Nodes: Afghanistan and Iraq\Afghanistan is a war of necessity; Afghanistan and Iraq\Ending Iraq responsibly; Afghanistan and Iraq\Ending Iraq allows focus on Afghanistan.

unwilling and possibly incapable of questioning the idea that the war in Afghanistan was an unavoidable consequence of the terrorist attacks of 9/11¹¹. Contrary to the arguments of constructivist and poststructuralist scholars, Obama's historical narrative of the Afghan war saw 9/11 as an event already laden with meaning, which could only ever have been met with a strong military response from the US leadership.

On entering office, the new president gradually reduced troop numbers before agreeing to a 30,000 troop surge in December of 2009, bringing the total number of US soldiers in the country to 100,000 (MacAskill, 2009; Woodward, 2013). The troop surge in Afghanistan was sold as part of a targeted campaign refocusing the nation's power on the 'real' threat from al Qaida. Whilst the men responsible for 9/11 were largely of Saudi origin, both Bush and Obama insisted on their links to Afghanistan and the Taleban to justify America's presence in the country. Afghanistan was (re)produced as a lawless safe haven and a base used by terrorists and extremists planning future 9/11s¹². When promoting US activity in Afghanistan, Obama echoed Bush in talking about "bringing justice" to the perpetrators of 9/11, and ensuring that the country would "never again be a safe haven for terrorists". Here, Obama was able to hide his strategic similarities to his predecessor in both Afghanistan and Iraq by discursively creating difference over the 'mistake' in Iraq. The 'mistake' label both served as a justification for the contrastingly legitimate anti-terrorist war in Afghanistan, and permitted Obama to fit the troop surge in Iraq into the narrative of a responsible end.

We need to look at Afghanistan and Pakistan together, because success in one requires progress in the other

Joe Biden, 10 March 2009

Text 3526

Our strategy to disrupt and dismantle and defeat al Qaeda and its affiliates has to succeed on both sides of the border.

¹¹ Node: 9/11\9/11 as cause of war in Afghanistan.

¹² Node: Afghanistan and Iraq\AfPak must not be a safe haven for terrorists; Afghanistan and Iraq\Threat of extremism.

The Obama administration then expanded the scope of the necessary/legitimate war through the discursive merger of Afghan and Pakistani border territories into ‘AfPak’ – a term used by Bruce Riedel, the chairman of a 2009 interagency policy review, to present Afghanistan and Pakistan as “two countries but one challenge” (Woodward, 2013, p. 99; see also Aslam, 2014). The intention behind this creation was ostensibly to ensure that the war against terrorism was being fought on both sides of the border, and therefore that al Qaida and Taleban operatives could not use FATA and the frontier regions of Pakistan as the very kind of safe haven the US was meant to be denying them in Afghanistan. In practice, members of the Obama administration rarely used the ‘AfPak’ label in public, however the discursive merger of Afghanistan and Pakistan was still achieved through the denial of Pakistani sovereignty in regards to US operations on the frontier¹³.

The discursive destruction of Pakistani sovereignty was achieved through the use of common Orientalist and colonialist tropes similar to those exposed by Gregory (2004) in the creation of ‘zones of visibility’ and ‘invisibility’ in Afghanistan at the start of the War on Terror. Arguments were made that the border between the two nations was secondary to US strategic interests, and by extension, global security concerns¹⁴. Furthermore, the Obama administration populated the imagined geography of the border using a colonial language of lawlessness and danger (Gregory, 2004; Said, 1995; Tuastad, 2003) by referring to ‘tribes’ and ‘terrorists’ rather than people (or even Afghans and Pakistanis). Within this narrative, it followed that the Pakistani government had no real control over the tribes and terrorists who operated in the area, and therefore could have no real claim to the legal protections of national sovereignty. Finally, the Obama administration promoted the idea that the Pakistani military

¹³ Node: Afghanistan and Pakistan.

¹⁴ Node: Afghanistan and Iraq\Global threat, not just to US.

and government were more concerned with the threat from India than the Taleban, and as a result were often guilty of turning a blind eye to terrorist activity¹⁵.

In contrast to the lawlessness of the border regions, the official representation of the American-led NATO mission in the country as a whole was dominated by the reassertion of order¹⁶. This was especially obvious after the signing of the Strategic Partnership Agreement on 1 May 2012, which was intended to place a greater responsibility for security provision on Afghan forces (Hadley & Podesta, 2012), and then again in 2014 as Obama heralded the close of the US and NATO's combat missions (Obama, 2014, Text 1636). Constructing the Agreement in the language of order and stability created the discursive base for the subsequent withdrawal of troops to then be framed as 'responsible', and part of a 'new chapter' in Afghan and regional development¹⁷. The security narrative then changed towards Western forces building a strong, strategic partnership with Afghanistan, 'helping' and supporting local forces to provide their own security and take on al Qaida and the Taleban by themselves¹⁸.

Although the focus in Afghanistan was on security, terrorism and the effectiveness of Western counterterrorist operations, in Iraq, Obama (and frequently Joe Biden, who took on a key role) preferred to use the language of governance. The same concept of a 'transition' from US to Iraqi security forces came to the fore earlier in Iraq, and allows the focus of the discourse to shift towards the US supporting the Iraqi government in fostering an inclusive democratic system, which could provide freedom for its people¹⁹. This shows that the stated goal in Iraq was based once again on the same universal values articulated in relation to the wider Middle East, and not simply the security and stability pursued in Afghanistan. From 2009, Iraq was therefore framed as the simpler, more regulated conflict from which America could exit almost immediately, while the more complex and chaotic Afghanistan would take longer to bring to

¹⁵ Node: Pakistan turning blind eye to terrorism.

¹⁶ Node: Afghanistan and Pakistan\Stabilisation.

¹⁷ Nodes: Afghanistan and Pakistan\Responsible End; Afghanistan and Pakistan\A new chapter.

¹⁸ Nodes: Afghanistan and Pakistan\Helping Afghans secure and defeat al Qaida; Afghanistan and Pakistan\Strong partnership.

¹⁹ Nodes: Iraq\Democracy; Iraq\Freedom; Iraq\Inclusive government; Iraq\Transition.

conclude. In campaigns, Obama then claimed Iraq as an American, and specifically a Democrat success, and promised the results of ending one expensive war would be a boost to the ailing economy and a return to Jeffersonian nation building at home²⁰

The imagined geographies of Iraq and Afghanistan therefore differed in US official discourse, with the former being seen as a relatively secure and stable nation requiring minimal US involvement, whilst the latter retained the barbaric qualities of disorder, insecurity and violence, especially in ‘tribal’ border zones. The concept of ‘AfPak’ sanitised and made logical the use of drones and targeted assassinations beyond Afghanistan, and into Pakistani territory (Aslam, 2014; Espinoza, 2018; Woods, 2013), which in turn allowed the Obama administration to normalise the (arguably illegal) use of lethal force beyond declared warzones. Targeted drone strikes, to the extent that they were acknowledged (Woods, 2013) were regularly sanitised as a welcome rise in the number of al Qaida leaders ‘brought to justice’, or simply eliminated by US forces. The language used to contextualise the most obvious and most celebrated example of such assassinations is deconstructed below.

1.c. After Osama bin Laden

According to Krebs’s (2015) analytical framework, the assassination of Osama bin Laden on 2 May 2011 required Barack Obama fulfil his role as the nation’s ‘narrator in chief’. The death of the man who had served for a decade as the figure of absolute evil in America’s cultural imaginary, raised a number of questions for US foreign policy, the War on Terror, and American identity going forward. Furthermore, Krebs’s research suggests that within the analytical context of Croft’s (2006) crisis cycle, dominant narratives and discourses are most likely to become contested and unsettled following moments of military and/or foreign policy success, with failures being (counterintuitively) more likely to impede change (Krebs, 2016, p. 5). For Obama then, this was also an opportunity to demonstrate his agency and attempt to

²⁰ Nodes: Iraq\Ending Iraq as Democrat success; Iraq\Expensive; Iraq\Nation building at home.

redefine America's identity, and potentially decouple it from the co-constitutive binary opposite of al Qaida terrorism.

As it happened, the analysis of texts presented in this thesis supports Jarvis & Holland's (2014, p. 426) finding, that the Bushian narratives that were initially deployed to make sense of 9/11 and to make possible the War on Terror were further (re)created and reinforced by the Obama White House after bin Laden's death. The memory of 9/11 was (re)articulated, using the language of remembrance outlined in the first section of this chapter. Phrases such as "that bright September day", "a cloudless sky" and "actions of heroic citizens" placed the extrajudicial killing in the cultural frame of the national tragedy (Obama, 2011, Texts 1135 and 1141). As a result, a state-orchestrated killing via the contravention of Pakistani national sovereignty was firmly placed in the powerful emotional and historical context of 11 September 2001²¹.

The morality of targeted killings as a means of warfare had already been marginalised as an issue by the long-serving narrative of America as the innocent victim in a global war that it did not seek (Jackson, 2005), which in turn took its roots in the longstanding discursive tradition that has portrayed the US as a nation "more sinned against than sinning" (Marsden, 2011, p. 329). The discursive destruction of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border even before the the killing had occurred, also meant that the question of its legality was neutralised by the prior normalisation of American military activity within Pakistani sovereignty (Trenta, 2018). Immediately after the killing, the president nodded towards this breach of sovereignty but dismissed its relevance by insisting that he had previously and "repeatedly made clear that we would take action within Pakistan if we knew where bin Laden was" (Text 1135).

The discursive space in which any question could be vocalised concerning America's right to act as a unilateral assassin was further dismissed through the destruction of middle ground between America's allies and supporters of terrorism. This therefore corresponded to an instance of rhetorical coercion in which Obama's narrative removed the "cultural and

²¹ Node: Bin Laden\9/11 framing.

discursive materials” needed for opponents to voice politically acceptable criticisms (Holland, 2013b, p. 55; Krebs & Lobasz, 2007; Mattern, 2005).

Al Qaida was said to have declared war on Pakistan as well as America, thus reducing the scope for criticism on ethical grounds in a rhetorical strategy almost identical to Bush’s infamous claims that the world was “either with us or against us” in the global War on Terror. America’s actions were framed in terms of values and principles while bin Laden and his network of terrorists are damned by their willingness to kill innocents, to attack the nation and to murder members of the faith he claimed to defend. Bin Laden’s status as the embodiment of evil was used to silence any question or criticism of America’s actions. As a result, Obama claimed, “his demise should be welcomed by all who believe in peace and human dignity” (2011, Text 1135).

In destroying bin Laden, Obama saw the US as embodying the universal values outlined in Chapter Five, and as fulfilling a duty to rid the world of an evil terrorist. Bin Laden’s role as a symbol of extremist intolerance (Jackson, 2005; Jarvis & Holland, 2014) made seem logical the claim that America had stayed true to these values throughout the mission to assassinate him²². Rather than overstepping US jurisdiction to settle an emotional score, the ideal of justice was deployed to lend a sense of due process to what appeared to be an execution²³²⁴ (see Jarvis & Holland, pp. 433-436). Having said this, Obama’s narrative was one of delivering or serving justice to an outlaw and an enemy. Rather than acting as the world’s ‘policeman’, Obama in this instance established America as the world’s executioner.

The recurring node of America serving justice thinly disguises a Jacksonian story of revenge on the nation’s most hated enemy. The theme of vengeance can also be read in references to Obama and his White House staff’s pride and satisfaction in the knowledge that

²² Node: Bin Laden\True to our values.

²³ Node: Bin Laden\Justice served.

²⁴ There is some confusion over whether the objective was to kill or capture bin Laden. Former CIA director Leon Panetta has stated “The authority here was to kill bin Laden. And obviously, under the rules of engagement, if he had in fact thrown up his hands, surrendered and didn’t appear to be representing any kind of threat, then they were to capture him. But they had full authority to kill him.” (Lehrer & Panetta, 2011).

it was American citizens who finally killed bin Laden, celebrations of a victory in the war against al Qaida, and repeated claims that this had brought about a moment of national unity similar to that experienced after the tragedy of 9/11²⁵. The refrain that bin Laden would “never threaten America again” was also frequently used²⁶, and became a popular rallying call and celebration of his own foreign policy record in his 2012 re-election campaign (Obama also used this as an opportunity to mock Mitt Romney, claiming in the third presidential debate, “you said we should ask Pakistan for permission. And if we had asked Pakistan for permission, we would not have gotten [him]” (Text 1888)).

Finally, Obama chose not to use the moment of opportunity (Hansen, 2006; Krebs, 2015) created by bin Laden’s death to attempt to claim an end to the War on Terror. The event was framed as a “significant victory” rather than simply ‘victory’ in the war against al Qaida (Text 1165), and the president made efforts to insist that the war had to continue, and America still needed to “finish the job” (2011, Text 1135)²⁷. US troops and American leadership had succeeded in making the nation and the world a “safer place”²⁸, however the president was not yet willing to attempt to dismantle the discursive foundations that undergirded the War on Terror and helped to sell his foreign and security policies in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq.

This first section has sought to outline the discursive landscape of official US foreign policy as it related to terrorism in the earliest period of Obama’s presidency. It has done so by analysing and deconstructing the discourse around three major early markers of this landscape, in the memory of the 9/11 attacks, the representation of the two wars waged in response to these attacks, and finally the assassination of the man responsible for them. All of these can be traced back to the events of September 11 2001, and therefore have their origins in the period of George W Bush’s presidency. As such, they provide evidence of Obama’s language and rhetoric as he grappled with the legacy of his predecessor. The next section changes focus in

²⁵ Nodes: Bin Laden\Americans killed bin Laden; Bin Laden\Moment of unity like 9/11; Bin Laden\A victory in the War on Terror.

²⁶ Node: Bin Laden\Will never threaten America again.

²⁷ Node: Bin Laden\The war continues.

²⁸ Node: Bin Laden\US and the world is more secure.

order to consider the narration of terrorism, threat and counter-terrorism by Obama as it developed under his watch.

2. Representations of terrorism, extremism and threat: 2009-2014

While the previous section dealt primarily with the memory and (re)telling of 9/11, and the related foreign policy legacy of the Bush administration, the following section will explore representations and constructions of threat from 2009 until the Obama White House was forced to adapt official narratives to account for the actions of ISIL from 2014. This chapter argues that despite the continuity concerning cultures of memorialisation and the war in Afghanistan outlined above, the official discourse on terrorism and the nature of threat underwent important changes after this time. Notably, this can be seen in the narrative that the terrorist threat at this time was returning to ‘pre-9/11 levels’. The purpose of this section is to establish the ‘common sense’ on terrorism as a threat to the US as it existed up until the summer of 2014. This is achieved by engaging with the Obama administration’s discourse on terrorism, extremism and national security over the 2009-2014 period, and by exploring key moments of encounter between the American self and the terrorist Other such as the failed Detroit bombing of December 2009, the 11 September 2012 attack on the US embassy in Benghazi, and the Boston marathon bombings of April 2013. This focus allows for an examination and deconstruction of policy-identity constellations involving the national self, threatening Others and counter-terrorist/extremist policies during this period.

On 25th December 2009, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a passenger on Northwest Airlines Flight 253, attempted to detonate an explosive device he had smuggled onto the plane on his person (O'Connor & Schmitt, 2009). The device failed, and the jet made an emergency landing in Detroit, where Abdulmutallab was arrested. The incident is important to the current research as it marks one of the Obama administration’s first encounters with terrorism targeted at the homeland, and the first occasion on which Obama had to frame an unforeseen attack into a coherent narrative for domestic audiences.

On the morning of the 28th, the president made his first public remarks since the attempt:

Good morning, everybody. I wanted to take just a few minutes to update the American people on the attempted terrorist attack that occurred on Christmas Day and the steps we're taking to ensure the safety and security of the country.

The investigation's ongoing. And I spoke again this morning with Attorney General Eric Holder, the secretary of homeland security, Janet Napolitano, and my counterterrorism and homeland security adviser, John Brennan. I asked them to keep -- continue monitoring the situation to keep the American people and members of Congress informed.

Obama, 28 Dec 2009

Text 4736

These first two paragraphs served to position the subjects of the text and to explicitly label the event as an attempted terrorist attack. The event was thereby framed within a pre-existing narrative of (counter)terrorism and fitted into a securitised context through immediate references to national and homeland security. Having established a securitised discourse, Obama then used civilian and legal (as opposed to military) language to go into the detail of events, with Abdulmutallab described as a “passenger” and a “suspect”, who “allegedly” tried to detonate a device.

These labels demonstrate the presumption of innocence under American law, implying the suspect “in custody” (ibid) was expected to stand trial and be judged according to conventional criminal law. Under the Bush administration, framing 9/11 and subsequent incidents as ‘terrorism’ and/or as ‘acts of war’, created and sustained a discursive context in which the administration could bypass due-process, and instigate a military response (Bentley, 2014a; Jackson, 2005; Ralph 2009). This in turn justified extra judicial practices such as the use of extraordinary rendition, off-shore detention centres and torture (Pious, 2011). In Obama’s statements however, the emphasis was placed on the act rather than the terrorist, and on the efforts the authorities would undertake in their criminal investigation in order to hold the guilty party to account. In other words, Obama appeared to stay true to his campaign rhetoric of change by laying the discursive framework for the potential normalisation or repoliticisation of terrorist prosecution in the US (see, for example, Nunes (2012) on repoliticisation in security

studies, or alternatively Howell & Richter-Montpetit's (2019) decolonial critique of the politicised/securitised binary).

As was shown in relation to the killing of bin Laden, Obama used the theme of justice throughout his presidency in connection to (counter-)terrorism²⁹. Obama referred to the ideal of justice both, as above, to emphasise the positive qualities of the self, and to hint towards fantasies of revenge for terrorist attacks committed against Americans (e.g. after the Boston bombings: "any responsible groups will feel the full weight of justice" (Obama, 2012, Text 2069))³⁰. As a result, he was able to craft narratives on terrorism that spoke both to the Jeffersonian tradition of cherishing the values of the republic and to the Jacksonian demand for vengeance. Furthermore, the language of justice (re)produced an ethical border between the legalised, ordered, and responsible violence of the state, and the illegal, chaotic and unprovoked violence of the terrorist.

In spite of his efforts to desecuritisе terrorist prosecution, Obama's response to the crisis moment of the Detroit attack still corresponded to a securitising speech act and contributed to the construction of a wider threat from the incident:

Now, this was a serious reminder of the dangers that we face and the nature of those who threaten our homeland. Had the suspect succeeded in bringing down that plane, it could have killed nearly 300 passengers and crew, innocent civilians preparing to celebrate the holidays with their families and friends.

The American people should be assured that we are doing everything in our power to keep you and your family safe and secure during this busy holiday season.

Ibid

This passage refers to multiple referent objects: the homeland, innocent civilians, and families being the most emotionally powerful. The American people are also mentioned, and the imagined loss of the 'nearly 300 passengers and crew' on Flight 253 is evoked. Even so, the nature of the existential threat remains vague. It is embodied by the single event in Detroit,

²⁹ Node: Terrorism\Justice.

³⁰ Node: Terrorism\Terrorists will face justice.

however the speaker clearly refers to a wider range of potential terrorist activity. The unknown threat enabled the authorities to do “everything in [their] power” to secure the nation. To this end, the remainder of the address was dedicated to an outline of four new security measures framed as necessary to “protect the American people and to secure air travel”, as well as a promise to “strengthen our defences” and continue to:

use every element of our national power to disrupt, to dismantle and defeat the violent extremists who threaten us, whether they are from Afghanistan or Pakistan, Yemen or Somalia, or anywhere where they are plotting attacks against the U.S. homeland.

Ibid

The outcome of this was therefore the legitimisation of increased surveillance – Obama’s explanation of his new security measures covered enhanced screening of air passengers and greater use of air marshals, two reviews into airport security, and reassurances on national security and public vigilance – and the continued use of military force abroad. This corresponds to what Rita Floyd (2016) identifies as a type of securitisation move that legitimises ‘ordinary’ rather than extraordinary security measures. The post-Detroit security narrative enabled the US to continue, and potentially expand its military activities in Africa and Asia, while (re)producing the policy-identity constellations created by the Bush administration, and securing their relevance in the Obama era. In other words, the speaker responded to the chaos of a potential disaster by speaking in the language of security inherited from his predecessor, but with emphasis on certain legal provisos. The Detroit incident was thereby fit into a coherent and familiar narrative that spoke to and reinforced the existing structures of the War on Terror. In terms of the broader discursive war of position, Obama adopted the logic of his predecessor’s War on Terror, whilst still seeking to differentiate himself from Bush ethically through his commitment to the rule of law³¹. Rather than dismantle the policy-identity constellations that made possible the PATRIOT Act and No-Fly Lists, the new president reacted to incidents such as Detroit by speaking in the language of legal justice, as well as security, so that existing

³¹ Node: Terrorism\Legality.

structures could survive in his ‘new’ era of universal values and progress presented in Chapter Five. Respect for the law thereby demarcated Obama from the lawlessness and chaos endorsed both by terrorists and the Bush administration. Nevertheless, the potential scope for change in US foreign and security policy was reduced to the prosecutorial realm, as the new ‘common sense’ was simply that the law should apply to terrorists after they had been captured, in the event that they were apprehended alive.

The Detroit moment is illustrative of the broader official construction of terrorist threat during Obama’s first term of office and in the beginning of his second. In this time frame, al Qaida were systematically framed as a credible threat to the nation and/or the homeland, which legitimised and made seem necessary the US military presence in Afghanistan³² (Doty, 1993; Holland, 2013b). Whilst Obama was generally measured in his language on security, he still regularly conceded that terrorism was a significant threat to America and to the world³³. Specifically, border controls were frequently securitised in official discourses, as was the internet, which was seen both as a site of radicalisation, and as a point of vulnerability to cyber-attacks from terrorist organisations³⁴. Finally, despite a lack of convincing evidence suggesting any terrorist organisation was working seriously to procure nuclear weapons (Weiss, 2015), nuclear proliferation featured strongly in Obama’s language on terrorist-related threats, and was often tied to the dangerous, or untrustworthy Others of Iran and North Korea³⁵. All of this contributed to a general narrative on terrorism that both called for, and encouraged an atmosphere of ‘vigilance’, if not outright fear, surrounding state organisations and including the general public³⁶.

In terms of identity construction, the image of the terrorist at this time was not as developed as it would become after 2014 in the context of ISIL. Nevertheless, the linguistic markers Obama did use to characterise the Other were often drawn from a classical archive of

³² Node: Terrorism\Al Qaida threat to homeland.

³³ Nodes: Terrorism\Terrorism is a threat; Ibid\Global threat.

³⁴ Nodes: Terrorism\Border controls; Terrorism\Cyber security.

³⁵ Node: Terrorism\Nuclear proliferation.

³⁶ Node: Terrorism\Vigilance.

Orientalist caricature as well as having some commonalities with the neo-Orientalism of the Bush era as studied by Tuastad (2003). Terrorists were regularly characterised as cowardly and senseless, and, in contrast to the American self, as preferring to destroy rather than build a more progressive society³⁷. This can be seen especially after 2012, following the Benghazi embassy and Boston marathon bombings. Nevertheless, these characterisations were usually preceded by appeals for calm in the immediate aftermath of a terrorist incident, as the President stressed the importance of waiting for evidence to emerge before drawing conclusions³⁸. The most obvious example of this being after Benghazi, when Obama drew strong criticism from Jacksonian, conservative and Republican quarters for not immediately and explicitly labelling the attack on the US embassy an “act of terror(ism)” (Entman & Stonbely, 2018; see also Kessler (2013) for an accurate record of Obama’s exact wording in the days following the attack). Similarly, in Boston, after setting up an initial securitised framing through the use of the conventional language of security, and references to his homeland security team, Obama then employed the language of rationalism to make sense of the day’s events (2013, Text 2069). In his first remarks on the day of the bombings, the president made clear that he did not yet have access to the facts that would allow him to provide a full explanation of what had occurred. Instead he repeatedly insisted that security and law enforcement “professionals” were “mobilizing the appropriate resources to investigate and respond” (ibid).

This reaction demonstrated a pattern of responses to acts of violence (both at home and abroad) that saw the speaker fix the discussion within the realm of security by performing ‘necessary’ securitising speech acts. Simultaneously, the language of rationalism and evidence was used to de-escalate the conversation and create an environment in which the White House could avoid committing itself to any particular course of action while waiting for the facts to emerge. Once again, this is an example of Floyd’s (2016) securitisation model sustaining ordinary security practice rather than enabling extraordinary moves.

³⁷ Nodes: Terrorist identity\Cowardice; Terrorist identity\Senselessness; Terrorist identity\Destroy rather than build.

³⁸ Node: Terrorist attacks\Rational response.

A consequence of this is that it contributed to the (re)production of the rational/irrational binary between the American self and the terrorist Other. Obama preferred to build the positive American self-identity in his immediate response to Boston, without (at first) touching on the identity of the assailants/Other or the negative emotions such as fear, anger, hatred that this might evoke. Rather than fall back on the huge established lexicon of the terrorist Other to solidify an image of the unknown threat, the speaker first (re)produced the self-image, emphasising the heroism and courage of ordinary Americans³⁹. In all the speeches delivered in the days and weeks after the Boston Bombings, the American identity was constructed through the bravery and kindness of ‘ordinary people’ on the ground, who helped the victims of the explosions. In some instances, most notably in remarks at an interfaith service on April 18, the metaphor of the marathon was used to show the endurance and tirelessness of the American people and security services in combatting terrorism. That the attacks coincided with Patriot’s Day provided the speaker with a further archive of Americanism from which to build the self-identity. As well as heroism, American pride and unity coloured initial and subsequent reactions. The president spoke about Americans coming together to support each other in times of need. Frequently this was done with reference to religion through prayers to those effected by the violence. Only later, did the opposite image of the evil, radical, backwards and/or nihilistic terrorist take form, in contrast to the positive American character:

Because that’s what the people of Boston are made of. Your resolve is the greatest rebuke to whoever committed this heinous act. If they sought to intimidate us, to terrorize us, to shake us from those values that Deval described, the values that make us who we are, as Americans - - well, it should be pretty clear by now that they picked the wrong city to do it. Not here in Boston. Not here in Boston.

You’ve shown us, Boston, that in the face of evil, Americans will lift up what’s good. In the face of cruelty, we will choose compassion. In the face of those who would visit death upon innocents, we will choose to save and to comfort and to heal. We’ll choose friendship. We’ll choose love.

Barack Obama, 18 April 2013

³⁹ Node: Terrorism\US identity\Heroism.

As time passed and the intelligence forces gathered more information, the language became more emotional, and the terrorist identity began to come to the fore. Potential motives were explored such as the desire to intimidate and terrorise ‘us’, and the concept of evil was applied. This was done in contrast to the American identity, to form a narrative in which the enemy was doomed to fail in its plot to break the American spirit, and separate the people from their liberal values. Terrorists were portrayed as weak and small but also vicious and selfish. Obama’s refrain was that Americans refused to live in fear⁴⁰. In Benghazi, Obama spoke of an outrage and a tragedy committed against heroic, and selfless Americans, typified by Ambassador Christopher Stevens, whose life was taken despite his efforts to stabilise and civilise Libya⁴¹, and separated his own and his administration’s rational response to this from the “political circus” of Republican criticism (2013, Text 2106).

This is representative of the broader construction of the self and terrorist Other at this time, and provides the underlying logic for contemporary US counter-terrorist policies⁴². The data examined here supports Espinoza’s (2018) argument that the Obama administration sanitised hard power counter-terrorist strategies such as the use of drones and assassinations – at least after these were officially acknowledged in 2012 (McCracken, 2014, p. 30) – through the use of scientific or clinical language. Lethal drone strikes were qualified as a proportionate, targeted and effective means to eliminate ‘real’ or ‘genuine’ threats to the nation⁴³. Further criticisms were dismissed on the grounds that strikes were both legal, and in line with American values due to the White House’s commitment to transparency and democratic checks and balances⁴⁴. Finally, when forced to acknowledge civilian deaths caused by the drone programme, this was justified on the ‘rational’ grounds that inaction might have led to the

⁴⁰ Node: Terrorist attacks\Americans refuse to live in fear.

⁴¹ Node: Benghazi attack\Brave, selfless Americans.

⁴² Nodes: Terrorist identity\Evil; Terrorist identity\Radical, backwards Islamism; Terrorism\US identity\Pride; Terrorism\US identity\Unity.

⁴³ Nodes: Terrorism\Drone policy\Effective; Terrorism\Drone policy\Targeted.

⁴⁴ Nodes: Terrorism\Counter-terrorism\Legal; Terrorism\Drone policy\Transparent; Terrorism\US identity\Democratic checks on counter terrorism.

deaths of a greater number of innocents at the hands of terrorists⁴⁵. Similarly, controversial surveillance programmes such as the PATRIOT Act, and later the more ironically titled FREEDOM Act, were justified through references to the same identity construction of professional security services referenced earlier in this chapter, and the need to strike a reasonable balance between US values and the threat to national security⁴⁶.

The apparent balance of values and national security priorities ran through Obama's counter-terrorist policy-identity constellations, and mirrors the broader narrative a balance of realism and idealism in US foreign policy addressed in Chapter Five⁴⁷. Guantanamo Bay was emblematic of this throughout Obama's tenure, as he frequently made the argument that closing the controversial detention centre would constitute a soft-power victory in the War on Terror, by depriving terrorists of a key recruitment symbol⁴⁸. Beyond this, Obama and his staff spoke of the same universal rights and values as were brought to the fore in conversations on foreign policy, referencing democracy, checks and debate as necessary controls on lethal and intrusive state powers, as well as the need to maintain trust between the government and the population⁴⁹. When whistleblowers such as Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden came forward, they were firstly met with hostile rhetoric on national security and patriotism, but even these statements were 'balanced' by references to the importance of due process⁵⁰.

By 2013, the importance of the terrorist threat had diminished in official discourse. The partial withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan was framed as a result of success in the core mission of ensuring al Qaida could not use the country as a base or safe haven for attacks on the homeland. At the same time, a strong narrative was crafted of US and allied forces pushing al Qaida back, and knocking it 'on its heels'⁵¹. Following the assassination of Osama bin Laden,

⁴⁵ Nodes: Terrorism\Drone policy\Civilian deaths justified.

⁴⁶ Nodes: Professionalism of security services; Surveillance\National security; Surveillance\Striking balance.

⁴⁷ Node: Terrorism\Values and counter terrorism compatible.

⁴⁸ Node: Terrorism\Guantanamo\Anti national interest.

⁴⁹ Node: Terrorism\US identity\Universal Rights; Terrorism\US identity\Values and counter terrorism compatible\Democracy and Debate; Terrorism\US identity\ Values and counter terrorism compatible\Trust.

⁵⁰ Nodes: Whistleblowers\Due Process; Whistleblowers\National security.

⁵¹ Node: Terrorism\Al Qaida\Al Qaida is on its heels.

a frequent node was that the US and its allies had ‘decimated al Qaida’s leadership’⁵². As a result, even after the Boston and Benghazi attacks, Obama portrayed al Qaida as in decline, with the danger newly emanating from its various affiliates across the Middle East and North Africa. Even these were imagined to be dangerous only at ‘pre-9/11’ levels⁵³. The President dedicated a long speech at the National Defence University (Obama, 2013, Text 2120) entirely to the War on Terror, and framed these affiliates as equivalent to those terrorist organisations faced by America in the 1980s and 1990s. Whilst the danger still existed, these new actors, according to the official narrative, had neither the resources nor the competence to engineer an attack on the scale of 9/11.

There was a conscious effort then to recalibrate the image of terrorism in the American mind in from 2009 to 2014. Obama has admitted to seeing terrorism as a distraction from the progress he wishes to see in the rest of the world (Goldberg, 2016), and this rhetorical move was therefore strategically useful in developing a foreign policy that went beyond the obsession with terrorism that dominated the Bush era. The idea of choosing between building and destroying recurred frequently in the contexts of terrorism, the Arab Spring and the Middle East Peace Process. Here, the president attempted to shift the focus of the nation away from the destruction wrought by terrorists and towards the potential for progress championed by the US and its liberal Western allies⁵⁴. The discursive structures of US foreign policy at this time therefore comprised official policy-identity constellations which suggested a relatively low level of terrorist threat and made possible a correspondingly limited (but nonetheless lethal) foreign policy response. This reduced threat narrative was upended by the violent and chaotic arrival of ISIL onto the international stage in 2014. The remainder of this chapter examines how Obama made sense of ISIL, and how the official discourses on terrorism were subsequently changed, first in the context of the Middle East and then in reaction to attacks on Western Europe and the US.

⁵² Node: US decimating Al Qaida.

⁵³ Node: Terrorism\Extremist affiliates\Pre-9/11 scale threat.

⁵⁴ Node: Build not destroy.

3. (Re)Writing terror: ISIL in the East and the West

3.a. (Re)Naming terror: The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

The first explicit mention of ISIL by (a) name came from Obama on 12 June 2014 in reaction to the organisation's territorial advance in Northern Iraq (Text 2529). Before this date, the White House downplayed the threat of various unnamed 'al Qaida affiliates' as minor actors, capable of causing damage and pain to America and its allies, but underwhelming and amateurish compared to the organisation that brought the nation to a standstill on 9/11. In a now infamous example of this, the president made the following analogy in a January 2014 interview with the New Yorker: "if a Jayvee [Junior Varsity] team puts on Lakers uniforms that doesn't make them Kobe Bryant" (Remnick, 2014). After this, Siniver & Lucas (2016) have argued that the Obama administration strategically embraced the ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) over the more ubiquitous ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) in order to produce a lexical ambiguity surrounding the geographical areas in which the US ought to have been focussing its foreign policy response.

