The Ideological Grip of Barack Obama's War on Terror: Exploring the Dimensions of Fantasy in President Obama's Speeches on Terrorism

Viljami Emil Vaarala

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Viljami Emil Vaarala

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

The War on Terror has been waged for almost two whole decades now. President Barack Obama pledged to end the "boundless Global War on Terror" during his tenure but there are still US troops present in Middle East and North Africa. Despite the rhetoric on ending the war, the war got even more violent in terms of air strikes and the military budget kept on rising from that of president Bush under Obama's first term as president. Since these circumstances suggest that there was no considerable change to be perceived in the outcome of the war from Bush to Obama, there seems to exist a process of political meaning-making through which the meanings attached to the US engagement in the Middle East are altered. Thus, this study aims at analysing the underlying fantasmatic logics through which the War on Terror was legitimized to the public during Obama's presidency. This study contributes to the study of international relations through Lacanian-Žižekian framework, which has only recently been introduced to the study of international politics.

The theoretical and methodological background of this thesis is rooted in Lacanian psychoanalysis, discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe and Lacanian-Žižekian theorizations on ideological fantasies. By adapting the logics approach of discourse theory as a qualitative method, this thesis analyses 105 speeches on terrorism that Barack Obama delivered in 2009–2016. The analysis is focused at analysing discursive articulations, nodal points and master signifiers that partake in structuring the fantasies regarding War on Terror.

In this thesis I will argue that it is through the fantasmatic logics that the ideological grip of Obama's War on Terror becomes intelligible: By structuring the fantasmatic objects of desire at least on three levels, Obama succeeds at granting the illusion that the unachievable and impossible enjoyment – that the subjects of War on Terror desire – is achievable. However, Obama organizes the fantasy in a way that keeps the realization of the ultimate fantasy of lasting peace, safety, prosperity and security always at a distance. The desire is sustained by articulating enemies, such as al Qaeda, Taliban, Osama bin Laden, Assad's regime and ISIL, as inferior objects of desire that are "forgotten" and replaced by one another in the signifying chain of enmity. In addition to this "forgetting" of inferior objects of desire, there exists a process of "reminding" or "remembering" that sustains the desire of War on Terror's subjects. I then argue that some of these objects of desire are used to remind the subjects of what the possible enjoyment would feel like when it is finally achieved. These enemies are also articulated as "the constitutive othesr" that prevent the subjects of War on Terror to realize their fantasy of lasting peace. The results show that the signifier "terrorists" functions as a subtle epithet through which various and differential groups can be articulated as enemies.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords

Barack Obama, War on Terror, terrorism, fantasy, enjoyment, psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan, Slavoj Žižek, discourse theory, hegemony, discursivity, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, poststructuralism, post-Marxism, fantasmatic logics

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1 Introduction

The War on Terror, as we understand it in the context of the 21st Century, has now been going on for almost two whole decades. In the meantime, two presidents of the US have come and gone, and now already a third president is establishing his own strategies and defining how the war should be fought and how to eventually overcome the terrorist threat (see e.g. Schmidle 2018; National Security Council 2017, p. 10). Taking action does not happen in a vacuum, and there is a need for taking in consideration the wider socio-political context in which actions are carried out. Within a democratic order this includes, for example, legitimating decisions and actions in the eyes of the public (Van Dijk 1998, p. 255). This happens in various forms, from which one prominent example are speeches that are given by governments and heads of state. This is where narratives, discourses and articulations play a crucial role when considering the upcoming consequences of political actions and meanings that are attached to these policies (see e.g. Lazar & Lazar 2007; Hodges 2007). As Daniel Nelson (2003, p. 449) has put it: "Human conflict begins and ends via talk and text".

Discourses create meanings and construct reality (Stavrakakis 1999, p. 54). They invite us to make certain interpretations of various social phenomena, and eventually, if being powerful enough, they end up establishing dominant discursively constructed frames through which we perceive the world and take action. Consequently, discursive articulations might begin to have ideological dimensions, as for something to become ideological it is required that an idea or a thought is not questioned anymore (Daly 1999, p. 129; Žižek 1989, p. 21). Therefore, if we accept the premise that discourses have an essential role in constructing social reality, it is not secondary how these discourses are established and what they invite us to do or believe.

While the origins of the War on Terror can be traced back to the administrations of the former US presidents George H. W. Bush, Ronald Reagan and even John F. Kennedy (see e.g. Toaldo 2012; Machin 2007, p. 132), this research recognizes the use of the notion in its contemporary context of the 21st Century. This study perceives that the persistent use of the idiom started right after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 under the administration of George W. Bush when he delivered his famous speech to the Congress of the US. In his speech Bush declared the war against terrorism even though the expression "war on terror" was mentioned only once in the course of the speech (see Bush 2001). This led to taking action first in Afghanistan in October 2001 and later on in Iraq against the regime of Saddam Hussein in 2003. As Bush was the initiator of the war against

terrorism in the 21st Century, numerous studies have been carried out on Bush's War on Terror rhetoric from different perspectives: discourse studies (e.g. Hodges & Nilep 2007), narrative studies (e.g. Duvall & Marzek 2015), crisis and conflict management studies (e.g. Widmaier 2007), media studies (e.g. Stoltz 2007), among others. However, an observation – based on public discussion and discussion in the media – suggests that the War on Terror is mainly associated with president Bush instead of president Barack Obama even though during Obama's tenure the US conducted more strikes with even more civilian casualties than under Bush's governance (see e.g. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism 2019). This might derive from Obama's skilled rhetoric on "counterterrorism" instead of referring to the engagement as "War on Terror" (see e.g. McCrisken 2011, p. 781–782).

This is what makes exactly Obama's War on Terror interesting and worth studying: Obama spoke *against* the war during the time of his presidential rally (see e.g. Obama 2007) and pulled a significant amount of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. The administration even tried to replace the rhetoric of "War on Terror" by referring to the Middle Eastern engagement as insipid "Overseas Contingency Operation" and even officially refused to refer to the conflict as "War on Terror" (Heathcote 2010, p. 1). Furthermore, Obama declared in 2013 that the "boundless Global War on Terror" is over (see e.g. Shinkman 2013) even though there were still operations going on for example in Libya and Afghanistan that involved the presence of US troops and military equipment as part of NATO coalition. All this goes together with the military budget which kept on rising from that of Bush during Obama's first term as president (Duvall & Marzec 2015, p. 4–5). In addition, there was a considerable increase in the number of air strikes under Obama's tenure (Purkiss & Serle 2017). Since these observations seem to suggest that there was no notable improvement in the outcome of the conflict when Obama took office, it could be assumed that there exists a process of political meaning-making and re-articulation when "a series of persistent, targeted efforts to dismantle specific networks of violent extremists that threaten America" should not be considered as part of War on Terror but as something else (Obama 2013). Obama's administration also re-took action in 2014 after the rise of ISIL in Iraq and Syria but, likewise, did not refer to it as War on Terror but instead as "Operation Inherent Resolve" after a long period without granting the operation a name (see e.g. Sisk 2014; U.S Central Command 2015). Despite the new name and a trial to dissociate these "smaller" operations from president Bush's wars, Obama's operations in the Middle East and North Africa are still widely referred to as "War on Terror" in journalism and academia (see e.g. Ralph 2013; Ahmed 2013). Erika King has argued that this was because

Obama's administration never actually "questioned the ongoing need to wage globalized war against those who attacked America on 9/11" and thus "Bush's master terror narrative remained essentially intact, firmly ingrained in the American psyche" (King 2014, p. 185).

Drawing on these above-mentioned circumstances and political events, this study explores the ideological grip of president Barack Obama's speeches on War on Terror in 2009–2016. The goal of this study is to explore the logics through which the war was legitimized to the public and why the War on Terror was still waged after Obama's tenure. I will focus on identifying fantasmatic constructs that are established discursively through articulatory practice in Obama's speeches. The research questions that guide this study are the following:

What were the underlying logics through which the ideological grip of Barack Obama's War on Terror becomes discernible?

How was the fantasy structured in Obama's speeches on terrorism and what characterized the fantasmatic construct(s) that these speeches established?

In this thesis, I will argue that it is through fantasmatic logics that the grip of Obama's War on Terror becomes discernible, and we can better understand why we are still waging war against terrorism even though it was supposed to end during Obama's presidency. I will also argue that the fantasmatic constructs are established through various objects of desire at least on three levels: there is an ultimate object of desire of lasting peace, security, prosperity and safety which is kept at a distance by articulating objects of desire on two inferior levels. These two levels are constructed through the category of enmity: it is by re-articulating this enmity and blaming "the other" for the theft of enjoyment that the desire of War on Terror's subjects is sustained. This category of enmity is also often articulated with new geographical areas which makes possible the expansion of War on Terror to new territories. I will also supplement the view, according to which the enemies of War on Terror are being "forgotten" (see e.g. Heath-Kelly 2018) by a finding of this study which suggests that there is also "remembering" and "reminding" involved in sustaining the desire to achieve the long-lost enjoyment. This "remembering" in War on Terror has also been identified by Lee Jarvis and Jack Holland (2014) in their study on the narration of Obama bin Laden's death but they did not investigate this "remembering" in terms of fantasy.

The analysis focuses on the analysis of Lacanian-Žižekian psychoanalytical concepts of fantasy and enjoyment which are useful when assessing the ideological grip of political discourses and actions (see e.g. Glynos 2001; Daly 1999). In other words, exploring ideological fantasies and fantasmatic

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logics helps one to better understand *why* political subjects keep on acting like they act and how ideologies structure subjects' enjoyment discursively (Glynos & Howarth 2007, p. 133–134, 151–152; Glynos & Howarth 2008, p. 12–13). The Lacanian-Žižekian framework, then, helps to explore political meaning-making that goes beyond mere rhetoric and unveils the logics that invite individuals to become political subjects and build their identities; at its best, this framework might uncover why some policies and modes of action are so resilient by showing how deep in individual's psyche and identity they go. In addition, by using the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, this study will explore discursive articulations, nodal points and master signifiers that are in a hegemonic position in Obama's War on Terror. This makes possible the analysis of points of identification that invite individuals to become political subjects, make interpretations of the fight against terrorism and eventually support various policies. This study avoids using expressions such as "War on Terror narrative" or "War on Terror discourse" because of their too instilled nature. For example, the word "narrative" might suggest that the meanings related to War on Terror are constructed consciously and strategically through narrative practices. While meaning-making is indeed at the center of politics and it is consciously altered by different regimes through strategic narratives, this study perceives the performative speeches of president Obama much rather as politics of meaning-making that operate on a discursive level but which never establish a final closure of discourse or a definite narrative framework. This is why this study also avoids the use of the word "discourse" as it is not possible to single out a one specific discourse concerning War on Terror, especially within the time frame under investigation. Politics of meaning-making then refers, in this study, to a political practice where discursive elements are shifted and re-articulated through the creation of political frontiers in order to create new meanings (see e.g. Palonen 2019, p. 182–183).

The data consist of 105 speeches on terrorism that were delivered by president Barack Obama. The data will be analysed through the means of discourse analysis and, more specifically, through the logics approach which has been inspired by Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory as well as Lacanian theory (Glynos & Howarth 2008, p. 10). The analysis will happen from an interpretative basis, based on the theoretical literature that will be introduced in Chapter 2. This research tries to contribute to discourse studies by filling the gap that has been claimed to be existing in Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory which does not take in consideration the dimensions of fantasy and enjoyment (see e.g. Daly 1999, p. 224). Assessing these dimensions through discourse theory is important because it helps to assess more in depth, how certain discursively established social and

political practices keep on prevailing and how they interpellate political subjects. This approach demonstrates how language and political rhetoric establishes points of identification that invite subjects to construct their identities and support certain policies. In addition, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the sparse study of the dimensions of ideological fantasy and enjoyment in Obama's War on Terror. Altogether, these dimensions have only recently been introduced to the analysis of international relations and politics (see Eberle 2017, p. 2), which emphasizes the importance of this study.

The research is structured as follows: I will start by introducing the theoretical framework of this research in Chapter 2. This chapter will first introduce the post-Marxist and poststructuralist paradigm which is rooted, from the point of view of this study, in the critique of Marxism and de Saussure's structural linguistics. After having introduced the post-Marxist and poststructuralist framework I will introduce the Lacanian-Žižekian framework. In this sub-chapter the first section introduces Lacan's view on subjectivity, identity and identification. The second section introduces the Lacanian-Žižekian theorizations on ideological fantasies and will include the definitions of central concepts of fantasy and enjoyment. After having introduced the theoretical background for this study, I will introduce in Chapter 3 some previous studies and analyses on War on Terror and international relations through discourse analysis and psychoanalysis. Chapter 4 introduces the method of this study, namely the logics approach of discourse theory. In this chapter I will introduce Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory as a theory and a method as well as the logics approach. This chapter will also shed light on the research design, data and data collection. In Chapter 5 I will introduce the results of the analysis. Chapter 6 concludes this study by introducing once more the relevant findings and results of the analysis. In this chapter I will also discuss the limitations and contributions of this study as well as introduce some topics and themes for further studying.

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter I will shed light on the theoretical background and introduce central theoretical notions and concepts that are vital for this research. I will first introduce the post-Marxist and poststructuralist paradigm that will lay out the basis for this study. This sub-chapter includes critique of Marxism and Saussurean structural linguistics. The second sub-chapter will introduce the Lacanian-Žižekian framework and will focus on introducing Lacan's views on subjectivity, identity and identification. This chapter will also introduce the central concepts of fantasy and enjoyment. It is important to acknowledge that this study will heavily lean on other scholars' commentaries and readings of Lacan because of the breadth and ambiguity of Lacan's own work. Even Žižek himself has admitted that "his Lacan is [Jacques-Alain] Miller's Lacan" as the original work from Lacan did not open up to him at first (Žižek & Daly 2004, p. 34).

2.1 Post-Marxism and poststructuralism

This section will include post-Marxist critique of Marxism as well as the critique of structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure. There will be a concise introduction of Marxist thoughts and ideas in order to understand the post-Marxist critique of essentialism and determinism. This section will also cover Marxist-Gramscian understandings of ideologies by Louis Althusser. It is important to note that Laclau and Mouffe's critique of both Marxism and structuralism are intertwined and it is sometimes rather difficult to make a distinction between the two. We could consider that the critique of Marxism provides the social context (e.g. the analysis of social antagonisms) for the discourse theory whereas the critique of structuralism takes a stand on the creation of meanings. (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 25.)

2.1.1 Post-Marxism and the critique of Marxism

Post-Marxism refers to a branch in political theory where Karl Marx's theorizations have been re-visited, criticized and ameliorated. In the reading of Marx by Laclau and Mouffe, the critique is directed above all towards its essentialist approach to social world. (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. ix; Žižek 1989, p. 4.) Being a post-Marxist does not however mean the complete rejection of Marxist notions and concepts. One such example is Laclau and Mouffe's use of the Gramscian concept of

hegemony. Hence, instead of being outdated, the Marxist tradition of political theory still helps us to distinguish and analyse important aspects of social and political life. Moreover, Žižek has claimed (1989, p. 4) that it is actually Lacanian thinking and reading of Marx that makes possible the actual leap from Marxism to post-Marxism by giving a more solid critique of essentialism.

Let us approach this critique by revising the Marxist concept of historical materialism: Historical materialism presupposes that the social world is defined by a fundamental distinction between a base and a superstructure. According to Marx, the guiding forces that direct the base are the economy and the modes of production – such as machines and resources – whereas the superstructure consists of the state, legal order, church, media, culture and school system. The superstructure is accountable for the production and re-production of meaning and ideology within the society. Marx's claim, however, is that the economy forms the solid base for the society and controls its direction: everything comes back to the modes of production and economy and, in Marx's view, societal changes are possible only through changes in the economic structure. Along with the base and superstructure, the social world also consists of subjects. What defines these subjects is that they have a predetermined class status which leads to a fundamental distinction between two binary classes: that of owners and that of workers. (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 30–31; Althusser 1994, p. 105.) Accordingly, from Marxist point of view there exists a fundamental social antagonism between owners and workers in the society. Every antagonism within society comes back to this fundamental and ontological division of people, even when people are struggling with their ordinary, everyday life issues. The antagonism between owners and workers mediates all other antagonisms within the society and, according to Marx, it can be solved only through a global revolution by workers. (Žižek 1989, p. 3–4; Laclau 1979, p. 11.)

The post-Marxist tradition has traditionally criticized Marx's idea of historical materialism because it gives too big of a role for the economy and material conditions to dictate how the society develops. In addition, post-Marxism criticizes the independent existence of these two antagonistic groups as they will exist as long as there is no communist state. It is like their existence is an ontological law of nature. The suggestion of historical materialism for resolving this social antagonism is also essentialist as there is only one solution for this antagonism to dissolve, namely the global revolution. But, when the role of economy is reduced, and other factors are perceived as constitutive of society, it seems that the economy is not enough to determine and define these social groupings and antagonisms that exist within society. (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 31–32; Howarth 2015, p. 3.) This is why Laclau and Mouffe (1985, p. ix–x) end up criticizing the whole

tradition of Marxism for assuming that social antagonisms belong internally to society instead of fields of discursivity. In other words, social antagonisms do exist in the society and economy does have an influence on human lives, but instead of having a pre-determined existence, they are much rather constituted discursively and have different forms through time (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 33).

So, in order to place discursivity into the nucleus of political analysis, Laclau and Mouffe turn to Antonio Gramsci's concept of *hegemony*. According to Gramsci there is more into the changes in the society than just the one-way relationship of the base over the superstructure (i.e. primacy of economy over culture, politics and human behaviour). Gramsci argued that there are also processes within the superstructure that determine the direction of the society and give more possibilities for the people to affect the direction of the society. Against the traditional Marxist current, Gramsci perceived ideology as something positive that makes change possible rather than as something repressive. He defined ideology as "the organization of consent" without using violence or coercion. (Barrett 1994, p. 236, 238.) Gramsci did however perceive the economic base to be having the final say over the superstructure and fell into the same old essentialist pitfall as his predecessors (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 34).

The French philosopher Louis Althusser has developed further the Gramscian approach to ideologies by developing the concept of *ideological state apparatuses* (Althusser 1994). Althusser builds on the Marxist idea that the capitalist society makes social actors dependent of the system by reproducing the conditions of the society's own existence: owners need the material conditions (machines, resources etc.) to produce products and workers want their salary in order to consume those products. But it is not only the material conditions that the state reproduces. In order to have enough labour at its use, the system needs to reproduce workers with the right mentality; the society necessitates the reproduction of labour-power that is willing to contribute for the production and existence of capitalist society. (Althusser 1994, p. 101–102). In order to reproduce the conditions for its own existence, the state needs the above-mentioned ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) that consist of such institutions as church, school, family, media and culture. Along with these Althusser argued that there exists a repressive state apparatus (RSA) which consists of, for instance, the police and the army. The RSA draws its legitimacy heavily from the possibility of violence whereas ISAs are in charge of the reproduction of ideological conditions in the society and function actually more *by* ideology. (Althusser 1994, p. 109–111, 114.) What characterizes the society, according to Althusser, is not only the class struggle between workers and owners but that the class in power

(that is, the class that holds the state power and has the power over the repressive state apparatus) has to employ "hegemony over and in the Ideological State Apparatuses" in order to maintain its position (Althusser 1994, p. 112).

Althusser puts forward two theses concerning ideology: According to the first one "ideology is a 'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 1994, p. 123). This view presents ideologies as imaginary representations that invite us to perceive social relations as something "real" (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 15). Ideologies are then illusions that allude to reality and at the same time invite to make certain interpretations of the reality through the goggles of ideology. This imaginary nature of ideologies will prove to be highly important aspect in Lacanian-Žižekian approach to ideologies, as we will see later on in the chapter. This view also highlights that, while there are reasons to investigate ideologies as illusions, there are also consequences and outcomes involved that affect real lives of people. This leads to Althusser's second thesis: ideologies have a material existence. It is through institutions and subjects' actions that the ideology realizes itself in the society and reproduces the conditions of its own existence. (Althusser 1994, p. 125.)

