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Telford, A.

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Towards a climate-resilient America? Tracing climate-resilient nationhoods in US climate politics

Andrew Telford [a]

[a]Department of European Studies, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT
Exploring connections between climate resilience and national identity under the Obama and Trump presidencies, this paper argues that discourses of climate-resilient American nationhood constitute an intersection of neoliberalism, populism and immunopolitics. Under Obama, a climate-resilient America is an adaptive subject that embraces climate-insecure futures; under Trump, the anti-climate resilient national subject is a 'frankenstein neoliberal' [Brown, W. (2018). Neoliberalism's Frankenstein: Authoritarian freedom in twenty-first century "democracies". *Critical Times*, *1*(1), 60–79. https://doi.org/10.1215/26410478-1.1.60] identity grounded in white supremacism. For both of these subjects, albeit in radically different ways, climate-resilient nationhood acts as an immunopolitical drive for self-preservation: a resilient American subject adapts to climate insecurities at the expense of those demarcated as non-adaptive and non-resilient.

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Introduction

Learning to live with the impacts of climate change is a pressing challenge for human societies. In response to this challenge, the concept of climate resilience, concerned with the resilience of social and ecological systems to uneven impacts of climate change (Adger, 2000), has gained traction in international policy debates. However, 'who' is it that will become climate-resilient, and 'who' will not? This paper explores the links between climate resilience and national identity, documenting the emergence of a climate-resilient national subject in US climate politics. The paper makes two contributions. First, underpinned by feminist political-ecological critiques of climate adaptation, the paper makes two theoretical arguments. First is that climate-resilient nationhoods are grounded in neoliberal subjectivities. Here, the paper draws instructively on critiques of resilience as a concept linked to neoliberal ideology. Second, the paper argues that climate-resilient nationhoods, because they depend on a distinction between those subjects to be rendered climate-resilient and adaptive, and those excluded

CONTACT Andrew Telford a.j.telford@uva.nl Department of European Studies, University of Amsterdam, Bushuis-Oost-Indisch Huis, Kloveniersburgwal 48, Amsterdam 1012 CX, The Netherlands

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from these categories, harness national identity as part of an immunopolitical drive in climate-insecure futures.

Second, the paper makes an empirical contribution that explores how discourses of national climate resilience develop across the different Obama and Trump administrations. In doing so, I argue that discursive formulations of climate resilience under these two presidents are fundamentally different from one another. Whilst Obama's climate policies exhibit a (neo)liberal logic and market-driven approach to drive emissions reductions, Trump's denial and contempt for proactive climate action are situated in the context of a deregulatory, anti-democratic white nationalism. Throughout, however, I argue that discursive constructs of climate-resilient American nationhood raise important questions about the politics of climate-secure futures, what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2018, p. 557) term 'climate resilient pathways': what difference does it make to define a *national* future as climate-resilient? And whom is to be made climate-resilient under these trajectories?

To unpack these questions, the paper proceeds as follows. First, the paper introduces critical scholarly debates on the concept of 'climate resilience', informed in particular by feminist political ecology and critiques of resilience as a form of neoliberal governmentality. Second, it traces the development of discourses of 'national climate resilience' during the Obama and Trump presidencies, noting key differences in their articulations of (anti-)climate resilient futures. Finally, the paper argues that although their articulations are fundamentally different, an immunopolitical response grounded in the preservation of adaptive, resilient national subjects over excluded others underpins these constructs of (anti-)climate resilience in US climate politics. The paper concludes with reflections on how a transformative approach to adaptation could challenge the 'nation-form' in articulations of climate resilience (Closs-Stephens, 2013, p. 15).

A climate-resilient nationhood?

Resilience is increasingly an 'organizing principle' for life in liberal democracies (Brassett et al., 2013). Understood as a property of social-ecological systems, resilience involves the capacity of a system to bounce back from exogenous disturbances, shocks and perturbations whilst still being able to retain its existing functions and integrity (Adger et al., 2011). As Brown (2016) summarizes, resilience is about the ability of a system to manage change in such a way that its existence and ability to function are not jeopardized. In their glossary of key terms to the special report on 'Global Warming of 1.5° C', the IPCC (2018, p. 557) define resilience in the context of climate change as 'the capacity of social, economic and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that retain their essential function, identity and structure'. Satterthwaite (2013, p. 381) argues that climate resilience implies a system's ability to cope with 'climate change-related disturbances/shocks' (including short-term disturbances, such as rock falls, and long-term events, such as glacier retreat and sea-level rise (Wyss et al., 2015)), particularly the ability to recover in a such a way that reduces future risks.