This section will show how ISIL were quickly elevated above the existing terrorist identity from June 2014. Two groups of events were particularly influential in initially shaping the new terrorist identity. First, the advance into Sinjar and the ethnic cleansing of the Yazidi population raised the profile of the network in the American popular mind. Second, the executions of a series of hostages, including Americans James Foley and Steven Sotloff, marked a further development in the language of US anti-terrorism. Following the arguments of Croft (2006) and Hansen (2006), this required political actors to intervene discursively in order to make sense of the unfolding chaos. Using a similar theoretical framework, Krebs (2015) adds that such crises, by unsettling the discursive environment, also create opportunities for elite actors to intervene and impose a new dominant foreign policy narrative. Here, this section responds to the thesis's main research questions by demonstrating how the violence in Iraq and Syria led to the (re)production and escalation of previously diminished threat constructions, as well as a shift towards a more obvious and manifestly Orientalist discourse of rampaging, nihilistic

barbarity in the region. The second half of the section then demonstrates how this markedly Orientalist narrative further developed after attacks in the West, which saw the opposing (re)production of the cultured, civilised Western self identity under threat from the barbaric Other.

ISIL's violent expansion into Sinjar in August 2014 was heavily publicised in Western media (Artrip & Debrix, 2018; Bassil, 2019; Friis, 2017). Artrip & Debrix (2018, p. 76) argue the nature of the media environment at the time of the Sinjar offensive led to an oversaturation of images of violence, "characterised by so-called viral patterns of production, dissemination, and consumption of content, often achieved through globally networked digital platforms". Buffon & Allison (2016, p. 180) argue that Western media at first demonstrated a confusion as to what was happening in Sinjar, to the extent that a new genre of "who are the Yezidis?" articles, coloured by "comfortable orientalist staples", emerged in the weeks following the assault. After discursive interventions by Vian Dakhil (at the time, the only Yezidi member of Iraq's parliament) and Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, on 5 and 14 August respectively, gained global media traction and led to sustained and intense journalistic and public interest in the humanitarian emergency (ibid). Artrip & Debrix (2018, p. 80) use the apt metaphor of ISIL "inject[ing] an image of terror into the global media circuitry, [which] behaves according to the hyper-real logic of an opportunistic virus" to describe the role of television stations, national newspapers, online news websites and social media in carrying and (re)producing accounts and sometimes images of mass-executions, murder, rape and slavery in the northern Iraqi province.

Before 'naming' ISIL, Obama first attempted to fit the violence in Iraq and Syria into the existing narrative of America and its allies finally winning the War on Terror (see for examples, texts 2120, 2214, 2506, and Remnick, 2014). The accounts of violence and territorial advance in the summer of 2014 jarred however with the existing official narrative of terrorism returning towards 'pre-9/11' threat levels highlighted in the previous section. As a result, according to Hansen's (2006) theory, these new and unforeseen events had to be fitted into a new narrative in order to be made comprehensible to American (and global) audiences. Applying this to

Krebs's (2015) framework, the events in Iraq and Syria unsettled the narrative environment of US foreign policy. Where before there had been one dominant narrative on the declining power of al Qaida and its allies, after the wave of violence and media attention caused by ISIL, there were suddenly multiple possible foreign policy stories vying for primacy in the American imaginary. Krebs argues that moments such as these require and create opportunities for well-timed discursive interventions by elite actors who otherwise run the risk of losing control of the discursive environment. If an actor such as the president is able to articulate a compelling story to make sense of new events in an 'unsettled' moment, this narrative is likely to dominate competing voices. Alternatively, should the actor miss such an opportunity, and attempt to mount an argument within the logical bounds of a failing narrative, they will be more vulnerable to critique (ibid).

In response, Obama and other White House actors made use of their platforms to paint a picture of ISIL as both brutal and cowardly⁵⁵. First, the vulnerable nature of their victims was insisted upon. To this end, the figure of the Yezidi as 'an ancient people' served to highlight the use of (it is suggested) soft and previously untouched targets⁵⁶. Obama often spoke of ISIL targeting civilians, and emphasised the Yezidi women and children who fell victim to its violence⁵⁷. This mirrors and echoes the "comfortable Orientalism" Buffon & Allison (2018) identify in media portrayals of Yezidis, exemplified by Sean Thomas of the Daily Telegraph (cf ibid, p. 180) describing Yezidis as "afraid of lettuce" and "abhor[ring] pumpkins". Friis (2015; 2017) and Euben (2017) have previously deconstructed the 'global spectacle' of ISIL and the network's agency in establishing itself as fundamentally different to other terror networks in the Western imagination, with Auchter (2018) also demonstrating the media's role in reinforcing this message. These authors demonstrate how this was achieved via the staging and dissemination in the media of explicit and previously unthinkable violence such as beheadings, "shootings and crucifixions, burning and drowning hostages in cages, executions

⁵⁵ Nodes: ISIL identity\Brutal; ISIL identity\Cowardly.

⁵⁶ Node: Yezidi identity\Ancient people.

⁵⁷ Nodes: ISIL identity\Targeting civilians; Yezidi identity\Women and children.

performed by children, decapitations with explosive necklaces, crushing bodies by running them over with tanks, hurling victims from rooftops and other forms of violence” (Friis, 2017, p. 245). The data here shows the White House also anticipated and targeted their audience’s sense of shock at violence, and especially violence against women, to construct an emotionally affective savage or barbarian ISIL identity in official foreign policy discourse.

Obama and the White house placed the new ISIL identity beyond the scope of previous terrorist identities through references to its extreme violence, the apparent senselessness of this – to the extent that Obama dramatically labelled it a ‘death cult’ – and by the existential, genocidal threat it posed to the Yezidi people⁵⁸. This new, terrifying image of the Other stood in contrast to the vulnerable, Orientalist portrayal of the ‘ancient’ Yezidis, and especially women and children, to create a new policy-identity constellation that provided an urgent case for airstrikes against ISIL targets in Iraq. Furthermore, both of these narratives provided an opportunity for the heroic image of the American self to come to the fore once again in US foreign policy discourse⁵⁹. As in the post 9/11 era, Wilsonian ideas of America having a duty to act, and take the fight to evil terrorists were deployed to foster support for another intervention in Iraq⁶⁰. Other recurring Wilsonian and ‘heroic’ nodes that appeared in this context include America “standing up” and “saving lives”, empowering ordinary Iraqis, and, inevitably, the US standing on the right side of history by choosing to act⁶¹.

With the emotional case for intervention made (airstrikes and a rescue operation in Sinjar were authorised on 8 August 2014), Obama then moderated his language to limit the imagined scope of military action. Obama had previously claimed the ‘end’ of the war in Iraq as a major success on the part of his administration, and so this discursive move had strategic benefits in terms of reassuring voters and critics. As in Libya, the president and his aides insisted this was

⁵⁸ Node: ISIL identity\Death cult; Sinjar\Existential threat to Yezidis.

⁵⁹ Node: ISIL\US identity\Heroism.

⁶⁰ Nodes: ISIL\US identity\Heroism\Duty to act; ISIL\US identity\Heroism\Taking the fight to terrorists; ISIL\US identity\Wilsonianism.

⁶¹ Nodes: Iraq\US identity\Wilsonianism\Empowering Iraqis; ISIL\US identity\Right side of history; ISIL\US identity\Wilsonianism\Standing up, saving lives.

a ‘limited’ campaign of airstrikes that would not lead to the reintroduction of ‘boots’ on the ground in Iraq⁶². The president stressed the ‘targeted’ and ‘humanitarian’ aspect of the bombings, as well as the broad multilateral/international coalition, legitimised by the invitation of the Iraqi government, that would contribute towards it⁶³. Finally, and again in a parallel with the 2011 Libyan intervention (Kitchen, 2014; Walt & Mearsheimer, 2016), the multilateral aspect of the air campaign was used both to reassure the audience that the America would not bear the burden of intervention alone, and as further proof of the renewal of US global leadership under Obama⁶⁴.

Furthermore, as ISIL gained ground in Northern Iraq, the Obama administration made use of the historic/literary language associated with the trope of ‘barbarians at the gate’ (Salter, 2002). As stated above, the new terrorist identity was differentiated to some extent from previous images of al Qaida-style terrorism by its willingness to kill senselessly or without reason⁶⁵. Whilst previous terrorist groups killed indiscriminately, ISIL was separated from al Qaida through its practice of killing others “for no rhyme or reason other than they have not kowtowed to them” (Obama, 2014, Text 2608). This in turn echoed the discursive practices by which al Qaida were differentiated from the IRA, PLO and other non-state violent actors post-9/11 (Gunning & Jackson, 2011). The barbarian trope was also obvious in portrayals of the destruction of religious sites and cultural landmarks. Ömür Harmanşah (2015, pp. 170; 171-2) has argued that viral images and accounts of ISIL’s “smashing artefacts in archaeological museums, iconoclastic breaking and bulldozing of archaeological sites, dynamiting of shrines, tombs, and other holy sites of local communities, and burning of libraries and archives” led to a spectacle of destruction in mainstream media, which was “quickly and confidently characterized as medieval iconoclasm, ignorant backwardness, and anti-western arrogance”. When ISIL targeted Palmyra in May 2015, this resonated with popular media due to the danger

⁶² Nodes: ISIL\Iraq airstrikes\Limited Intervention; ISIL\Iraq airstrikes\No boots on the ground.

⁶³ Nodes: ISIL\Iraq airstrikes\Humanitarian; ISIL\Iraq airstrikes\Multilateral intervention; ISIL\Iraq airstrikes\Targeted.

⁶⁴ Node: ISIL\International response\US leadership.

⁶⁵ Node: ISIL identity\Killing without reason; ISIL\Genocide threat.

posed to the ruins and monuments located in the UNESCO World Heritage Site – to the extent that a year later, the Mariinsky Symphony Orchestra would stage a concert in the then liberated city’s Roman Theatre, in what appeared to signal the return of civilisation to the region (BBC News, 2015a). Obama also embraced this narrative, and fed it into the official discourse via recurring nodes referencing the targeting of religious sites, ISIL’s nihilism and apparently bankrupt ideology, and of course, the binary opposition of building and destroying that served to separate America and the forces of civilisation from the barbaric Other⁶⁶.

In the same month as the events in Sinjar, ISIL released a video of the execution of the American journalist James Foley by Mohammed Emwazi, which was then followed by a series of similar videos showing beheadings and executions of hostages including Americans Abdul-Rahman Kassig and Steven Sotloff (Friis, 2015, pp. 725-6). All of these videos were circulated online, and while the majority of the American public may not have watched them in full, still photographs were included in many national newspapers, and news networks such as CNN, MSNBC and Fox showed excerpts in their broadcasts (ibid). Multiple official actors, including the president and vice-president made statements addressing the executions. Their language was highly emotional, with sentiments of shock, revulsion and mourning for the victims running through official statements⁶⁷. The victims and their families were placed at the forefront of the president’s message, as, for example, Foley’s career as a journalist served as a symbol of civilised principles of liberal democracy standing “in stark contrast to his killers” (Obama, 2014, Text 2609). Kassig’s role as an aid worker was also central to the construction of the hostage/victim identities as innocent and altruistic, in complete opposition to the apparently meaningless violence of their captors/killers⁶⁸. In contrast, the portrait of the killers was vivid, as the brutal, barbarian identity that appeared in descriptions of the Sinjar offensive became more prominent⁶⁹.

⁶⁶ Nodes: ISIL identity\Bankrupt ideology; ISIL identity\Destroy vs build; ISIL identity\Nihilistic; ISIL identity\Targeting religious sites.

⁶⁷ Nodes: ISIL\Hostages\Emotion.

⁶⁸ Nodes: ISIL\Hostages\Helping others; ISIL\Hostages\Innocent.

⁶⁹ Nodes: ISIL\Hostages\Captor identity\Barbarism; ISIL\Hostages\Captor identity\Brutal violence.

Finally, the contrast between barbarism and civilisation was evident in the official narrativisation of the 2014 Iraqi elections, and the efforts by incumbent Prime Minister al-Maliki to form a functioning government. Obama's long asserted claim that Iraqi sectarianism (and the tribalism of the Muslim world in general) was among the most important factors obstructing regional stability, was used to explain both the existence of ISIL and the weakness of the Iraqi state⁷⁰. Here, it is possible to unpack the narrative of risky 'tribalism and sectarianism' that was embedded in the Iraqi and Muslim\Arab identities in order to understand the differing local identities that populated the imagined geography of Iraq and Syria in official US discourse at this time.

Tribalism and sectarianism were spoken of as flaws in the regional Arab/Muslim identity, that constituted undesirable deviations from Western liberal democracy. Despite this, Obama was capable of differentiating ethically between various ethnic and religious groups. In addition to the Orientalist portrait of the Yezidis, there was also a broader Kurdish identity, which was framed as a reliable and largely secular ally to the US/Western self⁷¹. This was most prominent in the Sinjar rescue mission, when Kurdish forces took a leading military role, however the Obama White House continued to make frequent references to Iraqi military and Kurdish forces working together, as proof of the potential benefits of secular inclusivity⁷². In contrast to the positive representation of Kurds and the Iraqi military, Sunni groups were increasingly problematised and framed as risky in the post-ISIL setting. These groups were regularly depicted as having their loyalties split between the national government and the (ostensibly) Sunni ISIL⁷³. This contributed to a narrative that the US had a strong interest in offering support to the Iraqi government and military in order to demonstrate to the Sunni population that ISIL was "not the only game in town" (Obama, 2014, Text 2602). At the same time, whilst the Americans were keen to talk up the credentials of their international and regional coalitions, and the importance of US leadership in fostering regional (Arab) unity, scepticism was placed

⁷⁰ Nodes: ISIL\Iraqi identity\Tribalism and sectarianism.

⁷¹ Nodes: ISIL\Kurdish identity\Allies.

⁷² Nodes: ISIL\Kurdish and Iraqi forces together.

⁷³ Node: ISIL\Iraqi identity\Tribalism and sectarianism\Sunnis with split loyalties.

on (Shia) Iran's willingness and capacity to involve itself in a non-sectarian way⁷⁴. Similarly, in Syria, the collapse of order in some regions following the civil war, and the opening this created for ISIL gave rise to a discourse of dangerous tribalism and sectarianism taking hold in this setting. Against this backdrop, Obama sold his policy of offering aid and support to the 'moderate' opposition⁷⁵. The result of this was the (re)emergence of a strong discourse of mistrust and distrust surrounding overtly religious Muslim groups in the Middle East.

Obama therefore created and sustained a policy-identity constellation in which the violence of the barbaric ISIL could (only) be solved through American support for a strong and inclusive (i.e. multi-sectarian) Iraqi government and the 'moderate opposition' in Syria⁷⁶. The correct policy response therefore became the Obama administration's go-to military strategy in the Middle East: supplying air support where it deemed necessary whilst propping up precarious but ostensibly democratic/pro-American regimes via the provision of military and civilian aid – an approach which Little (2016) labels *contagement*. Obama and White House staff consequently created a strong and prominent discourse of America and its allies 'degrading and destroying' ISIL from the air, whilst local Iraqi forces 'took the lead' on the ground⁷⁷. On the one hand this discourse was marked by the almost scientific effectiveness of the air campaign, which again stood in contrast to the chaotic, barbaric violence of ISIL. Espinoza (2018) has recorded the scientific official language used to sanitise Obama's drone campaigns, and argues this contributed to a broader Orientalist distinction between the civilised West and the uncivilised Muslim world. Here, this pattern was repeated as Obama, Biden and other key actors talked of "systematic" and "effective" airstrikes "pounding", "hammering" or otherwise placing "tremendous pressure" on ISIL fighters⁷⁸. Simultaneously, a more violent, almost Jacksonian narrative emerged that centred explicitly on the idea of pursuing and killing the

⁷⁴ Nodes: ISIL\Foreign policy\Regional unity thanks to US leadership.

⁷⁵ Node: Tribalism and sectarianism (Syria/Arab Winter).

⁷⁶ Nodes: ISIL\Foreign policy\Must secure and encourage stable/inclusive governance in Iraq; ISIL\Iraqi identity\Must form a government; ISIL\Iraqi identity\Requires strong, inclusive leadership.

⁷⁷ Nodes: ISIL\Foreign policy\Degrade and destroy; ISIL\Foreign policy\Iraqi forces taking the lead.

⁷⁸ Nodes: ISIL\Degrade and destroy\Pounding, hammering ISIL; ISIL\Degrade and destroy\Systematic airstrikes; ISIL\Degrade and destroy\Tremendous pressure; ISIL\Iraqi airstrikes\Effectiveness.

barbaric enemy. This narrative was in turned marked by recurring nodes such as the dramatic statement “we will destroy this barbaric organisation”, but also by hunting metaphors and a tone of aggressive urgency in “going after them” or putting/knocking them “on their heels”⁷⁹.

From June of 2014 then, Obama contributed to the broader Western discourse that framed ISIL as a new and more dangerous form of terrorist organisation. The analysis here has shown that he did this in a particularly Orientalist way, that, in Said’s (1995, p. 206) framework, was more manifest in its opposition of barbaric terrorism to Western civilisation than had previously been seen. Elements of this new Orientalist discourse on ISIL can be traced back to the official discourse on violence in Syria and Libya outlined in the previous chapter, and before this to the construction of Iranian and other selfish and violent Arab/Muslim leader identities in the Middle East, with official portrayals of ISIL barbarism using some of the same language as deployed in those contexts. Having said this, the language in relation to ISIL was more unapologetic and frequent in its use of barbarian/civilised tropes. Furthermore, a more latent characterisation of local populations as prone to pre-Western tribalism and sectarianism, and therefore risky as a result of their religion, contributed to a securitised imagined geography of the Middle East that validated and legitimised certain foreign policy decisions. Strategically, Obama made use of these latent and manifestly Orientalist discourses to sell a foreign policy of hard air power against ISIL targets, combined with military and civilian aid to the relatively Westernised, and constitutionally democratic Iraqi government. In this way, the violent appearance of ISIL on the world stage was, via the (re)production of a ‘new’ barbaric Other identity, eventually fitted into the metanarrative of civilising progress that ran through Obama’s language on the Arab Spring, the Iran negotiations, and relations between Palestine and Israel. The final section of this chapter will now relate how the official discourse on terrorism continued to change following a series of ISIL claimed terrorist attacks on Western targets.

⁷⁹ Nodes: ISIL\Degradе and destroy\Hunting; ISIL\Degradе and destroy\Going after them; ISIL\Degradе and destroy\We will destroy this barbaric organisation.

3.b. ISIL in the West

What that beautiful city represents – the culture and the civilization that is so central to our imaginations – that's going to endure. And those who carry out senseless attacks against innocent civilians, ultimately they'll be forgotten.

Barack Obama, 7 January 2015

Text 2753

The following section considers official responses to a series of ISIL and al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) attacks from January 2015 to the end of the Obama administration's time in power⁸⁰. Starting with the AQAP assault on satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*'s headquarters in Paris, Obama's response differed from the pattern shown in the second section of this chapter, after previous incidents such as the Boston Marathon bombings, the Benghazi attacks or the Detroit incident, and even from his discourse outlined above on ISIL in Iraq and Syria. A key difference from previous attacks in the West, was that Obama's language was immediately emotional. As this chapter has shown, in the past, the president had initially made sombre but relatively measured appeals for calm, usually before asking his audiences to wait for facts to emerge before making judgements. Only later would a more emotional rhetoric emerge, that usually differentiated between courageous or heroic Americans and cowardly terrorists. This pattern changed after 2015, as can be seen in Obama's remarks made hours after the 7 January *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris. Here, Obama immediately and explicitly labelled the incident a "terrorist attack" (Obama, 2016, Text 2758), establishing a new pattern that was carried through in his first official reactions to the November 2015 attacks in Paris and San Bernadino (see Texts 3136, 4732), as well as the 2016 attacks in Brussels, Orlando and Nice (Texts 3226, 3310, 3344).

⁸⁰ Specifically, these are the AQAP attacks on Charlie Hebdo headquarters in Paris (11 January 2015, as well as the ISIL affiliated attacks on the Bataclan theatre in Paris (13 November 2015), the Inland Regional Center in San Bernadino, California (2 December 2015), various locations in Brussels (22 March 2016), Pulse, an Orlando nightclub (12 June 2016), and the Promenade des Anglais in Nice (14 July 2016).

With the linguistic frame of ‘terrorism’ established, Obama then, in the case of *Charlie Hebdo*, made appeals to the audience’s memories of 9/11 and France’s role in offering support to the US through the War on Terror, before evoking the longer shared history of the two nations and claiming France as “one of our oldest allies [and] one of our strongest allies” (Text 2758). In terms of subject positioning, this was a rhetorical mechanism that functioned to draw closer the American self and the French Other in the minds of the audience. This final section argues that throughout 2015 and 2016, Obama’s language on terrorism, ISIL and particularly on attacks in Europe, not only drew together the constructed identities of America and its Western allies⁸¹, but also (re)produced and developed the idea of a civilised Western self, reified in opposition to the horrors of ISIL violence and (what was framed as) its nihilistic or anti-civilisational ideology. The remainder of this section unpacks the civilised Western identity constructed through this rhetoric as well as the barbaric ISIL identity that was developed in opposition to this. Finally, it argues that the Muslim identity was (re)situated between these two camps due to its risky status, before concluding on the relevance of this to the changing structures of US foreign policy and the agency of the president in affecting this.

The location of the new wave of attacks in Western cities, was used by Obama to make a series of allusions to qualities of civilisation associated with Europe in Western literature⁸². In the Arab Spring, the Middle East Peace Process, and the Iran negotiations, violence towards civilians was often said to fly in the face of basic truths, universal values, and aspirations common to all humanity. With the European attacks, there was a shift in language towards ‘our’ values, the alliance between western states, and the various freedoms that are associated with the (European) Enlightenment such as secularism (or *laïcité*), freedom of speech, religion and, especially in relation to *Charlie Hebdo*, the press⁸³. At the same time, speakers established an image of the assailants as cowardly and evil – both of which traits featured not only in the pre-existing official discourse on al Qaida and ISIL’s activities in Iraq and Syria, but also

⁸¹ Node: ISIL\Western self\Allies standing together.

⁸² Node: ISIL\Western self\Civilisation and culture.

⁸³ Node: Charlie Hebdo\Attack on values, press freedom.

formed a key constituent of Bush era War on Terror narratives (Jackson, 2005; Croft, 2006). These characteristics fit into the civilisation/barbarism trope as well as the Bushian dichotomy of evil terrorists and heroic Americans – although in this case, the heroes were European (Jackson, 2005). As such, Western Europe, the nation of France, and especially the city of Paris became signifiers of civilisation, culture and universal/American values in official US foreign policy discourse⁸⁴.

Paris itself represents the timeless values of human progress. Those who think that they can terrorize the people of France or the values that they stand for are wrong. The American people draw strength from the French people's commitment to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness.

Obama, 13 November 2015

Text 4732

Frequently, these attacks were framed in official texts as the result of a clash between hate and the civilised world or hatred and 'our' way of life⁸⁵. Not as a Huntingtongesque clash between civilisations – a notion which Obama was eager to dismiss on multiple occasions⁸⁶ – but rather a more existential struggle between the forces of civilisation and the forces of darkness and nihilism. Despite Obama's claim, this narrative still relied upon the idea of Western cultural superiority, and Eastern barbarism, as 'universal', 'American' and 'Enlightenment' values became synonymous in the discourse, despite being explicitly located in Western culture and history⁸⁷. Again, claims were made that America and its allies, who were inclined to build rather than to destroy, were on the right side of history, and that ISIL and its sympathisers were doomed to fail⁸⁸.

Having said this, after the June 2016 mass shooting in Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Obama shifted his language once again away from the construction of the broader Western

⁸⁴ Node: Paris as symbol of values, civilisation, progress.

⁸⁵ Node: ISIL\Hate vs the civilised world; ISIL\Western self\Hate vs our way of life.

⁸⁶ Node: ISIL\Not a clash of civilisations.

⁸⁷ Node: Western self\Universal values.

⁸⁸ Nodes: ISIL\Futile cause; ISIL\US identity\Right side of history.

self, back towards a narrower description of American liberal values in opposition to terrorist brutality:

So this is a sobering reminder that attacks on any American -- regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation -- is an attack on all of us and on the fundamental values of equality and dignity that define us as a country. And no act of hate or terror will ever change who we are or the values that make us Americans

Obama, 12 June 2016

Text 3310

The Orlando attack coincided with the unexpected momentum of Donald Trump's presidential campaign, which frequently relied upon ultra-conservative, racist and openly Islamophobic messaging (Saul, 2017). As a result, relatively new nodes appear in the discourse, as Obama and officials placed messages of love, and pro-LGBT inclusiveness at the core of the US self identity⁸⁹. In tandem with this, and again this must be read in the context of both ISIL and Trump's presidential campaign, Obama started to construct a Jeffersonian narrative on the risk of abandoning liberal American values in response to the new terrorist threat. Notably, after Trump publicly stated his belief that "Islam hates us", and began to articulate his idea for a blanket ban on Muslims travelling to the US (CNN 2016), a narrative emerged urging Americans to refuse discrimination and not to "help ISIL" destroy 'our' values⁹⁰. This contributed to a wider narrative deployed in relation to America, Europe and the Middle East that democracy was stronger than terrorism and ISIL, which in turn fed into the metanarrative of human progress that defined Obama's presidency⁹¹.

However, even as Obama worked to promote this inclusive narrative, he continued to produce and reproduce an apocalyptic and Orientalist image of the barbaric ISIL identity to justify his foreign policy. Aside from the violence of ISIL's "unspeakable" or "unfathomable" methods, which became a core part of US foreign policy discourse from 2014⁹², their ideology

⁸⁹ Node: ISIL\US identity\LGBT; ISIL\US identity\Love.

⁹⁰ Nodes: ISIL\US identity\Don't help ISIL destroy values; ISIL\US identity\Refuse discrimination.

⁹¹ Node: ISIL\Democracy is stronger than ISIL.

⁹² Node: ISIL identity\Unspeakable, unfathomable violence.

was once again foregrounded after the European and American attacks. As before in the War on Terror, Obama made frequent claims that the US was not at war with Islam, and sought to differentiate between the Muslim faith and the doctrine of ISIL by portraying the latter as a “betrayal”, a “perversion”, or, later, simply a “wrong interpretation” of Islam⁹³. Nevertheless, as Noah Bassil (2018) has previously argued, this claim still produced a boundary between the self and the barbaric problem of terrorism/extremism, and firmly located the latter within Islamic tradition and culture. Furthermore, it demonstrated again Obama’s (re)production of the Orientalist ontological and epistemological distinction between the Western self and the Eastern/Arab/Muslim Other. Obama claimed the US was not at war with Islam, and yet his language consistently showed an understanding of terrorism as a problem of the (Muslim) Other, which in turn (re)produced the latter’s ‘risky’ or dangerous status (Breen-Smyth, 2014; Heath-Kelly, 2012; 2013; Hickman & al., 2012) This can be seen in a willingness from 2014, and especially after the attacks in the West to place the responsibility for confronting extremism at the door of Muslim communities and leaders, who were framed as having been too tolerant of radicalism⁹⁴.

This language on Muslim terrorism was also present in a sub-discourse on extremism that existed within the wider official discourse on (counter-)terrorism. This sub-discourse is distinguishable from the broader discourse in that it more often attributed potential reasons and motivations to the Other’s violent actions, going beyond (although not dismissing) the concepts of evil, senseless or nihilism that were regularly used to explain away the choices and behaviour of terrorists. For the most part, these reasons can be grouped into one narrative that located the cause of extremist ideologies in social and governance issues, and another that located them in the individual’s religious and/or cultural otherness. Both of these explanations framed (violent) extremism as a non-American, non-Western issue, situating it within the foreign Other. In the former case, an apparent lack of stable governance and civil society infrastructure in

⁹³ Node: ISIL identity\Betraying, perverting Islam; ISIL identity\Wrong interpretation of Islam.

⁹⁴ Nodes: ISIL\Muslim identity\Ideology spread within Muslim communities; ISIL\Muslim identity\Responsibility of Muslims to counter ideology.

‘developing’ nations was framed as causing vulnerable individuals to turn to radical ideologies⁹⁵. This then provided the logic for the Obama administration to champion ‘civilian’ intervention and state-building as effective counter-extremist tools abroad⁹⁶. Furthermore, in contrast to the characterisation of terrorists as inexplicably evil, potential extremists were portrayed as vulnerable in official discourses, with ‘deprivation’ positioned as another aggravating factor which again could be mitigated through overseas development programmes⁹⁷. In the latter narrative, the religious, and especially Islamic characteristics of (potential) extremists were problematised. Supposedly pre-Western markers such as tribalism and sectarianism were applied to ‘extremists’, especially in conflict zones in Iraq and Afghanistan, and later in Syria, Libya and Yemen⁹⁸. Later in his tenure, Obama was often proactive in deliberately locating the ‘extremist’ problem within Muslim communities (whether at home or abroad), repeatedly suggesting Muslim ‘leaders’ had a particular responsibility to ‘lead the debate’ on terrorism⁹⁹. At the same time, a related narrative was pushed that suggested a tension between Western/Enlightenment values and Islam¹⁰⁰.

Both of these narratives on extremism functioned to (re)locate the problem away from the self, and to justify Western intervention and/or interference, whether military or civilian, in developing and especially Muslim nations. They also (re)produced Orientalist tropes and marked yet another distinction between the rational, mature and enlightened self and the extremist, childish and oppressive Other. Layla Saleh (2016) has previously argued that such representations of (male) Muslim/Arab attitudes towards women were deployed after the Arab Spring to establish Muslim/Arab women as oppressed, despite their active role in revolution, and to lay the discursive groundwork for any potential Western interventions in the region. Here the same effect was achieved as a discourse emerged that Muslim governments and community leaders either couldn’t be trusted or had to be supported in providing the necessary

⁹⁵ Nodes: Extremism\Civil society; Extremism\Stable governance

⁹⁶ Node: State building as counter-terrorism.

⁹⁷ Nodes: Extremism\Deprivation breeds extremism.

⁹⁸ Node: Extremism\Tribalism and sectarianism.

⁹⁹ Node: Terrorism\Muslims have responsibility to lead debate.

¹⁰⁰ Node: Muslim world\Reason vs. extremism; Extremism\Gender (in)equality.

environment to keep their people from being tempted into (violent) extremism. All of this sanitised the image of a counter-terrorist programme which was both lethal, and unapologetic about America's right to take the lives of those it deemed a threat even when this meant breaching the sovereignty of other nations¹⁰¹.

Whether in the Middle East or in the context of Muslim communities in the West, ISIL and its ideology were characterised by Obama as a sickness and a cancer, that had to be destroyed¹⁰². In contrast, Obama saw the US as providing opportunity for Muslims, whether at home or abroad, to realise their aspirations, and thereby immunise themselves from the lure of tribalism, sectarianism, and ISIL-inspired extremism¹⁰³. Western-style democracy and tolerance were framed as the solutions to extremism both in the US, and the Middle East. This claim in turn further sanitised American liberal power abroad, which Obama regularly insisted was motivated by values and remained untainted by territorial ambitions¹⁰⁴. In between these two civilised and barbaric identities, the 'ordinary' Muslim identity, which was initially perceived in this thesis in the 2009 context of Obama's 'new era' of engagement with the Middle East and the Muslim World, was problematised and categorised as risky. This was a discursive effect that resulted from the (imagined) location of the problems of extremism and terrorism within the (Muslim/Arab) Other, as well as the related Orientalist understanding of the Muslim Other as different and, due to its non-Western character, particularly vulnerable to the lure of anti-Western, barbaric extremist ideology.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter has shown the development of official US discourses on terrorism, towards an increasingly manifest narrative of Western civilisation opposed to violent barbarism that situated the problems of extremism and terrorism in the domain of the Other. The agency of Barack Obama is visible in this as he responded to the disruption of his grand 'arc of

¹⁰¹ Node: Terrorism\Terrorists must be taken out; Terrorism\Terrorists cannot hide from America.

¹⁰² Node: ISIL identity\Sickness; ISIL identity\Cancer.

¹⁰³ Node: ISIL\US identity\Providing opportunity, enabling aspirations.

¹⁰⁴ Node: ISIL\US identity\No territorial ambitions.

progress' narrative not by adopting or abandoning this, but by embracing a starkly Orientalist portrayal of Western civilisation opposed to pre-Western, even medieval barbarism, leaving Muslim identities between these two camps with a particular responsibility to adopt Western 'universal values', and not only to reject extremist ideologies, but to confront and challenge these.

The analysis presented here has shown that Obama started off his presidency by maintaining some of the discursive structures on terrorism he inherited from his predecessor, whilst also seeking to reduce perceptions on the level of threat faced by America in his 'new era'. In terms of continuity, there is little evidence of Obama making an effort to change the discursive structures around the memory of 9/11. Instead he paid due respect to the culture of commemoration and memorialisation that had built up around anniversaries of the terrorist attacks in the decade since their occurrence (Holland & Jarvis, 2014). In keeping with these, Obama evoked broadly similar emotional narratives of national tragedy, courage and heroism in the face of evil and cowardly attacks, as his predecessor had done since 2001.

The most obvious example of a break with past discourses can be seen in the rhetoric on Iraq, which became framed as a distraction and a drain on resources, keeping US forces from addressing the 'real threat' in Afghanistan. Iraq and Afghanistan were thereby differentiated in the American mind from one another, with the discourse on the former centring on good governance and withdrawing troops 'responsibly', while the latter was framed as crucial in the ongoing fight against al Qaida. We further see evidence of Obama's strategic agency, and a consequent change in the structures of USFP in the discursive creation of 'AfPak'. The rhetorical erosion of the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, led by Obama, relied upon Orientalist tropes of lawlessness, tribalism and the untrustworthiness of Pakistani security forces, who were accused of turning a blind eye to Taleban/terrorist organisations. In contrast to this chaotic imagined geography on the Afghan border, Iraq was framed as relatively stable, capable of providing its own security, and therefore requiring less attention from the US military. As a result, a common sense was formed whereby Obama could take credit for 'ending

Iraq responsibly' whilst also disregarding Pakistani sovereignty to assassinate Osama bin Laden and claim a victory in the War on Terror. When bin Laden was finally killed in Abbottabad by US soldiers – a moment which, according to Krebs's (2015) framework, ought to have created an opportunity to change previously dominant discursive structures – the research presented here supports Jarvis & Holland's (2014) argument that Obama, rather than narrating an end to the War on Terror, instead chose to reinforce Bush-era US foreign policy structures by redeploying 9/11 narratives on terrorism, normalising the intervention deep into Pakistani territory, and driving home a new narrative that America now had to work to 'finish the job' of defeating al Qaida.