Althusser's most remarkable findings on ideologies concern the way ideologies *interpellate* subjects. This view sheds light on the logic how an individual becomes an ideological subject. (Althusser 1994, 128–129, 135.) Althusser writes (1994, p. 130–131) that "all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects", just like someone shouts at us on the street "Hey, you!" and we recognize ourselves as that "you". On that account, ideologies profit from language that invites an individual to adopt a certain position in the society and in the system. Eventually, through interpellation, an individual becomes an ideological subject. (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 15).

While Althusser's thoughts on ideologies and ideological state apparatuses have been highly influential in the development of cultural and communication studies, he falls into the same pitfall of essentialism and determinism as many other Marxists before him. First, Althusser perceived the ideological subjects as passive agents who interpret messages like the sender has meant them to be interpreted. However, the ideological subjects should not be underestimated in the way they make phenomena meaningful. (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 16.) Furthermore, ideologies that these essentialist groups or classes seem to be representing and putting forwards are not uniform; there are differences of opinion between ideological subjects even though they seem to be representing

the same "ideological front". It is thus impossible to say that a certain group has a specific ideology that is determined beforehand. (Pêcheux 1994, 142.) Secondly, Michel Pêcheux (1994, 142) has criticized Althusser for underestimating the independence of the ideological state apparatuses: ISAs do not reproduce automatically the ideology that the class-in-power demands. This all has led Laclau and Mouffe to place political struggle and struggle over hegemony into the very center of their political theory (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. x; Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 34). I will elaborate on this in Chapter 4 when introducing the method of this study.

2.1.2 Poststructuralism and the critique of Saussurean structural linguistics

De Saussure's linguistics is based on the relation between signifiers and signifieds; between words, images or sounds that represent an idea or something that we have perceived in the world. The relation between a signifier and a signified could be written in the form S-S'. What condenses this relation between signifier and signified is a sign. (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 9–10; Laclau 1993, p. 432; Žižek 1989, p. 101.) De Saussure claimed, however, that this relation between a signifier and signified is always arbitrary, meaning that the relation is not innate and could always be otherwise. The formation of the relation is based on social dynamics and socially agreed conventions. (de Saussure 1960 in Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 10.) Ernesto Laclau (1993, p. 432) introduces a central principle for de Saussure's linguistics: According to this principle things exist in the world in a differential relation to one another from which they draw their meaning. Laclau lays an example of the word "father" which gains its meaning from the differential position to other words, such as "mother" and "son". Consequently, this leads to a conclusion that nothing can exist in the social world independently without reference to something else; words get their meaning from everything that they are not. This is how language forms a structure where words are linked to one another and get their meanings through their differences. (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 10.) It is exactly this idea about excluding something from the sign in order to gain its meaning on which Lacan built his concept of the Symbolic (Kurki 2004, p. 13).

Lacan's critique of de Saussure is focused on the critique of this relation between a signifier and a signified which is, according to Lacan, always incomplete because they operate in different orders. The Symbolic is the domain of the signifier whereas the signified belongs to the Imaginary. It is therefore impossible for the signifier to be complete because the relation between the signifier and signified is always lacking. They simply are not representative of the same thing. (Stavrakakis

1999, p. 23; Kurki 2004, p. 13.) The perceived or imagined thing (the signified) that we try to bring to the symbolic order through a signifier will fail. Consequently, when the relation between signifier and signified is not adequate, it is impossible for a sign to be something representative of the Real and real conditions of existence. There is a split in the signifier, it is always lacking because there is always some aspect of the Real that escapes and cannot be captured. The Real is resisting symbolization. (Stavrakakis 1999, p. 27.)

If Lacan's critique is focused mainly on the eternally lacking character of the signifier towards a signified, then Laclau and Mouffe's critique is aimed towards the fixed character of this relation between the two. This derives from the structuralist idea according to which the arbitrary relations between signifiers and signifieds are mostly fixed and rarely, if ever, change their meaning. Phillips and Jørgensen (2002, p. 11–12) use the metaphor of a fishing-net where each node has its specific place within the net and, when the net is being stretched, they still hold their positions and distances to other nodes. So, even though signs can be used in different contexts and situations (stretching the fishing-net), their position and their meaning in relation to one another does not necessarily change. Hence, according to this view, it is almost impossible for a sign to receive new meanings.

Structural linguistics also argues for closure of discourse or meaning while poststructuralism perceives this closure as something impossible (Laclau 1993, p. 433; Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 112–113). This has led to accusations according to which poststructuralism is a too relativist branch of social sciences (Howarth 2015, p. 2). Poststructuralism does not however deny the existence of structures – and therefore the existence of truths or facts – but instead perceives them mainly as temporary and un-fixed. By putting forward such claim, we confront a central question which poststructural discursive studies strive to answer: how are meanings created and how do they change? This sets the wider context in which the language is being used to the very center of discourse studies. It is through conflicts and negotiation of social conventions that structures with meaning are both fixed, challenged and changed. (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002, p. 11–12, 25; Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 108.) Laclau and Mouffe's poststructuralist approach to discourses instead suggests that by using words, images and sounds in different context we alter the content of signs, making the change in meanings within signs possible (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 25). Consequently, this makes possible continuous meaning-making.

2.2 Lacanian-Žižekian framework

Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical theory is defined in terms of three different orders: the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. He gave varying level of importance to these orders during different phases of his thinking. (Mellard 2006, p. 49.) Lacan regarded the Symbolic as the most important order of the three because it is the field where subjects and subjectivities are formed (Lacan 1966, p. 12). However, it is not possible to cover all these orders in detail nor in fullness in the extent of this study as these orders are applied ambiguously in various context within the Lacanian psychoanalytic tradition and social sciences. That is why the emphasis of this chapter is in covering, how subjectivities and identities are established through the Symbolic. It is also through the Symbolic that the concept of fantasy becomes relevant for the political analysis. The first section of this chapter will shed light on the process of identification and how subjectivities are constructed through language according to Lacan. The second section will introduce Žižek's approach to ideological fantasies.

2.2.1 Lacan's view on subjectivity, identity and identification

According to Lacan human life is ordered by symbols. This means that a subject must submit to the laws of the symbolic order in order to understand one's position within society and become a subject that builds identity. (Stavrakakis 1999, p. 20; Miller 1988a, p. 141; Miller 1988b, p. 29.) If we want to create identities and tell other people who we are and what we want through language and symbols, we must submit to the laws of the Symbolic. This leads to a conclusion that a subject, which expresses oneself through the Symbolic, must also be lacking just like a signifier is lacking and incomplete. Lacan uses the sign $ to describe this subject that is fundamentally split and lacking, and thus, cannot never be "itself" (Žižek 1989, p. 72; Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 43). Yannis Stavrakakis (1999, p. 29) argues:

> "The fullness of identity that the subject is seeking is impossible both in the imaginary and in the symbolic level. The subject is doomed to symbolize in order to constitute her- or himself as such, but this symbolisation cannot capture the totality and singularity of the real body. – – Symbolisation, that is to say the pursuit of identity itself, introduces lack and makes identity ultimately impossible. – – Identity is possible only as a failed identity; it remains desirable exactly because it is essentially impossible. It is this constitutive impossibility that, by making full identity impossible, makes identification possible, if not necessary."

So, while it is impossible to achieve a stable identity for a child in the mirror stage and in the Imaginary (see e.g. Lacan 1994, p. 93–94; Kurki 2004, p. 9.), the same lack and instability of identity follows the individual through his life in the Symbolic. According to Stavrakakis (1999, p. 30, 35) it is through continuous identification *with something* that a subject tries to overcome this lack.

But, if in the Imaginary it is the guardian of the child that grants and confirms the identity and subjectivity of the child, who is it then within the Symbolic that grants the identity to an individual? Who is the symbolic big Other? The answer would be Law in its various forms. In Lacan's theory, all this derives from the introduction of the symbolic order through the paternal signifier, Name-of-the-Father. It is a signifier that prohibits something (i.e. we have to obey the rules) but at the same time functions as something productive because after leaving behind the Imaginary and entering the Symbolic a subject can start to operate in the symbolic world and create his/her own relation to symbols. However, the Name-of-the-Father brings about a lack: the Law (judicial order, societal and cultural norms etc.) guarantees that the child shall not be together with the guardian that would grant the feeling of fullness. (Lemaire 1977, p. 82–83; Stavrakakis 1999, 20, 32; Lacan 1993, p. 96 in Stavrakakis 1999, p. 31.)

How is this lack then produced in the Symbolic and what is the object of desire? The answer is to be found in the Saussurean linguistics: The symbolic big Other must be lacking as well since the Real will always be excluded from the signifier and the Other will never be what we thought it was. We will just end up being disappointed and look for something else. (Stavrakakis 1999, p. 41; Žižek 1993 p. 116 in Stavrakakis 1999, p. 43.) The concept of *jouissance* (from now on referred to as *enjoyment*) is constructed around this very desire to fill this lack but being too scared to fill it because becoming complete would be traumatic (Stavrakakis 1999, p. 33). As the Name-of-the-Father denies us the enjoyment – the ultimate pleasure that we long for (i.e. being together with our guardian) – it instead keeps us desiring forever. "The trick of the Law is that it creates desire as a result of the lack imposed by the prohibition of the incest". (Stavrakakis 1999, p. 42–43.) It is again Yannis Stavrakakis who is able to condense the Lacanian complexity in an intelligible way, and shows us, how we are still dependent on the Imaginary even though our subjectivity is constructed through the Symbolic:

> "The subject identifies with the Other, but the Other is lacking, unable to offer a stable identity
> and thus unable, by itself, to sustain the desire to identify, a desire that depends on the
> constitutivity of lack but also on the urge to suture this lack. Nothing in the symbolic can
> provide us with a solution for our division, an exit from this frustrating state. Thus we are led to

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bring something in from another register, the quasi-imaginary *objet petit a* [object of desire], the field of fantasy. – – Fantasy is a construction that stimulates, that causes desire exactly because it promises to cover over the lack in the Other, the lack created by the loss of *jouissance.* Since this lack is an effect of castration, of the introduction of language and symbolic Law, then fantasy is also revealed as a defence against castration." (1999, p. 45–46, italics in original)

This is exactly how ideological discourses function: they invite individuals to become subjects by offering full and complete, yet fundamentally impossible, identities. In other words, an individual starts to perceive the big Other in institutions, rules and guidelines, like in law or ideologies (Stavrakakis 1999, p. 36). It is therefore the Symbolic that opens up the possibility for human beings to fantasize, trying to stitch up the eternal wound between the imagined and the Real, between the thoughts that we have about the reality and the real conditions of existence that are unachievable to human consciousness.

2.2.2 Lacanian-Žižekian approach to ideological fantasy

All the above-mentioned theorizations bring us finally to define the two central concepts of this study: *fantasy* and *enjoyment*. The first premise that we have to accept here is that when talking about fantasies, we do not talk about them in a "traditional" sense that might be familiar from popular culture; we do not talk about fantasies as illusions that contrast with reality, but rather as something that belong inherently to the social world. (Daly 1999, p. 223.) According to Lacan (1977, p. 272 in Daly 1999, p. 223) fantasy should be considered as an image that operates within a symbolic structure. Žižek has argued (1997, p. 7) that fantasy is the very result of the lack within symbolic structure. That is, when the signifying chain, through which we also create our identity, is incomplete, we need a promise that someday this identity will be complete. Fantasy guarantees us that we will succeed in filling this lack, becoming ourselves, finding a stable and everlasting identity. However, Žižek also claims (1997, p. 7) that at the same time the fantasy guarantees that there will be unlimited possibilities for this identification as there exists no "universal formula or matrix" that will guarantee one's identity; every individual has to invent their own "private" formula. And if ever this fantasy, which supports the symbolical order, is questioned, it might lead to a "loss of reality" because our whole perception of reality, conditions of existence and identity are created through this very symbolic order (Glynos 2001, p. 201).

The Lacanian formula for fantasy ($\$\Diamond a$) illustrates this: Here we have the split, lacking and desiring subject ($\$$) that can only exist when the signifier (S), which constitutes the identity of a

subject, makes a reference to the fantasmatic object, the object of desire (a) (Glynos 2001, p. 201). It is then this very lack in the signifier which guarantees that the subject will be lacking and remains desiring for his enjoyment. Thus, fantasy, and namely the object of desire, is the very construct that evokes and sustains subject's desire through a promise of overcoming this lack. Furthermore, we seek the *objet petit a* from the symbolic Other, i.e. laws, rules, ideologies, principles, guidelines, etc. (Daly 1999, p. 223–224; Žižek 1997, p. 39; Stavrakakis 1999, p. 45, 46.)

Ben Wardle (2016, p. 309–311) has distinguished three forms of fantasy that differ in structuring the fantasy. According to Wardle, the first form of fantasy alludes to present which can be perceived for example in religions: It is through pure believe in God or some other transcendental power or idea that fills the fundamental lack within the subject in the present. In this case, the object of desire is then this figure, power, thing or idea of "God". The second form of fantasy gives a promise regarding future: in religions this could be expressed in the form of a promise that grants an access to paradise after having lived according to specific dogmas and rules. Many ideologies use the first and second form of fantasy in order to keep subjects desiring but also to justify different hierarchical positions and the use of (oppressive) power in the eyes of the subjects. The third form of fantasy draws on a little different logic as it works through "blaming of incompleteness". It relies on the creation of "the other" that is perceived as having full enjoyment when "we" are not allowed to have this enjoyment. Glen Daly (1999, p. 228) has referred to this as *theft of enjoyment* by "the other". In certain religions, according to Wardle, this is manifested in the way they take a hostile attitude towards non-believers or atheists. Articulating an antagonistic group binds the community closer together and bestows an imaginary feeling of unity. In the field of political ideologies Nazism offers a good example: Jews were perceived as a group that possessed something that Germans did not possess and from which all the grievances of German people derived from. Wardle emphasizes that the third form of fantasy is powerful especially in its way of sustaining the object of desire: while the problems may change, the antagonistic group is still blamed for these new problems.

But what if a subject realizes all this? Why cannot an individual just stop desiring when this "truth" behind the fantasy is unveiled? And what does this feeling of fullness consist of? Exploring the concept of enjoyment will offer insights into these questions. The concept of enjoyment offers also a critique of the discourse theory as, according to Laclau and Mouffe, there is nothing "beyond a discourse". Lacan would have however probably argued that the very tendency to create reality through discourses derives from something that is not reducible to discourses. That "beyond" would be enjoyment. It is noteworthy that enjoyment should not be interpreted only as pleasure, but rather

as "satisfaction through suffering". It is this kind of satisfaction that a subject feels when he/she maintains the desire but avoids getting too close to it. (Daly 1999, p. 227; Glynos 2001, p. 201.) At first enjoyment might seem like a concept that has something to do with sexual arousal or excitation, but it goes deeper than that: enjoyment is this type of stimulation that "gets us off" and makes us passionate about something even though we usually end up being in agony because of it (Hook 2017, p. 608). Enjoyment is then the answer to the question "Why cannot an individual just stop desiring?". It is because we want to believe there is something more for us in life even though it makes us feel more anxious and, in a paradoxical way, we still crave for this feeling of anxiety and incompleteness. So, while fantasy and desire invite us to believe in a complete and uniform world and bring us together as subjects, it is actually enjoyment that functions as the very basis for our collective identification because every desire derives from enjoyment (Glynos 2001, p. 201). And, to be more specific, this desire derives from a *lack of enjoyment*. This draws from the idea that in order to enter the symbolic order, the Name-of-the-Father (or the paternal signifier), demands a subject to give up this primitive and imaginary form of enjoyment – that of being satisfied and together with one's guardian. Desire is then built around the eternal chase of enjoyment that cannot be attained. (Stavrakakis 1999, p. 41–42.) Enjoyment is therefore to be found in the Real within the three orders because it is the very feeling of fullness and completeness that we crave for but can only try to imagine because we can never achieve it:

> "Before the introduction of the symbolic there is no lack and that's why we know that the real is not lacking. – – The real is related to lack exactly because in the process of symbolisation, the signifier produces the signified, creating the imaginary illusion of attaining the lost real. Sooner or later, the illusory character of this fixation of meaning is revealed. If the real is the domain of the inexpressible enjoyment (*jouissance*) then its presence, the encounter with the real, can only have as a consequence the revelation of the lack of our imaginary/symbolic constructs, of their inability to represent death and *jouissance*, to be 'real'." (Stavrakakis 1999, p. 44, italics in original)

Derek Hook (2017, p. 609–610) has however argued that as a concept of political analysis, enjoyment does operate on the symbolic level as well. This symbolical level of enjoyment is prominent especially in the relation between a subject and the Law which is characterized by the tendency to transgress moral codes, rules and laws even though the subject knows that it is wrong to do so. This transgression grants us this feeling of doing something good (or something that feels good) while knowing that we are doing something wrong. Hook lays an example in the context of everyday racism: even though one knows that racism is not right according to prevailing moral codes and standards, one might still end up doing racist generalizations or accusations when a moment seeks for a suitable culpable because "their predominant modes of enjoyment often

contradict many of their avowed moral or political beliefs". Coming up with laws, rules and moral codes means that something is restricted (castrated) and the very transgression of that norm produces this paradoxical feeling of enjoyment. From this point of view, enjoyment should not be considered as something that exists beyond or outside discourses but is to be found in the very proximity of the Symbolic as well.

Moreover, Bruce Fink (1995, p. 60–61) has distinguished two stages of enjoyment to which he refers as enjoyment[1] and enjoyment[2]. The first one should be considered as the above-mentioned primordial enjoyment where the desired Thing is the feeling of togetherness with the mother or the guardian. It is *the real* and very first form of enjoyment before the introduction of the symbolic order. Enjoyment[2] should be then considered as a reflection of the enjoyment[1] but, instead of constructing the desire around the guardian, it tries to conceal the very "nothingness" of each individual's existence – i.e. there is no fullness, there is no completeness or purpose. This illusion of a meaningful existence is made possible by providing an *objet petit a* which one can rely on and fantasize about. Fantasy is then constructed around this enjoyment[2], but paradoxically, the desire circles around the will to achieve the object of desire (that leads to enjoyment) and at the same time around the will avoid this very object (Stavrakakis 1999, p. 48; Glynos 2001, p. 201; Heath-Kelly 2018, p. 90). Consequently, we can deduce that also ideologies and political discourses aim construct a fantasmatic framework through which a subject can desire his/her enjoyment that is ultimately impossible to attain. Furthermore, fantasies try actively suppress the political nature of practices and make them appear as natural (Glynos & Howarth 2007, p. 146).

3 Literary review on War on Terror, discourse and ideological fantasy

This chapter introduces a brief literary review on recent studies that have been conducted on War on Terror and have inspired and guided in carrying out this study. While there is an abundance of literature concerning the War on Terror, this section will concentrate on studies that have covered it from discursive and Lacanian- Žižekian perspectives. It should be noted that the Lacanian- Žižekian psychoanalytical tradition has been applied only recently to the inquiry of War on Terror (as well as to political studies and analysis of international relations) and there are not many studies to be found from this tradition. There are however recent and relevant findings that seem to suggest that the theoretical tradition is becoming more popular among political studies (see e.g. Eberle 2017).