Drawing on a case study of Nepalese environmental policy, Ayers et al. (2011) critique climate resilience as a technocratic discourse that 'mainstreams' adaptation into existing development policies, an exercise in 'climate-proofing', but does not account for the structural political-economic inequities that constrain effective adaptation. In the context of climate-induced migration (CIM), Methmann and Oels (2015, p. 64) critique climate resilience for its tendency to 'eliminate the political': resilience shifts CIM discourse away from a rights-based narrative in which a right to compensation could be demanded. A climate resilience discourse also shifts responsibility onto those affected by climate change impacts (and potentially away from the highest emitters of greenhouse gases), stressing a need to become adaptive in a world of climate-induced insecurities. In light of these critiques, it is important to foreground the normative, political implications of resilience (Cote & Nightingale, 2012; Fabinyi et al., 2014): who is deemed to be resilient (or non-resilient)? Who or what is in a position to administer resilience?

To investigate discourses of national climate resilience, this paper draws inspiration from feminist political ecology. Building on early work concerned with the links between environmental politics and gendered knowledges, rights and responsibilities (Rocheleau et al., 1996), feminist political ecologists conceptualize relationships between gender and environment as dynamic, multi-scalar and constituted by unequal relations of power (Gonda, 2016). Eriksen et al. (2015, pp. 523–524) argue that adaptation is political 'all the way through': a contested socio-political process that frames how subjects understand and respond to social and environmental change. As Nightingale (2017, p. 13) attests, climate change is a fundamentally 'socio-natural process' which integrates biophysical and political processes. Drawing on the case of Nicaragua, Gonda (2019) proposes four components of a feminist political ecology of adaptation. First is a focus on the role of *emotions* in climate change, with emotions understood as situated, embodied experiences which affect human-environment relationships. Second is *knowledges* and the imperative to investigate the situated power relations which frame environmental knowledges. The third is *politics*: in particular, an understanding of adaptation politics, framed by relations of power (Ahlborg & Nightingale, 2018; Nightingale, 2018), as 'an ensemble of policies, interventions and everyday practices that … revolves around the feminist concept of social reproduction' (Gonda, 2019, p. 93). Finally, Gonda (2019) calls for more work on the *subjectivities* of adaptation: how do relations of power constitute subjects such as the 'environmentalist woman' or 'smallholder farmer' in adaptation politics, for example? Although adaptive subjectivities are constituted by dominant normative discourses which shape how people are identified at individual and collective scales (intersections of gender, race, age, nation, etc.), the internalization and re-expression of these discourses is also an important site of resistance, subversion and re-articulation of these subject positions (Eriksen et al., 2015; Garcia et al., 2020; Nightingale, 2013). This paper draws upon feminist political-ecological accounts of subjectivity; following Eriksen et al. (2015: 528–529), the paper seeks to examine how, in a US context, nationhoods are rendered as 'climate vulnerable' or 'climate resilient'.

In doing so, the paper also draws inspiration from critiques of resilience and neoliberal governmentality. In a study of UK resilience policy, Coaffee (2013) contends that over time resilience has become increasingly detached from state-centered approaches and governed by concepts of localized, place-based community resilience. Ultimately, there is an assumption that resilience involves a shift from 'national protection' to 'localised prevention and self-organising responses' (Coaffee & Fussey, 2015, p. 95). One manifestation of this is the construction of an individualized, resilient subject. For O'Malley (2010, p. 506), 'knowing when and how to exploit uncertainty to invent a new and better future is … a prominent feature of the adaptable, flexible and enterprising subject of resilience'. Resilient subjects are entrepreneurial individuals that seek out opportunities in a competitive, market-driven world of uncertainties (Tierney, 2015). Alongside an individualized subjectivity, neoliberal resilience can be constructed at a universal scale, part of a globalized liberal order of governmentality (Corry, 2014). Evans (2013, p. 40, original emphasis), for example, argues that the resilient subject occupies an uncertain, contingent landscape that defines the 'topos' of contemporary politics. Both an individualized resilient subjectivity, and an assumption that resilience is framed by a universalized neoliberal governmentality, are based on the notion that resilience is a feature of neoliberal ideology (Cretney, 2014).

Simon and Randalls (2016, p. 6) argue that whilst there is an 'intuitive ideological fit' between resilience and neoliberalism, to argue that resilience is exclusively a neoliberal project gives the concept an epistemological coherence that is questionable in reality. Building on this premise, this paper argues that national subjects of US climate resilience are *multiple*, *embedded in neoliberal logics*, *intersectional* and, in the case of Trump's administration, *populist*. First, it traces *multiple constructs* of the climate-resilient collective national subject across the Obama and Trump presidencies that are, secondly, embedded in *neoliberal logics*. In an Obama context, a climate-resilient America is (partially) a neoliberal discursive subject: a collective climate-resilient America that embraces opportunities and adapts to climate-insecure futures. In a Trump context, a resilient national subject is not constructed as 'climate-resilient' but 'anti-climate resilient': following Brown (2018), it is a 'frankenstein' neoliberal subject grounded in a mix of white nationalist and deregulatory logics.