In the broader context of terrorist threat construction, we have seen that Obama responded to terrorist incidents such as Detroit, Boston and Benghazi by framing them (unsurprisingly) in the protocols and conventions of national security. Having said this, in these cases Obama also made efforts to use legalistic and judicial language, as well as relatively measured appeals for calm before 'facts could emerge'. This chapter has argued that by embracing this 'reasoned' and legalistic language, Obama demonstrated strategic agency in differentiating himself not just from the lawless, evil terrorists, but also from the lawless War on Terror fought by the Bush administration after 9/11. Obama therefore did not seek to dismantle existing US foreign policy structures, for example by framing the death of bin Laden as the end of the War on Terror, but used a specific vocabulary of reason and legality, while working within the existing discursive framework, to create strategically advantageous security and foreign policy narratives.

Similarly, Obama maintained the idea that al Qaida and affiliated organisations posed a 'credible' threat to the US and to the world, but sought to reduce the importance of this threat back to 'pre-9/11' levels. This was especially clear in 2013, and up until the actions of ISIL fighters in the Middle East caused a dramatic reversal in the narrative. Up until this point, Obama differentiated the American self from the terrorist through the 'genuine' or 'credible' but apparently manageable threat posed by the latter to the former, and by the universal values

and enlightened rationalism associated with the self. Before 2014, Obama's counter-terrorist programme of surveillance, targeted assassinations, and limited military operations in the Middle East, Afghanistan and elsewhere, was justified and sanitised through the efficiency and apparent precision of the methods used to eliminate real threats, and the universality of American liberal values in contrast to the destructiveness of al Qaida. Echoing the narrative of a balance between realist and idealist impulses in his broader foreign policy, Obama claimed his counter-terrorist policy was defined by the balance his administration struck between universal/American values and national security.

From June of 2014 however, ISIL disrupted the official narrative of the diminishing terrorist threat. In response, Obama drastically modified his language to make sense of the rise of ISIL, and provide an official foreign policy narrative in the face of competing media and opposition representations of what was happening in the Middle East. Obama consequently drew on the Orientalist cultural archive of the barbarian, which, as Chapter Six showed, he had previously used to narrativize the Arab Spring, to make sense of ISIL. In doing so, he represented its fighters as brutal and cowardly, and framed them as an existential, genocidal threat to the Yezidi people, and especially women and children. The core identities of America's fight against terrorism therefore shifted, as ISIL was elevated above both the 'diminishing' but still 'credible' threat posed by al Qaida and its affiliates, and from previous constructions of 'evil terrorists', through its characterisation as a nihilistic, or medieval 'death cult'. As the self-proclaimed 'caliphate' targeted religious, historic, and culturally important sites of architecture and museums (Harmanşah, 2015), this narrative of barbarians at the gate of civilisation gained traction, both in official and wider discourses. As in the Arab Spring, Obama framed the American self as on the right side of history, heroically defending 'ancient' and defenceless peoples such as the Yezidis from the violence of the ISIL barbarians, whom America would 'degrade and ultimately destroy' through a 'systematic' and 'targeted' campaign of airstrikes. As in Bush's War on Terror, a gendered Orientalist narrative of masculine, heroic Americans saving vulnerable Eastern women from violently misogynistic Arab men dominated US foreign policy (Khalid, 2011, Zine, 2007).

At the same time, the manifestly Orientalist discursive opposition of civilisation and barbarism was equally visible in the official narrativisation of the execution of Western, and especially American hostages by ISIL members. However, a more subtle form of Orientalism can also be read in Obama's characterisation of local identities in the Middle East, who were differentiated by their ethnic and religious groupings. This can be seen in the general characterisation of the Iraqi people, and Muslims in the Middle East as prone to tribalism and sectarianism, but also in the way groups such as Kurdish forces, and the Iraqi military were presented as moderate and comparatively secular, and therefore as reliable allies to the US in the region. In contrast, while Obama consistently made efforts to reject claims that America was at war with Islam, he also portrayed minority Sunni groups in Iraq as especially risky due to their ethnic/religious link to the ostensibly Sunni ISIL in an otherwise majority Shia country. As a result, overtly religious and visibly non-Westernised groups were categorised as problematic and risky while 'moderate' or 'secular' (i.e. Westernised) groups were framed as reliable allies. This led to an Orientalist imagined geography of the Middle East justifying a campaign of airstrikes combined with military and civilian aid to the Iraqi government.

Finally, in the Western context, the data here shows a shift towards a more overtly emotional language in reaction to terrorist attacks from 2015, both in terms of the tragedy of loss, and anger at 'horrific' or 'senseless' violence committed by 'barbaric' terrorists on Western centres of 'civilisation' and 'enlightenment' such as Paris. Obama reacted to attacks in Europe by drawing together American and European civilised identities and contrasting them with the senseless barbarism of ISIL. This marked another development in the core identities of US foreign policy, led by Obama's elite agency, as a manifestly Orientalist discourse of Euro/American civilisation at odds with pre-Western barbarians came to dominate the official discourse. Simultaneously, the Muslim identity, whether in the Middle Eastern or Western context was left between these two binarily opposed camps. Even when Obama sought to negate the idea that America was at war with Islam, and re-assert Jeffersonian values in the face of Donald Trump's incendiary Islamophobic statements in 2016, he (re)produced ideas of ontological differences between East and West, and Muslims and non-Muslims, firmly locating

the problems of extremism and terrorism in the domain of the Other. This in turn exposed the fragility of the 'good' status of the 'ordinary' Muslim identity highlighted in Chapters Five and Six. Extremism and terrorism were finally framed as non-Western, or more accurately pre-Western problems, that could be solved by the adoption of supposedly Western/American values of tolerance, liberal freedoms, and inclusivity by the Other.

The concluding chapter of the thesis draws together the arguments and findings of each of the last three chapters and situates them within the literatures outlined in the first half of the thesis. It presents a discussion responding to the questions that guided the research process, as well as the implications of these findings for future research.

Conclusion

The first chapter of this thesis explored the existing literature on Barack Obama's foreign policy, and highlighted a gap relating to the progression of the discursive structures of US foreign policy over the eight years of his presidency, which could be filled through an analysis that examined continuity and change in this period through an explicitly post-colonial framework. The analysis of 4,700 official texts presented here has shown that the discursive structures of American foreign policy did not remain unchanged over the eight years of Obama's presidency. From the initial 'new beginning' in American-Muslim relations proclaimed in the 2009 address in Cairo, to the narrative that a wave of progress and democracy was transforming the region in 2011, to the final securitised narrative of barbaric terrorists threatening the civilised world, constructions of otherness fluctuated with events and in response to unsettled moments in the discursive environment. A central premise of this thesis which was established in Chapter Two, has been that social structures are inherently unstable and incomplete, and so none of these perceptions of the world were natural consequences of developments either in the Middle East or in America (Howarth, 2013). In light of this, the current study has sought to identify how these structures changed, and the ways in which specific constructions of identity and threat were deployed to make sense of new events and make certain foreign policies appear logical and necessary (Doty, 1993).

The primary focus of this thesis was to answer the following two questions: How did the discursive structures of American foreign policy change between 2009 and 2016? And how did official constructions of identities and threat change over the same period? In the briefest terms, the research presented here shows that while there was a continuous narrative of civilisational progress running through Obama's discourse across this timeframe, official constructions of identities and threat changed from a more latent or unconscious Orientalist portrayal of the Muslim/Arab Other in 2009, towards more obvious, unrestrained and manifest portrayals of tyranny after the Arab Spring, and then to a threatening medieval barbarism at the end of his

presidency. This trend is unpacked in detail below, starting with the continuous narrative of progress.

The computer-aided analysis of official texts relayed in the previous chapters has shown that one constant narrative thread running through Obama and his staff's speech on the Middle East was that of East to West civilisational progress. This consistently framed Western states as more advanced, more democratic and more rational than their Eastern counterparts. Through the varying degrees of ethical difference (Hansen, 2006) separating the self from America's traditional allies and more hostile governments, this narrative was used to construct and oppose 'responsible' and 'unreliable' characters. This in turn legitimised Washington's geostrategic alliances whilst simultaneously delegitimising uncooperative regimes. Both of these core identities were drawn from longstanding archives of colonialism and orientalism explored in Chapter Three. The 'unreliable' or immature native identity, close to that of the barbarian, or the wild Muslim (Said, 1995; Tuastad, 2003), is not necessarily a threat but cannot be trusted to pursue what is – in the coloniser's view – evidently in their own interest. In contrast the Western colonising/civilising hero must take on the 'burden' of development and help the native (through use of force if necessary) along the path of progress (Brittain, 2007; Said, 1995; Zine, 2007). This narrative was constructed upon racial, cultural and religious foundations, with Said's description of the 'untrustworthy Arab/Muslim' never far from official representations of Eastern otherness. The civilisational, racial and religious aspects of this portrayal were also consistently cloaked by the language of objectivity, reason and universalism in the description of the self. Obama and other White House speakers insisted that the Other shared with the self a common set of rights and a common yearning for certain opportunities. As such, it was only the Other's attachment to pre-Western tribal and sectarian divisions that separated it from the self. Nevertheless, these problematic tribal and sectarian traits were firmly located within the Muslim/Arab Other identity.

These constructed identities formed the unchallenged 'common sense' of America's policies in the Middle East and North Africa under Barack Obama. The Obama White House

framed the Muslim world as simultaneously ‘just like us’, in that Muslims shared the most basic human aspirations, and unreliable, untrustworthy, unserious and childlike in their failure to emulate Western civilisation. This dualistic view manifested itself both in optimistic reactions to social movements in Iran, Tunisia, Libya and Syria, as well as in an obvious impatience after, for example, the peoples of Gaza and Egypt democratically elected the ‘wrong’ leaders in Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.

From the start of Obama’s tenure, the contradictory elements within this discourse were usually spoken at two distinct levels, leading to the formation of two ethically distinct Muslim/Arab identities. The positive, universalist elements of the Muslim identity were embedded at the most basic level, in individual human beings, whilst the negative traits were located in the higher level of elite tyranny and governmental and bureaucratic corruption. This was especially notable during the Arab Spring where the two identities were used to (re)map the cartography of Washington’s relations in the Middle East and North Africa: with longstanding allies now recast as ‘responsive’ to popular uprisings, in contrast with ‘repressive’ and ‘oppressive’ regimes in Syria, Iran and Libya.

In order to establish the base level from which change could be identified, Chapter Five deconstructed the initial discourse on the self, various Muslim/Arab Others and the Middle East as it existed in its earlier form, from 2009, and in particular in application to the two issues that dominated Obama’s early foreign policy agenda in the region: the Arab/Israeli conflict and Iran’s potential pursuit of nuclear weapons. This analysis presented in this chapter exposed a discourse that presented the American self as an enlightened, rational actor, embodying a set of universal values and basic truths that were said to be held in common with ordinary people across the world, who were grouped together under a sympathetic transnational identity. This discourse included the framing of Obama’s election as an historic moment in US and global history, and was consolidated through the articulation of ‘new’ ‘21st century’ transnational threats that required international cooperation. It followed that the ordinary people of the Muslim world, especially in the contexts of Palestine and Iran, were framed as desiring the

same things as Americans, leading to a broadly neoliberal narrative of Muslims desiring negative freedoms from the state. In contrast, oppressive governments, notably that of Iran, and immature, irresponsible or extremist organisations such as Hamas and Hezbollah were presented as being opposed to the interests and the desires of their peoples.

Through the critical, post-colonial perspective developed in Chapter Three, it is possible to see the influence of a latent Orientalism here as, even when the Muslim/Arab Other was spoken of in positive terms, this was done via ‘conceptual proxies’ (Hobson, 2015) that positioned the Other temporally behind the Western self. When this discourse was applied to the Iranian government, or the actions of Hamas, these latter identities were opposed to the rationalism, maturity and values of the self, evoking the traditional colonial image of the ‘wild’ and undemocratic Muslim/Arab (Said, 1995; Tuastad, 2003). Any potential failure of these actors to engage and comply with America and the international community were then usually decontextualized and dehistoricised in the official discourse and instead explained through reference to these caricatured identities. Meanwhile, American policies and actions were framed as ideologically neutral.

From this base, Chapter Six then identified changes in the structure of official discourse using Hansen’s (2006) ‘key moments’ framework as outlined in Chapter Four, and tracing the formation of policy-identity constellations in the context of the Arab Spring. The analysis here found that the simplistic, universalist image of the ordinary Muslim/Arab Other mirrored that which had previously been applied to Palestinians and Iranians, and was presented in the same manner in all of the sites of the 2011 Arab protests. In contrast, the identities of the various governments involved were ethically differentiated from each other. This led to the adaptation of Obama’s grand narrative of progress via the development of a spectrum of progressive to oppressive identities that populated the imagined geography of Middle East and North Africa in the American mind. In the case of Egypt, this meant that a relatively secular, military regime was framed as responsible and responsive to Egyptian demands up until the point where sustained protestor activity made this untenable. This also led to a reductive (re)construction

of Egyptian protestor's demands which emphasised limited reforms relating to mainly negative freedoms, and minimised calls for social justice. This reductiveness was carried through in the broader official narrative of the Arab Spring, which saw a singular, universal protestor identity become entrenched in the discourse. This singular identity was cast as a modernising force, bringing about a generational change in the Muslim/Arab world and narrowing the temporal gap between East and West.

By contrast to the homogeneity seen in official representations of protestors across the region. The Libyan and Syrian regimes were distinguished in the White House discourse through their particular ethical Otherness. In both of these cases, Obama demonstrated a degree of strategic agency in (re)producing and sustaining emotionally affective 'tyrannical' regime identities that soon took on the traditional imagery of the Orientalist barbarian. In the Libyan case, the threat of a potential genocide in Benghazi was articulated in making the case for a Western-led military intervention. At the same time, Obama's language shifted from the more latent Orientalist language used previously to characterise the 'immature' and 'irrational' Iranian regime, towards a use of a more obvious vocabulary of 'barbarism', 'brutality' and 'tyranny' in connection with Gaddafi and Assad. These more manifestly Orientalist discourses of barbarism were then fed into heroic rescue narratives that made possible, legitimate and necessary military interventions – even when such interventions ultimately failed to occur, as in the case of Syria. Such culturally and emotionally evocative narratives had a strategic utility for Obama both in terms of fostering domestic support for potential interventions, and in seeking to achieve discursive resonance by speaking to the 'civilised' identities of the former colonial powers in Europe when building military coalitions, through the securitisation of Western values (Barnett, 1999; Holland, 2013, pp. 52-55).

The Arab Spring was thereby fitted into Obama's grand narrative of progress through the latter's adaptation to include a more manifestly Orientalist distinction between the Western self and barbaric/tyrannical regimes, with the universal protestor identity seeking to narrow the temporal difference between the East and West. The more negative construction of the Other

was then pushed to the most extreme when responding to incidents of terrorism, and especially in framing the debate on ISIL, as was explored in Chapter Seven. After the declaration of a ‘caliphate’ in the Middle East, and the attacks in Europe and America from 2015, Obama’s language shifted further from the kind of latent Orientalism seen in his remarks covered in Chapter Five, and in his characterisation of protestors in Chapter Six, towards a starker opposition of Western civilisation and nihilistic, rampaging barbarism. This corresponds to what Said labels manifest Orientalism (1995, p. 206).

Focussing on the construction of the terrorist Other and corresponding threat, Chapter Seven demonstrated how Obama initially did not challenge or significantly disrupt the structures surrounding the memorialisation of 9/11, and the analysis supported Jarvis & Holland’s (2014) finding that Obama responded to the killing of Osama bin Laden by recommitting America to the war against al Qaida. However, within this frame, Obama also crafted a narrative of diminishing threat that lasted until 2014. According to this narrative, while al Qaida and its affiliates still posed a ‘genuine’ or a ‘credible’ threat at this time, this was no longer of the same magnitude as seen in 9/11 and throughout Bush’s War on Terror. Instead, Obama sought to link the diminished terrorist threat temporally to ‘pre-9/11’ levels. This understanding was severely disrupted by ISIL from the summer of 2014, from which time Obama drastically modified his language. After this time, the construction of a new ISIL terrorist identity took form in the official discourse. This identity drew from the existing image of the terrorist Other, but was influenced more heavily by the discursive and cultural traditions of Orientalism, as it was elevated above the threat posed by al Qaida. In line with this, the ‘barbaric’ ‘nihilistic’, ‘rampaging’ ISIL ‘death cult’ was differentiated from existing images of terrorism in Obama’s discourse. The barbaric image of the Other was reified in contrast to a gendered Orientalist portrayal of the ‘ancient’ Yezidis, and especially Yezidi women and children, and to the image of American hostages, aid-workers and journalists executed by ISIL members. These identity and threat constructions were in turn linked to a military foreign policy of ‘degrading and destroying’ the enemy in Iraq and later Syria. From 2015, as ISIL launched large scale attacks on Western targets, the Orientalist frame used to make sense of

their terrorism again became more obvious in official reactions that used highly emotional language in opposing Western centres of civilisation, culture and the Enlightenment to the barbaric Other.

Simultaneously, a more subtle form of Orientalism can be read in Obama's construction of Muslim/Arab identities both in Iraq and Syria, and more broadly, including in the US. On the ground in the Middle East, Obama (re)created an imagined geography of the area populated by reliable and unreliable actors, the first of which could be trusted in the fight against ISIL, and the second were to be treated with more caution. The local Iraqi and Syrian Muslim/Arab constructed identities were linked to pre-Western tendencies towards tribalism and sectarianism. As such, certain groups such as the Iraqi military, Kurdish forces, and the Syrian 'moderate opposition' were trusted due to their apparently more secular and therefore Westernised identities. Meanwhile, more visibly non-Western and especially Sunni groups in Iraq were categorised as potentially risky, requiring reassurances that ISIL were not the only 'game in town'. More broadly, after 2014 Obama was more active in rhetorically locating the problems of terrorism and extremism within Muslim communities, and thereby according even to the 'good' or 'ordinary' Muslim identity a potentially risky status.

It is important to recognise that the portrayals of ISIL and 'unreliable' Muslims – whether in the context of the struggle against terrorism, the Middle East Peace Process, the Iran deal or the Arab Spring – were drawn from the same archive of Orientalism. While Obama, like Bush before him, sought to separate the War on Terror from America's relationship with Muslim populations across the world, this attempt ultimately failed due to its foundations in an Orientalist common sense. Authors such as Douglas Little (2009), Meghana Nayak (2007) and Dag Tuastad (2003) have previously made convincing arguments that the Bush administration's War on Terror frequently evidenced an underlying neo-Orientalist world view, with Tuastad demonstrating how this was informed by thinkers such as Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, Nayak using a gendered lens to deconstruct the symbolic violence of 9/11 and the subsequent reassertion of the heroically masculine American identity through the

War on Terror, and Little exploring the more cultural roots of American Orientalism. More recently authors including Noah Bassil (2019), Shampa Biswas (2018), Marina Espinoza (2018) and Layla Saleh (2016) have similarly demonstrated colonialist logics at play in elements of Obama's foreign policy. Bassil, who mostly analyses media texts concerning ISIL, argues that manifest and latent Orientalist discourses are present across these, with even 'critical' and 'left wing' authors regularly constructing the Muslim/Arab worlds as ontologically different. This leads him to suggest Obama's 'failure' to "disconnect ISIS from Islam", stemmed from the pervasiveness of Orientalist modes of thought (2019, p. 87) – a suggestion which the analysis in this thesis supports, with the reservation that the president also showed a strong degree of agency in using clear Orientalist imagery to make sense of and dehumanise ISIL. Biswas (2018) also identifies Orientalist and civilisational narratives in Western media and official discourses on the Iran negotiations between 2013 and 2014 – pointing to the systematic dehistoricisation of US-Iranian relations and Obama's constructed role as the spokesperson for the (civilised) international community. Similarly, Espinoza (2018) points to the rational, scientific and sanitised language of modernity used by the Obama administration to defend the drone programme, and contrasts this with the racialised and Orientalist discourses she finds in the testimonies of drone operators. This thesis recognises the language of modernity and rationalism highlighted by Espinoza and has traced it through Obama's wider foreign policy, demonstrating how it functions to separate rational/ethical America and its mature, reliable, and above all serious partners from immature, unreliable and selfish Muslim/Arab regimes and leaders. Finally, Layla Saleh (2016) unpacks the gendered official and congressional US narratives on women "in need of empowerment" in the Arab Spring that formed a logical and moral basis for potential empowering 'rescue' interventions by Western forces.

This thesis contributes to and draws together this literature by presenting a rigorous analysis of the official White House discourse on the Middle East and the Muslim World, and the construction of identities and threat within this, across the eight years of Obama's presidency, separated by the key moments of the Arab Spring and the rise of ISIL. It argues

that across Obama's record in the Middle East, whether in the context of the Peace Process, the Iran Deal, the Arab Spring or the military campaign against ISIL, he did not convincingly separate his foreign policy from Orientalist structures of power and knowledge. Furthermore, Obama's language is shown to have shifted towards a more marked or manifest version of Orientalism, first after the key moment of the Arab Spring, and then again, and further, in reaction to ISIL.

The effects of this discourse can be seen in both the legitimization of foreign policy, and in domestic politics. Creating a geography of the Muslim World that was populated by barbarians, (un)reliable partners, and innocent 'ordinary people' in need of rescue, established a common sense whereby Washington could pick and choose the areas in which it wished to intervene, and those in which it would rather turn a blind eye to violence meted out by allied regimes. Within this discursively constructed cartography, zones of visibility and invisibility served to draw attention to certain atrocities, whilst drawing a shroud over the abuses suffered by civilians elsewhere (Gregory, 2003). This can be seen most obviously in ISIL's 2014 Northern Offensive into Yezidi territory in Sinjar. Here, Obama took every opportunity to vocalise the visceral nature of the violence inflicted on Yezidi women and children, curating a discursive environment in which voicing opposition to military intervention was akin to supporting their continued suffering. This is an example of rhetorical coercion as described by Holland (2013b), Krebs & Lobasz (2007) and Mattern (2005). Simultaneously, casualties from American air and drone strikes frequently went unrecorded, with official body counts remaining unfeasibly low throughout Obama's presidency (McCracken, 2014; Airwars, 2019).

At another level, Obama's failure to fully separate the Muslim identity from that of the barbarian contributed to the further (re)production of Muslim suspect or risky communities (Breen-Smyth, 2014; Heath-Kelly, 2012; 2013; Hickman & al., 2012; Rygiel, 2007). Despite the efforts of Obama and his predecessor to make clear there was "no war with Islam", and that "Muslim citizens are just as American as the rest of us," Obama was increasingly willing, especially post-2014, to locate problems of extremism within Muslim communities, whether

in the domestic or international context. Similarly, there was little attempt to contextualise, historicise and/or politicise ‘extremist’ sentiment. Instead, Obama deployed the narrative of East to West progress, and made use of ‘immature’, ‘irresponsible’ and ‘unreliable’ markers to chastise Muslims when they failed to make acceptable choices – a rhetorical move which offered strategic benefits in laying the responsibility for lack of progress on the Other. It is important to note that Obama’s problematisation of the Muslim population spoke to its capacity for rational decision-making – or rather to its (un)willingness to commit to long-term progress over ‘easy’, short-term gains. The favoured refrain that people needed to ‘get serious’ rested on an Orientalist image of childlike, impulsive people, learning from the mature and rational West. This became especially pronounced (and dangerous) in the reaction to ISIL terrorism from 2014, when, as after 9/11, Muslims were once again asked to actively demonstrate their commitment to a set of liberal American values, and refrain from their impulses towards tribalism and sectarianism.

Alongside tracing the development of US foreign policy discourse, a central interest of this thesis has been in the capacity of elite actors to manipulate discursive structures to their political advantage. Evidencing agency and intentionality presents a challenge to discourse analysis methodologies, which has been addressed through the use of an ontological framework that draws upon Hay’s (2002) strategic-relational model and a discursive understanding of strategic agency that is influenced by Laclau & Mouffe (1985) and Howarth (2013), as well as the use of analytical concepts including political possibility (Doty, 1993; Holland, 2013b), rhetorical coercion (Krebs & Lobasz, 2007; Mattern, 2005) and strategic narratives (Arsenault & al., 2018; Miskimmon & al. 2018). This thesis has further made use of Hansen’s (2006) methodological framework to trace the shifts in language and policy-identity constellations used and (re)produced by White House actors through two key events - the Arab Spring and the rise of ISIS – and linked them to strategic foreign policy decision-making, through the conceptual frameworks of political (im)possibility and war of position.

It is clear that despite being an extremely powerful elite actor, Obama was simultaneously constrained by the structures of US foreign policy highlighted in Chapters One and Two, and influenced by the power of colonialist mythology unpacked in Chapter Three. However, the president still retains agency in setting the tone of official discourse when it comes to international politics (Krebs, 2015). The data presented here shows that Obama's initial framings of Middle Eastern politics adhered, broadly speaking to the established structures of American diplomacy. This can be seen in Chapter Five, in the cases of the Middle East Peace Process and primary negotiations towards the Iran nuclear deal – however, even here his language drew from the traditions of civilisation and progress. Furthermore, Chapter Seven pointed to strong evidence of strategic agency in the context the war in Afghanistan, as the discursive erosion of the border with Pakistan, through the deployment of Orientalist tropes of tribalism and lawlessness, made possible and 'sensible' US military operations which expanded into Pakistani territory in order to deny a 'safe haven' for al Qaida. As the Arab Spring developed, Obama showed himself more eager to engage in a more obvious the vocabulary of colonialism: crafting a narrative in which the West had no moral choice but to intervene to liberate helpless victims from cruel barbarian regimes. Chapter Seven then showed how after ISIL, the president (re)committed himself to a civilisational discourse not only by portraying terrorists as barbarians but crucially by (re)producing Europe as the spiritual home of progress, civilisation and culture. It was in 2015, when Europe and America became the targets of ISIL, that Obama most obviously relaxed his previous commitment to differentiating between Islam and its adherents and the ideology of terrorism, in making claims on the responsibility of Muslims and Muslim communities to denounce and confront extremist narratives.

Since Donald Trump won the race to become Obama's successor, much has been written on the differences between the two presidents. Trump has frequently pushed the bounds of the acceptable since assuming the presidency, and certain observers have even highlighted his eagerness to reverse Obama's legacy as a potential constant in an otherwise erratic doctrine (Eilperin & Cameron, 2017; Smith, 2018). However, there are still observable elements of

continuity between Trump and Obama's language on foreign policy, and even on America's relations with Islam. Trump's adoption of racist policies such as the Muslim Travel Ban appear to be built on the same 'common sense' of Eastern backwardness, and Muslim riskiness as Obama's speech on the responsibility of the Muslim community to confront and oppose Islamic fundamentalism. Similarly, Trump's hugely controversial statement that "Islam hates us", and that there is "something going on there [responsible for] a tremendous hatred", might be read as contributing to and drawing from the same common sense (re)produced by Obama's claim of a "new generation" of progressive Muslims grappling with outdated authoritarian and fundamentalist governments and institutions. In Obama's view young progressives were leading the 'Muslim World' into a new era. In Trump's version, the trajectory of 'Islam' is less obvious. Both however (re)create a narrative in which the problems of terrorism, and barbarity were firmly located within the Muslim community. An important avenue for future research lies in tracing the continuity and change in Trump and Obama's language on the Muslim World. Furthermore, the research presented here has been limited to official texts originating in the White House, on the basis that US foreign policy is overwhelmingly a top-down phenomenon led by the president, and that this focus allows for a detailed analysis of elite agency. Nonetheless, this elite discourse constantly interacts with and responds to media, cultural and popular discourses. There is scope here then for research investigating the extent to which the constructions and constellations of identity and threat revealed in this research have been replicated and/or have drawn from these different spheres.

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Appendix

1. List of nodes and associated texts from Chapter Five¹

Nodes	Associated texts
American self\Commitment to democracy	0001; 0111; 0219; 1249; 3590; 3598; 3614; 3615
American self\Exceptionalism	0041; 0050; 0068; 0094; 0102; 0117; 0134; 0263; 0397
American self\Exceptionalism\Exemplarism	0134; 0263; 0476; 1017; 1983; 4448
American self\Exceptionalism\America is exceptional but not perfect	0102; 0134; 0153; 0198; 0255; 0374; 0476; 1608; 3506
American self\Reset, new start	0001; 0046; 0219; 0263; 3506; 3513; 4507
Global security	0001; 0107; 0306; 0373; 0374; 0375; 0461; 0486; 0598
Global security\21 st century threats	0063; 0087; 0101; 0105; 0121; 0137; 0152; 0154; 0198
Global security\American leadership\Diplomacy backed by force	0486; 2137; 2358; 2506; 2558; 3006; 3009; 3506; 3513
Global security\American leadership\Engagement and listening	0001; 0134; 0374; 0461; 3506; 3527; 3675; 4507
Global security\American leadership\Exceptionalism not declinism	1480; 1672; 2506; 2594; 3060; 3157; 3300; 3357
Global security\American leadership\Frustration with expectations and perceptions of US	0486; 2255; 2467
Global security\American leadership\Frustration with exceptions and perceptions of US\Critics are hypocritical	0101; 2217; 2230; 2255; 2467; 2469; 2631; 3742
Global security\American leadership\Realism, idealism balance	0001; 0032; 0063; 0486; 0272; 2255; 2506; 3589; 3612
Global security\American leadership\Right to unilateral action	2506; 2529; 2601; 2776; 2969; 2985; 3056; 3300; 3329
Global security\Basic truths	0167; 0219; 0374; 0395; 0804; 0827; 1983; 2161; 3056
Global security\Basic truths\Basic truths are foundations of peace	0486; 1309; 1983; 3056
Global security\Basic truths\Universal desire for freedom and opportunity	0117; 0715; 2637; 2729; 3277; 3872

¹ The texts included in this and the following two tables are intended as representative samples of the speeches and official communications that were coded at each node during the research process. These samples are not exhaustive or indicative of the quantity of texts coded at each node.