The earliest work that should be introduced comes from Slavoj Žižek himself. Žižek has explored the dimensions of fantasy and enjoyment as well as the Symbolic and the Real after the events of 9/11 in his work "Welcome to the desert of the Real" (2004). In this collection of essays, Žižek juxtaposes the events of 9/11 with the material that is seen regularly in Hollywood films (terror, violence, disorder, chaos, etc.) and argues that the enjoyment of political subjects was structured exactly through the juxtaposition of films with real and televised footage of the attacks. According to Žižek, the attacks were the (imagined) Real that was supposed to exist solely in the Imaginary that was expressed through the Symbolic; the terror, violence and disorder were supposed to exist only in Hollywood films or in far-off countries, not in the lives of Western people. According to Žižek, the enjoyment was structured around a repetition of the imagery of the attacks and seeing it somehow granted us pleasure. Žižek also argues that especially Pentagon exploited politically this repetition of enjoyment by calling Hollywood for help in the war against terrorism. (Žižek 2004, p. 47–52.) The enjoyment of 9/11 was therefore structured foremost through the idea of *theft on enjoyment* by the terrorists, which made possible the political mobilization and novel structuration of subjects' enjoyment: "They shattered our reality and are now enjoying it at our expense!" Hence, the structuration of enjoyment was not structured only around the radical lack of enjoyment but also around the theft of it. Furthermore, the attacks confirmed the object of desire around which the enjoyment concerning (Islamic) terrorism circulated: "We knew it! We were right about Islamist terrorists and this is why we have to hate and demolish them!" This belief should be perceived as the very object of desire which keeps the subjects of War on Terror desiring and fantasizing about a world without terrorists. Politically this works as an efficient discursive tool for political meaning-making since the definition of terrorists can be (re-)articulated countless of times, again and again, keeping the fantasy always unattainable. Žižek even argues (2004, p. 146–148) that the word "terror" has become an universal signifier which is adapted to explain various social issues, such as drug trade, and that the War on Terror is a fight against an ideological straw man enemy ("terrorists" as the nodal point for this enmity) that is "pulling strings" behind these various, complex and differential issues.

Charlotte Heath-Kelly (2018) has studied this category of enmity and re-articulations on terrorist threat by exploring the repetition of discursive threat imaginaries in War on Terror and security discourse. In her study, Heath-Kelly explores the formation and structuration of enmity as a response to the lack of ontological security: According to the study there is fantasy construction of a stable and safe society that is to be achieved after the terrorist threat is overcome through War on

Terror. The objects of desire in this fantasmatic construct are terrorist groupings such as al Qaeda, Taliban and ISIS, and every one of them fails at satisfying the desire. According to Heath-Kelly, the terrorist threat is expressed as "hyper-significant" within the political discourse but is treated with an ambivalence and vagueness which makes possible the changes in (re-)articulating the category of enmity. (Heath-Kelly 2018, p. 86, 96.) She claims that the shift in enmity from al Qaeda to Taliban and most recently to ISIS suggests that "*the process* [of signification] *cannot stop* without endangering the social fantasies of nation and international society". Heath-Kelly argues that this on-going process unveils the very symptom that derives from the symbolic castration: a subject can never achieve the feeling of (ontological) security, all the subject can do is to fantasize about this harmonious state and give the object of desire new forms in order to keep that fantasy alive. (Heath-Kelly 2018, p. 96–97, italics in original.) The same logic applies also on the level of central terrorist figures such as Osama bin Laden. Heath-Kelly claims that bin Laden was indeed the most wanted terrorist (and object of desire) but was "forgotten" over time and replaced within the signifying chain by Taliban (Heath-Kelly 2018, p. 95). Lee Jarvis and Jack Holland (2014) have also explored the death of bin Laden and argued that as the hunt for Osama bin Laden extended from months to years, bin Laden's importance as the "yardstick" of the War on Terror decreased. Simultaneously the War on Terror expanded and became an issue that was not about capturing any specific individual anymore. However, this desire to capture bin Laden was upheld by actively remembering the events of 9/11 which suggested there existed some discursive continuity between Bush's and Obama's administrations (Lee & Holland 2014, p. 426, 444.) There has also been other arguments on the behalf of this continuity in War on Terror between the administrations of Bush and Obama, and that most significant changes occurred only on the level of rhetoric and discourse (see e.g. McCrisken 2011).

These findings on "forgetting" correspond to the finding made by Adam Hodges in his study (2007) on George W. Bush's presidential speeches. Although Hodges approaches War on Terror from a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, he makes a similar finding when studying the narrative that juxtaposed Saddam Hussein with Osama bin Laden as the most threatening figure of terror. Hodges (2007, p. 81–82) found that establishing a narrative that creates similarity between bin Laden and Hussein managed to create a not-evidence-based impression to many Americans that al Qaeda and Iraqi government were allied even before the events of 9/11. This narrative relied on incompleteness and gaps in narration that were to be filled by the audience, based on their

assumptions and impressions. According to Hodges, this discursive and narrative process was also part of the process which led to justifying the expansion of War on Terror from Afghanistan to Iraq.

4 Methodology

This chapter will introduce the method and data of this study. In the first section I will shed light on the research design and method that is based on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory. After having introduced the central concepts of their theory for this study I will introduce the logics approach which will be a central methodological tool for this study. After having introduced research design and method, I will introduce the data and explain, how the data was collected and why certain speeches were included and some were left out.

4.1 Research design and method

This study is a qualitative research that applies theoretical literature through interpretative analysis and discourse theory. Qualitative research takes an epistemological stand towards knowledge where the nature of knowledge is not something that is "out there" to be discovered through measurements or calculations. It much rather perceives knowledge as socially constructed through social practice, such as communication and human interaction. That is why qualitative research requires interpretation. (Vanderstoep & Johnston 2009, p. 165–166.) This study takes also a deductive stand towards the data, meaning that the interpretation of the data is guided by theoretical assumptions (Vanderstoep & Johnston 2009, p. 168). Accepting these premises, a qualitative and interpretative approach appears appropriate in the light of the aims and objectives of this study.

The method of this study consists of interpretative analysis that is guided by the theorizations on Lacanian-Žižekian concept of ideological fantasy (introduced in Chapter 2). Along with interpretative analysis, this study will considerably rely on the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe as a methodological tool for the analysis. Discourse theory will help me to identify essential articulations, nodal points and master signifiers that form points of identification and establish fantasmatic frameworks. This methodological approach is convenient as discourse theory makes possible the analysis and identification of discursive articulations, nodal points and master signifiers but does not form a consistent or uniform analytical method in itself. That is why it is recommended

to complement the theory with other theoretical approaches (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 24, 165–166).

This chapter introduces the discourse theory as a theory and method. The first section will concentrate on introducing essential notions and concepts that will be analysed in the course of the analysis. The second section will show more in detail, how the discourse theory functions as a methodological tool. Hence, the second section will introduce the logics approach which brings together the discourse theory and the Lacanian-Žižekian theorizations on ideological fantasies.

4.1.1 Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory as a theory and method

This study will concentrate on analysing discursive *articulations.* According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985, p. 105) articulation refers to a practice that changes the identity of discursive elements so that they start to appear as a structured and unchangeable totality. It is through articulation that a discursive element is connected to other element(s) and becomes a moment that starts to appear as something that has a natural meaning in itself. It is also through articulation that elements within a discourse (i.e. moments) change their meaning and identity so that the whole discourse might gain new meanings. At this point it is important to recall that an articulatory practice is not only related to the use of language but it can also be an act or a ritual, since Laclau and Mouffe's definition of a discourses does not limit only to talk and text but includes also social phenomena (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 108; Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 33, 50).

Moments within a discourse are not however equal with one another. There are hegemonic *nodal points* around which other signs are structured and from which other signs gain their meaning. An example of this would be the signs "pedal" and "gear lever" which relate to the nodal point "car" and gain their meaning through this sign. At the same time these nodal points exclude some other signs, making the temporary fixation of meaning possible. (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 26–27.) All excluded possibilities of meaning are to be found from a *field of discursivity.* It is this field of discursivity with the "surplus of meaning" which makes discursive change possible when some elements are articulated with discursive moments. That is why a final and definite meaning is impossible to establish. (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 111; Howarth 2015, p. 10.) Thus, a discourse gets its meaning, just like a sign in a language, from everything that it is not; it is through

differences between the moments within a discourse and excluded elements that grant the meaning for the discourse.

This study is interested particularly in identifying these discursive nodal points that guide the process of meaning-making. It is in the nodal points where the concept of hegemony becomes central for discourses, and by claiming this, a central premise of this study is put forward: ideologies are discursive constructions (Howarth 2015, p. 8; Stavrakakis 1999, p. 36). It is then through nodal points that the discursively constructed idea of "reality" might appear as if it was something objective or natural (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 33, 50). Nodal points introduce Lacanian thinking to the discourse theory: the concept of nodal point derives from Lacan's concept of *point de capiton* which refers to a privileged signifier within a signifying chain that determines the meaning of the whole chain (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 112). It is therefore important for ideology and discourse analysis to distinguish how nodal points are situated in relation to one another within an ideological discourse in order to understand what meanings a certain discourse is producing. Nodal points function also as points of identification (Lacan used the term *master signifier* when speaking of signifiers that grant identities) (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 42). It is because of these master signifiers that the construction of identity will always fail because, as it was shown before, these master signifiers, these nodal points that function as if they could tell us what we are, end up being incomplete and lacking. The master signifier does however manage to grant an illusion of fullness through certain words, such as "free", that can be interpreted in multiple ways and adapted to various contexts (Wardle 2016, p. 305).

In his later works on populism, Ernesto Laclau has developed further the concepts of nodal point and Lacanian master signifier by developing the concept of *empty signifier*. What characterizes an empty signifier is that it uses something called *logics of equivalence* in order to create a signifying chain that consists of differential demands. So, while the demands are differential in nature (because all things exist in a differential relation to one another), the empty signifier makes these demands look as if they appeared as one demand that has a single solution. Empty signifiers are thus symbolical representations that appear as offering fullness for the subjects (i.e. offering solutions to issues) while in fact this state of fullness is impossible. The function of an empty signifier is to hide this impossibility of fullness and make it look like as if there was a single solution to these various and sometimes even contradictory demands. (Laclau 1995, 1996, 2004 in Howarth 2015, p. 12.; Howarth 2015, p. 11–12.) Empty signifiers are then, by nature, lacking. Various ideologies from nationalism to feminism rely on empty signifiers in order to make their messages effective. Few

examples of empty signifiers could be such idioms as "Freedom!", "Make America Great Again!" or "Equality!". The logic of "Equality!", for instance, is that it might be representing various demands, such as social inequality, gender inequality, inequality between different ethnicities and inequality between the poor and the rich. The idea of such expression is that it does not define the specific problem at hand. Instead, it offers fullness through the idea that there exists merely a problem of "equality" which can be fixed with "more equality" without ever defining exactly what this signifier "equality" means. It draws its meaning from these various issues that in themselves are more complex and multidimensional. This empty signifier also offers an idea of a solution that promises fullness for an individual: by merely having "more equality" there would be no social inequalities or problems what so ever. It appears as if equality is a path to an issue-free world where no one is oppressed or in an unequal position. However, according to Laclau and Mouffe (1985, p. 125) there is something that prevents "us" from achieving this ideal state, and it is because of "the other".

The creation of the other works as a way to create the necessary social antagonism that an ideological discourse needs in order to be appealing to an individual. This premise derives from the idea that a discourse always invites individuals to pick a position in order to become a subject within that specific discourse (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 41). In addition, as these positions or master signifiers are built through signs and signifiers, something is always excluded. This paves the way for a social antagonism to appear as there are discursively constructed identities that exclude each other (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 47). "The other" offers then an illusory solution for the demands to be resolved in the form "if we get rid of 'them' we can finally be ourselves". The necessary and transhistorical social antagonism shows us this "universal social blockage", and ideologies are always constituting this otherness (Daly 1999, 225). So, in Lacanian terms, instead of showing us the constitutive lack within us – the fundamental split within ourselves as subjects – and the lack in the symbolic Other, through which we build our identity, the lack is to be perceived solely in "the other". It is "the other" that is incomplete and keeps us desiring for a better world. "The other" functions also as the "constitutive other" that establishes the possibility to create a sense of unity among "us" (Stavrakakis 2008 in Mylonas 2012, p. 355). According to Alain Badiou (2008 in Mylonas 2012, p. 355), the liberal identity has casted this role of the constitutive other upon, for instance, Muslims and immigrants.

4.1.2 The logics approach: operationalizing the discourse theory

This study will rely on the *logics approach* that has been highly influenced by Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory as well as Lacanian theory (Glynos & Howarth 2008, p. 10). Although the logics approach does not either constitute any consistent nor complete methodological tradition, Jason Glynos and David Howarth (2008, p. 13) argue that logics approach offers, along with the description and explanation of social and political phenomena, a possibility to approach the given phenomena critically. In their view, words "critical" or "critique" should not be understood as disapproval or criticism but much rather as an explanation and understanding through deconstruction. Glynos and Howarth divide their logics approach to three different analysable logics: social, political and fantasmatic, from which the second and third are relevant regarding this study. Political logics builds on the logics of equivalence and logics of difference. Logics of difference adopts a topological approach where things exist in a differential nature to one another, but some (empty) signifiers can represent other signifiers through logics of equivalence while some signifiers are excluded from the signifying chain. The exploration of political logics helps to identify discursive shifts where moments, elements and nodal points are dislocated within a discourse. It gives access to explore how social practices are politically debated, contested and constituted, and tries to understand *how* changes occur. One way to identify how these changes occur is through the identification of political frontiers or limits. That is, when somebody defines some entity and excludes something from that entity. The exploration of fantasmatic logics concentrates on the *why* of the social and the political and tries to understand why subjects keep on acting like they act. This approach explores the ideological grip and closure of discourse through the analysis of fantasies; the fantasmatic logics strives to explore how ideologies and discourses structure subjects' enjoyment. (Glynos & Howarth 2007, p. 133–134, 151–152; Glynos & Howarth 2008, p. 12–13.)

As an example, Glynos and Howarth (2008, p. 16–32) have used the logics approach to study the education reforms in the UK in 1980s that led to a system where universities started to function more according to economic and capitalistic conditions. They advanced from first exploring the social logics (i.e. what is being done and by which regime) to the exploration of political and fantasmatic logics. In their study they found that on a political level there was re-articulation at place where new political frontiers or limits where created through the use of language: The government behind these reforms were referred to as "modernizers" whereas those who resisted were referred to as "traditionalists". The reforms were also justified through the inclusion of

consumerist discourse into the higher education discourse, which made the discourse on higher education more market-friendly through logics of equivalence. By adopting the name "modernizers", Thatcher's government could re-articulate certain master signifiers, dislocate them and create new meanings concerning higher education. Consequently, the creation of new political frontiers and limits led to the restructuration of fantasy and enjoyment as well: the new fantasmatic construct made possible novel ways of imagining and articulating what "we" can achieve and who is preventing "us" from getting what "we" want.

This research applies the above-mentioned theories as hermeneutical tools when exploring the fantasmatic logics of Obama's War on Terror. I will build my interpretative analysis highly on the Lacanian-Žižekian theory that was introduced in Chapter 2 and will draw hermeneutical inspiration from Slavoj Žižek's study (2004) on the events of 9/11 that was introduced in Chapter 3. Although Žižek enquiry is written in an essay format and does not include a consistent methodological approach to the topic, it shows well the operationalization of the Lacanian-Žižekian concepts of fantasy and enjoyment through a contextualized and interpretative framework.

4.2 Data and data collection

The data of this research consists of 105 presidential speeches that were given by president Barack Obama in 2009–2016. Presidential speeches are used to communicate administration's policies to the public and are a primary tool for presidents govern and to affect political situations. Furthermore, speechmaking in the US is a way to lead the Congress, the media and the public. (Eshbaugh-Soha 2010, p. 1–3.) Also, in America, presidential press conferences – where speeches are also delivered – are a way to engage with the American people by generating news and introducing policies of the administration (Eshbaugh-Soha 2012, p. 474–475). It has also been claimed that a press conference is a way for a president to affect the policy agenda and persuade the public (Smith 1990, p. 66 in Eshbaugh-Soha 2012, p. 475). Drawing on these conclusions, presidential speeches appear as an adequate tool to analyse the articulations, discursive elements and fantasmatic constructs of Obama's War on Terror.

The 105 speeches were selected from the website *www.americanrhetoric.com* which is, according to its front page, a "[d]atabase of and index to 5000+ full text, audio and video versions of public speeches, sermons, legal proceedings, lectures, debates, interviews, other recorded media events,

and a declaration or two." It contains transcribed presidential speeches by Barack Obama listed and organized in a chronological order. The reason why this database was chosen, instead of for instance Obama White House Archives, is that *americanrhetoric.com* has gathered and arranged the speeches in a way that makes possible a more precise and consistent analysis of the speeches. For example, the webpage of Obama White House Archives does not list the speeches on one single page but instead on 473 different pages (see Obama White House Archives 2019). It is obvious that relying solely on the Obama White House Archives would make this study imprecise and time-consuming. By using the archives of *americanrhetoric.com*, the analysis can be carried out in a more scientific and organized way. In addition, *americanrhetoric.com* has attached a link to audio-visual materials to all of the included speeches so that the authenticity of each speech can be verified. It should be noted that the data consists of speeches that were actually carried out. Therefore, in some of the speeches, there are comments from the members of the audience to which president Obama reacts. These reactions are to be found within the transcripts as well. The data contains also some press conferences which have Q&A section after the speech. These Q&A parts were left out because this study focuses on analyzing the speeches that were prepared by the administration. If, however, there is a member of the audience that interrupts the speech and Obama reacts to this interruption, it is included into the analysis.

The criteria for a speech to be selected for further analysis was that the title of the speech should include at least one of the following topics or words (or a derivative from that word): words and topics related to terror, national security issues and military, such as *terror, terrorism, attack(s), 9/11, Pentagon, military, army, veteran*; words and topics related to specific geographical areas, states or cities that have been associated with the War on Terror or have been the scenes of terrorist attacks, such as *Middle East, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Paris, Orlando, Florida, Benghazi, Nigeria, Kenya, Somalia*; different parties and central figures related to terror, terrorism and politics within the Islamic world and Middle East, such as *al Qaeda, ISIS/ISIL/Islamic State/Daesh, al Shabaab, Boko Haram, NATO, United Nations, Osama bin Laden, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Benjamin Netanyahu, Bashar al-Assad*. Each selected speech was also read through in order to verify that it included articulations on War on Terror. For example, one speech concerning Iran was left out because its content was not directly related to War on Terror but instead to Iranian nuclear agreement.

Speeches including the word 'war' were also included but only if the title of the speech contained some other words from the list above. This way I could avoid the inclusion of, for instance,

memorial speeches that are not related to War on Terror but some other wars where the US has been involved. There were also eight State of the Union/State of the Nation addresses that were also selected for further analysis as there were sections concerning War on Terror and crises in the Middle East and the Arab world. Also, both presidential inaugural addresses from 2009 and 2013, three G-20 summit speeches and eight United Nations General Assembly speeches were included into the material. The archives also included speeches that were given by Obama before his presidency during the presidential rally. They were however excluded from the material because they do not represent the official administration of the US.

The archive at *americanrhetoric.com* includes only speeches that were given by president Obama himself. It does not include for example bulletins or press conferences given by the Press Secretary of the White House who also represents the administration. Nevertheless, this does not hamper from conducting the analysis or make this study any less valid: Through the analysis of these 105 speeches by president Obama we can rest assured that the speeches received a visibility that is not granted for the Press Secretary of the White House, since the information coming from president himself guarantees a certain credibility (Hodges 2007, p. 82–83). And, even if for some reason some Obama's speeches on terrorism were not included in the *americanrhetoric.com* archive, the data of 105 speeches guarantees that Obama's articulations on War on Terror will be covered; it is expected that there will be repetition of nodal points and master signifiers that are to be found from several speeches. Repetition is also needed when enjoyment is structured and restructured (Heath-Kelly 2018, p. 90).

5 Analysis

The analysis is divided into three phases according to political events and changes in US policy relating to terrorism during Barack Obama's presidency. The division is made according to reported and prominent political events that are expected to have an effect on the content of the speeches. In this chapter, central fantasmatic constructs and ways of structuring enjoyment will be identified but their role and functioning will be discussed more in detail in Chapter 6.

This study perceives that these changes in policy and articulations are shaped by three major events: The first phase is characterized by Obama's administrations attempt to promote the end of wars both in Iraq and Afghanistan, or the end of "Global War on Terror" (see Shinkman 2013). This phase is perceived to have started when Obama took office in 2009 and the end of this phase is marked by the withdrawal of troops from Iraq in the late 2011. The beginning of the second phase starts when Obama's administration decided to take action against the regime of Muammar Qaddafi in Libya in March 2011 and Obama started to express, in a growing extent, his support for "the people" in the midst of upheavals in Middle East and North Africa. It is noteworthy that the first two phases overlap, as the last troops in Iraq were withdrawn in the end of 2011 and operations in Libya had already taken place in the early 2011. This is however typical for discourses, as discursive elements and even nodal points do overlap sometimes with other discourses and might end up being part of some other discourse later on (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 28–29). The end of the second phase is marked by the rise and increasing presence of ISIL in the Middle East, which becomes prominent in the speeches from 2014 onward. This also marks a shift from the second phase to the third and final phase. The third phase ends in 2016 when Obama's second and final term as a president of the US came to an end.

The three phases were not chosen arbitrarily or without gaining supporting evidence from the data: I used ATLAS.ti – a software to perform Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (see e.g. Lewins & Silver 2007) – to browse through the data and verify that articulations, which support the division of the data, really exist. By using the same method, I looked for articulations of different enemies of War on Terror, since the study of Heath-Kelly (2018) showed that the objects of desire (enemies) tend to be "forgotten" and replaced by new enemies/objects of desire. This shifting of enmity was expected to show on the data as well. The results of this process are portrayed in the Figure 1.
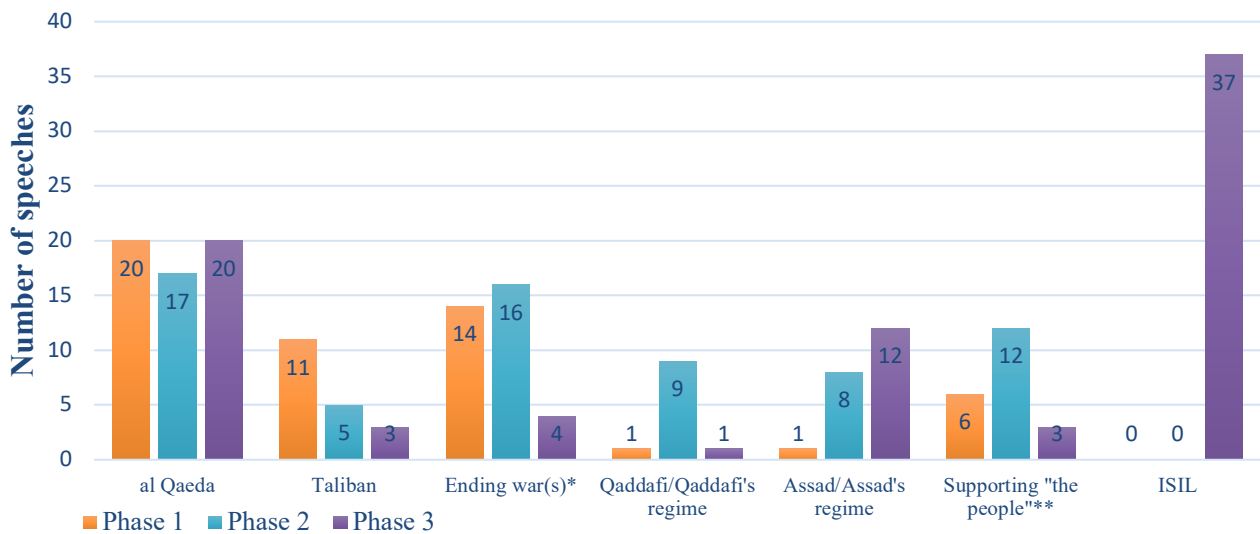
Figure 1. Articulations on considerable topics, enemies and political events in Obama's War on Terror. The number indicates in how many speeches an enemy or a topic was mentioned in each phase.

*These figures were gained by browsing the data with the search word "end" and ruling in only the speeches that contained articulations according to which the US is ending wars in Iraq and/or in Afghanistan.

**A speech was included in this category if Obama articulated himself and/or the United States as supporters of the revolting people of the Arab world.

Figure 1 shows that even though certain articulations are present in all of the phases, each phase has its own specific articulations that stand out in relation to other phases. Thus, the three phases that constitute the War on Terror of Barack Obama from the point of view of this study are:

Phase	Years	Name of the phase	Number of speeches
1	2009–2011	Advocating the end of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan	31
2	2011–2014	Supporting "the people" of the Arab world	30
3	2014–2016	War against ISIL	44

The speeches will be analysed in a chronological order, phase by phase, and the focus will be foremost on the repetitive elements within the speeches. This is because repetition is used to make a validity effect which makes a claim more convincing. In addition, repetition functions as an efficient way of embedding threat imaginaries and (re-)creating enmity. (Hansson 2015, p. 181; Heath-Kelly 2018, p. 95.) Therefore, mentioning some element only once or twice in one or two speeches does not justify me to make any further conclusions. It is also very unlikely that this element forms an important nodal point or master signifier in the larger discursive frame. After all, this study strives to gain a much wider understanding of the discursive practices of Obama's War on Terror and meanings that they create.

In each phase the focus of analysis will be first in the identification of discursively established nodal points and master signifiers. This will be done through the use of political logics by identifying political limits and frontiers (i.e. what is re-articulated or debated). This identification and analysis of nodal points and master signifiers is based on the theorizations of Laclau and Mouffe as well as Lacan. After having identified these nodal points and master signifiers that invite individuals to become subjects within that discursive order, I will explore, based on the theoretical literature, how the dimensions of fantasy and enjoyment are structured by these articulations, nodal points and master signifiers. Ideological fantasies will be analysed according Wardle's (2016) categorization: my purpose is to find out whether the fantasy is promised to fill the lack in the *present* through some pure belief in something transcendental that fills the void within a subject, or in the *future* through promises that the object of desire will be attained. It will be also analysed whether the unattainability of the fantasies is blamed on "the other" or not. The analysis will also focus on identifying, what is the object of desire for each phase, i.e. what is the object that grants fullness, as well as how the enjoyment is structured around this object of desire. Is the desire based solely on *lack of enjoyment* or is there a *theft of enjoyment* involved? I have neither ruled out the possibility that there will be several fantasies and objects of desire that might be overlapping with each other and that they might be articulated simultaneously as granting fullness in the present or in the future. A reference to a specific speech will be made in the course of the analysis by referring to the specific number of the speech (see Appendix)

5.1 Advocating the end of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (2009–2011)

The analysis the first phase shows that Obama does not use the idiom "War on Terror" when he refers to the operations in the Middle East, but instead he speaks about "new era of engagement" (speeches #3, #23, #11); "American engagement" (speech #3); "new level of engagement" (speech #23); and "renewed engagement" (speech #16). This remark suggests that the administration tries to, through articulatory practice, change the meanings that are attached to counterterrorism operations in the Middle East.

In the speeches on terrorism, "new era of engagement" works as an empty signifier that is often articulated along with other global issues, such as climate change, economic recession, nuclear threat and terrorist threat. "New era of engagement" then uses logics of equivalence and links together differential issues and appears as offering exhaustive solution to many of the above-mentioned issues; it is through this "new engagement" that problems will be solved in a responsible and long-lasting way, and peace and security will prevail:

> "We must embrace a new era of engagement based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and our work must begin now. – – Today, let me put forward four pillars that I believe are fundamental to the future that we want for our children: non-proliferation and disarmament; the promotion of peace and security; the preservation of our planet; and a global economy that advances opportunity for all people. – – The violent extremists who promote conflict by distorting faith have discredited and isolated themselves. They offer nothing but hatred and destruction. In confronting them, America will forge lasting partnerships to target terrorists, share intelligence, and coordinate law enforcement and protect our people. We will permit no safe haven for al Qaeda to launch attacks from Afghanistan or any other nation." (Speech #11)

Then, what is tried to achieve through this new engagement is lasting peace, security, prosperity and safety in Middle Eastern countries and around the world (see e.g. speeches #3, #8, #17, #20, #35). These articulations on pursuing lasting peace, security, prosperity and safety establish an ultimate fantasmatic horizon that forms the very basis and ethos for the administration's counterterrorism policies. It is however important to note that Obama does not introduce any detailed solution or plan in order to achieve this fantasy. Hence, by offering fullness through a promise of a fantasy and by linking differential issues together without properly defining what the engagement is fundamentally about, makes Obama's "new engagement" an empty signifier *par excellence*.

Even though Obama does not refer to the Middle Eastern operations as "War on Terror", he does occasionally talk about "war" when he refers to the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The nature of these articulations is mainly critical towards the policies of the previous administration and is foremost aimed at ending the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan (see e.g. speeches #2, #3, #14, #20, #35,

#39). Obama also speaks about "war" when he refers to Middle Eastern operations as something that terrorists started (see e.g. speeches #12, #15, #16, #28). Obama further stresses the futility of these wars by articulating them as costly in both economic terms and loss of human lives (see e.g. speeches #3, #12, #35). It is also noteworthy that the new level of engagement is not, according to Obama, about Islam and is specially not a fight against Islam or Muslims (see e.g. speeches #5, #16, #35). We then have an ultimate fantasmatic horizon that is structured by the desire to achieve lasting peace, security, prosperity and safety and where security and safety are guaranteed for everyone; peace and prosperity thrive and people live together, no matter the religion. This is then the very ultimate object of desire that is pursued through Obama's counterterrorism policies, namely through "new level of engagement". At the same time, Obama appears as a figure who condemns wars and wants to end them instead of waging them. By articulating the new engagement in such way, Obama insinuates that terrorism could be overcome without waging wars. But, in order to understand how the administration keeps this fantasmatic construct alive through the first years in power, it is necessary to go deeper into the discursive articulations that are linked to this new engagement. Who is the "us" that should conduct and take part in the engagement? Against who is this engagement taken and what is expected from it? How is the enjoyment (re)structured throughout the first years in power?

5.1.1 Articulating "us" through the idea of Americanness

Obama's administration consistently constructs the idea of "us" through the master signifier "American" that also works for the nodal point for "us" (see e.g. speeches #12, #10, #23). As the president of the US, Obama is representing the interests of the US. Thus, articulating "Americanness" is important in order to get American citizens behind common causes through common points of identification, that is, master signifiers. The legitimacy of given measures is drawn from discursively constructed idea of this "Americanness"/"Americans" which is reminded almost without exception in every speech Obama delivers:

> "To overcome extremism, we must also be vigilant in upholding the values our troops defend –
> because there is no force in the world more powerful than example of America. That is why I
> have ordered the closing of the detention center at Guantanamo Bay, and will seek swift and
> certain justice for captured terrorists – because living our values doesn't make us weaker, it
> makes us safer and it makes us stronger." (Speech #2)

> "In the end, it's our ideals, our values that built America – values that allowed us to forge a nation made up of immigrants from every corner of the globe; values that drive our citizens still." (Speech #14)

> "As Americans, we will keep alive the virtues and values that make us who we are and who we must always be." (Speech #21)

As we can perceive, Obama's administration builds the idea of Americanness heavily upon common values which are based mostly on freedom, dignity and justice (see e.g. speeches #12, #23, #35). They offer the backbone for the actions and policies because they guarantee the success of America. Hence, it is by believing in these values and by realizing them in people's lives that this ideal and fantasmatic state of affairs could be achieved. These values are then linked to the ultimate fantasy of lasting peace, security, prosperity and safety by a promise of fullness where extremism is overcome when a subject simply keeps on believing and acting according to these articulated values and ideals. Thus, so far, the fantasy is organized through Wardle's first and second category of fantasy where the object of desire (lasting peace, security, prosperity and safety) could be achieved in the present through a pure believe in something transcendental (these very values and ideals). Obama even offers a symbol for this idea of fighting terrorism according to American values: closing down the detention camp in Guantanamo Bay (see e.g. speeches #2, #11, #12). At the same time, Obama offers a "dogmatic" solution – that is, "new engagement" – which invites subjects to act according to the administration's strategies and maintain confidence in them.

It is worth noting that even though Obama articulates these values especially as "American values" and invites American citizens to come together and support his policies, he articulates them in a manner that invites other nations and countries to identify with these values as well; it is through values that everyone could become part of "us" (see e.g. speeches #5, #11, #14, #22). Moreover, Obama articulates these values as universal so that everyone who identifies with them could be considered as part of "us" (see e.g. speeches #11, #22, #33) However, there is no sense of unity, or "us", without Americans and the United States (see e.g. speeches #2, #16, #23). This is prominent especially in the articulations that place American leadership in the heart of the fight against terrorism (see e.g. speeches #3, #23, #39). The US is then the very nodal point that holds together the global front of counterterrorism.

History has also an important role in creating a sense of unity and emphasizing the role of Americans as the nodal point for "us" in the new engagement. The nodal points "America" and "Americans" (as these two function often as substitutes for one another) are articulated in a manner that frames Americans both as destined to act along with other nations of the world but also that

these other nations cannot solve these numerous issues and challenges (climate change, terrorist threat, nuclear threat etc.) without Americans:

> "[A] new era of engagement has begun. For we know that America cannot meet threats of this century alone, but the world cannot meet them without America." (Speech #2)
>
> "America takes these actions because our destiny is connected to those beyond our shores." (Speech #14)

Obama then pinpointedly articulates that Americans are and will be part of fighting the terrorist threat (among other global issues) in a way or another – it is impossible to accomplish these objectives without the US. Furthermore, this nodal point takes a determined moral stand where the duty of the US is to be the protector of these universal values in the world. America then appears as this trans-historical protector or guardian of the world. This unveils a certain paradox in Obama's articulations: the administration wants to make a distance to these crises but at the same time it wants to conserve the position of the US as the leader.

The unity among Americans is also upheld by reminding continuously Americans about the horrors of 9/11. Obama evens gives a hint of the political and strategic use of the events in the following citations:

> "Now, throughout history, no issue has united this country more than our security. Sadly, some of the unity we felt after 9/11 has dissipated" (Speech #14)
>
> "On September 11, 2001, in our time of grief, the American people came together." (Speech #28)

Here, Obama openly admits that 9/11 should be exploited as an essential symbol in constructing American national identity and unity in the fight against terrorism. It is the grief that brings Americans together. I will return to the role of the events of 9/11 a bit later when contemplating the structuration of enjoyment in the first phase.

The "us" in the renewed engagement does not consist solely of the United States or Americans but is articulated often along with "friends and allies". The most articulated allies, friends and partners are Europe, Israel, NATO countries and the UN (see e.g. speeches #3, #8, #12, #23, #33, #35). This category of "friends and allies" is a signifying chain that is never granted a final definition and is characterized by certain vagueness when being articulated; it can always be re-articulated otherwise. This makes possible the inclusion of new and previously differently articulated parties and groupings but also the exclusion of allies or partners that are not acting accordingly. The vagueness of the articulations draws on logics of difference through which these allies and partners

(and also enemies) are articulated as topologically distinct from the US – America is simply different from the rest of the world. Europe and Israel have also a more special tie with the US – through history and values – than for instance Iraq or Afghanistan that do not share the same historical tie. Hence, it is easier for Iraq and Afghanistan to drop from this signifying chain of friendship (see e.g. speeches #12, #35).

5.1.2 Articulating suspicion on certain allies

Israel is a prominent ally of the US and its role should be discussed more in detail, as this partnership is articulated many times during the first phase (see e.g. speeches #2, #8, #11, #22, #32, #33). Here too, the kinship is created through sharing of same (democratic) values. Articulations on Israel have also a bigger role when legitimizing the policies within Middle East as Obama articulates the fate of Israel as the question of fate of a much wider area. Israel could then be perceived as a significant nodal point for US policies in the Middle East:

> "I believe in the interest not only of the Palestinians, but also the Israelis and the United States and the international community to achieve a two-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians are living side by side in peace and security." (Speech #8)

> "[W]e will also pursue peace between Israel and Lebanon, Israel and Syria, and a broader peace between Israel and its many neighbors." (Speech #11)

Like we see in the first citation, it is obvious that Israel cannot be mentioned without discussion on the role of Palestine. And, as Obama is supporting the two-state solution, he articulates both the Israeli and Palestinian people as friends of the US. But, there is a discursive element of enmity that overshadows this articulation of Palestinian friendship:

> "And so for that reason I think the Palestinians are going to have to answer some very difficult questions about this agreement that's been made between Fatah and Hamas. Hamas has been and is an organization that has resorted to terror; that has refused to acknowledge Israel's rights to exist." (Speech #32)

What we see here is that Obama keeps a distance to the official Palestinian political party Fatah by linking Fatah to the radical organization of Hamas. But, simultaneously, Obama articulates the Palestinian people in the same breath with Fatah and Hamas and advocates – intentionally or unintentionally – a view where Palestinian people are discursively linked to Hamas, an organization that is defined as a terrorist organization according to the US Bureau of Counterterrorism (see e.g. U.S. Department of State 2019). This is the long shadow of Palestinian people that is created by articulating closely ordinary Palestinian people and a terrorist enemy. Slavoj Žižek (2004, p. 151)

has also paid attention to this difficult situation of Palestinian people: Israel needs resisting Palestinians in order to legitimize its actions, i.e. destroying and occupying land in the West Bank. In the same way the US could legitimate its support for Israel because of this articulated terrorist nature of Palestinians. Thus, although being named as "friends of the United States", Palestinians are kept at a distance and the friendship in relation to the US stays articulated differently than for example the friendship between the US and Israeli government. This shows that the signifying chain of "friends and allies" is then open and prone to new articulations; it is possible for a party or grouping to drop from this signifying chain as well. Moreover, it is not only Palestinians but also other groups are burdened with aggravating articulations that include articulations on terrorism. This remark brings forward a consistent articulative strategy through which Obama's administration keeps open the possibility to create enemies but to also make friends during the first years in power. In order to get a better grip of this logic that articulates "the people" and local governments or political parties closely together leaving both undefined and more or less under the shadow of suspicion, I should contemplate Obama's speeches and articulations on Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

During the first years in power, Iraq and the Iraq War form the nodal points for Obama's War on Terror. The articulations on this war are characterised foremost by the idea of ending military operations in the Middle East, which unveils a hegemonizing process: Obama states in his speeches that the Iraq War is an economic burden (articulating the war along with economic recession, see e.g. speech #12), exhausting and sacrificial (American people, soldiers and their families are fed up with the war see e.g. speech #3) and that the whole war was a mistake (taking a distance to Bush's administration and its policies, see e.g. speech #20). With all these articulations Obama backs up his argument of "Iraqi responsibility" which sets the whole strategic basis for winding the war down without more military operations or actions by the US. Obama uses this same articulative practice later on in the speeches concerning Afghanistan and Pakistan as well (see e.g. speeches #11, #12, #35). "Iraqi responsibility" or "local responsibility" forms a nodal point that partially fills "new level of engagement" with meaning and it is articulated as something that is beneficial for both the Iraqi people and Americans. The US will then maintain its influence in the area but the Iraqi and other local forces will be responsible for their own future without the presence and help by the United States. The US has been working hard for the Iraqi people to live in peace and prosperity and now this responsibility is little by little shifted on the shoulders of Iraqi government and Iraqi people:

> "[T]he United States will pursue a new strategy to end the war in Iraq through a transition to full Iraqi responsibility. This strategy is grounded in a clear and achievable goal shared by the Iraqi people and the American people: an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant. To achieve that goal, we will work to promote and Iraqi government that is just representative, and accountable, and that provides neither support nor safe-haven for terrorists." (Speech #3)

This articulation on Iraqi responsibility then suggests that things are getting better both in Iraq (and Middle East) and at home in America: people in Iraq do not have to bear war anymore and the American troops can come back home. The Iraqi government is however questioned and held under suspicion (note the articulation on "safe-haven"). It is kept at a distance and a possibility for it to be articulated either as an "enemy" or a "friend" remains. This might suggest that Obama's administration has not ruled out the possibility to retake action in Iraq if the Iraqi government does not please the US with its policies. At the same time, the responsibility to realize the ultimate fantasy is shifted upon the shoulders of Iraqi government. Obama however keeps articulating that the US is a stalwart supporter of the interests and aspirations of "the Iraqi people", thus making the relation to Iraq rather blurred and ambiguous; Obama is for the people but the government, elected by these very people, is suspicious.