Global security\Diplomacy and deals are the route to peace	2065; 2161; 2338; 2853; 2855; 3009; 3241; 3257; 3329
Global Security\Human rights	0397; 0486; 2161
Global security\Multilateral defence based on shared values	0032; 0101; 0486; 1309; 2161; 2230; 2255; 3300; 3506
Global security\Multilateralism based on shared interests	0101; 0187; 0219; 0220; 0374; 0486; 3527
Global security\Shared history	0100; 0107; 0117; 0439; 0486; 3678
Hamiltonianism	0032; 0101; 0117; 0165; 0187; 0219; 3947; 3872
International cooperation\Shared sacrifices	0046; 0101; 0104; 0360; 0385; 0439; 3611; 3612; 3613
Iran\Burden is on Iran to take on responsible role	0021; 0079; 0112; 0379; 0384; 0440; 2538; 3594; 3947
Iran\Delegitimising itself	0230; 0247; 0255; 0864; 4173
Iran\Diplomacy has brought deal, irresponsible to walk away	2506; 2853; 2853; 2855; 2872; 2976; 2981; 2985; 3005
Iran\Diplomacy has brought deal...\Best available option	2329; 2853; 2855; 2860; 2872; 2882; 3009
Iran\Diplomacy has brought deal...\Hard work	0079; 0138; 0741; 2255; 2259; 2261; 2329; 2338; 3560
Iran\Diplomacy has brought deal...\Proof sanctions work	2287; 2855; 2892; 3050; 3051; 3239; 3362; 4503
Iran\Diplomacy has brought deal...\US leadership	0165; 0219; 2985; 3009; 3015; 3153; 4503
Iran\Diplomatic solution	0187; 0377; 0440; 2038; 2041; 2259; 2506; 2640; 4173
Iran\Diplomatic solution\Deal through principled diplomacy	2853; 2855; 2853; 2872; 3009; 3005; 3034; 3056; 3241
Iran\Diplomatic solution\Rationality	0187; 0219; 1933; 2261; 2329; 2327; 3009; 3362; 3594
Iran\Iran and North Korea	0266; 0274; 0277; 0455; 0456; 0467; 0472; 0663; 0864
Iran\Iran is a threat to Israel	0189; 0223; 2038; 2041; 2042; 2853; 3009; 3594; 4273
Iran\Iran is a nuclear threat	0112; 0365; 0372; 0376; 0378; 2038; 2041; 3594; 3947
Iran\Iran is destabilising the region	0187; 0223; 2041; 2042; 2985; 3009; 3028; 3056; 3241
Iran\Iran will never obtain nuclear weapons	2329; 2747; 2904; 2925; 3102; 4355; 4377; 4417; 4536
Iran\Iranians deserve universal rights	0079; 0112; 0138; 0247; 1162; 1563; 1893; 2976; 4173
Iran\Leadership opposed to people	0079; 0230; 0232; 2042; 0247; 0864; 3009; 3647; 4173
Iran\Military options	1403; 1438; 1480; 2038; 2041; 2261; 2329; 2338; 4417
Iran\Mistrust	0187; 0223; 0378; 0384; 2976; 2981; 3034; 3241; 3947
Iran\Multilateral approach to isolating and putting pressure on Iran	0223; 0365; 0377; 0378; 0379; 0384; 2855; 3009; 3041

Iran\Regime denying Iran's potential as great civilisation	0079; 0112; 0187; 0598; 0864; 1563; 2041; 2042; 2259
Iran\Republicans siding with Iranian hardliners	2825; 2829; 2872; 3009
Iran\Rights and responsibilities	0112; 0277; 0377; 0440; 0456; 0716; 0863; 0864; 3506
Iran\Rouhani offers opportunity for deal	2168; 2255; 2259; 2287; 2329
Iran\Supports terrorism	0165; 0187; 0440; 0741; 0864; 2853; 3009; 3056; 3594
Iran\US is on the side of Iranian people	0230; 0232; 0247; 0255; 0598; 2042; 2853; 2976; 4173
Iran\US supports universal principles	0230; 0232; 0239; 0242; 0247; 0255; 2041; 0247; 0255
Iran\US wants to dialogue	0021; 0079; 0112; 0165; 0187; 0219; 0377; 0440; 3506
Iran\Wrong side of history	0247; 0598; 0741; 0864; 1563; 4736
Israel\Children	0117; 0219; 0369; 2037; 2038; 2039; 2252; 3560; 4499
Israel\Friendship	3560; 3594; 3647; 3648; 3653; 4087; 4184; 4270; 4273
Israel\Historic right to Jewish homeland	0440; 1168; 1541; 2039; 2041; 2043; 3560; 3653; 4087
Israel\International attempt to isolate and delegitimise Israel	3594; 3647; 3653; 3947; 3954; 4087; 4273; 4404; 4536
Israel\Israel as democracy	0187; 1157; 1541; 2039; 3653; 3594; 3954; 4273; 4336
Israel\Israel as key US ally	0187; 1541; 1543; 2230; 2039; 2041; 2252; 3648; 4336
Israel\Israel as key US ally\Post-Holocaust responsibility	0221; 0440; 2039; 2041; 2043; 3560; 4355; 4536
Israel\Israel as key US ally\Unbreakable bond	1480; 1542; 1707; 2039; 2041; 3560; 4087; 4499
Israel\Israel as key US ally\Unbreakable bond\Biden family story	3560; 3594; 3954; 4087; 4377; 4536
Israel\Israel as key US ally\US commitment to Israel's security	0187; 0230; 1306; 1309; 2038; 2041; 2853; 3009; 3560
Israel\Israeli security as unique case	0440; 2038; 2041; 2042; 3102; 3560; 3653; 4184; 4536
Israel\Need to combat antisemitism	2041; 2043; 3653; 4355; 4377; 4404; 4417; 4536
Israel\Need to combat antisemitism\Denial of Israeli state is antisemitic	1619; 3165; 3653; 4404; 4536
Israel\Jewish state	0187; 2038; 2040; 2261; 3594; 4273; 4355; 4377; 4536
Israel\Real threat to Israeli people	0440; 1938; 2037; 2038; 2041; 3653; 4273; 4336; 4536
Israel\Right to defend itself	1162; 1542; 1707; 2252; 2577; 2594; 2566; 2653; 4377
Israel\Shared interests	0187; 3560; 3648; 3652; 3653; 3726; 4377; 4336; 4536
Israel\Tough neighbourhood	1543; 2653; 3560; 3594; 3954; 3653; 4377
Israel\US stands alone in support of Israel	1542; 3653; 3594; 3947; 4273; 2925; 4404; 4536
Jacksonianism	1283; 1284; 1672; 1985; 2000; 3947
Jeffersonian mission to build democracy at home	0001; 0063; 0117; 0198; 3153; 3157; 3300

MEPP\1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps	0117; 0220; 1162; 1163; 1168; 2143; 2252
MEPP\Grow up	0138; 0220; 0369; 1543; 2040; 2261; 2594; 3653
MEPP\ Hamas as obstacle to peace	0208; 0715; 0826; 1162; 2040; 2041; 2577; 2594; 3506
MEPP\ Hamas as terrorist organisation	2577; 2599; 4336;
MEPP\Hard work and seriousness	0187; 0219; 0369; 0715; 0826; 0827; 1309; 2038; 2042
MEPP\Hard work and seriousness\George Mitchell	0117; 0138; 0826;
MEPP\Historic moment and opportunity	0165; 0187; 0826; 0827; 0863; 2041; 2255; 3647; 3652
MEPP\Missiles flying out of Gaza	1309; 2594; 2037; 2038; 2041; 2042; 2640; 4273; 4536
MEPP\Missiles flying out of Gaza\No nation would tolerate this	1445; 2569; 2572; 2599;
MEPP\Serious talks	0165; 0187; 0369; 0220; 0223; 2040; 2261; 3652
MEPP\Settlements	0220; 2040; 2040; 3652; 3648; 4273; 4536
MEPP\Status quo is unsustainable	0329; 0715; 1162; 1861; 2322; 2640; 3502
MEPP\Two state solution\Security and territory	0187; 0219; 0220; 0230; 0255; 0374; 0398; 2038; 3594
MEPP\Two state solution urgently needed	0117; 0187; 2077; 2038; 2040; 2041; 2255; 2640; 3506
MEPP\Two state solution urgently needed\Only possible and or fair solution	2038; 2040; 2255; 2261; 2329; 3652; 3506; 4273
Middle East regional (in)stability\Realism	0032; 0063; 0102; 3574; 3575; 3590; 3615;
Muslim world\Listening, engagement	0112; 0117; 0138; 0334; 0340; 0408;
Palestinian identity\Aspirations	0117; 0187; 0208; 0219; 0374; 0715; 1309; 2038; 2040
Palestinian identity\Children	0117; 0219; 0369; 2039; 2252; 2329; 2653; 4499
Palestinian identity\Entrepreneurialism	0747; 1162; 1309; 2255; 2413; 3653
Palestinian identity\Indignities	0219; 2040; 2042; 2255; 2358; 4173; 4273
Palestinian identity\Two Palestines	0219; 2040; 2041; 2252; 2566; 2569; 3652; 3653
Palestinian statehood	0165; 1162; 1309; 2081; 2038; 2040; 2252; 2255; 4273
Progress	0001; 0041; 0138; 0219; 0486; 3300
Progress\Build vs destroy	0112; 0370; 0374; 2037; 2040; 2566
Progress\Enlightenment, reason	0111; 0112; 0219; 0461; 2168; 3300
Progress\New era (of engagement)	0041; 0046; 0079; 0101; 0111; 0112; 0117; 0134; 0138
Progress\Obama presidency as historic moment, opportunity	0001; 0041; 0101; 0107; 0117; 0219; 0242; 0374; 0384; 1441; 3560; 3563; 3569; 3972.
Progress\Technology and peace	0219; 0395; 1563; 2037; 2040; 3057; 3653
Universalism	0001; 0167; 0219; 0239; 0486; 2230; 2255; 2506; 3506
Universalism\Aspiration and opportunity	0219; 0239; 0395; 0486; 1309; 2161; 3056; 3198; 3300
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Arab Spring\Arab Spring as historic change	1022; 1162; 1168; 1179; 309; 1480; 1543; 1983; 2217
Arab Spring\Arab Spring as historic change\New chapter	1022; 1028; 1080; 1191; 1341
Arab Spring\Bouazizi martyr narrative	1162; 1309; 1341; 1861; 3966
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Arab Spring\Egypt\Aspirations	1020; 1034; 1176; 2261; 4572; 4574; 4581;
Arab Spring\Egypt\Aspirations\economic reforms	1029; 1095; 1162; 1176;
Arab Spring\Egypt\Basic truths	1022; 1029; 2261; 4572; 4580; 4581
Arab Spring\Egypt\Egypt's people will determine Egypt's future	1020; 1022; 1030; 4580; 4581;
Arab Spring\Egypt\Egypt's people will determine Egypt's future\A great civilisation	0187; 1020; 1022; 1029; 2217; 3056; 3647;
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Arab Spring\Egypt\Non-violence a priority	1020; 1029; 1061; 1309; 1861; 4572;
Arab Spring\Egypt\Opportunity for the government to demonstrate responsiveness	1020; 1030; 4572; 4573;
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Arab Spring\Egypt\US backs Mubarak government and reforms	1020; 1022; 4572
Arab Spring\Egypt\US is on the side of democracy	1022; 1028; 2077; 4581
Arab Spring\Egypt\US supports an orderly transition (responsive to aspirations)	1022; 1028; 1034; 4574; 4575; 4577
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Arab Spring\Extraordinary changes	1061; 1156; 1162; 1309; 1471; 1861
Arab Spring\Legitimate aspirations and grievances	1025; 1081; 1162; 1168
Arab Spring\Libya\Brutal regime	1074; 1080; 1084; 1086; 1088; 1364; 1480
Arab Spring\Libya\Egypt, Tunisia and Libya	1044; 1088; 1156; 1162
Arab Spring\Libya\Gaddafi must go	1064; 1074; 2255; 4584; 4591

Arab Spring\Libya\Gaddafi must go\Gaddafi has made his intentions clear\Rats	1084; 1088; 1162; 1309; 1619
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Arab Spring\Libya\Inaction would send a clear message to tyrants	1091; 1162; 1893; 4591
Arab Spring\Libya\Intervention saved lives	1084; 1086; 1302; 4173
Arab Spring\Libya\Libya liberated	1302; 1309; 1461; 1480; 1893
Arab Spring\Libya\Libya liberated\Credit to Libyan people	1302; 1309; 1364;
Arab Spring\Libya\Libya liberated\Historic moment	1088; 1302; 1309; 1364;
Arab Spring\Libya\Libya liberated\New era of promise and freedom	1080; 1302; 1309; 1364;
Arab Spring\Libya\Libya liberated\Thanks to international community	1086; 1302; 1304; 1305; 1309; 1364;
Arab Spring\Libya\Libya liberated\Thanks to US leadership	1302; 1364; 1367; 1456; 1777
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Arab Spring\Libya\Multilateral response\US leadership	1088; 1302; 1364; 1456;
Arab Spring\Libya\Multilateral response\US leadership\But not US burden alone	1081; 1084; 1086; 1302;
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Arab Spring\Libya\Responsibility to Protect	1081; 1086; 1088; 4591;
Arab Spring\Libya\Unacceptable violence against civilians	1044; 1074; 1084; 1086; 1302; 4591;
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Arab Spring\Opportunity for free trade	3872; 4273;
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Arab Spring\Protests as expression of basic truths, aspirations	1020; 1080; 1162; 1302; 1309; 1983; 2042; 2217
Arab Spring\Protests as expression of basic truths, aspiration\Dignity	1162; 1302; 1309; 2217
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0093	2009.03.27	Remarks by the President at the Installation of Attorney General Eric Holder
0100	2009.04.01	Joint Press Availability With President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Gordon Brown
0101	2009.04.03	Remarks by President Obama at Strasbourg Town Hall
0103	2009.04.04	Remarks By President Obama And Prime Minister Karmanlis Of Greece After Meeting
0104	2009.04.04	Remarks By President Obama At Meeting Of North Atlantic Council
0105	2009.04.04	Weekly Address_ President Obama Hails Unprecedented G-20 Action to Address Global Economic Downturn
0107	2009.04.05	Remarks By President Barack Obama In Prague As Delivered
0111	2009.04.06	Joint Press Availability With President Obama And President Gul Of Turkey
0113	2009.04.06	Remarks by The President and PM of Turkey After Meeting
0114	2009.04.07	Remarks by President Obama and PM Maliki to the press, 4-7-09
0115	2009.04.07	Remarks by the President after Meeting with General Odierno, Iraq, 4-7-09
0116	2009.04.07	Remarks by the President to the troops, Iraq
0119	2009.04.09	Remarks by the President on Improving Veterans' Health Care
0127	2009.04.16	Joint Press Conference With President Barack Obama And President Felipe Calderon Of Mexico
0128	2009.04.16	Remarks by President Barack Obama at Welcoming Ceremony in Mexico
0129	2009.04.16	Remarks By President Obama At Dinner With President Calderon
0134	2009.04.19	Press Conference By The President In Trinidad And Tobago
0137	2009.04.20	Remarks by the President to CIA employees at CIA Headquarters
0138	2009.04.21	Remarks by President Obama and King Abdullah of Jordan in joint press availability
0140	2009.04.21	Remarks by the President at Signing of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act
0143	2009.04.23	Remarks by the President at Naturalization Ceremony for Active-Duty Service Members
0152	2009.04.28	Remarks by the President before meeting with senior FBI officials
0153	2009.04.28	Remarks by the President to FBI employees
0154	2009.04.29	Remarks by the President at Arnold, Missouri Town Hall
0157	2009.04.30	News Conference by the President
0159	2009.04.30	Remarks by the President at Kick-off for Wounded Warrior Soldier Ride
0165	2009.05.04	Remarks by the President at Cinco de Mayo Event
0168	2009.05.06	Remarks by the President at the close of the trilateral meeting with President Karzai and President Zardari
0169	2009.05.07	Remarks by President Obama and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov after Meeting
0174	2009.05.10	Remarks by the President at White House Correspondents Association Dinner

0182	2009.05.14.	Remarks By The President At Arizona State University Commencement
0184	2009.05.14.	Remarks by the Vice President to USS Ronald Regan Sailors and their families
0188	2009.05.17.	Remarks by the President at Notre Dame Commencement
0189	2009.05.18.	Remarks by President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in press availability
0192	2009.05.19.	Remarks by the President after meeting with Shultz, Kissinger, Nunn and Perry to discuss Key Priorities in U.S. Non-Proliferation Policy
0194	2009.05.19.	Remarks by the President on national fuel efficiency standards
0202	2009.05.23.	EMBARGOED_ WEEKLY ADDRESS_ President Obama Calls on All Americans to Honor the Service of the Troops and Their Families
0207	2009.05.27.	Remarks by the President at Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, Nevada
0210	2009.05.29.	Remarks by the President at a DNC fundraiser
0211	2009.05.29.	Remarks by the President on Securing Our Nation's Cyber Infrastructure
0215	2009.06.02.	Remarks by the President in Nomination of John McHugh as Secretary of the Army
0223	2009.06.06.	Remarks by President Obama and President Sarkozy of France, June 6, 2009
0227	2009.06.11.	Remarks by the President in Town Hall Meeting on Health Care in Green Bay, Wisconsin
0231	2009.06.15.	Remarks by the President to the Annual Conference of the American Medical Association
0232	2009.06.16.	Remarks by President Obama and President Lee of the Republic of Korea in Joint Press Availability
0236	2009.06.18.	Remarks by the Vice President to the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee
0238	2009.06.19.	Remarks by the President at Fatherhood Town Hall
0239	2009.06.19.	Remarks by the President at the Esperanza National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast
0247	2009.06.23.	Press Conference by the President, 6-23-09
0248	2009.06.23.	Remarks by President Obama and President Bachelet of Chile after meeting
0260	2009.06.30.	Remarks by The President on Community Solutions Agenda, 6-30-09
0261	2009.07.01.	Remarks of the President in an Online Town Hall on Health Care Reform
0264	2009.07.04.	Remarks by the President at Independence Day Celebration
0267	2009.07.07.	Remarks By President Obama And President Medvedev Of Russia Before Meeting
0270	2009.07.07.	Remarks By The President At Parallel Business Summit
0274	2009.07.08.	Remarks By President Obama And President Napolitano Of Italy After Bilateral Meeting
0278	2009.07.11.	Remarks By President Obama And President Mills Of Ghana After Bilateral Meeting
0282	2009.07.11.	Remarks by the President to the Ghanaian Parliament
0283	2009.07.11.	Weekly Address_ President Obama Praises Recovery Act Progress
0287	2009.07.14.	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Balkenende of the Netherlands after meeting
0288	2009.07.14.	Remarks by the President on the American Graduation Initiative in Warren, MI
0298	2009.07.22.	Remarks of President Obama and Prime Minister Maliki of Iraq in Joint Press Availability
0303	2009.07.24.	Remarks by the President on Rights of Persons with Disabilities Proclamation Signing
0306	2009.07.27.	Remarks by the President at the U.S. China Strategic and Economic Dialogue
0310	2009.07.29.	Remarks by the President at Town Hall in Raleigh, North Carolina
0311	2009.07.31.	Remarks by President Obama and President Arroyo of the Philippines in Joint Press Availability, 7-30-09
0313	2009.08.03.	Remarks by the President on the Post 9-11 Gi Bill at George Mason University
0314	2009.08.03.	Remarks of President Obama and His Highness Sheikh Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait
0326	2009.08.15.	Remarks By The President In Town Hall On Health Care Grand Junction Colorado
0330	2009.08.19.	Remarks by the President honoring 2008 NASCAR Sprint Cup Champion Jimmie Johnson
0331	2009.08.20.	Radio Interview of the President by Michael Smerconish
0332	2009.08.20.	Remarks by the President at the Organizing for America National Health Care Forum
0334	2009.08.21.	Remarks of President Barack Obama in Ramadan Message
0339	2009.08.29.	Weekly Address_ President Obama Marks Fourth Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina_ Will Visit New Orleans Later This Year
0340	2009.09.01.	Remarks by the President at Iftar Dinner
0342	2009.09.01.	Remarks by the Vice President on the 200 days of the American recovery and reinvestment act
0346	2009.09.08.	Remarks by the President in Discussion with 9th Graders-Wakefield High School
0348	2009.09.09.	Remarks by the President to a Joint Session of Congress on Health Care
0350	2009.09.10.	Remarks by the President on Health Insurance Reform
0351	2009.09.11.	Remarks by the President at Wreath-Laying Ceremony at the Pentagon Memorial
0352	2009.09.12.	Remarks by the President at Rally on Health Insurance Reform
0355	2009.09.15.	Remarks by the President at fundraising event for Senator Arlen Specter in Philadelphia
0357	2009.09.15.	Remarks by the President at the AFL-CIO convention in Pittsburgh
0360	2009.09.16.	Remarks by President Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Harper During Joint Press Availability
0362	2009.09.17.	Remarks by the President at Presentation of the Medal of Honor to Sergeant First Class Jared C. Monti
0363	2009.09.17.	Remarks by the President at Rally on Health Insurance Reform in College Park, MD

0365	2009.09.17.	Remarks by the President on Strengthening Missile Defense in Europe
0367	2009.09.21.	Remarks by the President on Innovation and Sustainable Growth at Hudson Valley Community College
0368	2009.09.22.	Remarks by President Obama and President Hu Jintao of China before meeting
0369	2009.09.22.	Remarks by The President at Beginning Of Trilateral Meeting With Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Abbas
0370	2009.09.22.	Remarks by the President at the Clinton global initiative
0372	2009.09.23.	Remarks by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia after bilateral meeting
0373	2009.09.23.	Remarks By President Obama And Prime Minister Hatoyama of Japan After Bilateral Meeting
0376	2009.09.24.	Remarks By The President At the UN Security Council Summit On Nuclear Non Proliferation And Nuclear Disarmament
0377	2009.09.25.	Remarks by the President at G20 Closing Press Conference
0378	2009.09.25.	Statements By President Obama French President Sarkozy And British Prime Minister Brown On Iranian Nuclear Facility
0379	2009.09.26.	Weekly Address_ President Affirms Commitment to International Cooperation in Strengthening Economy and Stopping Nuclear Proliferation
0381	2009.09.29.	Remarks by President Obama and NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen after Meeting
0384	2009.10.01.	Remarks by the President on the meeting of the P5 plus 1 regarding Iran
0385	2009.10.02.	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Rasmussen of Denmark before meeting
0395	2009.10.09.	Remarks by the President on Winning the Nobel Peace Prize
0397	2009.10.11.	Remarks by the President at Human Rights Campaign Dinner
0401	2009.10.14.	Remarks by the President at AAPI Initiative Executive Order Signing and Diwali Event
0407	2009.10.16.	Remarks By The President At DNC Fundraising Dinner
0408	2009.10.16.	Remarks by the President at DNC Fundraising Reception
0413	2009.10.20.	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Maliki of Iraq After Meeting
0417	2009.10.21.	Remarks by the President at DNC Fundraiser at the Hammerstein Ballroom
0418	2009.10.21.	Remarks by the President at DNC Fundraiser Dinner at the Mandarin Oriental
0420	2009.10.22.	Remarks by the President at signing of the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act
0422	2009.10.23.	Remarks by the President Challenging Americans to Lead the Global Economy in Clean Energy
0425	2009.10.27.	Remarks by the President at DSCC DCCC Fundraising Dinner
0426	2009.10.27.	Remarks by the President at DSCC DCCC Reception
0433	2009.10.29.	Remarks by President Obama and Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore before Meeting
0437	2009.11.02.	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Reinfeldt of Sweden after meeting
0439	2009.11.03.	Remarks by President Obama and Chancellor Merkel of Germany before Meeting
0440	2009.11.03.	Remarks by President Obama, Swedish Prime Minister Reinfeldt, European Commission President Barroso, and European Council High Representative Solana after meeting
0444	2009.11.05.	Remarks by President Obama and President Ian Khama of Botswana after Meeting
0450	2009.11.07.	Weekly Address_ President Obama Extends Condolences to the Fort Hood Community
0451	2009.11.10.	Remarks by the President at Memorial Service at Fort Hood
0452	2009.11.11.	Remarks by the President on Veterans Day at Arlington National Cemetery
0454	2009.11.12.	Remarks by the President to Service Members, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, Alaska
0455	2009.11.13.	Remarks by President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan in Joint Press Conference
0456	2009.11.14.	Remarks by President Barack Obama at Suntory Hall
0458	2009.11.15.	Remarks by President Barack Obama and Party Secretary Yu Zhengsheng before bilateral meeting
0459	2009.11.15.	Remarks by President Obama and President Yudhoyono of Indonesia after Bilateral Meeting
0462	2009.11.17.	Remarks by President Obama and President Hu of China Before Expanded Bilateral Meeting
0463	2009.11.18.	Remarks by the President in a Bilateral Meeting with Premier Wen Jiabao of China
0464	2009.11.19.	Remarks by President Barack Obama and President Lee Myung-Bak of Republic of Korea in Joint Press Conference
0465	2009.11.20.	Remarks by President Obama and President Lee of the Republic of Korea before Bilateral Meeting
0466	2009.11.20.	Remarks by the President to the Troops at Osan Air Base, Osan, Republic of Korea
0467	2009.11.21.	Weekly Address_ President Obama's Overseas Trip Focused on Better Relations with Asia and Creating Jobs at Home
0477	2009.12.03.	Remarks by the President and Q_A at the Closing Session of the Forum on Jobs and Economic Growth
0480	2009.12.04.	Remarks by the President on the Economy in Allentown, PA
0486	2009.12.10.	Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize
0492	2009.12.18.	Remarks by President Obama and Russian President Medvedev after Meeting
0493	2009.12.18.	Remarks by the President at the Morning Plenary Session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference
0500	2009.12.24.	Remarks by the President on Senate Passage of Health Insurance Reform

0501	2009.12.24.	Weekly Address_ The President and First Lady Extend Christmas Greeting and Express their Gratitude to America's Servicemen and Women
0006	2009.01.28	Remarks by the President After Meeting with the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff
0041	2009.02.24	Remarks of President Barack Obama -- Address to Joint Session of Congress
0044	2009.02.27	Remarks of President Barack Obama - Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq
0063	2009.03.12	Remarks by the President at the Dedication of Abraham Lincoln Hall
0094	2009.03.27	Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan
0102	2009.04.04.	News Conference By President Obama
0117	2009.04.07.	Remarks Of President Barack Obama At Student Roundtable In Istanbul
0121	2009.04.11.	Weekly Address_ President Obama Says Nations Must Unite To Overcome Global Challenges
0167	2009.05.06.	Remarks by the President after trilateral meeting with President Karzai of Afghanistan and President Zardari of Pakistan
0187	2009.05.16.	Remarks by the President in nominating Governor Jon Huntsman as Ambassador to the People's Republic of China
0198	2009.05.21.	Remarks by the President On National Security
0201	2009.05.22.	Remarks by the President at US Naval Academy Commencement
0203	2009.05.25.	Remarks by the President on Memorial Day
0218	2009.06.04.	Remarks by President Obama and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt before Bilateral Meeting, 6-4-09
0220	2009.06.05.	Remarks By President Obama And Chancellor Merkel In Press Availability, 6-5-09
0221	2009.06.05.	Remarks by President Obama, German Chancellor Merkel, and Elie Wiesel at Buchenwald Concentration Camp, 6-5-09
0230	2009.06.15.	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Berlusconi in press availability, 6-15-09
0242	2009.06.20.	Remarks by the President at Radio and Television Correspondents Association Dinner
0255	2009.06.26.	Remarks By President Obama And Chancellor Merkel Of Germany In Joint Press Availability
0265	2009.07.06.	Press Conference by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia
0266	2009.07.06.	Transcript of President Obama's Interview with Novaya Gazeta
0272	2009.07.07.	Remarks By The President At The New Economic School Graduation
0277	2009.07.10.	Press Conference by the President in L'Aquila, Italy, 7-10-09
0328	2009.08.17.	Remarks by the President at the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention
0329	2009.08.18.	Remarks by President Obama and President Mubarak of Egypt during press availability
0391	2009.10.06.	Remarks by the President at the National Counterterrorism Center
0398	2009.10.13.	Remarks by President Obama and President Zapatero of Spain after meeting
0415	2009.10.20.	Remarks by the President to Joint Terrorism Task Force Staff Members
0424	2009.10.26.	Remarks by the President to Servicemen and Women in Jacksonville, FL
0432	2009.10.28.	Remarks by the President Before Meeting with the President's Intelligence Advisory Board Co-Chairmen and Senior Leadership of the Intelligence Community
0461	2009.11.16.	Remarks by President Barack Obama at Town Hall Meeting with Future Chinese Leaders
0471	2009.11.24.	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Singh of India during Arrival Ceremony
0472	2009.11.24.	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Singh of India in Joint Press Conference
0483	2009.12.07.	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey after meeting
0502	2009.12.29.	Statement by the President on Preliminary Information from his Ongoing Consultation about the Detroit Incident
0112	2009.04.06.	Remarks By President Obama To The Turkish Parliament
0219	2009.06.04.	Remarks by the President at Cairo University, 6-04-09
0333	2009.08.21.	Remarks by the President on the recent elections in Afghanistan
0374	2009.09.23.	Remarks by the President to the United Nations General Assembly
0476	2009.12.01.	Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan
0489	2009.12.14.	Remarks by President Obama and President Sleiman of Lebanon after Meeting
0503	2010.01.02	Weekly Address President Obama Outlines Steps Taken to Protect the Safety and Security of the American People
0504	2010.01.05	Remarks by the President on Security Reviews
0506	2010.01.07	Remarks by the President on Strengthening Intelligence and Aviation Security
0515	2010.01.16	Remarks by President Obama, Former President Bill Clinton, and Former President George W. Bush on the Recovery and Rebuilding Effort in Haiti
0530	2010.01.27	Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address
0531	2010.01.28	Remarks by the President and the Vice President at Town Hall Meeting in Tampa, Florida
0532	2010.01.29	Remarks by the President at GOP House Issues Conference
0535	2010.02.01	Interview of the President by YouTube
0537	2010.02.02	Remarks by the President in Town Hall Meeting in Nashua, New Hampshire
0538	2010.02.02	Remarks by the President in Town Hall Meeting in Nashua, New Hampshire 2

0540	2010.02.03	Remarks by the President at the Senate Democratic Policy Committee Issues Conference
0542	2010.02.05	President Obama and CIA Director Panetta Speak at CIA Memorial Service
0543	2010.02.05	Remarks and Q&A by the President at DNC Fundraising Reception
0544	2010.02.05	Remarks by the President at DNC Fundraising Dinner
0546	2010.02.06	Remarks by The President at Democratic National Committee Meeting
0555	2010.02.18	Remarks by the President at Grassroots Fundraiser for Senator Bennet
0579	2010.03.07	Remarks by the President on the Elections in Iraq
0581	2010.03.08	Remarks by the President and the First Lady at International Women's Day Reception
0584	2010.03.09	Remarks by the President Honoring Greek Independence Day
0587	2010.03.10	Remarks by the President at Grassroots Fundraising Reception for Senator McCaskill
0592	2010.03.17	Remarks by President Obama and the Taoiseach of Ireland Brian Cowen
0598	2010.03.20	Remarks of President Obama Marking Nowruz
0604	2010.03.26	Remarks by the President on the Announcement of New START Treaty
0606	2010.03.28	Remarks by President Obama and President Karzai of Afghanistan after meeting
0607	2010.03.28	Remarks by the President to the Troops
0609	2010.03.30	Remarks by President Obama and President Sarkozy of France during Joint Press Availability
0613	2010.04.01	Remarks by the President at DNC Dinner in Boston, Massachusetts
0616	2010.04.02	Remarks by the President in a Discussion on Jobs and the Economy in Charlotte, North Carolina
0617	2010.04.03	Weekly Address President Obama Extends Holiday Greeting
0620	2010.04.08	Remarks by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia at New START Treaty Signing Ceremony and Press Conference
0624	2010.04.11	Remarks by President Obama and President Zuma of South Africa before Bilateral Meeting
0625	2010.04.13	Press Conference by the President at the Nuclear Security Summit
0626	2010.04.13	Remarks by the President at the Opening Plenary Session of the Nuclear Security Summit
0632	2010.04.16	Remarks by the President at DNC Reception
0634	2010.04.19	Remarks by the President at fundraising event for Senator Boxer and the DNC
0635	2010.04.20	Remarks by the President at dinner for Senator Boxer and the DNC
0641	2010.04.23	Remarks by the President at Naturalization Ceremony for Active-Duty Service Members
0644	2010.04.26	Remarks by the President at the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship
0655	2010.05.01	Remarks by the President at University of Michigan Spring Commencement
0660	2010.05.05	Remarks by the President at Signing of Caregives and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act
0661	2010.05.05	Remarks by the President to the Business Council
0663	2010.05.08	Interview of the President by Sergey Brilev of Channel Rossiya, Russian Television
0667	2010.05.13	Remarks by President Obama and President Karzai of Afghanistan in Joint Press Availability
0668	2010.05.13	Remarks by The President at DCCC Dinner
0671	2010.05.14	Remarks by the President at Ceremony Honoring TOP COPS
0675	2010.05.17	Remarks by the President at the Signing of the Freedom of the Press Act
0679	2010.05.19	Remarks by President Obama and President Calderón of Mexico at Joint Press Availability
0684	2010.05.22	Remarks by the President at United States Military Academy at West Point Commencement
0685	2010.05.22	Weekly Address President Obama Establishes Bipartisan National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling
0687	2010.05.25	Remarks by the President on Small Business Jobs Proposals
0691	2010.05.27	Remarks by President Obama and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia Before Bilateral Meeting
0694	2010.05.27	Remarks by the President on the Gulf Oil Spill
0698	2010.05.31	Remarks by the President on Memorial Day at Andrews Air Force Base
0699	2010.06.01	Remarks by President Obama and President Alan García of Peru in the Oval Office
0702	2010.06.03	Remarks by the President at U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue Reception
0707	2010.06.05	Remarks by the President in Announcement of James R. Clapper Jr. as Director of National Intelligence
0715	2010.06.09	Remarks by President Obama and President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority after Meeting
0716	2010.06.09	Remarks by the President on United Nations Security Council Resolution on Iran Sanctions
0717	2010.06.10	Remarks by the President in Meeting with Bipartisan Leaders of Congress
0720	2010.06.13	Remarks by the First Lady to the Camp Pendleton Community
0725	2010.06.15	Remarks by the President at an Event with Military Personnel in Pensacola, Florida
0727	2010.06.16	Remarks by the President to the American Nurses Association
0731	2010.06.21	Remarks by the President at a Father's Day Event
0732	2010.06.21	Remarks by the President after Cabinet Meeting
0735	2010.06.23	Statement by the President in the Rose Garden
0736	2010.06.24	Remarks by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia at Joint Press Conference
0737	2010.06.24	Remarks by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia at the U.S.-Russia Business Summit