When it comes to Afghanistan and Pakistan, a chain of equivalence is created with Iraq: Obama treats Afghanistan and Pakistan as analogous states with Iraq where the same strategy of shifting responsibility to local government and authorities could be applied. Just like in Iraq, Obama defends and supports the Pakistani and Afghan people but treats the governments with suspicion:

> "Although a legitimate government was elected by the Afghan people, it's been hampered by corruption, the drug trade, an under-developed economy, and insufficient security forces." (Speech #11)

> "Furthermore, the absence of a timeframe for transition would deny us any sense of urgency in working with the Afghan government. It must be clear that Afghans will have to take responsibility for their security, and that America has no interest in fighting an endless war in Afghanistan." (Speech #12)

> "We'll work with Pakistani government to root out the cancer of violent extremism, and we will insist that it keeps its commitments." (Speech #35)

Like the quotes above suggest, also the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan are on the verge of slipping into the category of enmity – or at least on the verge of dropping from the signifying chain of "friends and allies". Furthermore, Obama insists that the Pakistani government "keeps its commitments" which keeps open the possibility to intervene Pakistan if necessary. This shifting of responsibility to local actors could be interpreted as a way to diminish the responsibility of the US and the administration in achieving the promised ultimate fantasy. Therefore, the analysis suggests

that the administration constantly articulates certain groups as suspicious by articulating them along with terrorism and violent extremism, thus keeping up the possibility to intervene if US interests are at stake.

5.1.3 The constitutive other: Articulating the category of enmity

I will now explore how the category of enmity is articulated and established. The articulation of enmity in Obama's speeches is central because it is the enmity that functions as the category which establishes "the constitutive other" around which a larger sense of unity and togetherness could be created: It is through common enemies and common threats that these various and differentially articulated peoples, nations and governments are brought together and the category of "us" is created (see e.g. speeches #8, #12, #16). In the fight against terrorism, the central nodal point for the creation of enemy, or "the other", is the signifier "terrorists". Terrorists are the ones that are making the US, Europe, Middle East and the whole world unsafe (see e.g. speeches #12, #14).

In the first phase of the analysis, the nodal point "terrorists" functions as a signifier that uses the logics of equivalence by linking together two differential terrorist organizations, namely the terrorist network al Qaeda and the political movement and military organization Taliban. They both fill the signifier and nodal point "terrorists" with meaning and are articulated closely together (see e.g. speeches #12, #15, #35). "Terrorists" are also defined, through logics of difference, as something different from "Muslims" or "Islam" which establishes a gap based on difference between "Islamic terrorists" and "Muslims":

> "I also want to be clear that America's relationship with the Muslim community, the Muslim world, cannot, and will not, just be based upon opposition to terrorism." (Speech #5)

> "As we know, these men belonged to al Qaeda – a group of extremists who have distorted and defiled Islam, one of the world's great religions, to justify the slaughter of innocents. Al Qaeda's base of operations was in Afghanistan, where they were harbored by the Taliban – –." (Speech #12)

> "Al Qaeda and its affiliates are small men on the wrong side of the history. They lead no nation. They lead no religion." (Speech #16)

It is however the use of logics of difference that grants certain vagueness and openness in the definitions of both "Muslim" and "Islam" as well as "terrorists": Even though Obama stresses that the United States' relationship to Muslim communities will not be dictated by terrorism Obama does not talk about terrorism without occasionally referring to Islam. Consequently, if the

definitions of both Islam and terrorism are based on logics of difference that oppose one another, then one cannot be defined without a reference to the other. Thus, in Obama's War on Terror, Islam is condemned to be articulated occasionally along with terrorism even if on the level of rhetoric Obama tries to separate them and relieve Muslims from the burden that terrorism has brought about in the 21st Century; the definition of terrorism in the 21st Century includes an articulation on Islam, and even though this articulation aims at denying the role of Islam in violent extremism, it is still there.

There are also countries that are linked to terrorism and articulated as enemies in the fight against terrorism. This is the case especially with Iran which is always articulated together with the terrorist threat but also with nuclear threat. Iran then grants the nodal point "terrorists" an official name and geographical area which can be identified as preventing "us" from achieving the ultimate fantasy:

> "So let me be clear – we remain committed to preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.
> – – Moreover, Iran continues to support terrorism across the region, including providing
> weapons and funds to terrorist organizations." (Speech #33)

Iran then also grants a name for "nuclear threat" – an issue that can be also found under the banner of "new era of engagement" – where dealing with terrorist threat also means dealing with the nuclear threat (see e.g. speeches #3, #23). Obama does not however articulate Iran as a geographical area where terrorism should be fought – at least not through military action – but Iran is much rather articulated as a foe that is acting as a sponsor of terrorism. This articulatory practice does however attach Iran to the signifying chain of enmity which consequently frames Iran as a hostile terrorist state.

5.1.4 Expanding the War on Terror

Before getting into detail in defining what are the object(s) of desire and how enjoyment is structured during the first years of Obama's presidency, I will introduce how geography has an essential role in legitimizing policies and military actions against terrorism. While al Qaeda is an extremist network which is articulated as a global actor with not one specific geographical location, it is always localized somewhere when new policies against terrorism are introduced. This can be perceived well when the focus in counterterrorism policies shifts from Iraq to Afghanistan and Pakistan:

> "But while we have achieved hard-earned milestones in Iraq, the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated. After escaping across the border into Pakistan in 2001 and 2002, al Qaeda's leadership established a safe-haven there. – – [T]he Taliban has maintained common cause with al Qaeda, as they both seek an overthrow of the Afghan government." (Speech #12)

> "I have a responsibility to do whatever is necessary to succeed in Afghanistan and in our broader effort to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaida [sic]. – – We will not tolerate a safe haven for terrorists who want to destroy Afghan society from within and launch attacks against innocent men, women and children in our country and around the world." (Speech #18)

Hence, it seems that al Qaeda constantly keeps "slipping away": Al Qaeda was supposed to be destroyed in Iraq but little by little Afghanistan and Pakistan are articulated as the geographical areas where al Qaeda should be fought and defeated. These new war zones are justified by articulating these areas as terrorist "safe havens", which stresses the idea that terrorists are dwelling in safety and security and plotting attacks against "us" while "our" safety and security has been taken away by these very terrorists (see e.g. speech #35). The battlefield (or geography) of terrorism then seems to be expanding even though the war was supposed to end in Iraq and Afghanistan. The data also suggest that Obama maintains the possibility to expand the War on Terror to new geographical areas by articulating the US as a global actor that can hunt terrorists wherever necessary:

> "Where al Qaeda and its allies attempt to establish a foothold – whether in Somalia or Yemen or elsewhere – they must be confronted by growing pressure and strong partnerships." (Speech #12)

> "We will 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." (Speech #13)

Like the citations above suggest, the engagement could be expanded whenever an adequate enemy, that could be articulated as a terrorist threat, appears. When combining this finding to the recently discussed vagueness in defining and adapting the signifier "terrorists", the possibility to keep the war going remains, and Obama's will to wind down or end the War on Terror becomes, at the very least, debatable. Additionally, maintaining the possibility to expand the war against terrorism might end up being useful when later on the Arabic uprisings in 2011 start to shape American interests in the Middle East and North Africa. Obama already gives hints about this in the first phase:

> "We [Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu] discussed, first of all, the changes that are sweeping the region and what has been happening in places like Egypt and Syria and how they affect the interests and security of the United States and Israel, as well as the opportunity for prosperity, growth and development in the Arab world." (Speech #32)

Obama explicitly articulates that there are American interests in the area and that the upheavals might be affecting these interests as well as the security of the US. This far in Obama's War on Terror, the shifts in Middle Eastern and counterterrorism policies of the US are articulated and justified through terrorism, and it cannot be ruled out that this will be the case in the upcoming years as well.

I have this far covered essential articulations, discursive elements, nodal points and master signifiers that are in a hegemonic position in Obama's articulations on the terrorist threat and the fight against terrorism: There is a clear creation of "us" and "the other" through articulatory practice, and these discursive groupings within themselves have specific nodal points and master signifiers that interpelate individuals to become subjects in the fight against terrorism and support the administration's policies. All these discursive practices are linked to the wider banner of "new era of engagement" which promises fullness by promising a harmonious state of affairs where safety and security are not lacking and people are living in peace and prosperity. This is indeed the ultimate fantasmatic construct through which enjoyment in the War on Terror is structured. I will now explore more in detail the fantasmatic logics of the first phase of Obama's War on Terror.

5.1.5 The fantasmatic constructs in the first phase

In the first phase of the analysis, Obama's administration structures the enjoyment around the remembering of 9/11: The public is regularly reminded of the events of 9/11 in several speeches (see e.g. speeches #10, #12, #35) and it is from the events of 9/11 that the whole counterterrorism policy draws its ethos and legitimacy. The lack of enjoyment is based on *theft of enjoyment* by the terrorists; it was the 11th of September when the terrorists took "our" safety and security away and which "we" still have not gotten back. Furthermore, they are enjoying safety and security in their safe havens. Thus, 9/11 functions as a signifier that symbolically structures enjoyment and, through this shared symbolical meaning, functions as a unifying signifier that grants subjectivity and creates unity:

> "We can't forget why we're here. We did not choose this war. – – We were attacked viciously on 9/11." (Speech #15)

> "So this war has changed over the last nine years, but it's no less important than it was in those days after 9/11." (Speech #16)

The citations above suggest that enjoyment has a symbolic dimension in the first phase of the analysis. It also contains the transgressive character that Hook (2017) has identified as typical for enjoyment: Waging war that aims in destroying terrorist networks and killing terrorists transgresses the very moral codes and sense of justice that Obama is so keen to defend (see e.g. speeches #23, #35). 9/11 is then a symbol of revenge, a symbol of lost and stolen enjoyment. This finding reveals a paradoxical logic in Obama's War on Terror: terrorism should be fought according to moral codes and a sense of justice yet killing and destroying are not ruled out as modes of action.

When it comes to achieving the (impossible) ultimate fantasy, it is important to identify what is/are the possible object(s) of desire. In the course of the analysis it appeared that there are numerous objects of desire to be found at different times, and at least three hierarchical levels were identified: First, the ultimate pursuit of lasting peace, safety, prosperity and security through the fight against terrorism and "renewed engagement" is placed above all other objects of desire as the ultimate and superior fantasmatic construct. Under this first level functions the second level which is constructed through the category of enmity, that is, through al Qaeda and Taliban: these antagonistic organizations function as objects of desire that need to be achieved (i.e. destroyed and dismantled) in order to achieve the superior object of desire (lasting peace, safety and security). The third level consists of object(s) of desire that operate in the very proximity of the second level but help to keep the fantasy of the second level at a distance: it is structured by "names" and "faces" of terrorism, such as bin Laden, that represent these hostile organizations. By granting a name and a face for the fight against terrorism, the object of desire becomes embodied, and the fantasy appears as more concrete and achievable. These two inferior objects of desire on the latter levels guarantee that the ultimate and superior object of desire will never be achieved. This happens by re-structuring the objects of desire of the two inferior levels; once they are too close of being achieved, they "slip away" and the enemy re-appears somewhere else.

Examples of this "slipping" are the already introduced articulations on al Qaeda, according to which al Qaeda is occasionally articulated in a way that suggests that it could be destroyed within a specific geographical area, first in Iraq, then in Afghanistan and Pakistan (see e.g. speech #35). The same applies to Taliban (see e.g. speeches #12, #35). What seems to be happening is that the signifying chain that dictates where and against whom the war should be fought retains the possibility for articulating new elements so that the object of desire can be structured over and over again, in this case by re-articulating the geographical area in the fight against terror. This is "slipping away" applies to "names" and "faces" of terrorism as well:

> "As we speak, al Qaeda continues to plot against us, and its leadership remains anchored in the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan. We will disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda, while preventing Afghanistan from again serving as a base for terrorists. And because of our drawdown in Iraq, we are now able to apply the resources necessary to go on offense." (Speech #20)

> "And thanks to our intelligence professionals and Special Forces, we killed Osama bin Laden, the only leader that al Qaeda had ever known. This was a victory for all who have served since 9/11. – – Of course, huge challenges remain. This is the beginning – but not the end – of our effort to wind down this war." (Speech #35)

The citations above show that there is actually only little enjoyment granted when Obama announces the death of Osama bin Laden because the threat of al Qaeda and Taliban remains. The death of bin Laden does not then shatter the ultimate fantasmatic construct because the objects of desire of the second level, al Qaeda and Taliban, are still posing a threat and denying a state of lasting peace. However, this little dose of enjoyment that bin Laden's death grants for the subjects of War on Terror functions as a way to remind that there could be more of this enjoyment as long as the administration's counterterrorism policies and strategies are followed.

The first phase of the analysis shows that Wardle's all three categories of structuring fantasy are present in Obama's speeches on terrorism during the first years in power. By placing the belief in universal American values in the nucleus of the fight against terrorism, Obama gives a promise of fullness in the present: overcoming terrorism depends on the willingness of all the people to keep on acting according to these universal values. The second way of organizing fantasies in Wardle's categorization was based on dogmas, rules and precepts that allude to the future: through the combination of universal values and Obama's "new engagement", there exists a path to achieve the fantasmatic future. It is the third category of fantasy which explains, why the ultimate object of desire of War on Terror remains unachieved: it is due to "the other" – terrorists, sponsors of terrorism and suspicious governments and political parties – why the fantasy is still not achieved.

5.2 Supporting "the people" of the Arab World (2011–2014)

In the second phase of the analysis a discursive shift can be perceived: The upheavals of the Middle Eastern and North African countries start to replace the articulations on the conflicts of Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. At first, these upheavals are not linked directly to terrorism but over time articulations on the connections between local governments – namely those of Libya and Syria – and terrorist networks are being made. This is why Obama's articulations on Libyan and Syrian

regimes and on terrorism cannot be treated separately in this study, although they are not necessarily always articulated along with each other.

In the second phase of the analysis, Obama's administration continuously tries to legitimize its policies and actions in the Middle East and North Africa by articulating itself as representing "the people" of the Arab World. This was already seen in the first phase of the analysis, but the importance of this articulatory practice is more essential in the second phase. Obama perceives the upheavals as true "aspirations of the people" and articulates himself as if he is actually authentically representing the people of these nations (see e.g. speeches #24, #30, #37, #45). This idea is constructed foremost by articulating that the US is always ready to stand up for the true aspirations of the people around world and that "representing the people" is about universal values:

> "We were inspired by the Tunisian protests that toppled a dictator, because we recognized our own beliefs in the aspiration of men and women who took to the streets. We insisted on change in Egypt, because our support for democracy ultimately put us on the side of the people. We supported a transition of leadership in Yemen, because the interests of the people were no longer being served by a corrupt status quo. We intervened in Libya alongside a broad coalition, and with the mandate of the United Nations Security Council, because we had the ability to stop the slaughter of innocents, and because we believed that the aspirations of the people were more powerful than a tyrant. And as we meet here, we again declare that the regime of Bashar al-Assad must come to an end so that the suffering of the Syrian people can stop and a new dawn can begin. – – These are not simply American values or Western values – they are universal values. And even as there will be huge challenges to come with a transition to democracy, I am convinced that ultimately government of the people, by the people, and for the people is more likely to bring about the stability, prosperity, and individual opportunity that serve as a basis for peace in our world." (Speech #45)

In order to create the idea of "the people", Obama uses the same logics of difference as in the first phase when he strived to articulate Muslims as something different from terrorists. In the second phase this happens mostly by placing "the people" against local governments and articulating these governments and regimes as not representative of the people. These governments are almost without exception articulated as suspicious, unreliable and brutal – qualities that do not belong to the category of "the people". Local governments are then the constitutive others that grant the possibility to establish the "the people", and consequently, the idea of "us". What is characteristic for this kind of articulations in Obama's speeches is that these governments are defined and described more accurately than "the people":

> "Within days, whole parts of the country declared their independence from a brutal regime, and members of the government serving in Libya and abroad chose to align themselves with the forces of change. Moammar Qaddafi clearly lost the confidence of his own people and the legitimacy to lead." (Speech #25)

> "The Syrian people have shown their courage in demanding a transition to democracy. President Assad now has a choice: He can lead that transition, or get out of the way. The Syrian government must stop shooting demonstrators and allow peaceful protests." (Speech #30)

> "And today, that idea is being put to the test in the Middle East and North Africa. In country after country, people are mobilizing to free themselves from the grip of an iron fist." (Speech #34)

This suggests that the signifier "the people" draws its meaning foremost from what it is not, i.e. suspicious local governments, regimes, extremists and terrorists. In addition, local governments are often defined through their leadership (e.g. heads of state, prime ministers, presidents) which gives a name and a face for "the other" that prevents the realization of the fantasy (see e.g. speeches #27, #45,# 48, #56). This also helps to establish and re-articulate inferior objects of desire that help to keep the superior fantasy of lasting peace, safety, prosperity and security at a distance.

Obama does however keep a distance to "the people" of the Middle East and North Africa by stating that the responsibility of the upcoming changes and possible democratic progress in the area is on the shoulders of these local peoples (see e.g. speeches #34, #37, #38, #53 #60). Articulations on shared responsibility in resolving the crises of Middle East and North Africa is a central element when Obama's administration is legitimizing its policies for both the American and international audience: Obama continuously tries to make a distinction to the exhausting wars of Iraq and Afghanistan by articulating that the international community should be more involved in the upcoming operations (see e.g. speeches #24, #26, #36, #58). In order to make a distinction to the previous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Obama keeps on claiming that the Iraq War – the previous nodal point for US policies within Middle East – is ending. It is yet again by using the logics of difference that Obama's administration tries to get the public behind its policies; the message is that this will not be another Iraq War:

> "And finally, let me say this to the American people: I know well that we are weary of war. We've ended one war in Iraq. We're ending another in Afghanistan. And the American people have the good sense to know we cannot resolve the underlying conflict in Syria with our military. In that part of the world, there are ancient sectarian differences, and the hopes of the Arab Spring have unleashed forces of change that are going to take many years to resolve. And that's why we're not contemplating putting our troops in the middle of someone else's war. – – But we are the United States of America, and we cannot and must not turn a blind eye to what happened in Damascus. Out of the ashes of world war, we built an international order and enforced the rules that gave it meaning. And we did so because we believe that the rights of individuals to live in peace and dignity depends on the responsibilities of nations. – – I'm ready to act in the face of this outrage. Today I'm asking Congress to send a message to the world that we are ready to move forward together as one nation." (Speech #56)

Obama even speaks about a "different kind of war" (speech #53) but does not give any proper definitions or timeframes for the engagement which he did in Iraq and Afghanistan (see e.g. speeches #3, #11, #12). By applying logics of difference in such way, Obama sustains the possibility to re-articulate what the engagement is about and re-shape the aims and goals afterwards, whenever necessary. This will yet again help to keep the impossible ultimate fantasy at a distance, and the possibility to wage war against terrorism remains.