0740	2010.06.30	Remarks by the President at a Town Hall Meeting on the Economy in Racine, Wisconsin
0741	2010.07.01	Remarks by the President at Signing of the Iran Sanctions Act
0743	2010.07.01	Remarks by the President on Comprehensive Immigration Reform
0747	2010.07.06	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel in Joint Press Availability
0748	2010.07.06	Remarks by the President at Independence Day Celebration
0755	2010.07.10	Weekly Address President Obama Announces Changes to Help Veterans with PTSD Receive the Benefits They Need
0756	2010.07.12	Remarks by President Obama and President Fernandez of the Dominican Republic in Joint Press Availability
0759	2010.07.14	Background Briefing by Senior Administration Officials on Al Shabaab Terrorist Organization
0760	2010.07.14	Interview of the President by South African Broadcasting Corporation
0770	2010.07.20	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron of the United Kingdom in Joint Press Availability
0777	2010.07.27	Remarks by the President After Bipartisan Leadership Meeting
0785	2010.08.02	Remarks by the President at Disabled Veterans of America Conference in Atlanta, Georgia
0786	2010.08.03	Remarks by the President at Town Hall with Young African Leaders
0787	2010.08.04	Remarks by the President Honoring the 2010 Presidential Citizens Medal Recipients
0799	2010.08.09	Remarks by the President on Higher Education and the Economy at the University of Texas at Austin
0803	2010.08.13	Remarks by the President at Iftar Dinner
0804	2010.08.13	Remarks by the President at Iftar Dinner 2
0811	2010.08.17	Remarks by the President at Fundraiser for Senator Patty Murray
0815	2010.08.18	Remarks by the President at Florida Democratic Party Reception
0816	2010.08.18	Remarks by the President at Luncheon Reception for Governor Ted Strickland
0819	2010.08.28	Weekly Address President Obama As the Combat Mission in Iraq Ends, We Must Pay Tribute to Those Who Have Served
0823	2010.08.31	Remarks by the President During Fort Bliss Army Base Visit
0824	2010.08.31	Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the End of Combat Operations in Iraq
0825	2010.09.01	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel after Bilateral Meeting
0826	2010.09.01	Remarks by the President in the Rose Garden after Bilateral Meetings
0827	2010.09.01	Remarks by President Obama, President Mubarak, His Majesty King Abdullah, Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas Before Working Dinner
0830	2010.09.06	Remarks by the President at Laborfest in Milwaukee, Wisconsin
0833	2010.09.11	Remarks by the President at the Pentagon Memorial
0834	2010.09.11	Weekly Address President Obama Commemorates the Ninth Anniversary of the September 11th Attacks
0839	2010.09.13	Remarks of President Barack Obama -As Prepared for Delivery - Back to School Speech
0840	2010.09.14	Remarks by the President in Back to School Speech in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
0844	2010.09.16	Remarks by the President at DNC Event
0845	2010.09.16	Remarks by the President at Meeting with President's Export Council
0848	2010.09.18	Remarks by the President at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Phoenix Awards Dinner
0850	2010.09.20	Remarks by the President at CNBC Town Hall Discussion on Jobs
0851	2010.09.20	Remarks by the President at Dinner Reception for Congressman Sestak
0852	2010.09.20	Remarks by the President at DNC Finance Dinner
0856	2010.09.22	Remarks by the President at the Millennium Development Goals Summit in New York, New York
0858	2010.09.23	Remarks by President Obama and Premier Wen Jiabao of China After Bilateral Meeting
0859	2010.09.23	Remarks by President Obama and Premier Wen Jiabao of China before Bilateral Meeting
0860	2010.09.23	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Naoto Kan of Japan Before Bilateral Meeting
0861	2010.09.23	Remarks by the President and the First Lady at the Clinton Global Initiative Annual Meeting
0862	2010.09.23	Remarks by the President at a DCCC DSCC Dinner
0863	2010.09.23	Remarks by the President to the United Nations General Assembly
0864	2010.09.24	Interview of the President by Bahman Kalbasi, BBC Persian
0865	2010.09.24	Remarks by President Obama and President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón of Colombia Before Bilateral Meeting
0866	2010.09.24	Remarks By President Obama and President Triet Of Vietnam at Opening Of U.S.-ASEAN Leaders Meeting
0870	2010.09.27	Remarks by the President in Conference Call with College and University Student-Journalists
0871	2010.09.28	Remarks by the President at DNC Rally in Madison, Wisconsin
0872	2010.09.28	Remarks by the President in a Backyard Discussion in Albuquerque, New Mexico
0873	2010.09.29	Remarks by the President at a Backyard Discussion in Des Moines, Iowa
0876	2010.10.01	Remarks by the President at DNC Gen44 Event
0881	2010.10.05	Remarks by the President at Reception for the Diplomatic Corps

0883	2010.10.06	Remarks by the President Awarding the Medal of Honor to Staff Sergeant Robert Miller
0887	2010.10.08	Remarks by the President Announcing the Departure of General Jim Jones, National Security Advisor
0892	2010.10.11	Remarks by the President at a Dinner for the DCCC and Representative Ron Klein
0894	2010.10.11	Remarks by the President at Reception for the DCCC and Representative Ron Klein
0896	2010.10.13	Remarks by the President on the American Opportunity Tax Credit
0897	2010.10.14	Remarks by the President in a Youth Town Hall
0898	2010.10.15	Remarks by the President and Vice President at an Event for Chris Coons and the DSCC
0899	2010.10.16	Remarks by the President at a rally for Governor Deval Patrick
0900	2010.10.16	Remarks by the President at DSCC Fundraiser
0906	2010.10.21	Remarks by the President at a Rally for Senator Murray in Seattle, Washington
0907	2010.10.21	Remarks by the President at a Rally in Portland, Oregon
0909	2010.10.21	Remarks by the President to Overflow Crowd at University of Washington
0910	2010.10.22	Remarks by the President at an Event for Senator Boxer in Los Angeles, California
0911	2010.10.22	Remarks by the President at Las Vegas Moving America Forward Rally
0912	2010.10.22	Remarks by the President at Los Angeles Moving America Forward Rally
0913	2010.10.23	Remarks by the President at a DCCC Dinner in Minneapolis, Minnesota
0914	2010.10.23	Remarks by the President at a Rally in Minneapolis, Minnesota
0916	2010.10.25	Remarks by Dennis Ross, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for the Central Region AIPAC National Summit
0917	2010.10.25	Remarks by the President at DCCC General Reception
0919	2010.10.26	Remarks by the President at a DCCC Dinner
0921	2010.10.29	Remarks by the President at a rally for Congressman Perriello
0923	2010.10.29	Statement by the President
0925	2010.10.30	Remarks by the President at DNC Moving America Forward Rally in Bridgeport, Connecticut
0927	2010.10.31	Remarks by the President and the Vice President at DNC Moving America Forward Rally in Cleveland, Ohio
0928	2010.10.31	Remarks by the President at DNC Moving America Forward Rally in Chicago, Illinois
0930	2010.11.03	Press Conference by the President
0931	2010.11.04	Remarks by the President After a Cabinet Meeting
0933	2010.11.06	Remarks by the President Commemorating 2611 Attacks on Mumbai
0936	2010.11.07	Remarks by the President and the First Lady in Town Hall with Students in Mumbai, India
0938	2010.11.08	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Singh in Joint Press Conference in New Delhi, India
0939	2010.11.08	Remarks by the President at Official Arrival Ceremony in New Delhi, India
0941	2010.11.08	Remarks by the President to the Joint Session of the Indian Parliament in New Delhi, India
0943	2010.11.09	Remarks by President Obama and President Yudhoyono of Indonesia Before Expanded Bilateral Meeting
0945	2010.11.10	Remarks by the President at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta, Indonesia
0946	2010.11.10	Remarks by the President Honoring Veterans Day in Seoul, South Korea
0947	2010.11.11	Remarks by President Obama and German Chancellor Merkel before Bilateral Meeting
0948	2010.11.11	Remarks by President Obama and President Hu of China Before Bilateral Meeting
0949	2010.11.12	Press Conference by the President After G20 Meetings in Seoul, Korea
0952	2010.11.13	Remarks by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia After Bilateral Meeting in Yokohama, Japan
0953	2010.11.13	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Gillard of Australia After Bilateral Meeting in Yokohama, Japan
0954	2010.11.13	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Kan of Japan in Statements to the Press in Yokohama, Japan
0956	2010.11.16	Remarks by the President in Awarding the Medal of Honor to Staff Sergeant Salvatore A. Giunta
0958	2010.11.18	Remarks by the President at a Meeting on the New START Treaty
0960	2010.11.19	Remarks by the President on the NATO Summit and the New START Treaty
0961	2010.11.19	Statements to the Press by President Obama and President Silva of Portugal After Meeting
0962	2010.11.20	Press Conference of the President after NATO Summit
0963	2010.11.20	Statement by the President at end of the EU-U.S. Summit
0964	2010.11.20	Weekly Address Senators Opposing New START Want to Trust But Not Verify
0970	2010.12.01	Remarks by the President and General Colin Powell After Meeting
0973	2010.12.03	Remarks by the President to the Troops at Bagram Air Base
0978	2010.12.08	Remarks by President Obama and President Komorowski of Poland after Bilateral Meeting
0980	2010.12.09	Remarks by the President at Lighting of the National Christmas Tree
0984	2010.12.13	Remarks by the President at Holiday Reception for the Diplomatic Corps
0990	2010.12.16	Statement by the President on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Annual Review
0993	2010.12.18	Weekly Address START is About the Safety and Security of America; Not Scoring Political Points

0994	2010.12.22	Remarks by the President and Vice President at Signing of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010
0995	2010.12.25	Weekly Address Democrats and Republicans Have Shared Responsibility to Move America Forward
0996	2011.12.22	News Conference by The President
1003	2011.01.10	Remarks by President Obama and President Sarkozy of France after Bilateral Meeting
1005	2011.01.14	Remarks by the President at a Memorial Service for Richard Holbrooke
1008	2011.01.19	Press Conference with President Obama and President Hu of the People's Republic of China
1011	2011.01.19	Remarks by President Obama and President Hu of the People's Republic of China in an Exchange of Toasts at State Dinner
1015	2011.01.24	Remarks by the President, Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden on the Presidential Studies Directive Strengthening Our Military Families
1017	2011.01.25	Remarks by the President in State of Union Address
1020	2011.01.28	Remarks by the President on the Situation in Egypt
1022	2011.02.01	Remarks by the President on the Situation in Egypt
1023	2011.02.03	Remarks by the President at National Prayer Breakfast
1025	2011.02.04	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada in Joint Press Availability
1028	2011.02.10	Remarks by the President on the National Wireless Initiative in Marquette, Michigan
1029	2011.02.11	Remarks by the President on Egypt
1030	2011.02.11	Remarks by the President and Press Briefing by Press Secretary Robert Gibbs
1033	2011.02.14	Remarks by the President to Students at Parkville Middle School and Center of Technology
1034	2011.02.15	Press Conference by the President
1035	2011.02.15	Remarks by the President Honoring the Recipients of the 2010 Medal of Freedom
1044	2011.02.23	Remarks by the President on Libya
1051	2011.03.02	Remarks by the President on Shooting of American Service Members in Germany
1052	2011.03.04	Remarks by the President at Dinner for the DSCC and Senator Bill Nelson in Miami, Florida
1057	2011.03.07	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Gillard During a Classroom Visit
1058	2011.03.07	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Gillard of Australia After Bilateral Meeting
1061	2011.03.09	Remarks by the President at a DCCC Fundraiser in Boston, Massachusetts
1064	2011.03.11	News Conference by the President
1069	2011.03.16	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event
1070	2011.03.17	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland
1074	2011.03.18	Remarks by the President on the Situation in Libya
1075	2011.03.19	Remarks by President Obama and President Rousseff of Brazil in Brasilia, Brazil
1076	2011.03.19	Remarks by President Obama and President Rousseff of Brazil in Exchange of Toasts at Official Lunch in Brasilia, Brazil
1079	2011.03.19	Remarks by the President on Libya
1080	2011.03.20	Remarks by the President to the People of Brazil in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
1081	2011.03.21	Remarks by President Obama and President Sebastian Pinera of Chile at Join Press Conference
1084	2011.03.22	Remarks by President Obama and President Funes of El Salvador in Joint Press Conference
1085	2011.03.25	Remarks by the President at a Reception Honoring Greek Independence Day
1086	2011.03.26	Weekly Address President Obama Says the Mission in Libya is Succeeding
1087	2011.03.28	Remarks by the President at Univision Town Hall
1088	2011.03.28	Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya
1089	2011.03.29	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event
1091	2011.03.29	Remarks by the President at Dedication of the Ronald H. Brown United States Mission to the United Nations Building
1092	2011.03.30	Remarks by the President on America's Energy Security
1095	2011.04.05	Remarks by the President After Meeting with House Republican and Senate Democratic Leadership
1099	2011.04.07	Remarks by President Obama and President Santos of Colombia After Bilateral Meeting
1103	2011.04.12	Remarks by the President, the Vice President, the First Lady, and Dr. Biden at Launch of Joining Forces Initiative
1105	2011.04.14	Remarks by President Obama and Emir Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani of Qatar After a Bilateral Meeting
1106	2011.04.14	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event
1107	2011.04.14	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event 2
1108	2011.04.14	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event 3
1116	2011.04.21	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event 3
1120	2011.04.22	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event
1125	2011.04.28	Remarks by President Obama and President Martinelli of Panama After Bilateral Meeting
1126	2011.04.28	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event
1128	2011.04.28	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event, New York
1129	2011.04.28	Remarks by the President in a Personnel Announcement

1130	2011.04.29	Remarks by the President at Miami Dade College Commencement
1133	2011.05.02	Remarks by the President at Congressional Bipartisan Dinner
1134	2011.05.02	Remarks by the President Awarding the Medal of Honor to Private First Class Anthony Kaho'ohanohano and Private First Class Henry Svehla
1135	2011.05.02	Remarks by the President on Osama Bin Laden
1137	2011.05.04	Remarks by the President Welcoming the Wounded Warrior Project's Soldier Ride
1139	2011.05.05	Remarks by the President at Pride of Midtown Firehouse, Engine 54, Ladder 4, Battalion 9
1141	2011.05.06	Remarks by the President and the Vice President to the Troops at Fort Campbell, KY
1144	2011.05.10	Remarks by the President at a DNC event in Austin, Texas
1145	2011.05.10	Remarks by the President on Comprehensive Immigration Reform in El Paso, Texas
1149	2011.05.12	Remarks by the President at the National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast
1151	2011.05.16	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event
1152	2011.05.16	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event 2
1156	2011.05.17	Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan After Bilateral Meeting
1158	2011.05.18	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event in Boston, Massachusetts
1159	2011.05.18	Remarks by the President at DNC Event in Boston, Massachusetts
1160	2011.05.18	Remarks by the President at U.S. Coast Guard Academy Commencement
1162	2011.05.19	Remarks by the President on the Middle East and North Africa
1163	2011.05.20	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel After Bilateral Meeting
1165	2011.05.20	Remarks by the President, CIA Director Leon Panetta, and DNI Director James Clapper to the Intelligence Community at CIA Headquarters
1167	2011.05.22	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Kenny of Ireland
1168	2011.05.22	Remarks by the President at the AIPAC Policy Conference 2011
1170	2011.05.24	Remarks by President Obama and Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom in Dinner Toasts
1172	2011.05.25	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron of the United Kingdom in Joint Press Conference in London, United Kingdom
1173	2011.05.25	Remarks by the President to Parliament in London, United Kingdom
1174	2011.05.26	Remarks by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia after Bilateral Meeting in Deauville, France
1175	2011.05.26	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Kan of Japan Before Bilateral Meeting in Deauville, France
1176	2011.05.27	Remarks by President Obama and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France After Bilateral Meeting
1177	2011.05.28	Remarks by President Obama and President Komorowski in Discussion on Democracy in Warsaw, Poland
1178	2011.05.28	Remarks by President Obama and President Komorowski of Poland after Bilateral Meeting in Warsaw, Poland
1179	2011.05.28	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Tusk of Poland in Joint Press Conference in Warsaw, Poland
1183	2011.05.30	Remarks by the President at a Memorial Day Service
1184	2011.05.30	Remarks by the President in Department of Defense Personnel Announcements
1189	2011.06.07	Remarks by President Obama and Chancellor Merkel in a Joint Press Conference
1190	2011.06.07	Remarks by President Obama and Chancellor Merkel in an Exchange of Toasts
1191	2011.06.07	Remarks by President Obama and Chancellor Merkel in Official Arrival Ceremony
1195	2011.06.13	Remarks by the President at a DNC event
1196	2011.06.13	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event 2
1200	2011.06.14	Remarks by the President at a Welcome Event in San Juan, Puerto Rico
1204	2011.06.20	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event
1205	2011.06.20	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event 2
1206	2011.06.22	Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan
1207	2011.06.23	Message from the President regarding the continuation of the national emergency with respect to the Western Balkans
1208	2011.06.23	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event
1209	2011.06.23	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event 2
1210	2011.06.23	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event 3
1211	2011.06.23	Remarks of the President to Soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division in Fort Drum, New York
1212	2011.06.24	Remarks by the President at Carnegie Mellon University's National Robotics Engineering Center
1213	2011.06.25	WEEKLY ADDRESS Strengthening America by Investing at Home
1215	2011.06.28	Remarks by the President on the Critical Role the Manufacturing Sector Plays in the American Economy
1216	2011.06.29	Press Conference by the President
1220	2011.06.30	Remarks by the President and Secretary Gates at Armed Services Farewell Tribute in Honor of Secretary Gates

1222	2011.06.30	Remarks by the President at DNC Event in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1224	2011.07.04	Remarks by the President at White House Independence Day Celebration
1226	2011.07.06	Remarks by the President in Twitter Town Hall
1231	2011.07.12	Remarks by the President in Presenting the Medal of Honor to Sergeant First Class Leroy Arthur Petry
1236	2011.07.22	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Key of New Zealand
1238	2011.07.22	Remarks by the President at University of Maryland Town Hall
1240	2011.07.25	Remarks at White House Release of Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime
1244	2011.07.29	Remarks by the President on the Status of Debt Ceiling Negotiations
1245	2011.07.29	Remarks of President Obama After Meeting with African Heads of State
1246	2011.08.30	Remarks by the President at 93rd Annual Conference of the American Legion
1249	2011.08.03	Remarks by the President at a DNC event
1252	2011.08.04	Remarks by the President in a DNC Video Teleconference
1253	2011.08.05	Remarks by the President on the Administration's Work to Prepare our Nation's Veterans for the Workforce
1254	2011.08.06	WEEKLY ADDRESS Creating Jobs and Getting All Americans Back to Work
1255	2011.08.08	Remarks by the President
1256	2011.08.08	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event in Washington, DC
1258	2011.08.10	Remarks by the President during Iftar Dinner
1260	2011.08.11	Remarks by the President at Johnson Controls, Inc.
1262	2011.08.13	WEEKLY ADDRESS Putting the American People First
1263	2011.08.15	Remarks by the President in a Town Hall Meeting in Cannon Falls, Minnesota
1264	2011.08.15	Remarks by the President in a Town Hall Meeting in Decorah, Iowa
1266	2011.08.16	Opening Remarks by the President at the White House Rural Economic Forum
1269	2011.08.17	Remarks by the President in a Town Hall Meeting in Alpha, Illinois
1270	2011.08.17	Remarks by the President in a Town Hall Meeting in Atkinson, Illinois
1271	2011.08.20	WEEKLY ADDRESS Getting America Back to Work
1273	2011.08.27	WEEKLY ADDRESS Observing 911 with National Service
1283	2011.09.10	WEEKLY ADDRESS Remembering September 11th
1284	2011.09.11	Remarks by the President at A Concert for Hope
1292	2011.09.15	Remarks by the President Awarding the Medal of Honor to Sergeant Dakota Meyer
1297	2011.09.19	Remarks by the President on Economic Growth and Deficit Reduction
1300	2011.09.20	Remarks by President Obama and President Karzai of Afghanistan before Bilateral Meeting
1301	2011.09.20	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey before Bilateral Meeting
1302	2011.09.20	Remarks by President Obama at High-Level Meeting on Libya
1304	2011.09.21	Remarks by President Obama and President Sarkozy of France
1305	2011.09.21	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron of the United Kingdom
1306	2011.09.21	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel before Bilateral Meeting
1307	2011.09.21	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Noda of Japan before Bilateral Meeting
1308	2011.09.21	Remarks by President Obama and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon in Luncheon Toasts
1309	2011.09.21	Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly
1317	2011.09.26	Remarks by the President at DNC Event -- San Diego, CA
1319	2011.09.26	Remarks by the President at DNC Event--San Jose, California
1320	2011.09.26	Remarks by the President at DNC Event--San Jose, California 2
1321	2011.09.26	Remarks by the President in Town Hall with LinkedIn
1322	2011.09.27	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event--Los Angeles, CA
1326	2011.09.28	Remarks by the President in an Open for Questions Roundtable
1329	2011.09.30	Remarks by the President at the Change of Office Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Ceremony
1330	2011.10.01	Remarks by the President at the Human Rights Campaign's Annual National Dinner
1333	2011.10.04	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event
1338	2011.10.05	Remarks by President Obama and President Lobo of Honduras Before Bilateral Meeting
1339	2011.10.06	News Conference by the President
1341	2011.10.07	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Essebsi After Bilateral Meeting
1344	2011.10.11	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event
1347	2011.10.12	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event
1349	2011.10.13	Remarks by President Obama and President Lee of the Republic of Korea in a Joint Press Conference
1351	2011.10.13	Remarks by President Obama and President Lee of the Republic of Korea in Arrival Ceremony
1360	2011.10.19	Remarks by the President and the First Lady on the American Jobs Act and Joining Forces
1362	2011.10.20	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Stoltenberg After Bilateral Meeting
1363	2011.10.20	Remarks by the President at Presentation of the 2011 Presidential Citizens Medals

1364	2011.10.20	Remarks by the President on the Death of Muammar Qaddafi
1366	2011.10.21	Remarks by the President on Ending the War in Iraq
1367	2011.10.22	WEEKLY ADDRESS Renewing America's Global Leadership
1368	2011.10.24	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Las Vegas, NV
1370	2011.10.25	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1372	2011.10.25	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 3
1373	2011.10.26	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1376	2011.10.27	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Necas of the Czech Republic before Bilateral Meeting
1381	2011.11.03	Remarks by President Obama and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany Before Bilateral Meeting
1382	2011.11.03	Remarks by President Obama and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France in a Joint Statement
1384	2011.11.04	Remarks by President Obama and President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner of Argentina Before Bilateral Meeting
1385	2011.11.04	Remarks by President Obama In Honoring the Alliance Between the United States and France
1386	2011.11.07	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1387	2011.11.07	Remarks by the President on Tax Credits Included in the American Jobs Act and New Executive Actions that Will Help Get Veterans Back to Work
1392	2011.11.11	Remarks by the President Aboard the USS Carl Vinson
1393	2011.11.11	Remarks by the President on Veterans Day
1394	2011.11.12	Remarks by President Obama and President Hu of China
1395	2011.11.12	Remarks by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia After Bilateral Meeting
1396	2011.11.12	Remarks by President Obama at APEC CEO Business Summit Q&A
1398	2011.11.12	WEEKLY ADDRESS Honoring our Veterans for their Service and Sacrifice
1403	2011.11.14	News Conference by President Obama
1404	2011.11.14	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1405	2011.11.16	After Dinner Remarks by President Obama at Parliamentary Dinner
1406	2011.11.16	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Gillard of Australia in Joint Press Conference
1407	2011.11.17	Remarks by President Obama and President Aquino of the Philippines before Bilateral Meeting
1408	2011.11.17	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Singh of India before Bilateral Meeting
1410	2011.11.17	Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament
1411	2011.11.17	Remarks by President Obama to U.S. and Australian Service Members
1412	2011.11.18	Briefing on Burma by Senior Administration Officials
1413	2011.11.18	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Najib of Malaysia before Bilateral Meeting
1415	2011.11.19	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Yingluck of Thailand Before Bilateral Meeting
1417	2011.11.21	Remarks by the President and the First Lady at Bill Signing
1419	2011.11.22	Remarks by the President on the American Jobs Act
1422	2011.11.28	Statements by President Obama, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso after meeting
1423	2011.11.29	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Rutte of the Netherlands Before Bilateral Meeting
1424	2011.11.30	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1425	2011.11.30	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1426	2011.11.30	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 3
1427	2011.11.30	Remarks by the President on the American Jobs Act
1428	2011.11.30	Remarks by the President on the American Jobs Act 2
1436	2011.12.07	Statements by President Barack Obama and Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper of Canada
1438	2011.12.08	Statement by the President
1441	2011.12.12	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister al-Maliki of Iraq in a Joint Press Conference
1442	2011.12.13	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1443	2011.12.14	Remarks by the President and First Lady on the End of the War in Iraq
1445	2011.12.16	Remarks by the President at the 71st General Assembly of the Union for Reform Judaism
1447	2011.12.17	WEEKLY ADDRESS Honoring Those Who Served in Iraq, as the War Comes to An End
1448	2011.12.20	Remarks by the President on the Payroll Tax Cut
1451	2011.12.24	Weekly Address The President and First Lady Thank our Troops for their Service as we Celebrate the Holiday Season
1453	2012.01.03	Remarks by the President to the Iowa Caucus Attendees via Video Teleconference
1456	2012.01.05	Remarks by the President on the Defense Strategic Review
1459	2012.01.09	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event
1461	2012.01.09	Remarks by the President on the Resignation of Chief of Staff Bill Daley
1463	2012.01.11	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1465	2012.01.12	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1466	2012.01.12	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2

1471	2012.01.17	Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan
1472	2012.01.17	Remarks by the President and First Lady Honoring the 2011 World Champion St. Louis Cardinals
1473	2012.01.19	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1474	2012.01.19	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1476	2012.01.19	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 4
1480	2012.01.24	Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address
1484	2012.01.26	Remarks by the President on American-Made Energy
1488	2012.01.30	Remarks by President Obama and President Saakashvili of Georgia After Bilateral Meeting
1491	2012.01.31	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1492	2012.01.31	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 1
1497	2012.02.03	Remarks by the President on the Veterans Job Corps
1500	2012.02.09	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Monti of Italy after Bilateral Meeting
1506	2012.02.13	Remarks by the President at the 2011 National Medals of Arts and Humanities Ceremony
1508	2012.02.14	Remarks by President Obama and Vice President Xi of the People's Republic of China Before Bilateral Meeting
1512	2012.02.16	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1513	2012.02.16	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 3
1514	2012.02.17	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1515	2012.02.17	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1516	2012.02.17	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event
1525	2012.02.23	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1527	2012.02.23	Remarks by the President on Energy
1528	2012.02.24	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Thorning-Schmidt of Denmark after a Bilateral Meeting
1534	2012.03.01	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1536	2012.03.01	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 4
1537	2012.03.01	Remarks by the President on American Energy
1538	2012.03.01	Remarks by the President the VP Panetta
1541	2012.03.04	Remarks by the President at AIPAC Policy Conference
1542	2012.03.04	Remarks by the President at AIPAC Policy Conference 2
1543	2012.03.05	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel
1545	2012.03.07	Remarks by the President on Energy -- Mount Holly, NC
1547	2012.03.09	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1551	2012.03.13	Remarks by the President on Fair Trade
1552	2012.03.14	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron of the United Kingdom at Arrival Ceremony
1553	2012.03.14	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron of the United Kingdom in a Joint Press Conference
1554	2012.03.14	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron of the United Kingdom in an Exchange of Toasts at State Dinner
1556	2012.03.16	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1557	2012.03.16	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event--Atlanta, GA
1560	2012.03.20	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Kenny of Ireland after Bilateral Meeting
1563	2012.03.20	Remarks of President Obama Marking Nowruz
1567	2012.03.22	Remarks by the President on American-Made Energy 2
1569	2012.03.23	Remarks by the President on the Nomination of Dr. Jim Kim for World Bank President
1571	2012.03.25	Remarks by President Obama and President Lee Myung-bak in Joint Press Conference
1572	2012.03.25	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey after Bilateral Meeting
1573	2012.03.26	Remarks by President Obama and President Hu Jintao of the People's Republic of China Before Bilateral Meeting
1574	2012.03.26	Remarks by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia After Bilateral Meeting
1575	2012.03.26	Remarks by President Obama and President Nursultan Nazarbayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan Before Bilateral Meeting
1576	2012.03.26	Remarks by President Obama at Hankuk University
1577	2012.03.26	Remarks by President Obama at Opening Plenary Session of the Nuclear Security Summit
1578	2012.03.27	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Gilani of Pakistan before Bilateral Meeting
1579	2012.03.27	Remarks by President Obama, President Medvedev of Russia, and President Nazarbayev of Kazakstan at Trilateral Announcement
1582	2012.03.30	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1583	2012.03.30	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME
1584	2012.03.30	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Southern Maine Community College - South Portland, ME
1585	2012.03.30	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1587	2012.04.01	President Obama's Final Intervention at the end of the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit
1588	2012.04.02	Joint Press Conference by President Obama, President Calderon of Mexico, and Prime Minister Harper of Canada
1593	2012.04.05	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event

1597	2012.04.09	Remarks by President Obama and President Rousseff of Brazil after Bilateral Meeting
1601	2012.04.10	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Hollywood, FL
1608	2012.04.15	Remarks by President Obama and President Santos of Colombia in Joint Press Conference
1613	2012.04.18	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1616	2012.04.20	Remarks by the President at Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride
1619	2012.04.23	Remarks by the President at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
1626	2012.04.27	Remarks by the President and First Lady at Fort Stewart, Georgia
1627	2012.04.27	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1630	2012.04.29	Remarks by President Obama and Former President Clinton at a Campaign Event
1631	2012.04.29	Remarks by the President at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner
1632	2012.04.30	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Noda of Japan at Joint Press Conference
1634	2012.05.01	Excerpts of the President's Address to the Nation from Afghanistan
1635	2012.05.01	Remarks by President Obama and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan at Signing of Strategic Partnership Agreement
1636	2012.05.01	Remarks by President Obama in Address to the Nation from Afghanistan
1637	2012.05.01	Remarks by President Obama to the Troops in Afghanistan
1642	2012.05.05	REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AND FIRST LADY AT A CAMPAIGN EVENT
1643	2012.05.05	Weekly Address A New Chapter in Afghanistan
1645	2012.05.08	Remarks by the President, Albany, NY
1648	2012.05.10	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Seattle, WA
1649	2012.05.11	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event in Studio City, California
1652	2012.05.12	Weekly Address Congress Must Act on To-Do List
1653	2012.05.14	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1658	2012.05.16	Remarks by the President at Medal of Honor Ceremony to Specialist Leslie H. Sabo, Jr.
1659	2012.05.16	Remarks by the President at Roundtable with Small Business Owners
1660	2012.05.18	Remarks by President Obama and President Hollande of France after Bilateral Meeting
1662	2012.05.19	Remarks by the President Before Working Session with G8 Leaders
1663	2012.05.19	Statement by President Obama at Closing of G8 Summit
1665	2012.05.20	Remarks by President Obama and NATO Secretary General Rasmussen Before Bilateral Meeting
1666	2012.05.20	Remarks by President Obama and President Karzai of Afghanistan After Bilateral Meeting
1667	2012.05.20	Remarks by the President at Opening NAC Meeting
1668	2012.05.21	Remarks by the President at ISAF Meeting on Afghanistan
1669	2012.05.21	Remarks by the President at NATO Press Conference
1671	2012.05.23	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event
1672	2012.05.23	Remarks by the President at the Air Force Academy Commencement
1673	2012.05.24	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1674	2012.05.24	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1675	2012.05.24	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 3
1676	2012.05.24	Remarks by the President on Energy in Newton, Iowa
1678	2012.05.26	Weekly Address Honoring Our Fallen Heroes this Memorial Day
1679	2012.05.28	Remarks by the President at the Commemoration Ceremony of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War
1680	2012.05.28	Remarks by the President Commemorating Memorial Day
1685	2012.06.01	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1686	2012.06.01	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Bachelor Farmer Restaurant, Minneapolis, MN
1687	2012.06.01	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Private Residence, Chicago, IL 2
1688	2012.06.01	Remarks by the President on Veterans Jobs -- Golden Valley, Minnesota
1693	2012.06.05	Remarks by President Obama and President Clinton at a Campaign Event
1694	2012.06.06	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1695	2012.06.07	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1697	2012.06.07	Remarks by the President on College Affordability
1698	2012.06.08	Remarks by President Obama and President Aquino of the Philippines after Bilateral Meeting
1699	2012.06.08	Remarks by the President
1702	2012.06.12	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Hyatt Regency, Baltimore, MD
1704	2012.06.12	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Philadelphia, PA 2
1707	2012.06.13	Remarks by President Obama and President Peres of Israel at Presentation of the Medal of Freedom
1710	2012.06.15	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1711	2012.06.15	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1715	2012.06.18	Remarks by President Obama and President Calderon After Bilateral Meeting
1716	2012.06.18	Remarks by President Obama and President Putin of Russia After Bilateral Meeting
1717	2012.06.19	Remarks by President Obama and President Hu Jintao of China before Bilateral Meeting
1718	2012.06.20	Remarks by President Obama at Press Conference After G20 Summit
1720	2012.06.22	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1723	2012.06.25	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1724	2012.06.25	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1725	2012.06.25	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 3

1726	2012.06.26	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1727	2012.06.26	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Atlanta, GA
1734	2012.07.04	Remarks by the President at Fourth of July Celebration
1735	2012.07.04	Remarks by the President at Naturalization Ceremony
1736	2012.07.05	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1737	2012.07.05	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1738	2012.07.05	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 3
1739	2012.07.06	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1740	2012.07.06	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1744	2012.07.10	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- Cedar Rapids, IA
1746	2012.07.13	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event in Hampton, Virginia
1747	2012.07.13	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event in Roanoke, Virginia
1748	2012.07.13	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event in Virginia Beach, VA
1749	2012.07.14	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1750	2012.07.14	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1752	2012.07.16	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1755	2012.07.17	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1757	2012.07.17	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event in San Antonio, TX
1759	2012.07.19	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- West Palm Beach, FL
1760	2012.07.19	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- Jacksonville, FL
1761	2012.07.20	Remarks by the President on the Shootings in Aurora, Colorado
1762	2012.07.21	Weekly Address Remembering the Victims of the Aurora, Colorado Shooting
1765	2012.07.23	Remarks by the President to the 113th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars
1766	2012.07.24	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1767	2012.07.24	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1768	2012.07.25	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1769	2012.07.25	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- House of Blues, New Orleans, LA
1771	2012.07.26	Remarks by the President Before Cabinet Meeting
1772	2012.07.27	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1773	2012.07.27	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1774	2012.07.27	Remarks by the President at Signing of the United States-Israel Enhanced Security Cooperation Act
1778	2012.08.01	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event
1784	2012.08.06	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- Stamford, CT
1786	2012.08.06	Remarks by the President at Signing of the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012
1788	2012.08.08	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1790	2012.08.09	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Pueblo, Colorado
1791	2012.08.09	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- Colorado Springs, CO
1792	2012.08.10	Remarks by the President at Iftar Dinner
1794	2012.08.12	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1795	2012.08.13	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Chicago, Illinois
1796	2012.08.13	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- Boone, IA
1797	2012.08.13	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- Council Bluffs, IA
1800	2012.08.14	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Oskaloosa, Iowa
1801	2012.08.14	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- Marshalltown, IA
1803	2012.08.15	Remarks by the President and First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Davenport, Iowa
1804	2012.08.15	Remarks by the President and First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Dubuque, IA
1805	2012.08.15	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Waterloo, Iowa
1807	2012.08.18	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Rochester, NH
1808	2012.08.18	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Windham, NH
1811	2012.08.20	Remarks by the President to the White House Press Corps
1812	2012.08.21	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Columbus, OH
1813	2012.08.21	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event - Reno, NV
1814	2012.08.22	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1818	2012.08.28	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- Ames, Iowa
1819	2012.08.28	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- Fort Collins, Colorado
1821	2012.08.29	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- Charlottesville, VA
1822	2012.08.31	Remarks by the President to the Troops at Fort Bliss, TX
1823	2012.09.01	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event
1824	2012.09.01	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event 2
1825	2012.09.01	Weekly Address Honoring Our Nation's Service Members and Military Families
1826	2012.09.02	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Boulder, CO
1828	2012.09.03	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Toledo, OH
1829	2012.09.04	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Norfolk, VA
1831	2012.09.07	Remarks by the President and the Vice President at a Campaign Event -- Portsmouth, NH

1832	2012.09.07	Remarks by the President and the Vice President at Campaign Event -- Iowa City, IA
1833	2012.09.07	Remarks by the President at the Democratic National Convention
1834	2012.09.08	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Kissimmee, Florida
1835	2012.09.08	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Seminole, FL
1836	2012.09.08	Weekly Address Coming Together to Remember September 11th
1837	2012.09.09	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Melbourne, Florida
1838	2012.09.09	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- West Palm Beach
1839	2012.09.11	Remarks by the President at the Pentagon Memorial Service in Remembrance of 911
1840	2012.09.12	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Las Vegas, NV
1841	2012.09.12	Remarks by the President on the Deaths of U.S. Embassy Staff in Libya
1843	2012.09.13	Remarks by the President in Golden, CO
1844	2012.09.14	Remarks by the President and the First Lady Welcoming the 2012 U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Teams
1845	2012.09.14	Remarks by the President at Transfer of Remains Ceremony for Benghazi Victims
1846	2012.09.15	Weekly Address Carrying on the Work of Our Fallen Heroes
1847	2012.09.17	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Cincinnati, OH
1848	2012.09.17	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Columbus, Ohio
1850	2012.09.18	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- 4040 Club
1851	2012.09.18	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- Waldorf Astoria
1853	2012.09.20	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Tampa, FL
1854	2012.09.20	Remarks by the President at Univision Town Hall with Jorge Ramos and Maria Elena Salinas
1855	2012.09.21	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Woodbridge, VA
1857	2012.09.22	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Milwaukee Theater
1859	2012.09.23	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Henry Maier Festival Park
1861	2012.09.25	Remarks by the President to the UN General Assembly
1862	2012.09.26	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Bowling Green, OH
1863	2012.09.26	Remarks by the President at Kent State University
1864	2012.09.27	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event in Virginia Beach, VA
1865	2012.09.27	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event in Virginia Beach, VA 2
1866	2012.09.28	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1867	2012.09.28	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event 2
1868	2012.09.28	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event -- Capital Hilton, Washington, DC
1870	2012.09.30	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1871	2012.10.04	Remarks by the President and Governor Romney in the First Presidential Debate
1872	2012.10.04	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Denver, CO
1873	2012.10.04	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event in Madison, WI
1874	2012.10.05	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Cleveland, OH
1875	2012.10.05	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Fairfax, VA
1877	2012.10.08	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event
1878	2012.10.08	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event2
1881	2012.10.09	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- San Francisco, CA
1882	2012.10.09	Remarks by the President at Campaign Event at The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH
1883	2012.10.11	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Miami, FL
1884	2012.10.11	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event in Miami, FL
1886	2012.10.17	Remarks by the President and Governor Romney in Second Presidential Debate
1887	2012.10.17	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event in Mt. Vernon, IA
1888	2012.10.17	Remarks by the President at Ohio University, Athens, OH
1889	2012.10.18	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event in Manchester, NH
1890	2012.10.19	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Fairfax, VA
1893	2012.10.23	Remarks by the President and Governor Romney in the Third Presidential Debate
1894	2012.10.23	Remarks by the President and Vice President in Dayton, OH
1895	2012.10.23	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event in Delray Beach, Florida
1896	2012.10.24	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Denver, Colorado
1897	2012.10.24	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event in Davenport, Iowa
1898	2012.10.25	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Las Vegas, NV
1899	2012.10.25	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Richmond VA
1900	2012.10.25	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event, Cleveland, OH
1901	2012.10.25	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event, Tampa, FL
1903	2012.10.28	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event in Nashua, NH
1908	2012.11.01	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Green Bay, WI
1909	2012.11.01	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event, Boulder, CO
1910	2012.11.01	Remarks by the President in Las Vegas, NV
1911	2012.11.02	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event -- Hilliard, OH
1912	2012.11.02	Remarks by the President in Lima, OH
1913	2012.11.02	Remarks by the President in Springfield, OH
1915	2012.11.03	Remarks by President Obama and President Clinton in Bristow, VA

1916	2012.11.03	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event in Mentor, OH
1918	2012.11.03	Remarks by the President in Dubuque, IA
1919	2012.11.03	Remarks by the President in Milwaukee, WI
1922	2012.11.04	Remarks by President Obama and President Clinton at a Campaign Event in Concord, NH
1923	2012.11.04	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event in Cincinnati, OH
1924	2012.11.04	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event in Hollywood, FL
1925	2012.11.04	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event, Aurora, Colorado
1926	2012.11.05	Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event in Columbus, Ohio
1927	2012.11.05	Remarks by the President in Madison, WI
1928	2012.11.06	Remarks by the First Lady and the President at Final Campaign Rally -- Des Moines, IA
1932	2012.11.11	Remarks by the President on Veterans Day
1933	2012.11.14	Remarks by the President in a News Conference
1938	2012.11.18	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Shinawatra in a Joint Press Conference
1939	2012.11.19	Remarks by President Obama and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
1940	2012.11.19	Remarks by President Obama and President Thein Sein of Burma After Bilateral Meeting
1942	2012.11.20	Remarks by President Obama and Premier Wen Jiabao Before Bilateral Meeting
1943	2012.11.20	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Noda of Japan Before Bilateral Meeting
1948	2012.11.28	Remarks of President Obama and President-Elect Peña Nieto of Mexico Before Bilateral Meeting
1951	2012.12.03	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Borisov of Bulgaria
1952	2012.12.03	Remarks by the President at the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Symposium
1960	2012.12.14	Remarks by the President at a Hanukkah Reception
1964	2012.12.19	Remarks by the President at the Diplomatic Corps Reception
1966	2012.12.21	Remarks by the President at Nomination of Senator John Kerry as Secretary of State
1969	2012.12.22	Weekly Address The President and First Lady Extend a Holiday Greeting and Thank our Troops for their Service
1970	2012.12.25	Remarks by the President to Servicemembers and their Families
1976	2013.01.07	Remarks by the President in Nomination of Secretary of Defense and CIA Director
1978	2013.01.12	WEEKLY ADDRESS Ending the War in Afghanistan and Rebuilding America
1982	2013.01.20	Remarks by the President, the Vice President, the First Lady and Dr. Biden at Inaugural Reception
1985	2013.01.22	Remarks by the President at Commander-in-Chief Ball
1987	2013.01.24	Remarks by the President at a Personnel Announcement
1988	2013.01.25	Remarks by the President at a Personnel Announcement
1989	2013.01.26	Weekly Address Two Nominees Who Will Fight for the American People
1995	2013.02.04	Remarks by the President on Preventing Gun Violence in Minneapolis, MN
1998	2013.02.07	Remarks by the President at House Democratic Issues Conference
2000	2013.02.08	Remarks by the President and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta
2002	2013.02.11	Remarks by the President in Presentation of the Medal of Honor to Staff Sergeant Clinton L. Romesha
2003	2013.02.12	Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address
2004	2013.02.12	RPresident Barack Obama's State of the Union Address -- As Prepared for Delivery
2007	2013.02.15	Remarks by President Obama and President Napolitano Before Bilateral Meeting
2008	2013.02.15	Remarks by the President at Presentation of 2012 Presidential Citizens Medals
2012	2013.02.22	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan After Bilateral Meeting
2019	2013.03.01	Statement by the President on the Sequester
2024	2013.03.09	Remarks by the President at the Gridiron Dinner
2026	2013.03.12	Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty Sultan of Brunei Darussalam After a Bilateral Meeting
2031	2013.03.18	Remarks by the President Announcing the Nomination of Thomas Perez for Secretary of Labor
2034	2013.03.19	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Kenny of Ireland Before a Bilateral Meeting
2037	2013.03.20	Remarks by President Obama and President Peres After Meeting
2038	2013.03.20	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel in Joint Press Conference
2039	2013.03.21	Remarks by President and President Peres of Israel at State Dinner
2041	2013.03.21	Remarks of President Barack Obama To the People of Israel
2042	2013.03.22	Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Joint Press Conference
2048	2013.03.28	Remarks by the President After Meeting with African Leaders
2051	2013.03.29	Weekly Address President Obama Offers Easter and Passover Greetings
2053	2013.04.02	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Lee of Singapore Before Bilateral Meeting
2065	2013.04.11	Remarks by President Obama and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon After Meeting
2070	2013.04.17	Remarks by the President Welcoming the Wounded Warrior Project's Soldier Ride
2072	2013.04.18	Remarks by the President at Interfaith Service in Boston, MA
2074	2013.04.19	Statement by the President (Boston)

2075	2013.04.20	Weekly Address America Stands with the City of Boston
2077	2013.04.23	Remarks by the President and Amir of Qatar after Bilateral Meeting
2080	2013.04.25	Remarks by the President at DNC Event
2082	2013.04.26	Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Abdullah II before Bilateral Meeting
2086	2013.04.29	Remarks by the President on the 150th Anniversary of the National Academy of Sciences
2088	2013.04.30	News Conference by the President
2089	2013.04.30	Remarks by the President, The Vice President, The First Lady, Dr. Jill Biden, and Petty Officer David Padilla at Joining Forces Employment Event
2091	2013.05.02	Remarks by President Obama and President Pena Nieto of Mexico in a Joint Press Conference
2093	2013.05.03	Remarks by President Obama and President Chinchilla of Costa Rica in a Joint Press Conference
2098	2013.05.05	Remarks by the President at The Ohio State University Commencement
2099	2013.05.05	Remarks of President Barack Obama – As Prepared for Delivery
2100	2013.05.07	Remarks by President Obama and President Park of South Korea in a Joint Press Conference
2106	2013.05.13	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron of the United Kingdom in Joint Press Conference
2108	2013.05.13	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event -- New York, NY
2110	2013.05.15	Remarks by the President at the National Peace Officers Memorial Service
2111	2013.05.16	Joint Press Conference by President Obama and Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey
2117	2013.05.20	Remarks by President Obama and President Thein Sein of Myanmar After Bilateral Meeting
2120	2013.05.23	Remarks by the President at the National Defense University
2121	2013.05.23	Remarks of President Barack Obama
2122	2013.05.24	Remarks by the President at the United States Naval Academy Commencement
2123	2013.05.25	Weekly Address Giving Thanks to our Fallen Heroes this Memorial Day
2125	2013.05.27	Remarks by the President Commemorating Memorial Day
2130	2013.05.31	Remarks by President Obama and NATO Secretary General Anders Rasmussen After Bilateral Meeting
2134	2013.06.04	Remarks by President Obama and President Piñera of Chile After Bilateral Meeting
2136	2013.06.05	Remarks by the President Congratulating the Super Bowl Champion Baltimore Ravens
2137	2013.06.05	Remarks by the President in Personnel Announcement
2139	2013.06.07	Remarks by President Obama and President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China Before Bilateral Meeting
2142	2013.06.08	Remarks by President Obama and President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China After Bilateral Meeting
2146	2013.06.11	Remarks by President Obama and President Humala of Peru After Bilateral Meeting
2151	2013.06.12	Remarks by the President at Markey for Senate Rally -- Boston, MA
2156	2013.06.17	Remarks by President Obama and President Putin of Russia After Bilateral Meeting
2157	2013.06.17	Remarks by President Obama, U.K. Prime Minister Cameron, European Commission President Barroso, and European Council President Van Rompuy on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
2158	2013.06.18	Remarks by President Obama after a bilateral meeting with President Hollande of France
2160	2013.06.19	Remarks by President Obama and German Chancellor Merkel in Joint Press Conference
2161	2013.06.19	Remarks by President Obama at the Brandenburg Gate -- Berlin, Germany
2162	2013.06.21	Remarks by the President at Nomination of James Comey as Director of the FBI
2167	2013.06.27	Remarks by President Obama and President Sall of Senegal in an Exchange of Toasts
2168	2013.06.27	Remarks by President Obama and President Sall of the Republic of Senegal at Joint Press Conference
2172	2013.06.29	Remarks by President Obama and President Zuma of South Africa at Joint Press Conference
2173	2013.06.29	Remarks by President Obama at Young African Leaders Initiative Town Hall
2177	2013.06.30	Remarks by President Obama at the University of Cape Town
2178	2013.07.01	Remarks by President Obama and President Kikwete of Tanzania at Joint Press Conference
2182	2013.07.04	Remarks by the President at Fourth of July Celebration
2196	2013.07.24	Remarks by the President on the Economy -- Knox College, Galesburg, IL
2197	2013.07.25	Remarks by President Obama and President Truong Tan Sang of Vietnam after Bilateral Meeting
2198	2013.07.25	Remarks by the President at Iftar Dinner
2202	2013.07.27	Remarks by the President at 60th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice
2207	2013.08.01	Remarks by President Obama and President Abdo Rabu Mansour Hadi of Yemen after Bilateral Meeting
2210	2013.08.07	Remarks by the President at Camp Pendleton, CA
2212	2013.08.08	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Samaras of Greece after Bilateral Meeting
2214	2013.08.09	Remarks by the President in a Press Conference
2215	2013.08.10	Remarks by The First Lady and The President at Disabled American Veterans Convention

2217	2013.08.15	Remarks by the President on the Situation in Egypt
2223	2013.08.23	Remarks by the President in Town Hall at Binghamton University
2225	2013.08.26	Remarks by the President in Presentation of the Medal of Honor to Staff Sergeant Ty M. Carter
2227	2013.08.31	Statement by the President on Syria
2229	2013.09.03	Remarks by the President Before Meeting with Members of Congress on the Situation in Syria
2230	2013.09.04	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Reinfeldt of Sweden in Joint Press Conference
2232	2013.09.05	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan Before Bilateral Meeting at the G20 Summit
2233	2013.09.06	Remarks by President Obama and President Hollande of France after Bilateral Meeting
2234	2013.09.06	Remarks by President Obama and President Xi of the People's Republic of China Before Bilateral Meeting
2235	2013.09.06	Remarks by President Obama in a Press Conference at the G20
2237	2013.09.07	Weekly Address Calling for Limited Military Action in Syria
2238	2013.09.10	Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Syria
2239	2013.09.11	Remarks by the President at the September 11th Observance at the Pentagon Memorial
2240	2013.09.12	Remarks by the President Before Meeting with Cabinet Members
2241	2013.09.13	Remarks by President Obama and Amir Sabah Al-Sabah of Kuwait After Bilateral Meeting
2242	2013.09.14	Weekly Address Pursuing a Diplomatic Solution in Syria
2243	2013.09.16	Remarks by the President at the Five-Year Anniversary of the Financial Crisis
2249	2013.09.23	Remarks by President Obama at Civil Society Roundtable
2250	2013.09.23	Remarks by President Obama Before Bilateral Meeting with President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria
2252	2013.09.24	Remarks by President Obama and President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority Before Bilateral Meeting
2253	2013.09.24	Remarks by President Obama and President Sleiman of Lebanon before Bilateral Meeting
2255	2013.09.24	Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly
2256	2013.09.24	Remarks by the President at Fundraising Reception -- NY, NY
2258	2013.09.27	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Singh of India after Bilateral Meeting
2259	2013.09.27	Statement by the President
2261	2013.09.30	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel After Bilateral Meeting
2270	2013.10.15	Remarks by the President at Presentation of the Medal of Honor to Captain William D. Swenson
2272	2013.10.17	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Letta of Italy after Bilateral Meeting
2274	2013.10.18	Remarks by the President at Nomination of Jeh Johnson to be Secretary of Homeland Security
2277	2013.10.23	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan After Bilateral Meeting
2282	2013.10.28	Remarks by the President and FBI Director James Comey
2285	2013.10.31	Remarks by the President at DCCC Event -- Weston, MA
2287	2013.11.01	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Maliki of Iraq after Bilateral Meeting
2299	2013.11.08	Remarks by the President on Veterans Day
2300	2013.11.09	Weekly Address Honoring America's Veterans
2302	2013.11.13	Remarks by the President at Tribal Nations Conference
2308	2013.11.19	Remarks by the President to the Wall Street Journal CEO Council
2315	2013.11.25	Remarks by the President on Immigration Reform -- San Francisco, CA
2316	2013.11.26	Remarks by the President at First Joint DCCC DSCC Event -- Beverly Hills, CA
2317	2013.11.26	Remarks by the President at Second Joint DCCC DSCC Event -- Beverly Hills, CA
2322	2013.12.03	Remarks by President Obama and President Santos of Colombia After Bilateral Meeting
2326	2013.12.05	Remarks by the President at Afternoon Hanukkah Reception
2329	2013.12.07	Remarks by the President in a Conversation with the Saban Forum
2338	2013.12.20	Press Conference by the President
2340	2013.12.25	Weekly Address The President and First Lady Wish Everyone a Happy Holiday Season
2345	2014.01.13	Remarks by President Obama and President Rajoy of Spain After Bilateral Meeting
2352	2014.01.17	Remarks by the President on Review of Signals Intelligence
2358	2014.01.28	President Barack Obama's State of the Union Address
2367	2014.02.06	Remarks by President Obama and President Martelly of Haiti before Bilateral Meeting
2368	2014.02.06	Remarks by the President at National Prayer Breakfast
2372	2014.02.11	Remarks by President Obama and President Hollande of France at Arrival Ceremony
2373	2014.02.11	Remarks by President Obama and President Hollande of France in Exchange of Toasts at State Dinner
2375	2014.02.14	Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
2381	2014.02.19	Remarks by President Obama before Restricted Bilateral Meeting
2396	2014.03.03	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu before Bilateral Meeting
2407	2014.03.12	Remarks by President Obama and Ukraine Prime Minister Yatsenyuk after Bilateral Meeting

2410	2014.03.14	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Kenny of Ireland after Bilateral Meeting
2421	2014.03.24	Remarks by President Obama and President Xi Jinping of China Before Bilateral Meeting
2422	2014.03.24	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Rutte of the Netherlands After Bilateral Meeting
2425	2014.03.26	Press Conference by President Obama, European Council President Van Rompuy, and European Commission President Barroso
2426	2014.03.26	Remarks by President Obama and NATO Secretary General Rasmussen Before Meeting
2427	2014.03.26	Remarks by President Obama, His Majesty King Philippe, and Prime Minister di Rupo of Belgium at Flanders Field Cemetery
2428	2014.03.26	Remarks by the President in Address to European Youth
2429	2014.03.27	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Renzi of Italy in Joint Press Conference
2431	2014.04.01	Remarks by the President Honoring the 2013 World Series Champion Boston Red Sox
2434	2014.04.02	Remarks by the President on Minimum Wage -- Ann Arbor, MI
2435	2014.04.02	Remarks by the President on the Shooting at Fort Hood
2436	2014.04.03	Remarks by the President and the First Lady at Visit of the 2014 Sochi Olympic and Paralympic Athletes
2437	2014.04.04	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Jomaa of Tunisia Before Bilateral Meeting
2442	2014.04.09	Remarks by the President at Fort Hood Memorial Service
2443	2014.04.09	Remarks by the President at Joint DCCC DSCC Dinner
2451	2014.04.17	Press Conference by the President
2452	2014.04.17	Remarks by the President Welcoming the Wounded Warrior Project's Soldier Ride
2459	2014.04.25	Remarks by President Obama and President Park of the Republic of Korea before Bilateral Meeting
2463	2014.04.26	Remarks by President Obama to U.S. Troops and Personnel at U.S. Army Garrison Yongsan
2467	2014.04.27	Remarks by President Obama at Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Town Hall
2468	2014.04.28	Remarks by President Obama and President Aquino III of the Philippines at State Dinner
2469	2014.04.28	Remarks by President Obama and President Benigno Aquino III of the Philippines in Joint Press Conference
2471	2014.04.28	Remarks by President Obama to Filipino and U.S. Armed Forces at Fort Bonifacio
2474	2014.05.02	Remarks by President Obama and German Chancellor Merkel in Joint Press Conference
2476	2014.05.05	Remarks by President Obama and President Guelleh of Djibouti before Bilateral Meeting
2478	2014.05.05	Remarks by the President at White House Correspondents' Dinner
2481	2014.05.07	Remarks by the President at USC Shoah Foundation Dinner
2483	2014.05.08	Remarks by the President at DNC Reception -- San Jose, CA
2485	2014.05.12	Remarks by President Obama and President Mujica of Uruguay Before Bilateral Meeting
2488	2014.05.13	Remarks by the President at Presentation of Medal of Honor to Sergeant Kyle J. White, U.S. Army
2491	2014.05.15	Remarks by the President at 911 Museum Dedication
2501	2014.05.24	Weekly Address Paying Tribute to our Fallen Heroes this Memorial Day
2502	2014.05.25	Remarks by the President to the Troops at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan
2503	2014.05.26	Remarks by the President Before ISAF Meeting -- Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan
2504	2014.05.26	Remarks by the President On Memorial Day -- Arlington National Cemetery
2506	2014.05.28	Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony
2507	2014.05.29	Remarks by the President at the Healthy Kids and Safe Sports Concussion Summit
2510	2014.05.30	Remarks by the President, Press Secretary Jay Carney, and Principal Deputy Press Secretary Josh Earnest in Daily Press Briefing
2511	2014.05.31	Statement by the President on the Release of Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl
2513	2014.06.03	Remarks by President Obama and President Komorowski of Poland in a Joint Press Conference
2517	2014.06.04	Remarks by President Obama and President-elect Petro Poroshenko of Ukraine After Bilateral Meeting
2518	2014.06.04	Remarks by President Obama at at 25th Anniversary of Freedom Day
2519	2014.06.04	Remarks by President Obama at at 25th Anniversary of Freedom Day -- Warsaw, Poland
2520	2014.06.05	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom in Joint Press Conference
2521	2014.06.06	Remarks by President Obama at the 70th Anniversary of D-Day -- Omaha Beach, Normandy
2529	2014.06.12	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abbott of Australia After Bilateral Meeting
2533	2014.06.14	Remarks by the President at University of California-Irvine Commencement Ceremony
2537	2014.06.19	Remarks by the President at Presentation of The Medal of Honor to Corporal William Kyle Carpenter
2538	2014.06.19	Remarks by the President on the Situation in Iraq
2540	2014.06.23	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Key of New Zealand after Bilateral Meeting
2546	2014.06.26	Remarks by the President in Town Hall
2549	2014.06.30	Remarks by President Obama and President Michelle Bachelet of Chile Before Bilateral Meeting
2550	2014.06.30	Remarks by the President at Nomination of Robert McDonald as Secretary of Veterans Affairs
2558	2014.07.05	Remarks by the President at Fourth of July Celebration
2566	2014.07.14	Remarks by The President at the Annual Iftar Dinner, July 14, 2014

2569	2014.07.16	Remarks by the President on Foreign Policy
2572	2014.07.18	Statement by the President on Ukraine
2575	2014.07.21	Remarks by the President at Presentation of the Medal of Honor to Staff Sergeant Ryan Pitts
2577	2014.07.21	Statement by the President on the Situation in Ukraine and Gaza
2579	2014.07.22	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event -- Seattle, WA
2585	2014.07.25	Remarks by President Obama After Meeting with Central American Presidents
2594	2014.08.01	Press Conference by the President
2596	2014.08.05	Remarks by the President at the U.S.-Africa Business Forum
2599	2014.08.06	Remarks by the President at Press Conference After U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit
2600	2014.08.07	Remarks by the President at the Signing of the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act
2601	2014.08.07	Statement by the President
2602	2014.08.09	Statement by the President on Iraq
2603	2014.08.09	Weekly Address American Operations in Iraq
2604	2014.08.11	Remarks by the President at a DSCC Event -- Tisbury, MA
2605	2014.08.11	Statement by the President on Iraq
2606	2014.08.14	Statement by the President
2608	2014.08.18	Statement by the President on ISIL and Ferguson
2609	2014.08.20	Statement by the President on Foley
2611	2014.08.26	Remarks by the President to the American Legion National Convention
2612	2014.08.28	Statement by the President
2614	2014.08.29	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event -- Purchase, New York
2616	2014.09.01	Remarks by the President at Milwaukee Laborfest
2617	2014.09.03	Remarks by President Obama and President Ilves of Estonia in Joint Press Conference
2618	2014.09.03	Remarks by President Obama to the People of Estonia
2619	2014.09.05	Remarks by President Obama and President Erdoğan of Turkey Before Bilateral Meeting
2620	2014.09.05	Remarks by President Obama at NATO Summit Press Conference
2621	2014.09.10	Statement by the President on ISIL
2622	2014.09.11	Remarks by the President at 911 Memorial
2623	2014.09.12	Remarks by the President at a DSCC Event
2625	2014.09.13	Weekly Address We Will Degrade and Destroy ISIL
2628	2014.09.17	Remarks by the President at Congressional Picnic
2629	2014.09.17	Remarks by the President at MacDill Air Force Base
2630	2014.09.18	Remarks by President Obama and President Poroshenko of Ukraine After Bilateral Meeting
2631	2014.09.19	Remarks by the President at DNC Women's Leadership Forum
2632	2014.09.19	Remarks by the President at It's On Us Campaign Rollout
2633	2014.09.20	Weekly Address The World Is United in the Fight Against ISIL
2635	2014.09.23	Remarks by President Obama in Meeting with Arab Coalition Partners
2636	2014.09.23	Remarks by the President at a DSCC Event -- New York, New York
2637	2014.09.23	Remarks by the President at Clinton Global Initiative
2638	2014.09.23	Remarks by the President at U.N. Climate Change Summit
2639	2014.09.23	Statement by the President on Airstrikes in Syria
2640	2014.09.24	Remarks As Prepared for Delivery by President Barack Obama, Address to the United Nations General Assembly
2641	2014.09.24	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abadi of the Republic of Iraq After Bilateral Meeting
2642	2014.09.24	Remarks by President Obama at Luncheon with U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon
2643	2014.09.24	Remarks by President Obama at Open Government Partnership Meeting
2644	2014.09.24	Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly
2645	2014.09.24	Remarks by the President at U.N. Security Council Summit on Foreign Terrorist Fighters
2646	2014.09.25	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Desalegn of Ethiopia Before Bilateral Meeting
2647	2014.09.25	Remarks by President Obama Before Bilateral Meeting with President el-Sisi of Egypt
2648	2014.09.25	Statement by the President and Attorney General Eric Holder
2649	2014.09.26	Remarks by the President at Global Health Security Agenda Summit
2650	2014.09.27	Weekly Address America is Leading the World
2651	2014.09.28	Remarks by the President at Congressional Black Caucus Awards Dinner
2652	2014.09.30	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India After Bilateral Meeting
2653	2014.10.01	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel Before Bilateral Meeting
2656	2014.10.02	Remarks by the President on the Economy -- Northwestern University
2659	2014.10.05	Remarks by the President at the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial Dedication
2661	2014.10.06	Remarks by the President at DNC Event

2662	2014.10.07	Remarks by the President at DNC Event -- New York
2663	2014.10.08	Remarks by the President at the Pentagon
2665	2014.10.09	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event -- Los Angeles, CA
2668	2014.10.11	Remarks by the First Lady at Bruce Braley for Senate Rally -- Des Moines, Iowa
2670	2014.10.14	Remarks by the President After Meeting with Chiefs of Defense
2672	2014.10.16	Remarks by the President After Meeting on the Government's Response to Ebola
2676	2014.10.19	Remarks by the President at Anthony Brown for Governor Rally
2678	2014.10.20	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event-- Chicago, IL
2679	2014.10.22	Remarks by the President on the U.S. Government's Ebola Response and the Shooting Incident in Canada
2681	2014.10.28	Remarks by the President at Burke for Governor Rally
2683	2014.10.30	Remarks by the President at Michaud for Governor Rally
2686	2014.11.01	Remarks by The President at Rally for Gary Peters and Mark Schauer -- Detroit, Michigan
2687	2014.11.02	Remarks by The President at Rally for Governor Dan Malloy -- Bridgeport, Connecticut
2688	2014.11.02	Remarks by the President at Rally for Tom Wolf for Governor
2689	2014.11.05	Remarks by the President in a Press Conference
2690	2014.11.06	Remarks by the President at A Salute to the Troops In Concert at the White House
2691	2014.11.06	Remarks by the President at Medal of Honor Presentation to First Lieutenant Alonzo H. Cushing
2692	2014.11.07	Remarks by the President Before Cabinet Meeting
2693	2014.11.07	Remarks by the President Before Meeting with Congressional Leadership
2694	2014.11.08	Weekly Address This Veterans' Day, Let's Honor Our Veterans
2695	2014.11.09	Remarks by the President at Nomination of Loretta Lynch for Attorney General
2696	2014.11.10	Remarks by President Obama and President Widodo of Indonesia before Bilateral Meeting
2697	2014.11.10	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abbott of Australia After Bilateral Meeting
2698	2014.11.10	Remarks by President Obama at APEC CEO Summit
2699	2014.11.10	Remarks by President Obama at APEC Plenary Session One
2701	2014.11.12	Remarks by President Obama and President Xi Jinping in Joint Press Conference
2702	2014.11.12	Remarks by President Obama Before Bilateral Meeting with President Xi of China
2704	2014.11.13	Remarks by President Obama After Bilateral Meeting with President Thein Sein of Burma
2708	2014.11.14	Remarks by President Obama and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma in Joint Press Conference
2709	2014.11.14	Remarks by President Obama at Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Town Hall
2710	2014.11.15	Remarks by President Obama at the University of Queensland
2712	2014.11.16	Remarks by President Obama at G20 Press Conference
2713	2014.11.18	Remarks by the President Before Meeting with National Security and Public Health Teams on Ebola
2722	2014.11.24	Remarks by the President at Presentation of the Medal of Freedom
2723	2014.11.24	Remarks by the President on the Resignation of Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel
2725	2014.11.26	Remarks by the President at Pardoning of the National Turkey
2729	2014.12.03	Remarks by the President at the Business Roundtable
2733	2014.12.05	Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan after Bilateral Meeting
2735	2014.12.05	Remarks by the President in Nominating Ashton Carter as Secretary of Defense
2738	2014.12.09	Remarks by the President in Immigration Town Hall -- Nashville, Tennessee
2739	2014.12.09	Remarks by the President to Senior Leaders of the Federal Workforce
2740	2014.12.10	Remarks by the President and the First Lady At Toys for Tots Gift Sorting
2743	2014.12.12	Remarks by the President before Meeting on Ebola Response
2744	2014.12.13	Weekly Address Giving Thanks for Our Troops
2746	2014.12.15	Remarks by the President to Military and Civilian Personnel at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst
2748	2014.12.17	Statement by the President on Cuba Policy Changes
2749	2014.12.19	DECLARACIONES DEL PRESIDENTE SOBRE CAMBIOS EN LA POLÍTICA CON CUBA
2750	2014.12.19	Remarks by the President in Year-End Press Conference
2751	2014.12.20	Weekly Address America's Resurgence Is Real
2752	2014.12.25	Weekly Address Happy Holidays from the President and First Lady
2755	2015.01.06	Remarks by President Obama and President Peña Nieto after Bilateral Meeting
2757	2015.01.07	Remarks by the President on the Resurgence of the American Auto industry
2758	2015.01.07	Remarks by the President on the Terrorist Attack in Paris
2760	2015.01.08	Remarks by the President on Housing -- Phoenix, AZ
2762	2015.01.09	Remarks by the President on America's College Promise
2763	2015.01.09	Remarks by the President on Housing -- Phoenix, AZ
2764	2015.01.10	Weekly Address America's Resurgence Is Real
2773	2015.01.16	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron of the United Kingdom in Joint Press Conference