5.2.1 Shifting the responsibility of the war to the "international community"

In the second phase the idea of "us" and sense of unity is created through the idea of "international community". It is a master signifier that offers a point of identification through which a state could be conceived as an ally of the US. It is through the use of this master signifier that Obama's administration tries to share the responsibility in resolving complex conflicts and reduce the role of the US in resolving the conflict. A central arena in legitimizing actions, creating the sense of unity and sense of shared responsibility is the United Nations and the United Nations Security Council (see e.g. speeches #25, #27, #36, #37, #45). The U.N. functions also as a nodal point for the master signifier "international community" as it is through the U.N. that countries are invited to identify with this master signifier; they belong to the U.N. and share the universal values that the US claims to be representing. Furthermore, NATO countries, especially the United Kingdom, are articulated as close allies and partners that share the common concern about "the people" of the Arab World and share the same set of universal rights and values:

> "The United States was proud to play a decisive role, especially in the early days, and then in a supporting capacity. But let's remember that it was the Arab League that appealed for action. It was the world's most effective alliance, NATO, that's led a military coalition of nearly 20 nations. It's our European allies – especially the United Kingdom and France and Denmark and Norway – that conducted the vast majority of air strikes protecting rebels on the ground. It was Arab states who joined the coalition, as equal partners. And it's been the United Nations and neighboring countries – including Tunisia and Egypt – that have cared for the Libyans in the urgent humanitarian effort that continues today. This is how the international community should work in the 21st century – more nations bearing the responsibility and the costs of meeting global challenges. In fact, this is the very purpose of this United Nations." (Speech #36)

Although Obama's administration tries to increase the responsibility of international community and diminish the responsibility of the US in resolving crises, it does not let go of the American leadership in these operations. While there is a sense of shared responsibility when it comes to the

outcomes and results of the engagement, the US is articulated as the nodal point for the international community:

> "My fellow Americans, for nearly seven decades, the United States has been the anchor of global security. This has meant doing more than forging international agreements – it has meant enforcing them. The burdens of leadership are often heavy, but the world is a better place because we have borne them." (Speech #57)

> "I believe America must remain engaged for our own security. But I also believe the world is better for it. Some may disagree, but I believe America is exceptional – in part because we have shown a willingness through the sacrifice of blood and treasure to stand up not only for our own narrow self-interests, but for the interests of all." (Speech #58)

This is made possible by articulating – just like in the first phase – the US as the nodal point for "universal values and human rights" (see e.g. speeches #24, #27, #37, #45). United States is then articulated as a country that has the will and power to represent and defend these values globally. Thus, when universal values and rights are the very core of "Americanness" without which the idea of "international community" would splinter, then the idea of "international community" is also constructed through these universal values and rights; one must identify with them in order to be included as part of "us". "International community" then uses logics of equivalence in creating the idea of "us" (values as unifying factor) while logics of difference is used to articulate "America", "United States" and "American leadership" as something distinct and exceptional from the international community, allies and partners. These articulations are consequently re-shaping the meanings that are attached to the engagement in Middle East and North Africa. While this engagement was articulated in the first phase as "new era of engagement" where the US had a central role in taking action, the second phase centres the international community in the nucleus of the engagement: Obama speaks about "new era of cooperation", "international cooperation" and "our engagement" (see e.g. speeches #34, #37, #45, #58) which still builds on the previous articulations of the "new era of engagement" from the first phase. Thus, terrorism has become a matter of wider international community and the US is demanding other nations to contribute to the fight. Obama also makes sure that the conflict is still not about Islam or Muslims. He insists that extremists are not Muslims and that the conflict is not a war against Islam (see e.g. speech #36, #53). Obama again leaves the definitions of "Islam" and "Muslim" open and defines them through what they are not. Obama then yet again burdens the definitions of Islam and a Muslim by articulating them through terrorism.

5.2.2 Linking local governments to terrorism

As I have now introduced Obama's articulations on the US policy in the midst of the changes in Middle East and North Africa, it is now in place to consider how these changes are linked to terrorism. Obama makes a clear distinction between the upheavals and terrorism as he highlights that "the people" are seeking shelter from both terrorists and local governments. Governments and terrorists are then both threatening the realization of universal rights and values of "the people" and both should be kept culpable for not acting for lasting peace, safety, prosperity and security. Obama links terrorism to local governments rather directly:

> "For decades, he [Muammar Qaddafi] has demonstrated a willingness to use brute force through his sponsorship of terrorism against the American people as well as others, and through the killings that he has carried out within his own borders." (Speech #25)

> "The fact that Hizbollah's ally – the Assad regime – has stockpiles of chemical weapons only heightens the urgency. We will continue to cooperate closely to guard against that danger. I've made it clear to Bashar al-Assad and all who follow his orders: We will not tolerate the use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people, or the transfer of those weapons to terrorists." (Speech #48)

> "It's time for Russia and Iran to realize that insisting on Assad's rule will lead directly to the outcome that they fear: an increasingly violent space for extremists to operate." (Speech #58)

By articulating Iran and Syria together with terrorism, Obama makes a clear connection between terrorism and the regimes of Syria and Iran. This link between Iran's nuclear weapons and terrorism could already be perceived in the first phase of the analysis but it is now extended to concern regime of Bashar al Assad. This articulatory practice becomes more and more frequent after Assad's regime's use of chemical weapons in 2013 and rises a concern of terrorists getting their hands on chemical weapons (see e.g. speech #48, #56). It is through this articulatory practice that Assad's regime is linked to the terrorist discourse and framed as a terrorist enemy.

Al Qaeda is also articulated as the enemy in the second phase of the analysis. However, the threat that al Qaeda poses is articulated differently when compared to the first phase: after the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013 Obama defines the terrorist threat as something that is related to al Qaeda but is performed by "al Qaeda affiliates" (see e.g. speeches #53, #54, #60 #61). Obama also speaks about "extremist groups" that have occurred within the Arab world due to disorder that the civil wars and upheavals have brought about (see e.g. speeches #47, #58, #61). Obama does not however define these groups more specifically, which leaves a possibility to define and re-articulate these new emerging groupings as "terrorists" later on if necessary:

> "Instead, what we've seen is the emergence of various al Qaeda affiliates. From Yemen to Iraq, from Somalia to North Africa, the threat today is more diffuse, with Al Qaeda's affiliates in the Arabian Peninsula – AQAP – the most active in plotting against our homeland." (Speech #53)

These findings suggest that the role of al Qaeda as the nodal point for "terrorism" is decreasing and Obama is paving the way for new groups to be framed as the nodal point for "terrorists". This finding confirms the finding of Heath-Kelly (2018) since al Qaeda seems not to be the object of desire anymore; old enemies are forgotten in order for new ones to be framed as the ones that are denying the realization of the ultimate fantasy. Altogether, al Qaeda is portrayed as a group that has lost its capacity to threaten America with new 9/11-like attacks but the threat remains in the form of dangerous individuals that might be even American citizens (see e.g. speeches #34, #53). Obama does however manage to articulate an enemy for the fight against terrorism in his speeches even though al Qaeda's role as the nodal point for enmity is in decline and the nature of terrorism is described as more complex. This is established first by articulating the enmity through Qaddafi's regime in Libya and later on through Assad's regime in Syria. In sum, the ethos of US policy in the Middle East and North Africa changes from first being about granting the people universal values and human rights to fighting hostile regimes that are supporting terrorism. This happens gradually when the focus is shifting from the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan to the operations in Libya and Syria. Obama then grants this paradoxical illusion that the war against terrorism is ending when simultaneously he is advancing policies that guarantee that the US engagement in the Arab world will continue and it is still legitimized through terrorism. Obama applies the same articulatory strategy as in the first phase by claiming that terrorists are establishing new safe havens in new geographical areas, this time in Syria (see e.g. speeches #58, #61).

5.2.3 Structuring the fantasy through the protection of universal values

All of these articulations shape the fantasies that are to be achieved through War on Terror. The ultimate object of desire, lasting peace, safety, prosperity and security around the world, is still articulated and reminded to the public. But, the second phase introduces another ultimate fantasy: A fantasy which is built on the global realization of universal values and human rights. Obama speaks in a greater extent about human dignity, prosperity, freedom and tolerance that should be realized in all people's lives (see e.g. speeches #24, #44, #45, #46, #61). Obama does however keep this new ultimate object of desire at a distance by continuously saying that achieving these values on a global scale is hard:

> "[W]e are the nations most willing to stand up for the values of tolerance and self-determination that lead to peace and dignity." (Speech #34)

> "This is how the international community is supposed to work – nations standing together for the sake of peace and security, and individuals claiming their rights. – – The promise written down on paper – "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" – is closer at hand. But let us remember: Peace is hard. Peace is hard. Progress can be reversed. Prosperity comes slowly. Societies can split apart. The measure of our success must be whether people can live in sustained freedom, dignity, and security" (Speech #37)

> "All of us must recognize that peace will be a powerful tool to defeat extremists throughout the region, and embolden those who are prepared to build a better future" (Speech #58)

Obama articulates the "universal values and rights" as something that should be just believed in which suggest – in the footprints of Wardle's (2016) first category of structuring fantasy – that values are a tool in order to achieve the ultimate fantasy of lasting peace, safety and security; believing in these values and acting according to them will lead to a state where these values and rights are realized and lasting peace, safety and security are prevailing. These two ultimate objects of desire are then intertwined. Again, by articulating such ambitious fantasy, Obama creates an optimal discursive space where possible future interventions are made easier if these values and rights are not realized and respected somewhere. Furthermore, unrealized universal values and rights are easy to articulate along with the terrorist discourse by exploiting the third category of fantasy: blaming it to "the other". The second phase shows that it is possible to re-articulate "the other" who prevents "us" from fully being ourselves, as the articulatory shift from terrorists to the regimes of Qaddafi and Assad is rather swift and discreet. This shift happens by articulating these regimes (and other hostile groupings) along with the signifier "terrorists".

There are also new inferior objects of desire that are articulated and constructed following the same logic as in the first phase: For example, in the case of Muammar Qaddafi, the elimination of his regime is articulated as the object of desire that would bring peace, prosperity and democracy to Libya (see e.g. speeches #24, #30). However, when this momentary object of desire seems to be achieved and Qaddafi is killed, Obama states that there is still much work to do in Libya and that it is the responsibility of the Libyan people to realize this fantasy:

> "Today, we can definitively say that the Qaddafi regime has come to an end. – – So this is a momentous day in the history of Libya. The dark shadow of tyranny has been lifted. And with this enormous promise, the Libyan people now have a great responsibility – to build an inclusive and tolerant and democratic Libya that stands as the ultimate rebuke to Qaddafi's dictatorship. – – We're under no illusions – Libya will travel a long and winding road to full democracy. There will be difficult days ahead. But the United States, together with the international community, is committed to the Libyan people." (Speech #38)

The fantasy was not realized after all even though everything was done accordingly and Qaddafi's regime was replaced and democratic elections were held. Qaddafi is also equated to other despotic leaders of the Arab world through logics of equivalence and Libya acts as a precedent for the wider political outcomes in the Middle East and North Africa. This articulatory practice is used especially when the emphasis of the engagement is shifting from Libya to Syria. Thus, Qaddafi never was the ultimate object of desire, and now he is being replaced by Assad's regime as the object of desire:

> "While Libya has faced violence on the greatest scale, it's not the only place where leaders have turned to repression to remain in power. Most recently, the Syrian regime has chosen the path of murder and the mass arrests of its citizens. The United States has condemned these actions, and working with the international community we have stepped up our sanctions on the Syrian regime – including sanctions announced yesterday on President Assad and those around him." (Speech #30)

Qaddafi's role starts to resemble that of bin Laden from the first phase. After his killing, Qaddafi joins bin Laden in the signifying chain that re-structures enjoyment: Even though bin Laden's death was not celebrated as a grand milestone in the fight against terrorism, bin Laden's death was, and still is being used to remind that objects of desire could be achieved. Reminding of the death of bin Laden repetitively aims to signal that this kind of enjoyment – hunting terrorists down, bringing them before justice and claiming one's revenge – could be felt all the time when the fight against terrorism is over and a permanent state of peace, security, prosperity and safety is achieved. This finding again points out how enjoyment is connected to transgressing laws and moral codes: Obama persistently claims that terrorism should be fought according to American values, most notably according to sense of justice, but he continuously speaks about delivering justice to terrorist leaders (see e.g. speeches #44, #50, #54). These articulations have connotations that might refer to killing these terrorists, which reveals the libidinous and rather barbaric side of enjoyment:

> "A year ago, Qaddafi was one of the world's longest-serving dictators – a murderer with American blood on his hands. Today, he is gone. And in Syria, I have no doubt that the Assad regime will soon discover that the forces of change cannot be reversed, and that human dignity cannot be denied." (Speech #41)

> "We will bring justice to those who harm our citizens and our friends, and we will stand with our allies. – – The war in Iraq is over. American troops have come home. We've begun a transition in Afghanistan, and America and our allies will end our war on schedule in 2014. Al Qaeda has been weakened, and Osama bin Laden is no more." (Speech #45)

Just like the death of bin Laden, Qaddafi's death is used as a symbol of progress in replacing unjust regimes that are supporting terrorism. Obama's War on Terror starts to have features that remind of headhunting, and both bin Laden and Qaddafi are reminding the public that the Middle Eastern and North African policies of the US are efficient and working.

The second phase of the analysis suggests, however, that the enjoyment is not structured as much around the theft of enjoyment (i.e. lack and theft of safety and security): Obama stresses that al Qaeda cannot attack the US like it did in September 2001 (see e.g. speeches#58, #61). Obama then suggests that there is no direct threat to the US. Consequently, the events of the 9/11 are also used in a lesser extent to structure subjects' enjoyment. The enjoyment is instead structured through the lack of universal rights and values in the world:

> "There will be times, though, when our safety is not directly threatened, but our interests and our values are." (speech #27)

Obama insists that attacking these values and rights (which form the very core of the master signifier "Americanness") anywhere is an attack against America. A second ultimate object of desire (realizing universal values and rights globally) is then needed in order to keep the subjects desiring and supporting the policies of the administration when the safety and security of the subjects is not directly threatened; while there is not direct threat to a subject's ontological security, the desire of a subject to wage War on Terror remains because there is a threat to his/her identity.

Wardle's all three categories of structuring fantasy are to be found in Obama's second phase of War on Terror. Just like in the first phase, Obama maintains the fantasmatic construct by articulating universal values (and believing in them) as a way to achieve the ultimate fantasy in the present. The first category of fantasy then appears as rather stable and unchangeable in relation to the first phase. It is however the second and third categories of fantasy that are granted new articulations: The dogmatic path to achieve the fantasy shifts in the second phase away from the "new engagement" and is replaced by "new era of cooperation" and "international cooperation". Through this articulatory practice Obama shifts the responsibility to realize the fantasy to other parties; the future is to be claimed by, not only the US, but the wider international community. The fantasy is also structured according to the third category: articulations on Qaddafi, Assad, al Qaeda and other hostile groupings suggest that the lack of fullness and fantasy is blamed on "the other".

5.3 War against ISIL (2014–2016)

In the third phase of the analysis the most significant articulations relate to the emergence and fight against ISIL as well as the Syrian Civil War. It is through these events that the terrorist threat and counterterrorism policies of the US are articulated. The analysis of the third phase also shows that Obama's articulations on the terrorist threat starts to resemble the articulations of the first phase

since there exists a more direct threat to the US. I will start presenting the results of the third part of the analysis by introducing how Obama's administration articulates and describes the terrorist threat between the years 2014 and 2016.

5.3.1 Articulating terrorism as a complex issue

According to Obama's administration the terrorist threat, violent extremism and emergence of ISIL derives from the fact that in the Arab world there are too many unsatisfied and disappointed young people that are let down by local governments, insufficient level of democracy and poor standards of living (see e.g. speeches #67, #71, #78, #89). In addition, Obama articulates various other global issues along with terrorist threat and Syrian Civil War, such as climate change, and that these global issues are manifesting themselves particularly in Syria. Obama then articulates the US operations and engagement in Syria as a mixture of humanitarian aid and counterterrorism:

> "[T]he United States will work with it and other countries in the region to provide increased support to deal with this humanitarian crisis and counterterrorism challenge." (Speech #62)

> "The risk of instability and extremism grow. Where young people have no education, they are more vulnerable to conspiracy theories and radical ideas, because it's not tested against anything else, they've got nothing to weigh. And we've seen this across the Middle East and North Africa." (Speech #71)

> "Long-term corruption has rotted too many nation-states from within. Governance is collapsing. Sectarian conflicts rage. A changing climate is increasing competition for food and water. And false prophets are peddling a vision of Islam that is irreconcilable with tolerance and modernity and basic science. And in fact, every one of these trends is at play inside of Syria today." (Speech #105)

According to Obama, it is this frustration and despair that drives young people to violent and extremist ideologies, and what ISIS tries to exploit in its propaganda (see e.g. speeches #74, #93). The US engagement is then not only about military action but also humanitarian aid that aims at minimizing this frustration. Slavoj Žižek (2004 p. 130) identified this trend already in Bush's policies. Žižek perceives this as a problem, as the limit between war and humanitarian aid is blurred and is gradually disappearing. This kind of thinking is, according to Žižek, leading to a situation where war is waged under the banner of humanitarian aid. One could conclude that, in the context of War on Terror, humanitarian aid has become killing, and Obama does not seem to make a distance to such policy.

In the third phase, Obama speaks about the increasing role of technology in terrorism: Terrorism is not anymore something that is conducted by specific terrorist organizations in Middle East or North

Africa, but it is also a "violent extremist" ideology that is spreading all over the world. It is over the internet and social media that this ideology is influencing smaller terrorist cells and individuals (see e.g. speeches #71, #89, #98, #100, #105). Thus, possible perpetrators of terrorism are increasingly from Western countries, not only from the Arab world. Obama even speaks about "homegrown terrorism" (see e.g. speeches #74, #97, #100, #105). It is by articulating terrorism as an ideology that these attacks are linked directly to both ISIL and al Qaeda that are articulated explicitly as root promoters of such ideology:

> "Terrorist groups like al Qaeda and ISIL deliberately target their propaganda in the hopes of reaching and brainwashing young Muslims, especially those who may be disillusioned or wrestling with their identity. That's the truth. The high-quality videos, the online magazines, the use of social media, terrorist Twitter accounts – it's all designed to target today's young people online, in cyberspace." (Speech #71)

This expands the idea how terrorism should be fought, as Obama tries to expand the arsenal of fighting terrorism by promoting the surveillance of civilian telecommunications:

> "[I]f we want maximum cooperation from other countries and industry in our fight against terrorist networks. So while some have moved on from the debates over our surveillance programs, I have not. As promised, our intelligence agencies have worked hard, with the recommendations of privacy advocates, to increase transparency and build more safeguards against potential abuse." (Speech #69)

> "[W]hat I'm trying to do there is to institutionalize a system where we begin to hold ourselves accountable for this different kind of national security threat and these different kinds of operations. – – And what I can say honestly is, whether we're talking about how the NSA operates – – that by the end of my presidency – – I feel confident that these efforts will be on a firmer legal footing, more consistent with international law and norms, more reflective of our values and our ethics." (Speech #99; *this citation was picked exceptionally from a press conference material that was given by Obama after the official speech. This was done due to few articulations on the topic in the prepared speeches*.)

Losing one's right to private telecommunications is then the sacrifice that has to be made in order to contribute to the common fantasy – lasting peace, safety, prosperity and security. There are not however many articulations to be found on the surveillance of civilian telecommunications in the speeches, probably because of the sensitive nature of the topic. However, these few articulations on the topic reveal this logic that invites individuals to support the fight against terrorism even though it means losing one's right to private communications. By articulating the terrorist threat as more global and "home grown" Obama makes possible the Schmidtian state of exception. Žižek (2004, p. 143–144) has identified this already during Bush's administration: it was by claiming that US was at war that the limit between war and peace got blurred; the ordinary life of Americans was not affected by this declaration of war, and the war was waged mostly by the state machinery. A state of

peace had become then a state of exception. In the footprints of Žižek, it could be perceived that Obama exploits this state of exception to reduce the civil liberties and rights of individuals to private communication based on this very state of exception that is produced and maintained by numerous articulations on terrorist threat.