2774	2015.01.17	Weekly Address America's Progress
2775	2015.01.17	Weekly Address State of the Union Is This Tuesday
2776	2015.01.20	Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address
2777	2015.01.20	State of the Union
2783	2015.01.25	Statements by President Obama and Prime Minister Modi of the Republic of India
2784	2015.01.26	Remarks by President Obama at U.S.-India Business Council Summit
2786	2015.01.27	Remarks by President Obama in Address to the People of India
2787	2015.01.28	Remarks by the President at Farewell Tribute in Honor of Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel
2788	2015.01.29	Remarks by the President to the House Democratic Issues Conference
2792	2015.02.02	Remarks by the President on the FY2016 Budget
2794	2015.02.03	Remarks by the President Before Cabinet Meeting
2795	2015.02.04	Remarks by the President in Meeting with DREAMers
2796	2015.02.05	Remarks by the President at National Prayer Breakfast
2797	2015.02.06	Remarks by the President in Town Hall on Middle-Class Economics
2799	2015.02.09	Remarks by President Obama and Chancellor Merkel in Joint Press Conference
2800	2015.02.11	ISIL Remarks by the President on Request to Congress for Authorization of Force Against ISIL
2801	2015.02.11	Remarks by the President on America's Leadership in the Ebola Fight
2802	2015.02.12	Remarks by the President at Signing of the Clay Hunt SAV Act
2803	2015.02.13	Remarks by the President at the Cybersecurity and Consumer Protection Summit
2805	2015.02.17	Remarks by the President After Meeting with Secretary of Defense Ash Carter
2806	2015.02.18	Remarks by the President in Closing of the Summit on Countering Violent Extremism
2809	2015.02.19	Remarks by the President at the Summit on Countering Violent Extremism February 19, 2015
2816	2015.02.24	Remarks by President Obama and the Amir of Qatar After Bilateral Meeting
2817	2015.02.24	Remarks by President Obama and the Amir of Qatar After Bilateral Meeting LAST EDIT
2818	2015.02.25	Remarks by the President in Immigration Town Hall -- Miami, FL
2820	2015.02.27	Remarks by President Obama and President Sirleaf of Liberia before Bilateral Meeting
2821	2015.02.27	Remarks by the President and Attorney General Eric Holder at Departure Ceremony
2825	2015.03.03	Remarks by the President Before Meeting with Secretary of Defense Carter
2827	2015.03.07	Remarks by the President at the 50th Anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery Marches
2829	2015.03.09	Remarks by President Obama and European Council President Donald Tusk before Bilateral Meeting
2834	2015.03.17	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Kenny of Ireland After Bilateral Meeting
2836	2015.03.18	Remarks by the President to the City Club of Cleveland
2837	2015.03.19	Remarks by President Obama on Nowruz
2838	2015.03.19	Remarks by the President on Energy and Climate Change
2840	2015.03.21	Weekly Address It's Time To Confirm Loretta Lynch
2843	2015.03.24	Remarks by President Obama and President Ghani of Afghanistan in Joint Press Conference
2850	2015.03.30	Remarks by the President at Dedication of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute
2853	2015.04.02	Statement by the President on the Framework to Prevent Iran from Obtaining a Nuclear Weapon
2854	2015.04.03	Remarks by the President on Jobs in Solar Energy
2855	2015.04.04	Weekly Address Reaching a Comprehensive and Long-Term Deal on Iran's Nuclear Program
2857	2015.04.07	On-the-Record Conference Call on the President's Trip to Jamaica and Panama
2860	2015.04.09	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Simpson-Miller of Jamaica After Bilateral Meeting
2862	2015.04.09	Remarks by President Obama in Town Hall with Young Leaders of the Americas
2863	2015.04.10	Remarks by President Obama and President Varela of Panama After Bilateral Meeting
2864	2015.04.10	Remarks by President Obama at the Civil Society Forum
2865	2015.04.10	Remarks by President Obama in Response to Questions at the CEO Summit of the Americas
2866	2015.04.10	Remarks by the President at Opening of the CEO Summit of the Americas
2867	2015.04.10	Remarks by the President in Meeting with SICA Presidents
2868	2015.04.11	Remarks by President Obama and President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil Before Meeting
2870	2015.04.11	Remarks by President Obama and President Santos of Colombia before Bilateral Meeting
2871	2015.04.11	Remarks by President Obama at the First Plenary Session of the Summit of the Americas
2872	2015.04.11	Remarks by the President in Press Conference after the Summit of the Americas
2873	2015.04.12	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Al-Abadi of Iraq after Bilateral Meeting
2874	2015.04.14	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Al-Abadi of Iraq after Bilateral Meeting
2879	2015.04.16	Remarks by the President at the Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride Event
2882	2015.04.17	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Renzi of Italy in Joint Press Conference
2885	2015.04.20	Remarks by the First Lady at Joining Forces Event for the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness -- New Orleans, Louisiana
2889	2015.04.23	Remarks by the President at the Organizing for Action Summit

2891	2015.04.23	Statement by the President on the Deaths of Warren Weinstein and Giovanni Lo Porto
2892	2015.04.24	Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at the Export-Import Bank's Annual Conference
2893	2015.04.24	Remarks by the President at Organizing For Action Dinner
2894	2015.04.24	Remarks by the President Marking the 10th Anniversary of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence
2895	2015.04.25	Remarks By The President At White House Correspondents' Association Dinner
2897	2015.04.28	Remarks By President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan at Arrival Ceremony
2898	2015.04.28	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan in Joint Press Conference
2899	2015.04.29	Remarks by the President Celebrating the 2015 National Teacher of the Year
2900	2015.04.29	Toast Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abe at State Dinner
2901	2015.04.30	Remarks at the Arab American Institute's Annual Kahlil Gibran Gala
2903	2015.04.30	Remarks by the President in Discovery Education Webinar with Middle School Students
2904	2015.05.01	Remarks by the President On World Press Freedom Day
2909	2015.05.05	Remarks by the President at Nomination of General Joe Dunford as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and General Paul Selva as Vice Chairman
2911	2015.05.08	Remarks by the President at DNC Fundraiser -- Portland, OR
2915	2015.05.11	Remarks by the President at Global Entrepreneurship Event
2917	2015.05.13	Remarks by President Obama and Crown Prince bin Nayef of Saudi Arabia
2918	2015.05.14	Remarks by President Obama in Press Conference after GCC Summit
2923	2015.05.20	Remarks by the President at the United States Coast Guard Academy Commencement
2924	2015.05.21	Remarks by President Obama and President Essebsi of Tunisia after Bilateral Meeting
2925	2015.05.21	Remarks by the President before Cabinet Meeting
2926	2015.05.22	Remarks by the President on Jewish American Heritage Month
2927	2015.05.25	Remarks by the President on Memorial Day
2928	2015.05.26	Remarks by President Obama and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg after Bilateral Meeting
2931	2015.05.29	Remarks by the President After Meeting with Attorney General Lynch
2932	2015.05.30	Weekly Address Pass the USA Freedom Act
2933	2015.06.01	Remarks by President Obama and King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands After Meeting
2934	2015.06.02	Remarks by the President at Presentation of the Medal of Honor
2935	2015.06.02	Remarks by the President in Town Hall with YSEALI Initiative Fellows
2938	2015.06.07	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron
2939	2015.06.07	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron of the United Kingdom Before Bilateral Meeting
2940	2015.06.07	Remarks by the President in Krun, Germany
2941	2015.06.08	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Al-Abadi after Bilateral Meeting
2942	2015.06.08	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron of the United Kingdom Before Bilateral Meeting
2943	2015.06.08	Remarks by President Obama in Press Conference after G7 Summit
2947	2015.06.17	Remarks by the President at Congressional Picnic
2948	2015.06.17	Remarks by the President at Investiture Ceremony for Attorney General Loretta Lynch
2950	2015.06.19	Remarks by the President at DCCC Fundraiser -- San Francisco, California
2953	2015.06.22	Remarks by the President at the 2015 Iftar Dinner
2955	2015.06.24	Support, Defend, and Sustain The Relevance of U.S. Response to Closing Civic Space
2957	2015.06.26	Remarks by the President in Eulogy for the Honorable Reverend Clementa Pinckney
2961	2015.06.30	Remarks by President Obama and President Rousseff of Brazil in Joint Press Conference
2969	2015.07.06	Remarks by the President on Progress in the Fight Against ISIL
2970	2015.07.07	Remarks by President Obama and General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong of Vietnam
2975	2015.07.14	Remarks by the President at the NAACP Conference
2976	2015.07.14	Statement by the President on Iran
2981	2015.07.18	WEEKLY ADDRESS A Comprehensive, Long-Term Deal with Iran
2982	2015.07.20	Remarks by President Obama and President Buhari of Nigeria Before Bilateral Meeting
2983	2015.07.20	Remarks by the President on The Americans With Disabilities Act
2985	2015.07.21	Remarks by the President to the VFW National Convention
2988	2015.07.25	Remarks by President Obama and President Kenyatta of Kenya Before Bilateral Meeting
2989	2015.07.25	Remarks by President Obama and President Kenyatta of Kenya in a Press Conference
2990	2015.07.25	Remarks by President Obama and President Kenyatta of Kenya in Press Conference
2995	2015.07.26	Remarks by President Obama in Conversation with Members of Civil Society
2996	2015.07.26	Remarks by President Obama to the Kenyan People

2997	2015.07.27	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia in Joint Press Conference
2999	2015.07.27	Toast Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia at State Dinner
3001	2015.07.28	Remarks by President Obama to the People of Africa
3003	2015.07.31	Remarks by the President at Signing of the Extension of Highway Funding Bill
3005	2015.08.03	Remarks by the President at the Young African Leaders Initiative Presidential Summit Town Hall
3006	2015.08.03	Remarks by the President in Announcing the Clean Power Plan
3007	2015.08.04	Remarks by the President and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon After Bilateral Meeting
3009	2015.08.05	Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal
3015	2015.08.25	Remarks by the President at an Event for the Nevada State Democratic Party
3016	2015.08.25	Remarks by the President at National Clean Energy Summit
3019	2015.08.27	Remarks by the President on the Ten Year Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina
3028	2015.09.04	Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Salman bin Abd alAziz of Saudi Arabia Before Bilateral Meeting
3030	2015.09.08	Remarks by the President at Greater Boston Labor Council Labor Day Breakfast
3032	2015.09.09	Remarks by the President and Dr. Jill Biden on Training America's Workers
3034	2015.09.10	Remarks by the President at Veterans Roundtable on the Iran Nuclear Deal
3035	2015.09.11	Remarks by the President in Town Hall at Fort Meade
3038	2015.09.15	Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Felipe of Spain After Bilateral Meeting
3041	2015.09.16	Remarks by the President to the Business Roundtable
3042	2015.09.17	Remarks by the President in Meeting with Specialist Aleksander Skarlatos, Airman Spencer Stone, and Anthony Sadler
3043	2015.09.18	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Annual Legislative Conference, Africa Braintrust
3049	2015.09.25	Remarks by President Obama and President Xi of the People's Republic of China at Arrival Ceremony
3051	2015.09.25	Remarks by President Obama and President Xi of the People's Republic of China in Joint Press Conference
3052	2015.09.25	Remarks by the President at Armed Forces Farewell Ceremony for General Martin Dempsey
3055	2015.09.27	Remarks by the President on Sustainable Development Goals
3056	2015.09.28	Remarks by President Obama to the United Nations General Assembly
3057	2015.09.29	Remarks by President Obama at the Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism
3059	2015.10.01	Statement by the President on the Shootings at Umpqua Community College, Roseburg, Oregon
3060	2015.10.02	Press Conference by the President
3065	2015.10.07	Remarks by President Obama and President Gauck of Germany before Bilateral Meeting
3069	2015.10.10	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event -- San Francisco, CA
3070	2015.10.10	Remarks by the President for Patty Murray for Senate and Washington State Democratic Party
3072	2015.10.11	Remarks by the President at DNC Event -- Private Residence, Los Angeles, CA
3073	2015.10.11	Remarks by the President at DNC Event at a Private Residence, Los Angeles, CA
3076	2015.10.15	Statement by the President on Afghanistan
3077	2015.10.16	Remarks by President Obama and President Park of the Republic of Korea in Joint Press Conference
3084	2015.10.22	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif of Pakistan Before Bilateral Meeting
3085	2015.10.22	Remarks by the President at Veto Signing of National Defense Authorization Act
3087	2015.10.23	Remarks by the President at DNC Women's Leadership Forum 22nd Annual Issues Conference
3089	2015.10.27	Remarks by the President at the 122nd Annual IACP Conference
3091	2015.10.28	Remarks by President Obama and His Royal Highness Prince Harry of the United Kingdom
3098	2015.11.03	Remarks by the President at DNC Event
3099	2015.11.04	Remarks by the President at DNC Event
3102	2015.11.09	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel Before Bilateral Meeting
3104	2015.11.09	Remarks by the President at Organizing for Action Event
3105	2015.11.09	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel Before Bilateral Meeting
3106	2015.11.11	Remarks by the President at Veterans Day Commemoration Ceremony
3107	2015.11.12	Remarks by the President in Medal of Honor Presentation to Captain Florent Groberg, United States Army
3109	2015.11.14	Weekly Address Giving Veterans their Chance
3110	2015.11.15	Remarks by President Obama and President Erdogan of Turkey
3111	2015.11.15	Remarks by President Obama and President Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey after Bilateral Meeting
3113	2015.11.17	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull of the Commonwealth of Australia after Bilateral Meeting
3116	2015.11.19	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan Before Bilateral Meeting
3117	2015.11.19	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada After Bilateral Meeting

3118	2015.11.20	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Najib of Malaysia After Bilateral Meeting
3119	2015.11.20	Remarks by President Obama at ASEAN Business and Investment Summit
3120	2015.11.20	Remarks by the President in YSEALI Town Hall
3122	2015.11.21	Remarks by President Obama at the Dignity for Children Foundation
3123	2015.11.21	Remarks by President Obama Before U.S.-ASEAN Meeting
3124	2015.11.21	Weekly Address In the Face of Terror, We Stand as One
3125	2015.11.22	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of the Republic of Singapore After Bilateral Meeting
3126	2015.11.24	Remarks by President Obama and President Hollande of France in Joint Press Conference
3127	2015.11.24	Remarks by the President at Medal of Freedom Ceremony
3128	2015.11.25	Remarks by the President After Meeting with National Security Team
3129	2015.11.25	Weekly Address This Thanksgiving, Recognizing the Greatness of American Generosity
3130	2015.11.30	Remarks by President Obama and President Xi of China Before Bilateral Meeting
3131	2015.11.30	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Modi of India before Bilateral Meeting
3132	2015.11.30	Remarks by President Obama at the First Session of COP21
3136	2015.12.05	WEEKLY ADDRESS We Will Not Be Terrorized
3137	2015.12.06	Address to the Nation by the President
3140	2015.12.09	Remarks by President Obama and President Rivlin of Israel Before Bilateral Meeting
3141	2015.12.09	Remarks by the President at Commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the 13th Amendment
3142	2015.12.12	Weekly Address Standing Strong in the Face of Terrorism
3143	2015.12.14	Remarks by the President on the Military Campaign to Destroy ISIL
3145	2015.12.15	Remarks by the President at Naturalization Ceremony
3146	2015.12.19	Remarks by the President After Meeting the Families of the Victims of the San Bernardino Shooting
3147	2015.12.19	Weekly Address Top 10 Things that Happened in 2015
3149	2015.12.26	Remarks by the President to Servicemembers
4732	2015.11.13	Statement by the President on the Situation in Paris
3153	2016.01.05	Remarks by the President on Common-Sense Gun Safety Reform
3154	2016.01.07	Remarks by the President at CNN Guns In America Town Hall
3156	2016.01.13	Remarks by the President at the University of Nebraska-Omaha
3157	2016.01.13	State of the Union
3160	2016.01.17	Statement by the President on Iran
3161	2016.01.19	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Turnbull of Australia Before Bilateral Meeting
3165	2016.01.27	Remarks by the President at Righteous Among Nations Award Ceremony
3166	2016.01.28	Remarks by the President at House Democratic Issues Conference
3169	2016.02.03	Remarks by the President at Islamic Society of Baltimore
3171	2016.02.04	Remarks by the President at National Prayer Breakfast
3174	2016.02.08	Remarks by President Obama and President Mattarella of Italy After Bilateral Meeting
3178	2016.02.12	Remarks by the President at Democratic Hope Fund Los Angeles Reception
3179	2016.02.12	Remarks by the President at DNC Northern California Reception
3180	2016.02.12	Remarks by the President at L.A. Democratic Hope Fund Dinner
3183	2016.02.15	Remarks by President Obama at Opening Session of the U.S.-ASEAN Summit
3184	2016.02.16	Remarks by President Obama at U.S.-ASEAN Press Conference
3192	2016.02.22	Remarks by the President at National Governors Association Reception
3193	2016.02.23	Remarks by the President on Plan to Close the Prison at Guantanamo Bay
3194	2016.02.24	Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan After Bilateral Meeting
3198	2016.02.25	Remarks by the President on Progress Against ISIL
3200	2016.02.27	WEEKLY ADDRESS: Degrading and Destroying ISIL
3201	2016.02.29	Remarks by the President at Medal of Honor Presentation to Senior Chief Edward Byers, Jr., U.S. Navy
3207	2016.03.10	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada at Arrival Ceremony
3208	2016.03.10	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada in Joint Press Conference
3209	2016.03.10	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada at State Dinner
3210	2016.03.11	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event -- Austin, TX
3211	2016.03.11	Remarks by the President at DNC Reception -- Austin, TX
3212	2016.03.11	Remarks by the President at South By Southwest Interactive
3213	2016.03.12	Remarks by the President at a DSCC Event -- Dallas, TX
3214	2016.03.12	Remarks by the President at DNC Hope Fund Dallas Reception
3216	2016.03.14	Remarks by the President at Chief of Missions Conference
3218	2016.03.15	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Kenny of Ireland After Bilateral Meeting

3220	2016.03.15	Remarks by President Obama, Vice President Biden, and Prime Minister Kenny of Ireland at St. Patrick's Day Reception
3221	2016.03.16	Remarks by the President Announcing Judge Merrick Garland as his Nominee to the Supreme Court
3226	2016.03.22	Remarks by President Obama to the People of Cuba
3227	2016.03.23	Remarks by President Obama and President Macri of Argentina in Exchange of Toasts at State Dinner
3228	2016.03.23	Remarks by President Obama in Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative Town Hall
3230	2016.03.26	Weekly Address Defeating ISIL
3232	2016.03.28	Remarks by the President at the 2016 Toner Prize Ceremony
3233	2016.03.29	Remarks by the President in Panel Discussion at the National Prescription Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit
3234	2016.03.30	Remarks by the President and the Vice President at Easter Prayer Breakfast
3236	2016.03.31	Remarks by President Obama and President Xi of the People's Republic of China Before Bilateral Meeting
3237	2016.03.31	Remarks by President Obama and President Hollande of France After Bilateral Meeting
3238	2016.03.31	Remarks by President Obama, President Park Geun-Hye of the Republic of Korea, and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan After Trilateral Meeting
3239	2016.04.01	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Rutte at Opening Session of the Nuclear Security Summit
3240	2016.04.01	Remarks by President Obama at the Closing Session of the Nuclear Security Summit
3241	2016.04.01	P5+1 Remarks by President Obama at the P5+1 Meeting
3242	2016.04.02	Weekly Address: Securing the World from Nuclear Terrorism
3243	2016.04.04	Remarks by the President and Secretary General Stoltenberg of NATO after Bilateral Meeting
3244	2016.04.05	Remarks by the President in Meeting with Combatant Commanders and Joint Chiefs of Staff
3245	2016.04.05	Remarks by the President on the Economy
3248	2016.04.09	Remarks by the President in a Conversation on the Supreme Court Nomination
3251	2016.04.13	Statement by the President on Progress in the Fight Against ISIL
3253	2016.04.14	Remarks by the President at 2016 Wounded Warrior Ride Kickoff
3255	2016.04.21	Remarks by President Obama in Q&A with the Press -- Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
3256	2016.04.22	UK Remarks by the President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron in Joint Press Conference
3257	2016.04.23	Remarks by President Obama in Town Hall with Young Leaders of the UK
3258	2016.04.24	Remarks by President Obama at Hannover Messe Trade Show Opening
3259	2016.04.25	Remarks by President Obama in Address to the People of Europe
3262	2016.04.28	Remarks by the President to College Reporters
3269	2016.05.05	Remarks by the President, Vice President, First Lady and Dr. Biden at Joining Forces 5th Anniversary Event
3272	2016.05.06	Remarks by the President on the Economy
3273	2016.05.07	Remarks by the President at Howard University Commencement Ceremony
3277	2016.05.13	Remarks by President Obama, President Niinistö of Finland, and Prime Minister Solberg of Norway at the Nordic Leaders' Summit Arrival Ceremony
3278	2016.05.13	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Lofven of Sweden after Multilateral Meeting with Nordic Leaders
3281	2016.05.15	Remarks by the President at Commencement Address at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
3282	2016.05.16	Remarks by the President at Presentation of the Medal of Valor
3287	2016.05.24	Remarks by President Obama in Address to the People of Vietnam
3289	2016.05.24	Toast Remarks by President Obama and President Quang of Vietnam at State Luncheon
3291	2016.05.26	Remarks by President Obama in Press Availability -- Ise-Shima, Japan
3292	2016.05.27	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan at Hiroshima Peace Memorial
3296	2016.05.30	Remarks by the President on Memorial Day, 2016
3299	2016.06.01	Remarks by the President on the Economy
3300	2016.06.02	Remarks by the President in Commencement Address to the United States Air Force Academy
3301	2016.06.02	Remarks by the President at PBS NewsHour Town Hall Discussion with Gwen Ifill for Elkhart, IN Residents
3304	2016.06.06	Remarks by the President Honoring Super Bowl Champion Denver Broncos
3306	2016.06.08	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Modi of India After Bilateral Meeting
3307	2016.06.08	Remarks by the President at a DNC Event -- New York, NY
3310	2016.06.12	Remarks by the President on Mass Shooting in Orlando
3312	2016.06.13	Remarks by the President After Briefing on the Attack in Orlando, Florida
3313	2016.06.14	Remarks by the President After Counter-ISIL Meeting
3314	2016.06.14	Remarks by the President at United States of Women Summit
3316	2016.06.16	Remarks by the President in a Statement to the Press
3317	2016.06.18	Weekly Address Standing with Orlando
3322	2016.06.24	Statement by the President On the One-Year Anniversary of the Hostage Policy Review

3323	2016.06.25	Remarks by the President at a DCCC Fundraiser
3326	2016.06.25	Remarks by the President at Global Entrepreneurship Summit and Conversation with Mark Zuckerberg and Entrepreneurs
3327	2016.06.29	Remarks by President Obama, Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada, and President Peña Nieto of Mexico in North American Leaders' Summit Press Conference
3328	2016.06.29	Remarks by President Obama and President Peña Nieto of Mexico After Bilateral Meeting
3329	2016.06.29	Remarks by President Obama in Address to the Parliament of Canada
3334	2016.07.06	Statement by the President on Afghanistan
3336	2016.07.08	Remarks by President Obama and President Duda of Poland After Bilateral Meeting
3337	2016.07.08	Remarks by President Obama, President Tusk of the European Council, and President Juncker of the European Commission after U.S. -EU Meeting
3339	2016.07.10	Remarks By President Obama to Troops at Naval Station Rota
3340	2016.07.11	Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Don Felipe VI of Spain Before Bilateral Meeting
3341	2016.07.11	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Rajoy of Spain After Bilateral Meeting
3342	2016.07.12	remarks by the President at Memorial Service for Fallen Dallas Police Officers
3344	2016.07.15	Remarks by the President at Diplomatic Corps Reception
3349	2016.07.20	Remarks by the President at the White House Summit on Global Development
3350	2016.07.21	Remarks by the President at Eid Reception
3352	2016.07.22	Remarks by President Obama and President Pena Nieto of Mexico in Joint Press Conference
3356	2016.07.28	Remarks by the President at the Democratic National Convention
3357	2016.08.01	Remarks by the President at 95th National Convention for Disabled American Veterans
3358	2016.08.02	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Lee of Singapore at Arrival Ceremony
3359	2016.08.02	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Lee of Singapore in Joint Press Conference
3360	2016.08.03	Toast Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Lee of Singapore at State Dinner
3361	2016.08.03	Remarks by the President at the Young African Leaders Initiative Town Hall
3362	2016.08.04	Press Conference by the President After Meeting with National Security Officials
3363	2016.08.06	Weekly Address
3374	2016.09.04	Remarks by President Obama and President Erdogan of Turkey After Bilateral Meeting at G20 Summit
3375	2016.09.04	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister May of the United Kingdom After Bilateral Meeting at the G20 Summit
3376	2016.09.04	Remarks by President Obama Before Bilateral Meeting with President Xi Jinping of China at the G20 Summit
3377	2016.09.06	Remarks by President Obama and President Park of the Republic of Korea After Bilateral Meeting
3380	2016.09.07	Remarks by President Obama at YSEALI Town Hall
3381	2016.09.08	Remarks by President Obama Before U.S.-ASEAN Meeting
3382	2016.09.10	Weekly address 911
3383	2016.09.11	Remarks by the President Obama at the 911 Memorial Observance Ceremony
3385	2016.09.13	Remarks by the President at a Hillary for America Event -- Philadelphia, PA
3392	2016.09.18	Remarks by the President at Congressional Black Caucus Foundation 46th Annual Phoenix Awards Dinner
3393	2016.09.18	Remarks by the President at HVF Fundraising Event
3394	2016.09.19	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abadi of Iraq After Bilateral Meeting
3395	2016.09.20	Remarks by President Obama after Bilateral meeting with President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria
3397	2016.09.20	Remarks by President Obama at Leaders Summit on Refugees
3398	2016.09.20	Remarks by President Obama at Luncheon for Heads of State and Government
3399	2016.09.20	Address by President Obama to the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly
3400	2016.09.21	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel Before Bilateral Meeting
3401	2016.09.21	Remarks by President Obama and President Santos of Colombia Before Bilateral Meeting
3407	2016.09.26	Opening Remarks by the President in Call with Rabbis for Rosh Hashanah
3410	2016.09.28	Remarks by the President to Troops
3411	2016.09.29	Remarks by the President Welcoming the 2016 USA Olympic and Paralympic Teams
3412	2016.09.30	Remarks by President Obama at Memorial Service for Former Israeli President Shimon Peres
3414	2016.10.03	Remarks by the President in South by South Lawn Panel Discussion on Climate Change
3421	2016.10.11	Remarks by the President at North Carolina Democratic Party Rally
3422	2016.10.13	Remarks by the President at Ohio Democratic Party Dinner
3423	2016.10.13	Remarks by the President in Opening Remarks and Panel Discussion at White House Frontiers Conference
3424	2016.10.14	Remarks by the President at Hillary for America Campaign Event
3428	2016.10.18	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Renzi of the Republic of Italy in Arrival Ceremony
3430	2016.10.20	Remarks by the President at Democratic Party of Florida Grassroots Organizing Event
3435	2016.10.24	Remarks by the President at DCCC Event
3436	2016.10.24	Remarks by the President at HFA La Jolla Reception

3440	2016.10.28	Remarks by the President at Hillary for America Rally
3442	2016.11.01	Remarks by the President at Ohio Democrats Early Vote Event
3444	2016.11.02	Remarks by the President at Hillary for America Rally -- Raleigh, NC
3445	2016.11.03	Remarks by the President at a Hillary For America Rally -- Jacksonville, Florida
3446	2016.11.03	Remarks by the President at Hillary for America Rally -- Miami, FL
3448	2016.11.04	Remarks by the President at Fayetteville Early Vote Event
3450	2016.11.05	Remarks by the President at Hillary for America Rally in Charlotte, NC
3456	2016.11.07	Remarks by the President at Hillary for America Rally in Ann Arbor Michigan
3463	2016.11.14	Remarks by the President in Conference Call with DNC Stakeholders
3465	2016.11.15	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece in Joint Press Conference
3466	2016.11.15	Remarks by President Obama and President Pavlopoulos of Greece before Courtesy Call
3467	2016.11.16	Remarks by President Obama at Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center in Athens, Greece
3468	2016.11.17	Remarks by President Obama and Chancellor Merkel of Germany in a Joint Press Conference
3469	2016.11.17	Op-Ed by President Obama and Chancellor Merkel: The Future of Transatlantic Relations
3470	2016.11.19	Remarks by President Obama and President Xi of China Before Bilateral Meeting
3471	2016.11.20	Remarks by the President at YLAI Town Hall
3472	2016.11.20	Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada after Bilateral Meeting
3473	2016.11.22	Remarks by the President at Presentation of the Presidential Medal of Freedom
3481	2016.12.06	Remarks by the President on the Administration's Approach to Counterterrorism
3482	2016.12.06	Remarks by the President to Thank Service Members
3484	2016.12.13	Remarks by the President and the Vice President at the 21st Century Cures Act Bill Signing
3489	2016.12.24	Remarks by the President to Service members
3492	2016.12.31	Weekly Address Working Together to Keep America Moving Forward
3493	2017.01.04	Remarks by the President at Armed Forces Full Honor Review Farewell Ceremony
3494	2017.01.04	Remarks by the President with Combatant Commanders and Joint Chiefs of Staff
3497	2017.01.10	Remarks by the President in Farewell Address
3498	2017.01.13	Remarks by the President and the Vice President in Presentation of the Medal of Freedom to Vice President Joe Biden
3499	2017.01.13	Weekly Address The Honor of Serving You as President
3502	2017.01.18	Final Press Conference
3506	2009.02.07	Remarks by Vice President Biden at 45th Munich Conference on Security Policy
3507	2009.02.09	Remarks By National Security Adviser Jones At 45th Munich Conference On Security Policy
3513	2009.02.19	Remarks by the Vice President at the ceremonial swearing-in of Leon E. Panetta as Director of the C
3522	2009.03.03	Pool Report and Remarks from Arlington Nat'l Cemetery Women's Memorial Event
3525	2009.03.05	Transcript of Remarks by the Vice President to the AFL-CIO Executive Council in Miami, Florida
3526	2009.03.10	Remarks by Vice President Biden at Press Conference with NATO Secretary General
3527	2009.03.10	Remarks by Vice President Biden to the North Atlantic Council
3528	2009.03.10	Transcript of QA Session of Press Conference with Vice President Biden and NATO Secretary General
3536	2009.03.16	Remarks by the Vice President to the International Association of Firefighters at their 2009 Legisl
3542	2009.03.28	Remarks By The Vice President At The First Session Of The Progressive Governance Conference in Vina
3543	2009.04.08	Remarks by The Vice President at the Welcome Home Ceremony for XVIII Airborne Corps
3547	2009.04.16	Remarks by the Vice President on the Administration's Commitment to the Military and their Fa
3560	2009.05.05	Remarks By The Vice President At The Annual Policy Conference Of The American Israel Public Affairs
3563	2009.05.11	Commencement address by the Vice President to graduates, family members, and faculty of Syracuse
3569	2009.05.18	Remarks By The Vice President At Wake Forest University
3573	2009.05.21	Remarks By The Vice President To Troops At Camp Bondsteel Multi National Task Force East
3587	2009.07.21	Statement by Vice President Biden After Meeting with President Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine
3588	2009.07.22	Remarks by the Vice President at an official dinner hosted by President Saakashvili
3589	2009.07.22	Remarks By Vice President Biden In Ukraine
3590	2009.07.23	Remarks By The Vice President To The Georgian Parliament
3593	2009.07.31	Remarks by the First Lady upon return of the USNS Comfort and USS Eisenhower
3598	2009.09.17	Remarks by the Vice President at a joint statement to the press with President of the Kurdistan
3601	2009.09.25	Remarks By The First Lady CAPA
3608	2009.10.15	Remarks by the First Lady to the Eglin and Hurlburt Community
3611	2009.10.21	Remarks By Vice President Biden in a Joint Statement with President Kaczynski
3612	2009.10.21	Remarks By Vice President Biden In a Joint Statement With Prime Minister Tusk
3613	2009.10.22	Opening Remarks by Vice President Biden at a Meeting with President of the Senate Geoana
3614	2009.10.22	Remarks By Vice President Biden in a Joint Statement with President Basescu

3615	2009.10.22.	Remarks By Vice President Biden On America Central Europe And A Partnership for the 21st Century
3617	2009.10.23.	Remarks by Vice President Biden in a Joint Statement with Prime Minister Fischer
3621	2009.11.04.	Remarks by the First Lady at Coming Up Taller Awards
3623	2009.11.10.	Remarks by the Vice President at Memorial Service at Fort Lewis
3624	2009.11.11.	Remarks by the First Lady at Mission Serve Event
3629	2009.11.18.	Remarks by the First Lady at Tea for Military Women
3629	2009.11.18.	Remarks by the First Lady at Tea for Military Women
3636	2010.01.26	Remarks by the First Lady at the Joint Armed Forces Officers' Wives' Luncheon
3641	2010.02.18	Remarks of Vice President Biden at National Defense University - As Prepared for Delivery
3647	2010.03.09	Remarks by The Vice President and President of Israel Shimon Peres at an Expanded Group Meeting
3648	2010.03.09	Remarks by Vice President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu in a Joint Statement to the Press
3650	2010.03.10	Remarks by the First Lady at the International Women of Courage Awards
3653	2010.03.11	Remarks by Vice President Biden The Enduring Partnership Between the United States and Israel
3654	2010.03.15	Press Briefing on the President's Upcoming Trip to Guam, Indonesia and Australia by Denis McDonough, NSC Chief of Staff, Jeff Bader, NSC Senior Director for Asian Affairs, and Ben Rhodes,
3663	2010.04.09	Remarks by the First Lady during Department of Defense Agency visit
3664	2010.04.12	Remarks by The Vice President before a Lunch Meeting with Foreign Leaders and Dignitaries
3666	2010.04.14	Remarks by the First Lady at Youth Forum -- Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City, Mexico
3668	2010.04.19	Statement by The Vice President on Iraq
3674	2010.05.05	Remarks by The First Lady at USAID Agency visit
3675	2010.05.06	Remarks by Vice President Biden to the European Parliament
3676	2010.05.07	Remarks by The First Lady and Dr. Biden to the Women's Leadership Forum Issues Conference
3678	2010.05.08	Remarks by Vice President Biden in a Statement to the Press with Spanish President Zapatero
3680	2010.05.12	Remarks by the First Lady at National Military Family Association Summit
3681	2010.05.16	Remarks by The First Lady at George Washington University Commencement
3691	2010.06.08	Remarks by Vice President Biden in a Statement to the Press with Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki
3692	2010.06.09	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden to University Students in Nairobi, Kenya
3697	2010.06.23	Remarks by the First Lady during a visit to Department of Justice
3699	2010.07.04	Remarks by the Vice President at a Fourth of July Reception
3700	2010.07.04	Remarks by the Vice President at a Naturalization Ceremony for U.S. Service Members
3709	2010.07.23	Remarks by the First Lady at Christening of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton in Pascagoula, Mississippi
3710	2010.09.01	Remarks by Vice President Joseph Biden at the Change of Command Ceremony for United States Forces-Iraq
3720	2010.10.05	Remarks for Gen. James L. Jones, National Security Advisor at the Sochi Security Council Gathering, Sochi Russia
3724	2010.10.26	Remarks by the First Lady at the Women's Conference with California First Lady Maria Shriver
3726	2010.11.07	Remarks by the Vice President to the Jewish Federations of North America General Assembly
3729	2010.11.20	Statements by European Foreign Ministers in Support of the New START Treaty
3732	2010.12.02	Remarks by the First Lady at Fisher House Tour and Ribbon Cutting
3733	2010.12.04	Weekly Address Vice President Biden Calls on Congress to Preserve the Middle Class Tax Cuts and to Extend Unemployment Insurance This Year
3736	2010.12.15	Remarks by the Vice President at a Meeting of the United Nations Security Council
3741	2011.01.11	Remarks by Vice President Biden and President Karzai of Afghanistan After Meeting
3742	2011.01.12	Remarks by Vice President Biden and Prime Minister Gilani of Pakistan
3743	2011.01.13	Remarks by Vice President Biden to the U.S. Forces-Iraq Troops
3744	2011.01.19	Remarks by the First Lady at her 100K strong State Visit Event
3749	2011.02.18	Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jay Carney aboard Air Force One en route Portland, Oregon
3751	2011.02.28	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden to the National Governors Association
3753	2011.03.06	Remarks of Denis McDonough Deputy National Security Advisor to the President--As Prepared for Del
3755	2011.03.08	Remarks by the First Lady at the International Women of Courage Awards
3756	2011.03.08	Remarks By Vice President Joe Biden and President Tarja Halonen Of Finland Upon The Conclusion Of
3757	2011.03.09	Remarks by Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. at a Roundtable Discussion with American and Russi
3758	2011.03.10	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden and Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin
3759	2011.03.10	Vice President Biden's Remarks at Moscow State University
3760	2011.03.11	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden in Chisinau, Moldova
3768	2011.04.07	Remarks by the First Lady at the Military Child of the Year Award
3772	2011.04.13	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Biden to Base Community
3779	2011.05.04	Remarks by the Vice President at the Atlantic Council's 50th Anniversary Dinner
3780	2011.05.06	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Biden at Mother's Day Tea for Military Spouses
3783	2011.05.09	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden to the Opening Session of the U.S.-China Strategic & Economic