5.3.2 Diminishing the role of the US in overcoming terrorism

Obama also calls out Muslim communities across the world to make a distance to these hateful ideologies and condemn ISIL's propaganda (see e.g. speeches #71, #87). In other words, Obama asks Muslim communities to use logics of difference to define Islam and their identity as Muslims: Islam should not be this hateful ideology that ISIL and ISIL's fighters represent. By making Muslim communities responsible for getting rid of the hateful ideologies, Obama guarantees that his administration will not be the one to blame when these hateful ideologies still keep on thriving in the world and the ultimate fantasy remains unachieved. Yet again, Obama does simultaneously underline that the war never was and never will be against Islam or Muslims (see e.g. speech #71). This poses a problem for Muslims: An extremist interpretation of Islam is needed for a Muslim to establish an acceptable identity, and the possibilities for the creation of one's identity stay highly limited. For example, a revolutionary Muslim might be easily perceived as a terrorist since an act of violence by a Muslim might be easily condemned as an act of terrorism whereas a violent act by a Westerner could be perceived as something else. Slavoj Žižek (2004, p. 148) has argued that this is mainly because in the 21st Century the word "terror" has become an universal signifier and a metaphor that is used to explain various social issues. In Obama's articulations on War on Terror, this is easy to perceive as the words "Muslim", "Islam" and "terrorism" are articulated closely together – although not always in a manner that aims at framing Muslims as violent terrorists. This unveils this paradoxical dimension – proper to ideologies and ideological discourses – that by doing good one might be causing harm: Obama asks Muslims to condemn violence but at the same time he ends up limiting the possibilities for Muslims to establish their identity without reference to extremism.

Along with stressing the responsibility of Muslim communities, Obama emphasizes that the terrorist threat has to be overcome by the wider international community and that it is not only the US that has to bear the responsibility in the fight against terrorism (see e.g. speeches #65, #67, #71, #75). There are also articulations that suggest that the fight against terror is getting more and more

global and is not restricted to the Arab world anymore (see e.g. speeches #74, #84, #90, #98, #100). I will discuss about the significance of this finding a bit further. But, in this more and more globalized fight against terrorism, Obama calls out close allies and partners – especially UK, France and Germany – to solve the terrorist threat with the US (see e.g. speeches #63, #64, #88). Obama also stresses that the fight against ISIL is backed up by a broad coalition of 65 nations (see e.g. speeches #66, #74, #84, #87,). This is mostly articulated through the U.N:

> "Working with our partners, we will redouble our efforts to cut off its funding; improve our intelligence; strengthen our defenses; counter its warped ideology; and stem the flow of foreign fighters into and out of the Middle East. And in two weeks, I will chair a meeting of the U.N. Security Council to further mobilize the international community around this effort." (Speech #66)

This suggests that Obama relentlessly tries to diminish the role of the US in solving the terrorist threat, and thus evades the liability to achieve the promised fantasies. This idea of international community is again constructed through the idea of American leadership (see e.g. speeches #66, #71, #74, #75). While Obama calls for international responsibility, he stresses that it is the US that leads these operations; there is no international community if the US is not involved. Again, it is the values that determine "Americanness" and guide American leadership and policies in the Middle East and North Africa. These values are articulated as universal and stabile and as something that everyone should share if they want to be partners with the US and pursue the fantasies of a better and safer world (see e.g. speeches #71, #92). These values, based on dignity, justice and freedom, seem to be the same as in the previous phases, and Obama speaks about believing in these values as a way to fight terrorism and reach the ultimate object of desire:

> "America, our endless blessings bestow an enduring burden. But as Americans, we welcome our responsibility to lead. From Europe to Asia, from the far reaches of Africa to war-torn capitals of the Middle East, we stand for freedom, for justice, for dignity. These are values that have guided our nation since its founding." (Speech #66)

Like the citation above suggests, the articulation of these universal American values functions again as this metanarrative that keeps the US on the "right side of history" (see e.g. speech #87). However, the military action against ISIL is not justified only through values but also by articulating that the war against ISIL is different from previous wars. Obama yet again uses logics of difference in articulating and defining what the war is about: The war against ISIL is most certainly not like the previous costly wars in Iraq or Afghanistan. Furthermore, Obama keeps articulating that the original War on Terror is over by stressing that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are over; the fight against ISIL should not be confused with these wars (see e.g.

speeches #65, #69, #105). This could be interpreted as an articulatory practice through which a distance is yet again made to the policies of president George W. Bush.

Obama also insists that this particular war is different in the way it is fought. Obama stresses that in this war there are no US troops on the ground, but instead the war is fought through air strikes, including drone strikes (see e.g. speeches #69, #87, #88, #105). In addition, there are the US Special Forces that are training and equipping local troops in Syria and Iraq. According to the administration this is not only economic but also efficient way to fight the war, since the main responsibility in resolving the terrorist issue in Syria is on the shoulders of local people and troops:

> "Together with our partners, America is training and equipping the Syrian opposition to be a counterweight to the terrorists of ISIL and the brutality of the Assad regime. But the only lasting solution to Syria's civil war is political – an inclusive political transition that responds to the legitimate aspirations of all Syrian citizens, regardless of ethnicity, regardless of creed."
> (Speech #67)

This strategy might end up being useful when it comes to the fantasies, since the responsibility to achieve both inferior and superior objects of desire is thrusted upon local people and governments. At this point it starts to be obvious what Obama's administration tries to achieve through these articulations: the influence of the US in the Arab world should not diminish but the responsibility in solving the adverse impacts that the War on Terror has produced should be shared.

5.3.3 Still expanding: Linking the Syrian Civil War and terrorism

I have so far introduced how Obama's administration describes the terrorist threat in the ISIL-era and how ISIL-inspired terrorism should be fought. I will now discuss how Obama's administration links the war against ISIL with the Syrian civil war: As mentioned before, Obama declares that ISIL rises from the chaos the prevails in Syria. Acting against ISIL is then articulated in a way that acting against the regime of Bashar al Assad in Syria (the root cause of this chaos) means working against ISIL and vice versa:

> "In the fight against ISIL, we cannot rely on an Assad regime that terrorizes its own people – a regime that will never regain the legitimacy it has lost. Instead, we must strengthen the opposition as the best counterweight to extremists like ISIL, while pursuing the political solution necessary to solve Syria's crisis once and for all." (Speech #66)

ISIL and the regime of Assad then act as the enemy, replacing al Qaeda as the constitutive other that grants unity and differentiates "us" from "the other". Both ISIL and Assad's regime are also

articulated as groups that do not represent "the people" that the US has pledged to be protecting across the world (see e.g. speeches #66, #74, #84). Thus, the familiar discursive practice from the second phase – supporting and fighting for "the people" – is now applied explicitly and straightforwardly in the fight against terrorism that both ISIL and Assad's regime are representing. Obama's administration puts the emphasis on forming an inclusive government in Syria and articulates it as the only way to get rid of ISIL, and possibly the wider terrorist threat:

> "The process agreed to in Vienna is clear – a transition toward a more inclusive representative government, a new constitution, followed by free elections. I will say it again: Such a future, I am convinced, cannot include Bashar al-Assad. It's clear that after years of his barbaric war against his own people – including torture, and barrel bombs, and sieges, and starvation – many Syrians will never stop fighting until Assad is out of power. There's no alternative to a managed transition away from Assad. It's the only way to end the civil war and unite the Syrian people against terrorists." (Speech #93)

In addition, ISIL and Assad's regime are also directly linked to the "trans-temporal" enemy of War on Terror, al Qaeda (see e.g. speeches #71, #81, #97, #100). Al Qaeda then appears as this kind of enemy that is kept in reserve and articulated when there are no other enemies around or if some other antagonistic group is wanted to associate with terrorism; al Qaeda is the very symbol of terrorism and the "trans-temporal" nodal point for terrorism. This helps to make the link with other historical terrorist attacks, notably the 9/11, and to strengthen the justification of military action against ISIL and Assad. Occasionally this category of enmity is supplemented with other smaller terrorist organizations, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Shabaab in Somalia and Hezbollah in Lebanon (see e.g. speeches #67, #78, #79). This finding supports the idea that the administration could yet again re-articulate new geographical areas in the fight against terror and act against terrorism wherever the US interests are threatened. Obama's administration also uses the familiar articulation on "safe-havens" that the terrorists are pursuing in order to plot against the US (see e.g. speech #90).

5.3.4 The direct threat returns: Structuring the fantasy through "the other"

In terms of fantasy, the most significant changes in objects of desire happen on the inferior levels: ISIL and the regime of Assad are articulated as the objects of desire that structure the ultimate object of desire of lasting peace, safety and security. Obama does however make a return to the articulations that are familiar from the first phase by claiming that there is again a more direct threat to the US by terrorists (see e.g. speeches #100). The grip in the third phase of Obama's War on

Terror is then rooted into the idea that the ontological security of Americans is threatened, whereas the second phase stressed that the American values were threatened in the world. The objects of desire are kept at a distance anew by articulating that the fight is going to last for a long time. However, by believing in and acting according to a set of universal values, the ultimate fantasy will be eventually realized:

> "And our own safety, our own security, depends upon our willingness to do what it takes to defend this nation and uphold the values that we stand for – timeless ideals that will endure long after those who offer only hate and destruction have been vanquished from the Earth." (Speech #66)

The fantasmatic construct in the third phase is yet again upheld by relying on the logics of Wardle's first category of fantasy: believing in transcendental values, rights and ideals in the present will fulfil the fantasy of lasting peace, safety, prosperity and security.

However, what is peculiar in the last phase compared to other two phases is that Obama admits occasionally that there will be no future without grievances and tragedies in the globalized world. This can be interpreted as a way to suggest that there will be always terrorism and that the terrorist threat will always be present at some level:

> "I've said this before – we will not be able to stop every tragedy. We can't wipe away hatred and evil from every heart in this world. But we can stop some tragedies. We can save some lives. We can reduce the impact of a terrorist attack if we're smart. And if we don't act, we will keep seeing more massacres like this – because we'll be choosing to allow them to happen. We will have said, we don't care enough to do something about it. – – And today, the results are clear: ISIL has lost more than half its territory. ISIL has lost control of major population centers. Its morale is plummeting. Its recruitment is drying up. Its commanders and external plotters are being taken out, and local populations are turning against it. – – So the campaign against ISIL has been relentless. It has been sustainable. It has been multilateral. And it demonstrates a shift in how we've taken the fight to terrorists everywhere from South Asia to the Sahel. Instead of pushing all of the burden onto American ground troops, instead of trying to mount invasions wherever terrorists appear, we've built a network of partners." (Speech #105)

Does Obama then admit that the fantasy might be unrealizable? Maybe, but he does nonetheless strive to keep the ultimate fantasy alive by claiming that some of the attacks can be prevented. It is also not only the US that bares the responsibility and consequences of terrorism. Admitting the impossibility of the fantasy could be interpreted as "washing one's hands": the relentless War on Terror cannot be won but at least Obama will not be the one to blame since he already said that there will be tragedies in the future as well. Organizing the fantasy through Wardle's second category is then used in a lesser extent in the third phase of Obama's War on Terror: Obama speaks less about "international cooperation" let alone "new era of engagement". It appears that Obama focuses on articulating the war against ISIL as something that has to be waged and that the terrorist

threat is difficult to overcome. So, while the fantasy is structured mainly through the first and third categories of fantasy, the war starts to appear as "headless" where there are no consistent strategies according to which terrorism should be fought. From this point of view, air raids appear as desperate way of showing power and willingness to act in a situation where there is no solid strategy to win the war.

When it comes to structuring the enjoyment in the third phase, Obama articulates the theft of enjoyment again by reminding the public of the events of 9/11 (see e.g. speeches #66, #105). In order to sustain audience's desire to keep on pursuing enjoyment (i.e. taking revenge against terrorists by bringing them before justice or killing them), he presents the progress that the administration has made in the fight against terror so far. Obama names, for instance, dead terrorist leaders that the US has effaced from the battlefields, such as Osama bin Laden among others (see e.g. speech #95, #105). The death of bin Laden is still used to remind the public of the enjoyment that was once felt but which has since dissipated; it is an invitation to keep on desiring, to keep on fighting terrorists:

> "And this focus on al Qaeda – the most dangerous threat to the United States at the time – paid dividends. Today, by any measure, core al Qaeda – the organization that hit us on 9/11 – is a shadow of its former self. Plots directed from within Afghanistan and Pakistan have been consistently disrupted. Its leadership has been decimated. Dozens of terrorist leaders have been killed. Osama bin Laden is dead." (Speech #105)

The role of bin Laden, and especially the role of his death, is to sustain the desire to keep on fighting terrorism and never give up. As the death of bin Laden shows, according to Obama, the US policies are efficient and leaders are brought before justice – although this might be happening by transgressing of moral codes and even law. The analysis also suggests that al Qaeda functions as a persistent object of desire that is "forgotten" only for short periods of time when some other momentary enemy appears. Or, to put it differently, when there is no adequate enemy around, al Qaeda is a signifier that could be articulated when there is a need for a constitutive other. This persistency of al Qaeda as object of desire is made possible by its nature: it is a vague network with no exact geographical location and no single leader that could be named. In addition, it is always articulated as the grouping that attacked the US (and consequently "us") in 9/11, started the War on Terror and it is still not beaten. This makes possible a fantasmatic construct where the promised fantasies of War on Terror are still not reached: the war sustains its grip over subjects because justice is still not done.

6 Discussion and concluding remarks

In this chapter, I will recapitulate the key findings of the analysis, reiterate the research problem as well as discuss the relevance and contribution of this study to previous studies on War on Terror. I will also point out some limitations of this study and introduce some further research topics that could contribute to the study of ideological fantasies and discourses in international relations and counterterrorism policies. I will start by introducing and discussing on the key findings and answering the research questions.

6.1 Discussion on key findings

In this study I sought to contribute on the study of War on Terror by exploring, why is the War on Terror still fought even though president Barack Obama's administration declared to end the "boundless Global War on Terror" (see e.g. Shinkman 2013). This research problem led me to study the ideological grip of Obama's counterterrorism policies, which is established through articulations in his speeches. In addition, the contradictory and often unpopular opinion on the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan among American citizens (see e.g. Baxter Oliphant 2018; Sussman 2007) made the study even more interesting; how was the expansion of War on Terror beyond Middle East, to North Africa, then legitimized when the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were winding down due to their unpopularity?

Like Jason Glynos and David Howarth (2008, p. 12) have put it, by exploring the fantasmatic logics of policies through the logics approach of discourse theory, one can get an understanding why people support certain policies and keep on doing what they do. In order to explore these fantasmatic logics of Obama's policies in fighting the war against terrorism, I relied on the Lacanian-Žižekian theorizations on fantasy and enjoyment, the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe as well as the logics approach. Based on these reflections and the theoretical background, I formed the following research questions:

What were the underlying logics through which the ideological grip of Barack Obama's War on Terror becomes discernible?

How was the fantasy structured in Obama's speeches on terrorism and what characterized the fantasmatic construct(s) that these speeches established?

I divided the data of 105 speeches to three phases according to specific political events and shifts in US policy that manifested themselves in the form of articulations in the speeches. This division formed also the set-up for conducting the analysis. Through the analysis of discursive articulations, elements, nodal points and master signifiers, I arrived on the following findings regarding the fantasmatic constructs of Obama's War on Terror: Barack Obama's speeches invite people and leaders of various nations to become subjects in the fight against terrorism through a promise of an ultimate fantasy. This fantasy is structured by an idea of a future where lasting peace, safety, prosperity and security prevail. In the second phase Obama also introduces a second ultimate object of desire which is founded on the realization of universal values and rights on a global scale. The latter emerges when there is no direct threat of a terrorist attack. One could conclude that it functions as a substitute for the former ultimate object of desire when safety and security are not directly threatened.

Obama articulates his counterterrorism policies in a way that contributes to achieving these ultimate objects of desire. In the course of the analysis, I also identified inferior objects of desire that operate beneath these ultimate and superior objects of desire. These inferior objects of desire receive more often novel articulations whereas the articulations concerning ultimate object of desire remain rather stable and unchanged. It is also these inferior objects of desire that actually help to understand the grip of Obama's War on Terror more profoundly: it is by articulating these objects of desire through the continuously re-articulated category on enmity that the enemy seems to appear always somewhere else and that the ultimate objects of desire continuously stay unachieved. These two inferior objects of desire consist, first, of enemy groups and organizations such as al Qaeda, Taliban and ISIL, and secondly, of names, faces and leaders of terror, such as Osama bin Laden, Muammar Qaddafi and Bashar al Assad. The relation of the inferior objects of desire and the ultimate objects of desire is then reciprocal: the inferior objects of desire help to keep the ultimate objects of desire at a distance, but it is the ultimate objects of desire that allow the continuous re-articulation – and even failure – of these inferior objects of desire.

For example, the death of Osama bin Laden shows that while capturing or killing bin Laden was for a long time an object of desire in the War on Terror, his actual death did not grant the enjoyment that it was supposed to. His death "began the process of designifying Bin Laden as the object of enmity" (Heath-Kelly 2018, p. 95). This was due to, like the analysis suggested, the existence of al Qaeda and Taliban and appearance of new terrorist groupings as well as hostile regimes. The analysis also showed that Obama persistently articulated new geographical areas along with these

new groupings, which legitimized the expansion of Obama's War on Terror to these new areas, namely Libya and Syria. While bin Laden has certainly not been an object of desire – in the sense that killing him would lead in realizing the ultimate fantasy –, for a long time, he is not simply an ordinary object of desire that is simply "forgotten". His role in structuring enjoyment is very important in sustaining the desire of War on Terror's subjects. The death of bin Laden grants only little enjoyment for the subjects but it is enough to be used as a reminder of what the possible revenge would feel like when the terrorist threat is finally overcome. When in comparison to, for instance, Muammar Qaddafi who functions also for a while as a name and face for US counterterrorism policies, bin Laden is not forgotten like Qaddafi who is later on replaced by Assad. I then argue that some of War on Terror's objects of desire cannot simply be perceived through a process of "forgetting" but they should be perceived also through a process of "remembering" or "reminding". This "remembering" is needed for a subject to sustain its desire for the long-lost enjoyment and to remind, what the (impossible) enjoyment would feel like when it is finally achieved. The annual 9/11 memorial service could be therefore perceived, not only as a way to remember the victims of the attack, but as a way to sustain the desire to deliver justice to terrorists and keep on waging the War on Terror.

Bin Laden's death also unveils the transgressing side of enjoyment that is typical for enjoyment (Hook 2017, p. 609–610). This transgressing is to be found in every phase of Obama's War on Terror: Even though Obama pledges to fight terrorism according to universal American values, which include a sense of justice and dignity, he frequently speaks about destroying and killing terrorists. The War on Terror then appears as rather libidinous and barbaric fight that aims at achieving, by all means necessary, the ultimate fantasy, where subjects are dwelling together with their enjoyment. In the case of War on Terror it is also necessary to note that it is not about achieving the enjoyment and the ultimate object of desire but actually retrieving them, since Obama keeps on articulating the lacking peace, safety and security as something that have been taken away from Americans (and allies) by the very terrorists. It is also this enjoyment that the terrorists are exploiting in their "safe-havens". Furthermore, structuring the fantasy through "the other", namely the category of enmity, there is a guarantee for a better unity among "us"; it is easier to bring people together when using the logics of difference and establishing an identity through the idea of "what we are not".

Then, in a Lacanian sense, the ultimate fantasy is then the very last resort for a subject's identification: if subject's identity (or part of subject's identity) and sense of selfhood is structured

by the idea of lasting peace, safety, prosperity and security – ideals that are hard to deny but which are impossible to achieve and realize – then facing this impossibility of these ideals would shatter his/her sense of reality and understanding of conditions of existence. That is why the inferior objects of desire function as milestones that grant the illusion of a progress towards this (impossible) ideal state of affairs. At the same time the belief in achieving the ultimate fantasy is so persistent that the inferior objects of desire are allowed to fail. This also confirms the Lacanian view according to which there are no stable identities but rather continuous identifications (Stavrakakis 1999, p. 30, 35). Every time an object of desire fails, a new one emerges through which a subject starts to build an understanding what is good and what is bad, what is desirable and what is not. Then, the pursue of the ultimate fantasy is not only limited in War on Terror but could be found from various domains of social life.

All three forms of fantasies that Ben Wardle has identified in his study (2016) are present in Obama's War on Terror. The first form, where the fantasy is promised to be achieved in the present by believing in a set of transcendental and universal values, ideals and principles, is present in all three phases and remains rather stable and unchanged throughout Obama's presidency. The second form of fantasy is used to give a promise of achieving the fantasy in the future through dogmas and rules, in the case of Obama's War on Terror, through new strategies and policies, such as "new level of engagement" and "new era of cooperation". The articulations that structure the fantasy through the second category are more prone to changes: It appears that in the first and second phase Obama uses these mentioned empty signifiers to promise fullness through strategies that appear as leading to the ultimate fantasy. However, in the third phase, Obama drifts from these articulations and even, for a moment, articulates the ultimate fantasy as something impossible to realize. There are neither consistent strategies built through empty signifiers but Obama much rather relies on air raids and surveillance of telecommunications in his fight against terrorism, namely in the fight against ISIL. I interpret this as the very manifestation of the impossibility to overcome terrorism since all violence that surges from the Arab world could be framed, through discursive articulatory practice, as terrorism. Air raids appear as an expression of frustration by the state machinery that Obama represents: people demand that something should be done about an issue that is generated mostly by the state itself. Increasing bombings lead to increasing number of terrorists. Although in the third phase there is no consistent structuration of fantasy through the second category, it is by structuring the fantasy through the first and third categories which helps to sustain subjects' desire. This third form of fantasy, where "the other" is preventing the realization of the fantasy, is used to

structure fantasy in all of the three phases of Obama's War on Terror. This happens through the category of enmity that receives various novel articulations over the analysed period.

So, to give a more straightforward answer to the research questions, it is through the analysis of fantasmatic logics of War on Terror that its underlying logics that grip subjects become discernible: By constructing a fantasmatic horizon through the exploitation of objects of desire on three levels, Obama strives to legitimize US policies first in the Middle East, then in North Africa and gradually on a global scale. By framing the fight as a matter of pursuing lasting peace, safety, prosperity and security as well as transcendental and universal values, while articulating them mainly as American values, Obama manages to create an international front where responsibilities and consequences of the War on Terror are shared by the international community but the American leadership is upheld. Obama's speeches also prove that the signifier "terrorists" is easily applied and articulated with new groupings (suspicious governments, extremists and perpetrators of violence) that are not representing the interests of the US. Moreover, by defining the signifier "terrorists" through logics of difference, the definition of "terrorists" remains vague, and new groupings are easily burdened with this signifier. Combining this finding with the previous discovery on structuring the ultimate fantasy through Wardle's third category, the desire to keep on waging War on Terror is then sustained with ease as long as the constitutive other is burdened with the signifier "terrorists". This puts Muslims in a troublesome situation as their identity is mostly articulated in Obama's speeches through logics of difference where the meaning and definition of a Muslim draws its meaning from what it is not, that is, "terrorists". The possibility to wage war against terrorism then remains as long as it is possible to articulate "terrorists" as the reason why the ultimate fantasy is still not achieved and realized. Furthermore, the analysis showed that al Qaeda functions as a "trans-historical" enemy of terror which is easily articulated as the terrorist enemy when there are no other adequate terrorist enemies in sight.

Thus, the analysis suggests that while Obama spoke about ending the War on Terror, he tried to end the war only on the level of rhetoric. Obama kept on repeating that the war will come to an end but at the same time he kept articulating novel threats in a way that shifted the focus somewhere else and kept the ultimate fantasy alive. In other words, the War on Terror is waged as long as an enemy is articulated as a "terrorist" or an affiliate of a terrorist group, and the fantasy is constructed around the theft of enjoyment by these very terrorists. Under these circumstances, Obama does not appear as figure who genuinely advocated the end of War on Terror.

Furthermore, the findings on reminding of lost and stolen enjoyment then unveil the very logic through which subjects' desire is sustained: It is by making sure that subjects remember what has happened in the past from which Obama's administration draws the legitimacy for US actions. This finding also demonstrates how analysing fantasies and fantasmatic logics in the field of international relations and politics grants an access to better understand why certain policies are so persistent and supported among individuals.

6.2 Limitations of the study

At this point it is important to consider the limitations of this study. While offering novel insights into the study of international relations and foreign policy studies, the most considerable limitation is related to the method of this study. As I expressed in Chapter 4, the discourse theory and the logics approach do not establish a consistent methodological tradition. The discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe does however offer dexterous tools for the analysis of social, political and discursive struggles and it is a functional tool of analysis when combined with other theoretical traditions (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, p. 24). As this study is highly founded on interpretative analysis, it is also important to acknowledge that researchers do make – consciously or unconsciously – epistemological assumptions when analysing empirical data (Travers 2001, p. 9). This obviously affects the results and findings of the research. To make the findings as relevant and reliable as possible, I have therefore laid out both theory and method and their backgrounds as thoroughly and openly as I could. This will also help to raise criticism towards the study in the future.

In this study, the discourse theory was supplemented with the Lacanian-Žižekian psychoanalytical concept of fantasy. This sets another limit for the analysis, as the analysis of fantasies and forms of enjoyment is still undeveloped theoretically and methodologically (Glynos & Stavrakakis 2008, p. 270). This was however acknowledged and the research design was therefore highly influenced by previous studies and inquiries on fantasies and fantasmatic logics (see e.g. Žižek 2004; Heath-Kelly 2018; Glynos & Howarth 2007) which have proven out to be reliable and both theoretically and methodologically adaptable. Despite these methodological and theoretical limitations, this study does, through logics approach, offer useful insights and critique of social and political phenomena (Glynos & Howarth 2007, p. 8). Furthermore, the Lacanian-Žižekian theory grants an access to analyse political meaning-making in a way which does not become intelligible otherwise: it shows

how deep certain policies and ways of doing go into subject's identity. They show subject's emotional investment that seems to go close to one's psyche and sense of selfhood; ideological fantasies are constructs that sustain subject's identity. Thus, methodologically speaking, supplementing discourse theory with Lacanian-Žižekian theory unveils how political rhetoric establishes and sustains these ideological fantasies. Not many other theories or methodological approaches succeed in exploring this level of the political and the social.

The data sets some limits for the study as well. While *americanrhetoric.com*, the data base from which the speeches were collected, is extensive, there remains the possibility that not all Obama's speeches on terrorism are included in the databank. Nonetheless, the data of 105 speeches is extensive and manages to capture the hegemonic and repetitive articulations relating to terrorism. It is however acknowledged that it is not only through presidential speeches but also through official documents, press conference materials and interviews that fantasies are constructed. This kind of study should also be conducted in order to receive a more extensive understanding of Obama's War on Terror. This was not however possible in the extent of this study, and the general view on the topic remains to be completed by future research. The study does not either take in consideration the role of the audience. The study then operates on a general level of articulations and does not make any specific classification in where and to whom the speeches are directed at. There is then no denying that the audience does affect the content of the speeches and specific articulations. However, this study does not focus on analysing how a specific audience or context affects the articulations but much rather focuses on reaching a much wider understanding of what is being articulated.

While this study aims at offering critique on the articulatory practices and discursive elements that establish Obama's War on Terror on the level of rhetoric, this study does not aim at investigating the archaeology of these articulations. So, while Obama's articulations are indeed put forward by Obama himself, this study cannot point out any fingers or explicitly accuse Obama of the continuity of War on Terror. As Trevor McCrisken has put it (2011, p. 786), even if Obama wanted to end the War on Terror, his tenure was burdened by the "core assumptions established by his predecessor's administration about the meaning of 9/11, the existential nature of terrorist threat and the imperative of meeting that threat globally." From this perspective, the grip of War on Terror goes beyond Obama.

6.3 Contributions of the study and future research

This study aimed to contribute to the study of international relations through the analysis of Lacanian-Žižekian concept of fantasy. Moreover, this study aimed at offering insights into fantasmatic constructs of Barack Obama's War on Terror, a topic that has so far been widely neglected. The main contribution of this study is to fill this void in research and offer a way understand more in depth probably the most prominent conflict of the 21st Century. Through an extensive theoretical background rooted in psychoanalysis, the study manages to offer a qualified answer to the core question, why is the War on Terror still waged even though it was supposed to end under Obama's governance. This study also proves that psychoanalysis and discourse theory serve well as hermeneutical tools in the study of international relations and offering insights to foreign policy topics.

Although the topic necessitates subjective interpretations of the data and applications of the theory, the findings are in line with the few previous studies on the topic. For instance, the analysis confirmed few previous findings on War on Terror's fantasmatic constructs, such as that of Charlotte Heath-Kelly's (2018) argument on "forgetting" the enemies, or the objects of desire, of War on Terror. In addition, this study found points that are common for the policies of both George W. Bush and Barack Obama, by exploring the previous arguments on War on Terror's fantasies that are put forward by Slavoj Žižek (2004). Furthermore, this study confirms Trevor McCrisken's argument (2011, p. 781) on Obama's intentions to "deepen Bush's commitment to counterterrorism while at the same time ending the 'distraction' of the Iraq war". It does appear, in the light of the results, that Obama was not willing to end the engagement of the US in the Arab world and kept the fantasies of War on Terror alive in order to persuade subjects to support his policies. Under these circumstances, it is not far-fetched to place Obama's awarding with Nobel Peace Prize of 2009 to dubious light, since one of the reasoning arguments called for Obama's capacity to reach out to the Muslim World and to establish relations based on "common interests and mutual understanding and respect" between the Muslim World and the West (see e.g. The Norwegian Nobel Institute 2009).

This study did not content itself only to confirm these findings, it also supplemented these findings, especially that of Heath-Kelly: In Obama's War on Terror, the enmity should not be perceived only through the process of "forgetting". It is also the "remembering" and "reminding" of the previous enemies from which the War on Terror draws its legitimacy and capacity to grip subjects. This

study then shows the very capability of Lacanian-Žižekian psychoanalysis to analyse political and social phenomena; it offers hermeneutical tools to better understand why certain policies, actions and ways of doing are so important to political subjects. It shows how political rhetoric resonates on the level of an individual and how individuals construct identities through language. The analysis of political rhetoric through this theoretical tradition offers then a wider understanding on why policies are considered so important on a level of an individual.

By pointing out repetitive articulations and fantasmatic constructs, this study offers various possibilities for future research: By extensively covering the fantasmatic constructs of Obama's War on Terror it is now possible to make a comparative analysis between the fantasmatic constructs of Bush and Obama. This would help to offer an intelligible way to understand more in depth, why it so hard to bring the War on Terror to an end. Then, through the application of Foucauldian genealogy, for instance, a historical trait of systems of thought relating to War on Terror could be mapped out; what articulations keep on thriving from administration to another and what kind of consequences do these articulations have?

The study also raised an interesting question that would need definitely more investigating and looking into: by gradually highlighting the role and responsibility of other Western and NATO countries in the fight against terrorism, did Obama pave the way for Trump's administration to advance the rhetoric on wider financial responsibility of Western and NATO countries in their national defence and defending Europe? I am definitely not putting forward such argument based on this evidence but investigating discursive traits and articulations from this point of view should not be ruled out.

The one last research topic is related in completing further the public image of Obama through the analysis of fantasies. Since Obama has been active speaker after his tenure, it would be sensible to analyse the speeches on War on Terror that he has given after his presidency. This might reveal different kind of articulations on terrorism, as he is not burdened by his responsibility that the presidency brings about.

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APPENDIX

Data: Organized chronologically according to date a speech was delivered. The data was retrieved from https://www.americanrhetoric.com/barackobamaspeeches.htm [Accessed 23 Jan 2019].

#	Date of the speech	Name of the speech	Phase
1	20th Jan 2009	First presidential Inaugural Address	1
2	24th Feb 2009	Address by the President to a Joint Session of Congress	1
3	27th Feb 2009	Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq	1
4	2nd Apr 2009	Post G20 Economic Summit Remarks and Press Conference	1
5	6th Apr 2009	Speech to the Turkish Parliament	1
6	7th Apr 2009	Address to Multi-National Forces Serving in Iraq	1
7	20th Apr 2009	First Address at the Central Intelligence Agency	1
8	17th May 2009	Joint Press Meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu	1
9	23rd Jun 2009	On Iran and Health Care	1
10	11th Sep 2009	9/11 Pentagon Memorial speech	1
11	23rd Sep 2009	First Speech Before the United Nations General Assembly (64th Session)	1
12	1st Dec 2009	Speech at West Point on Troop Increase in Afghanistan	1
13	28th Dec 2009	First Press Conference on NW Airlines Flight 253	1
14	27th Jan 2010	First Presidential State of the Union Address	1
15	28th Mar 2010	Address to the Troops in Afghanistan	1
16	22nd May 2010	Commencement Address at the U.S. Military Academy	1

17	9th Jun 2010	Address on UN Security Council Sanctions Against Iran	1
18	23rd Jun 2010	On Resignation of General McChrystal from Afghanistan Command	1
19	2nd Aug 2010	Address at the Disabled Veterans of American Conference	1
20	31st Aug 2010	Address to the Nation on the End of Operation Iraqi Freedom	1
21	11th Sep 2010	9/11 Pentagon Memorial Address	1
22	23rd Sep 2010	65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Address	1
23	25th Jan 2011	Second Presidential State of the Union Address	1
24	23rd Feb 2011	Address on Libya: The Violence Must Stop	2
25	18th Mar 2011	Address on Libya	2
26	19th Mar 2011	On Authorization of Odyssey Dawn, Ltd Military Action in Libya	2
27	28th Mar 2011	Address to the Nation on Libya	2
28	1st May 2011	Announcing the Death of Osama bin Laden	1
29	6th May 2011	Speech to Troops at Fort Campbell	1
30	19th May 2011	On American Diplomacy in Middle East and Northern Africa	2
31	20th May 2011	Address to the Intelligence Community at CIA Headquarters	1
32	20th May 2011	Join Remarks to the Press Following Bilateral Meeting (with Benjamin Netanyahu)	1

33	22nd May 2011	Address to the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee	1
34	25th May 2011	Address to the British Parliament	2
35	22nd Jun 2011	Afghanistan Troop Reduction Address to the Nation	1
36	20th Sep 2011	Speech at United Nations High-Level Meeting on Libya	2
37	21st Sep 2011	66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Address	2
38	20th Oct 2011	Address on the Death of Muammar Qaddafi	2
39	21st Oct 2011	Speech on Ending the War in Iraq Responsibly	1
40	17th Dec 2011	Weekly Address Honoring Iraq War Troops & Veterans	1
41	24th Jan 2012	Third Presidential State of the Union Address	2
42	3rd Feb 2012	Address on Veterans Jobs Corps	2
43	29th Feb 2012	Address Toasting Iraq War Veterans	2
44	12th Sep 2012	Rose Garden Address on Benghazi Attacks	2
45	25th Sep 2012	67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Address	2
46	21st Jan 2013	Second Presidential Inaugural Address	2
47	12th Feb 2013	Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address	2
48	21st Mar 2013	Address at the Jerusalem International Convention Center	2
49	15th Apr 2013	First Statement on the Boston Marathon Bombings	2
50	16th Apr 2013	Second Statement on the Boston Marathon Bombings	2
51	19th Apr 2013	Third Statement on the Boston Marathon Bombings	2
52	30th Apr 2013	Press Conference on Syria and Sundry Topics	2

53	23rd May 2013	Address on Drones and Terrorism at the National Defense University	2
54	24th May 2013	Naval Academy Commencement Address	2
55	9th Aug 2013	Press Conference on Intelligence Gathering Reform	2
56	31st Aug 2013	On the Use of Chemical Weapons by Syrian Government	2
57	10th Sep 2013	Address to the Nation on U.S. Military Action in Syria	2
58	24th Sep 2013	68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Address	2
59	11th Nov 2013	Veterans Day Address	2
60	28th Jan 2014	Fifth Presidential State of the Union Address	2
61	28th May 2014	United States Military Academy Commencement Address	2
62	7th Aug 2014	On Authorizing Targeted Air Strikes and Humanitarian Aid in Iraq	3
63	9th Aug 2014	First Update on Authorizing Targeted Air Strikes and Humanitarian Aid in Iraq	3
64	14th Aug 2014	Statement on the Situations in Northern Iraq and Ferguson, Missouri	3
65	28th Aug 2014	On Iraq and Ukraine	3
66	10th Sep 2014	Address to the Nation on Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant	3
67	24th Sep 2014	69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Address	3
68	24th Sep 2014	United Nations Security Council Address	3

69	20th Jan 2015	Sixth Presidential State of the Union Address	3
70	11th Feb 2015	On Force Authorization Request Against ISIL	3
71	18th Feb 2015	On Countering Violent Religious Extremism	3
72	3rd Mar 2015	On Iran and PM Netanyahu's Speech to Congress	3
73	2nd Apr 2015	Statement on Iran Nuclear Agreement	3
74	6th Jul 2015	Pentagon Address on the Progress Toward Defeating ISIL	3
75	14th Jul 2015	Iran Nuclear Accord Announcement	3
76	15th Jul 2015	Post Iran Nuclear Accord Agreement Press Conference	3
77	26th Jul 2015	Address to the people of Kenya	3
78	28th Jul 2015	Address to the Representatives of the African Union	3
79	5th Aug 2015	Address on Iran at American University	3
80	28th Sep 2015	70th Session of United Nations General Assembly Address	3
81	15th Oct 2015	Statement on Afghanistan	3
82	13th Nov 2015	Address on the Terrorist Attacks in Paris	3
83	16th Nov 2015	G-20 Press Conference	3
84	24th Nov 2015	Joint Press Conference with François Hollande	3
85	30th Nov 2015	COP21, Session 1 Address	3
86	1st Dec 2015	Paris Press Conference	3
87	6th Dec 2015	Address to the Nation on Foreign and Domestic Counter-Terrorism Strategies	3
88	14th Dec 2015	Update on Military Campaign Against ISIL	3

89	17th Dec 2015	Post Briefing Address at the National Counterterrorism center	3
90	12th Jan 2016	Final Presidential State of the Union Address	3
91	17th Jan 2016	On Smart Diplomacy with Iran and Release of U.S. Detainees	3
92	23rd Feb 2016	Address on Closing Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility	3
93	25th Feb 2016	Update on Campaign to Degrade and Destroy ISIL	3
94	1st Apr 2016	Nuclear Security Summit Press Conference	3
95	2nd Jun 2016	U.S. Air Force Academy Commencement Address	3
96	12th Jun 2016	Statement on the Orlando, Florida Shootings	3
97	14th Jun 2016	Counter-ISIL Meeting Briefing	3
98	16th Jun 2016	Address to the Community of Orlando, Florida, After Meeting Privately with the Families of the Victims	3
99	9th Jul 2016	Press Conference Following NATO Summit	3
100	4th Aug 2016	Post Security Council Meeting Press Conference on ISIL	3
101	5th Sep 2016	Press Conference Following G20 Summit	3
102	11th Sep 2016	Address on the 15-Year Anniversary of 9/11	3
103	19th Sep 2016	Statement on the Explosions in New York and New Jersey	3
104	20th Sep 2016	Final Address to the United Nations General Assembly	3
105	6th Dec 2016	On the Administration's Approach to Counter-Terrorism	3