3788	2011.05.19	Commencement Address by Dr. Jill Biden to Graduates, Family Members, and Faculty of Montgomery Co
3790	2011.05.19	Remarks by the First Lady at DNC event in Washington, DC
3793	2011.06.01	Remarks by Vice President Biden and Italian President Napolitano to the Press in Rome
3799	2011.06.13	Remarks by the First Lady at a DNC event
3800	2011.06.13	Remarks by the First Lady at a Joining Forces Entertainment Guilds Event
3801	2011.06.14	Remarks by the First Lady at a DNC event
3802	2011.06.14	Remarks by the First Lady at a DNC event 2
3803	2011.06.14	Remarks by the First Lady at a DNC event 3
3806	2011.06.22	Remarks by The First Lady during Keynote Address at Young African Women Leaders Forum
3811	2011.06.29	Remarks of John O. Brennan, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism
3812	2011.06.30	Remarks by the First Lady at DNC event in Burlington, Vermont -- Echo Lake Aquarium and Science
3813	2011.06.30	Remarks by the First Lady at DNC event in Boston, Massachusetts
3814	2011.06.30	Remarks by the First Lady at DNC event in Burlington, Vermont -- Sheraton Burlington
3815	2011.06.30	Remarks by the First Lady at Vermont National Guard Joining Forces Rally
3818	2011.07.24	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Biden at Joining Forces Military Family Cookout
3819	2011.08.15	Conference Call With Reporters To Discuss Vice President Biden Trip to China, Mongolia, and Japan
3820	2011.08.18	Remarks by Vice President Biden in a Meeting with Chairman Wu
3821	2011.08.18	Remarks by Vice President Biden in a Meeting with Chinese Vice President Xi
3822	2011.08.19	Remarks by Vice President Biden and Chinese Vice President Xi at a U.S.-China Business Roundtable
3825	2011.08.21	Remarks by the Vice President at Sichuan University
3826	2011.08.22	Remarks by Vice President Biden and Mongolian Prime Minister Batbold
3827	2011.08.23	Remarks by Vice President Biden at Sendai Airport
3830	2011.09.10	Remarks by Vice President Joseph Biden at Dedication of Flight 93 Memorial
3831	2011.09.11	Remarks by Vice President Biden at the Pentagon 911 10th Anniversary Commemoration
3834	2011.09.16	Remarks of John O. Brennan, Strengthening our Security by Adhering to our Values and Laws
3835	2011.09.19	Gaggle with Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes Aboard Air F
3836	2011.09.30	Remarks by First Lady Michelle Obama - 2012 Lunch Reception in Cape Elizabeth, Maine
3837	2011.09.30	Remarks by First Lady Michelle Obama at 2012 Reception in Providence, Rhode Island
3839	2011.10.05	Remarks by the First Lady to U.S. Secret Service Employees
3840	2011.10.11	Remarks by the First Lady at 2012 DNC Reception
3842	2011.10.12	Remarks by the First Lady at 2012 DNC Dinner
3848	2011.10.25	Remarks by the First Lady at a DNC Event in Detroit, Michigan
3850	2011.10.26	Remarks by the First Lady at DNC Event -- Plumber's Hall, Chicago, IL
3851	2011.10.27	Remarks by the First Lady at a DNC Event, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
3852	2011.10.27	Remarks by the First Lady at a DNC Event, Tampa, FL
3853	2011.10.27	Remarks by the First Lady at DNC Event -- Jacksonville, FL
3855	2011.11.01	Remarks by the First Lady at a DNC Event
3856	2011.11.01	VP's Remarks to London Cyberspace Conference
3860	2011.11.10	Remarks by the First Lady at a Joining Forces Announcement
3863	2011.11.14	Remarks by the First Lady at Jobs Fair
3865	2011.11.20	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Biden at a NASCAR-Joining Forces Military Family BBQ
3867	2011.11.30	Remarks by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and Vice President Joe Biden at a Bilateral Meeti
3870	2011.11.30	Remarks by Vice President Biden at the Conclusion of a Meeting of the U.S.-Iraq Higher Coordinati
3871	2011.12.01	Remarks by Vice President Biden at Event to Honor U.S. and Iraqi Servicemembers
3872	2011.12.03	Remarks by Vice President Joseph Biden at the Entrepreneurship Summit
3877	2011.12.20	Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney and Remarks by the President
3879	2012.01.11	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event in Charlottesville, VA
3880	2012.01.11	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event in Richmond
3881	2012.01.11	Remarks by the First Lady at Joining Forces Medical College Event
3882	2012.01.13	Remarks by the First Lady at iCarly Screening Event in Alexandria, VA
3884	2012.01.26	Remarks by the First Lady at a DNC Event -- Palm Beach, FL
3885	2012.01.26	Remarks by the First Lady at a DNC Event -- Sarasota, FL
3887	2012.01.30	Remarks by the First Lady at Joining Forces Event -- Department of Labor
3888	2012.02.01	Remarks by the First Lady at a DNC Event -- Los Angeles, CA
3889	2012.02.01	Remarks by the First Lady at Campaign Event -- Beverly Hills, CA
3893	2012.02.09	Remarks by the First Lady in a Briefing with Air Force Leadership at Little Rock Air Force Base
3898	2012.02.14	Remarks by Vice President Biden and Chinese Vice President Xi at the State Department Luncheon
3899	2012.02.14	Remarks by Vice President Biden and Chinese Vice President Xi to US and China CEOs
3903	2012.02.22	Remarks by the First Lady at Women in Technology Event -- Washington, D.C.

3904	2012.02.23	Remarks by the First Lady at a DNC Event -- Cincinnati, OH
3905	2012.02.23	Remarks by the First Lady at a DNC Event -- Louisville, KY
3907	2012.03.02	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3911	2012.03.05	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3912	2012.03.05	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
3913	2012.03.08	Remarks by the First Lady at International Women of Courage Awards
3914	2012.03.09	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3916	2012.03.13	Remarks by the First Lady at Mini-Olympic Games Event
3918	2012.03.14	Remarks by Vice President Biden, Secretary of State Clinton and British Prime Minister Cameron at an Official Luncheon
3920	2012.03.16	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3922	2012.03.19	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3923	2012.03.20	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3929	2012.03.30	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- San Francisco, CA
3930	2012.03.31	Remarks by the First Lady at Coast Guard Cutter Ceremony
3933	2012.04.10	Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jay Carney en route West Palm Beach, Florida
3934	2012.04.11	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Biden at a Joining Forces Nurses Event
3935	2012.04.11	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Biden at the Joining Forces Anniversary event
3939	2012.04.17	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3940	2012.04.17	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
3941	2012.04.17	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 3
3942	2012.04.23	Fact Sheet Sanctions Against Those Complicit in Grave Human Rights Abuses Via Information Technology in Syria and Iran
3944	2012.04.24	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
3947	2012.04.26	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden on Foreign Policy at a Campaign Event
3948	2012.04.27	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3949	2012.04.30	Remarks by the First Lady at the Opening Ceremony of the Warrior Games
3950	2012.05.01	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3951	2012.05.01	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event - Las Vegas
3952	2012.05.01	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
3954	2012.05.08	Remarks by the Vice President to the Rabbinical Assembly Leadership
3955	2012.05.10	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden at Congressional Spouses Service Project
3956	2012.05.10	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden at Mother's Day Tea
3958	2012.05.11	Remarks of Dr. Jill Biden at Southwestern Community College Commencement
3961	2012.05.14	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3964	2012.05.21	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3965	2012.05.26	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the Commencement Ceremony of the United States Military Academy
3966	2012.06.04	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the Cypress Bay High School Graduation Ceremony
3968	2012.06.06	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3969	2012.06.06	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
3970	2012.06.07	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3972	2012.06.14	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the Tallwood High School Graduation Ceremony
3973	2012.06.17	Remarks by the First Lady at Oregon State University Commencement
3974	2012.06.19	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3976	2012.06.20	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3977	2012.06.20	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
3978	2012.06.26	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3979	2012.06.26	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
3981	2012.06.28	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3983	2012.07.10	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3984	2012.07.10	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
3986	2012.07.15	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3987	2012.07.18	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3989	2012.07.23	Remarks by the First Lady Previewing Trip to the 2012 Olympic Games During Press Conference Call
3990	2012.07.24	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3991	2012.07.24	Remarks by the First Lady at Campaign Event 2
3995	2012.08.01	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3996	2012.08.01	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 1

3997	2012.08.02	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
3998	2012.08.02	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 1
3999	2012.08.02	Remarks by the First Lady at Campaign Event
4000	2012.08.03	REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY AT A CAMPAIGN EVENT
4001	2012.08.03	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event2
4002	2012.08.09	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event - Bethlehem, PA
4003	2012.08.09	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event - Montgomery County, PA
4004	2012.08.09	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event - Philadelphia, PA
4005	2012.08.11	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event - Denver, CO
4006	2012.08.11	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event - Jackson Hole, WY
4007	2012.08.12	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4008	2012.08.13	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4010	2012.08.22	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4011	2012.08.22	Remarks by the First Lady at Joining Forces Veterans Hiring Event
4013	2012.08.23	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4014	2012.08.23	Remarks by the First Lady at Campaign Event
4015	2012.09.05	Remarks by the First Lady at the Democratic National Convention
4019	2012.09.06	Remarks by Dr. Jill Biden at the Democratic National Convention
4022	2012.09.06	Remarks by the Vice President at the Democratic National Convention
4023	2012.09.11	Remarks by the Vice President at the Flight 93 National Memorial Commemorative Service
4024	2012.09.12	Remarks by Denis McDonough on International Religious Freedom
4025	2012.09.13	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4026	2012.09.13	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
4027	2012.09.17	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4028	2012.09.17	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event - Gainesville, Florida
4029	2012.09.19	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4030	2012.09.19	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event - Greenville, North Carolina
4031	2012.09.22	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event - Morgan State University
4032	2012.09.22	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Phoenix, Maryland
4033	2012.09.23	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Princeton, New Jersey
4035	2012.09.27	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4036	2012.09.27	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
4037	2012.09.28	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4038	2012.09.28	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
4039	2012.10.02	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Cincinnati, OH
4040	2012.10.02	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Seattle, WA
4041	2012.10.03	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Reno, NV
4042	2012.10.09	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Sterling, VA
4043	2012.10.10	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4045	2012.10.11	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Castle Rock, CO
4046	2012.10.15	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Cleveland, Ohio
4047	2012.10.15	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Delaware, Ohio
4048	2012.10.16	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Chapel Hill, NC
4049	2012.10.17	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4050	2012.10.17	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
4051	2012.10.19	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4053	2012.10.19	Remarks by the First Lady to the Overflow Crowd -- Racine, WI
4054	2012.10.22	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Davie, Florida
4056	2012.10.25	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Calabasas, CA
4057	2012.10.26	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- La Jolla, CA
4058	2012.10.27	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Las Vegas, Nevada
4059	2012.10.29	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign event
4060	2012.10.29	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
4061	2012.11.01	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4062	2012.11.01	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 2
4063	2012.11.01	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event 3
4064	2012.11.02	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Hampton, VA
4065	2012.11.02	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event -- Petersburg, VA
4066	2012.11.03	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event

4067	2012.11.05	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4068	2012.11.06	Remarks by the First Lady at a Campaign Event
4069	2012.11.15	Remarks by National Security Advisor Tom Donilon -- As Prepared for Delivery
4075	2012.12.24	Photo & Remarks from the First Lady's Conversations with Children While Tracking Santa with NORAD
4076	2013.01.19	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Biden at the Kids Inaugural Concert
4077	2013.02.01	Remarks by the Vice President at a Meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel
4078	2013.02.02	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden to the Munich Security Conference. Hotel Bayerischer Hof Munich, Germany
4079	2013.02.04	Remarks to the Press by the Vice President and French President Hollande
4080	2013.02.05	Remarks by Dr. Jill Biden at Wounded Warriors Reception at Winfield House
4082	2013.02.25	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden to National Governors Association
4087	2013.03.04	Remarks by the Vice President to the AIPAC Policy Conference
4088	2013.03.08	Remarks by the First Lady at the International Women of Courage Awards
4090	2013.03.13	Remarks by the First Lady at Business Roundtable Quarterly Meeting
4091	2013.03.19	Remarks by the First Lady at Champions of Change Women's Veterans Event
4099	2013.04.16	Statement by the Press Secretary on the Visit of President Park of the Republic of Korea to the White House
4101	2013.04.17	Remarks by the First Lady at the Veterans Full Employment Act of 2013 Bill Signing
4103	2013.04.24	Remarks by Tom Donilon, National Security Advisor to the President At the Launch of Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy
4104	2013.04.25	Background Conference Call by White House Official on Syria
4110	2013.05.09	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden at Military Mother's Day Tea
4114	2013.05.17	Remarks of Dr. Jill Biden at Navajo Technical College Commencement AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY
4124	2013.05.29	Remarks by the Vice President on U.S.-Brazil Relations, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
4125	2013.05.31	Remarks to the Press by Vice President Biden and Brazilian Vice President Temer
4127	2013.06.04	Remarks by the Vice President to the American Turkish Council
4133	2013.07.02	Remarks by First Lady Michelle Obama and First Lady Laura Bush in a Conversation at the African First Ladies Summit
4136	2013.07.19	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden on Asia-Pacific Policy
4138	2013.07.24	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden on the U.S.-India Partnership at the Bombay Stock Exchange
4139	2013.07.26	Remarks to the Press by Vice President Biden and Prime Minister Lee of Singapore
4140	2013.07.27	Remarks by the Vice President at Pratt & Whitney, Singapore
4143	2013.09.09	Remarks As Prepared for Delivery by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice
4150	2013.09.20	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the U.S.-Mexico High Level Economic Dialogue
4151	2013.09.20	Remarks to the Press by Vice President Joe Biden and Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto
4153	2013.09.24	Remarks by the First Lady at the United Nations General Assembly Spousal Luncheon
4155	2013.09.30	Background Conference Call on the President's Trip to Sweden and Russia
4163	2013.11.15	Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney
4165	2013.11.19	Remarks As Prepared for Delivery By Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa Monaco
4166	2013.11.19	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the Panama Canal
4167	2013.11.19	Remarks to the Press by Vice President Joe Biden and President Ricardo Martinelli of Panama
4169	2013.11.26	Statement by the Press Secretary Regarding Robert Levinson
4172	2013.12.03	Remarks to the Press by Vice President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan
4173	2013.12.04	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice Human Rights Advancing American Interests and Values
4175	2013.12.04	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden and President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China
4176	2013.12.05	Remarks by the Vice President at a Breakfast with the American Chamber of Commerce in Beijing and the U.S.-China Business Council
4177	2013.12.06	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden and Republic of Korea President Park Geun-Hye in a Bilateral Meeting
4178	2013.12.06	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden and Republic of Korea Prime Minister Chung Hongwon in a Bilateral Meeting
4179	2013.12.06	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden on U.S.-Korea Relations and the Asia-Pacific
4181	2013.12.19	REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY AT TOYS FOR TOTS SERVICE PROJECT
4182	2013.12.24	Photo & Remarks from the First Lady's Conversations with Children While Tracking Santa with NORAD
4183	2013.12.25	Weekly Address The President and First Lady Wish Everyone a Happy Holiday Season
4184	2014.01.13	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at a Bilateral Meeting with Israeli President Shimon Peres
4190	2014.02.07	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at the Aspen Institute U.S.-India Dialogue
4191	2014.02.10	Remarks by the First Lady at a National Symposium on Veterans' Employment in Construction, A Joining Forces Event

4198	2014.03.04	Remarks by the First Lady at International Women of Courage Awards
4201	2014.03.10	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at a Bilateral Meeting with Chilean President Sebastián Piñera
4202	2014.03.11	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at the Department of State's Global Chiefs of Mission Conference
4205	2014.03.18	Remarks to the Press by Vice President Joe Biden and President Toomas Ilves of Estonia
4208	2014.03.19	Remarks to the Press by Vice President Joe Biden, President Dalia Grybauskaitė of Lithuania, and President Andris Bērziņš of Latvia
4210	2014.03.21	Remarks by the First Lady Michelle Obama and President Xi Jinping of China
4220	2014.04.16	Remarks by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco
4225	2014.04.23	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden at Joining Forces Meet-and-Greet with Military Families
4226	2014.04.23	Remarks by the First Lady at Joining Forces Veterans Jobs Summit and Career Forum
4229	2014.04.30	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden at Joining Forces Impact Pledge Announcement
4233	2014.05.09	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at Palmachim Air Force Base, Israel
4235	2014.05.10	Remarks by the First Lady in Commencement Address to Dillard University
4236	2014.05.10	Weekly Address The First Lady Marks Mother's Day and Speaks Out on the Tragic Kidnapping in Nigeria
4237	2014.05.12	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden at Annual Mother's Day Tea
4241	2014.05.20	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden to Joint United States and Romanian Participants in Carpathian Spring Military Exercise
4242	2014.05.21	Remarks by vice President Joe Biden and Romanian President Traian Basescu in a Joint Press Statement
4243	2014.05.21	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden and Romanian Prime Minister Victor Ponta in a Joint Press Statement
4244	2014.05.21	Remarks by vice President Joe Biden to Romanian Civil Society Groups and Students
4245	2014.05.21	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden to the Press at Larnaca International Airport
4248	2014.05.22	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at an Official Lunch with President Nicos Anastasiades of Cyprus
4251	2014.05.27	Remarks of Dr. Jill Biden at Villanova University Commencement As Prepared for Delivery
4252	2014.05.31	Commencement Address By Vice President Joe Biden
4255	2014.06.02	Remarks by the First Lady at the Keel Laying Ceremony for the PCU ILLINOIS
4256	2014.06.04	Remarks by the First Lady Announcing Mayors Challenge to End Veterans Homelessness
4260	2014.06.17	Remarks by the Vice President to the Press at U.S. Embassy -- Brasilia, Brazil
4261	2014.06.18	Remarks by the First Lady at a Naturalization Ceremony
4262	2014.06.18	Remarks by the Vice President and President Santos of Colombia in a Joint Press Statement
4265	2014.06.19	Remarks to the Press by the Vice President and Dominican President Medina
4273	2014.07.08	Remarks as Prepared by White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf Region Philip Gordon at the Ha'aretz Israel Conference for Peace
4276	2014.07.16	Remarks by the First Lady at the Unite for Veterans Summit
4279	2014.07.30	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice Africa and America Partners in a Shared Future
4280	2014.07.30	Remarks by the First Lady at the Summit of the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders
4282	2014.07.31	Remarks by the First Lady at the National Alliance to End Homelessness Annual Conference
4283	2014.08.06	A Conversation Between First Lady Michelle Obama and Mrs. Laura Bush Moderated by Cokie Roberts
4293	2014.09.22	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice on Southeast Asia at the Brookings Institution
4296	2014.09.26	Opening Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at the Global Health Security Agenda Conference
4297	2014.09.26	Opening Remarks by the Vice President at the UN Summit on Peacekeeping Operations
4302	2014.10.03	Remarks by the Vice President at the John F. Kennedy Forum
4314	2014.10.22	Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Dr. Jill Biden at Women in the World Texas on Military Families
4326	2014.11.10	Remarks by the First Lady at the Women Veterans Career Development Forum
4327	2014.11.18	Remarks by Senior Administration Officials in a Conference Call on the Vice President's Trip to Morocco, Ukraine and Turkey
4329	2014.11.20	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden to the Global Entrepreneurship Summit
4330	2014.11.22	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden on European Energy Security to the Atlantic Council Energy and Economic Summit
4331	2014.11.22	Statement to the Press by Vice President Joe Biden and Turkish President Recep Erdogan
4336	2014.12.07	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden to the 2014 Saban Forum
4340	2014.12.27	Remarks by Vice President Biden at a Service for NYPD Officer Rafael Ramos
4343	2015.01.30	Remarks by the First Lady at the Presentation of the School Counselor of the Year Award
4344	2015.02.04	Remarks by Senior Administration Officials in a Conference Call on the Vice President's Trip to Belgium and Germany
4346	2015.02.06	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan Rice on the 2015 National Security Strategy
4347	2015.02.06	Remarks by the Vice President at a Meeting with European Council President Donald Tusk
4348	2015.02.07	Remarks by the Vice President at the Munich Security Conference

4349	2015.02.11	Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco Strengthening our Nation's Cyber Defenses
4352	2015.02.19	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism
4355	2015.03.02	Remarks As Prepared for Delivery at AIPAC Annual Meeting by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice
4357	2015.03.04	Remarks by The First lady at Change Direction Mental Health Event
4358	2015.03.05	Prepared Remarks of First Lady Michelle Obama for International Women of Courage Award
4361	2015.03.18	Remarks by the First Lady at Let Girls Learn Event in Tokyo, Japan
4369	2015.04.09	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden on Iraq
4377	2015.04.24	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden the 67th Annual Israeli Independence Day Celebration
4380	2015.05.01	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at the Donald M. Payne Sr. Global Foundation Lecture Series - As Prepared for Delivery
4382	2015.05.03	Remarks by Dr. Jill Biden at the 28th Annual Human Rights Campaign Atlanta Gala Dinner
4384	2015.05.08	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden at Mother's Day Tea for Military Spouses
4385	2015.05.09	Remarks by the First Lady at Tuskegee University Commencement Address
4386	2015.05.12	Remarks by the Vice President at TOP COPS Awards Dinner
4389	2015.05.19	Message -- Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to Iraq
4391	2015.05.22	Commencement Address by the Vice President at the United States Naval Academy
4395	2015.06.06	Remarks by the President in Eulogy in Honor of Beau Biden
4396	2015.06.09	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at a Tribute to Secretary of Defense Ash Carter - As Prepared for Delivery
4400	2015.06.16	Remarks by The First Lady at Let Girls Learn Event in London, UK
4402	2015.06.16	Remarks by The First Lady at Let Girls Learn Roundtable (All Participants)
4404	2015.06.18	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at the Anti-Defamation League Dinner Honoring Abraham Foxman
4408	2015.06.26	Remarks by Celeste Wallander, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russia and Central Asia on U.S. Policy on Russia
4409	2015.06.26	Remarks by the Vice President to the Truman National Security Project and Center for National Policy
4411	2015.06.29	Remarks by The First Lady at More Magazine Impact Awards
4417	2015.09.03	Remarks by the Vice President at the Eizenstat Lecture
4419	2015.09.21	National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice's As Prepared Remarks on the U.S.-China Relationship at George Washington University
4420	2015.09.22	Remarks by First Lady Michelle Obama at The Bush Institute's Global Woman's Network Summit
4426	2015.10.08	Remarks by the First Lady During a Roundtable with Business Leaders at the Private Equity Industry Veterans Initiative Summit
4428	2015.10.12	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice on Climate Change and National Security at Stanford University - As Prepared for Delivery
4433	2015.10.22	Remarks By The First Lady At Joint U.S. -Pakistan Let Girls Learn Announcement
4434	2015.10.28	Remarks by the First Lady, Dr. Biden, and His Royal Highness Prince Harry of the United Kingdom, At Invictus Games Event
4437	2015.11.04	Remarks by the First Lady at World Innovation Summit for Education on Let Girls Learn Educating Adolescent Girls Worldwide
4440	2015.11.11	Remarks by The First Lady, Dr. Jill Biden and Captain Rolona Brown at the Joining Forces Veteran's Day Luncheon
4448	2015.12.09	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden to The Ukrainian Rada
4450	2015.12.19	Remarks by the First Lady to Children on the NORAD Santa-Tracker Call
4451	2016.01.14	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden and Guatemala President-Elect Jimmy Morales at a Bilateral Meeting
4452	2016.01.21	Remarks by The First Lady on Ending Veteran Homelessness at U.S Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting
4453	2016.01.23	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden after a meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu
4455	2016.02.02	Remarks by the First Lady, Lena Dunham and Julianne Moore in Media with Purpose Discussion at American Magazine Media Conference
4460	2016.03.02	Remarks by the First Lady at Women's History Month Event Honoring Women Veterans For Their Service To Our Country
4461	2016.03.07	Remarks by Lisa O. Monaco at the Council on Foreign Relations - Kenneth A. Moskow Memorial Lecture
4462	2016.03.08	Remarks By The First Lady At Let Girls Learn Event Celebrating International Women's Day
4463	2016.03.10	Remarks By The First Lady Michelle Obama And Mrs. Sophie Grégoire-trudeau At Canadian State Visit Spousal Event
4466	2016.03.16	Remarks by the First Lady in a Keynote Discussion at South by Southwest
4470	2016.03.28	Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Ned Price on National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice's Meeting with Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu of Turkey
4471	2016.03.31	Remarks by Lisa O. Monaco at the Intelligence Studies Project at the University of Texas-Austin
4475	2016.04.13	Remarks by the First Lady on Let Girls Learn at the World Bank Spring Meeting

4476	2016.04.14	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs
4477	2016.04.15	Remarks by Senior Advisor Brian Deese - As Prepared for Delivery
4484	2016.05.05	Remarks by The First Lady at Joining Forces Fifth Anniversary Employment Event
4486	2016.05.11	Prepared Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice at the Florida International University 2016 Commencement
4487	2016.05.13	Remarks for Denis R. McDonough Israel Independence Day Celebration
4489	2016.05.18	Remarks by Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes on Burma Policy at the Center for New American Security
4491	2016.05.24	As Prepared Remarks by APHSCT Lisa Monaco at the International Special Operations Forces Convention
4495	2016.06.03	Remarks by the First Lady at City College of New York Commencement
4498	2016.06.06	Remarks by Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes at the Arms Control Association
4499	2016.06.06	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan Rice at the American Jewish Committee Global Forum
4500	2016.06.14	Remarks by Deputy National Security Advisor Avril Haines Commemorating World Refugee Day
4502	2016.06.14	Remarks by the First Lady at the United State of Women Summit Dinner
4503	2016.06.16	Remarks by Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes at the Iran Project
4504	2016.06.24	Remarks by the Vice President to the Irish People
4511	2016.07.17	Remarks by the Vice President at a World War II Flag Commemoration Ceremony
4512	2016.07.17	Remarks by the Vice President on the Cancer Moonshot, Melbourne AU
4516	2016.07.19	Remarks by the Vice President to Australian Service Members
4517	2016.07.19	Remarks by Vice President Biden and Australian Prime Minister Turnbull Before a Meeting
4518	2016.07.19	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden After a Bilateral Meeting Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull
4519	2016.07.20	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden on the Future of the U.S.-Australian Relationship in Asia
4520	2016.07.21	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden and New Zealand Prime Minister John Key
4522	2016.07.26	Remarks by Lisa O. Monaco
4525	2016.08.19	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the Conclusion of a Bilateral meeting With President Hashim Thaci of Kosovo
4526	2016.08.19	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the Conclusion of a Bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Vucic of Serbia
4529	2016.09.07	Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the 20th Annual CAF Conference
4531	2016.09.16	Remarks by First Lady Michelle Obama and Former First Lady Laura Bush in Discussion with Bob Woodruff
4533	2016.09.19	Remarks by the First Lady at the United Nations General Assembly Spousal Program
4535	2016.09.28	Remarks by APHSCT Lisa O. Monaco at the U.S. Attorney's Office National Security Conference in Cambridge, MA
4541	2016.10.11	Remarks by the First Lady at Glamour Magazine's "a Brighter Future A Global Conversation on Girls' Education" to Mark International Day of the Girl
4544	2016.10.13	Remarks by the First Lady at Hillary for America Campaign Event in Manchester, Nh
4546	2016.10.20	Remarks by DNSA Avril D. Haines at Yale Law School on the Importance of Treaties
4549	2016.10.24	Remarks by the President at DCCC Event
4550	2016.10.24	Remarks by the President at HFA La Jolla Reception
4553	2016.10.26	Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at American University on Global LGBTQ Rights
4557	2016.11.14	Remarks by the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden at Joining Forces Capstone Reception
4581	2011.02.10	Statement of President Barack Obama on Egypt
4591	2011.04.14	Joint Op-ed by President Obama, Prime Minister Cameron and President Sarkozy: 'Libya's Pathway to Peace'
4564	2009.09.24	Fact Sheet on the United Nations Security Council Summit on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Nuclear Disarmament UNSC Resolution 1887
4565	2009.12.27	Statement by National Security Council Spokesman Mike Hammer on Violence in Iran
4566	2009.12.31	Statement from the President on Preliminary Assessments from Reviews Ordered on the Christmas Day Incident
4568	2010.05.02	Statement By The Press Secretary on the President's Update of Times Square
4569	2010.05.03	Notice Continuing the National Emergency with Respect to Syria.
4570	2010.05.03	Message to the Congress Continuing the National Emergency with Respect to Syria.
4571	2010.07.13	Statement on the meetings of National Security Advisor General James Jones in Paris and Brussels
4572	2011.01.25	Statement by the Press Secretary on Egypt
4573	2011.01.29	Readout of the President's Meeting on Egypt
4574	2011.01.30	Readout of the President's Calls to Discuss Egypt
4575	2011.01.31	Readout of the Vice President's Call with Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa to Discuss Egypt
4576	2011.02.03	Readout of President's Call with President Saleh of Yemen
4577	2011.02.03	Readout of the Vice President's Call with Egyptian Vice President Omar Soliman
4578	2011.02.05	Readout of the President's calls to discuss Egypt
4579	2011.02.05	Readout of the Vice President's Call with Egyptian Vice President Omar Soliman

4580	2011.02.08	Readout of the Vice President's Call with Egyptian Vice President Omar Soliman
4581	2011.02.10	Statement of President Barack Obama on Egypt
4582	2011.02.12	Readout of the President's Calls to Discuss Egypt
4583	2011.02.18	Statement by the President on violence in Bahrain, Libya and Yemen
4584	2011.02.26	Readout of President Obama's Call with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany
4585	2011.03.12	Statement from the Press Secretary on Arab League announcements today
4587	2011.03.20	Readout of the President's National Security Meeting this Morning
4589	2011.03.20	Readout of Vice President Biden's Calls on Libya
4590	2011.03.23	Statement by the President on Bombing in Jerusalem
4591	2011.04.14	Joint Op-ed by President Obama, Prime Minister Cameron and President Sarkozy: 'Libya's Pathway to Peace'
4592	2011.05.02	Readout of the President's Phone Calls on the Death of Osama bin Laden
4593	2011.06.05	Statement by the Press Secretary on Violence in Syria
4594	2011.10.20	Readout of the President's Videoconference with Chancellor Merkel, President Sarkozy and Prime Minister Cameron
4595	2011.10.23	Statement by the President on the Declaration of Liberation in Libya
4596	2012.03.11	Statement by the President on Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan
4597	2012.03.11	Readout of the President's Call with President Karzai
4598	2012.03.13	Joint Op-Ed by President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron
4599	2012.07.19	Op-ed by President Obama: Taking the Cyberattack Threat Seriously
4600	2012.09.12	Statement by the President on the Attack in Benghazi
4601	2012.09.13	Readout of the President's Call with Libyan President Magariaf
4602	2012.09.14	Letter from the President regarding the War Powers Resolution Report for Libya
4603	2013.04.16	Statement by the President
4666	2015.01.07	Statement by the President on the Attack in France
4667	2015.01.07	Readout of the President's Call with French President Francois Hollande
4668	2015.01.11	Statement from the Press Secretary on the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism
4709	2015.12.03	Statement by the President on the Shooting in San Bernardino, California
4711	2015.12.05	Statement by the Press Secretary
4715	2016.07.15	Readout of the President's Call with President Francois Hollande
4716	2016.07.14	Statement by the President on the Attack in Nice, France
4717	2016.06.12	Statement by the Press Secretary
4718	2016.06.12	Statement from Vice President Biden's Spokesperson
4719	2016.06.12	Statement from Vice President Biden on Mass Shooting in Orlando
4724	2016.03.22	Readout of the President's Call with Prime Minister Charles Michel of Belgium