Third, national subjects in this context are *intersectional* in the sense that nationhood is co-constituted with gendered, racialized identifications of who counts as 'adaptive' and 'resilient'. This is particularly the case with Trump's articulations of American anti-climate resilience with violent performances of white masculinity (e.g. his appeals to the strong leader and the resource extracting worker), part of what Gökariksel and Smith (2016, p. 79) term a 'fascist body politics'. Nationhood is conceptualized in this paper, following Benedict Anderson (2005 (1991), p. 49), as an 'imagined political community', where 'nations' are social constructs in which most members will never meet one another and yet share a sense of communion and collective togetherness. Finally, nationhood is also configured in this paper along *populist* lines: in particular, a shift from a neoliberal nationhood under Obama to an authoritarian, white supremacist, populist nationhood under Trump. The concept of populism can be understood in a range of different ways, including as an ideology, a discourse, or a form of a political organization oriented around the figure of the charismatic leader (Caiani & Graziano, 2019; Hunger & Paxton, 2021). Perhaps most prominent is the *ideational* theorization of populism which views populism as a set of interrelated ideas. Mudde (2004, p. 543, original emphasis, drawing on Freeden (1996)), for example, classifies populism as a 'thin-centred ideology' which 'considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite"'. In this reading, populism has a core set of ideas (people-centrism, anti-elitism and politics as driven by 'the general will' of the people), but is not as fully developed as other ideologies (e.g. socialism or liberalism) (Hawkins & Kaltwasser, 2017). Katsambekis (2022) critiques Mudde's (2004) claim of 'homogenous' oppositional groups when in practice notions of 'the people' or 'the elite' may be formed across a range of political-economic, cultural and social differences. This paper adopts a discursive approach to populism, one which avoids a priori assumptions of ideological and programmatic content (Katsambekis, 2022). In this sense, popular unity and opposition to elites can be constituted via a range of intersecting, different signifiers (e.g. 'the 99%') and populism is understood as a discursive strategy or logic, a way of formulating political claims which varies by context (Bonikowski, 2017). A discursive approach also allows for more flexibility to explore how populist strategies intersect with other political concepts (in this case neoliberalism and white nationalism) (Bialasiewicz & Stallone, 2019). As such, in this paper populism is understood less as a coherent ideology and more as a discursive 'style' or strategy for political change (Kojola, 2019).

As Agnew and Shin (2017, p. 716) argue, rightwing populisms can articulate 'ordinary people' in a territorial, 'native' sense in opposition to 'outside' others (migrants, racialized and religious minorities, international organizations, etc.). As Huber et al. (2020) point out, research on the implications of rightwing populist discourses for climate policy is still relatively rare. Lockwood (2018) argues that rightwing populist opposition to climate policy (in a US context) can be read as an opposition to liberal, cosmopolitan urban 'elites' as opposed to engagement with the issue of climate change in its own right. A populist, anti-elitist strategy in this context can be combined with authoritarianism and ethnonationalist ideology in opposition to climate change mitigation (Atkins & Menga, 2021). This paper argues that US climate resilience discourses transition from a collective neoliberal national subject under Obama to a populist, white supremacist 'frankenstein neoliberal' national subject under Trump. Importantly, the paper does not claim to study populism as a deductive, explanatory category in US climate politics (for example as an explanatory factor in electoral outcomes). Rather, the paper traces climate resilience discourses (in particular when constructed in the context of nationhood) and explores the range of discursive strategies and ideological formulations which contribute to these discursive constructs across the Obama and Trump administrations.

As Fisher (2016) notes, resilience thinking has grown in a period where crisis and insecurity frame actions about how to secure a desirable future. The future is conceptualized as 'turbulent' in this context: as radically uncertain, unpredictable and dangerous (Amin, 2013). The final stage of this paper's argument is that discursive constructions of climate-resilient national subjectivities function as an immunopolitical strategy (Esposito, 2008), to respond to uncertain climate-insecure futures. A climate-resilient nationhood, whether this constitutes an adaptive, entrepreneurial national subject under Obama, or a white supremacist subject under Trump, provides a boundary – an immunizing effect – which protects the preserved population and enables this subject to respond to climate insecurities. In doing so, I argue that this immunopolitics constitutes a biopolitical divide between those who are rendered climate-resilient (the collective American subject), and those who are not: a racialized, maladaptive, non-resilient other which is excluded from the climate-resilient American nation. The next section documents how these climate-resilient national subjectivities are constructed discursively in US climate politics.

Climate resilience under Obama

In their historical account of resilience thinking, Walker and Cooper (2011) point out that resilience was first adopted in US security policy during the 1970s oil crises when an alternative, decentralized energy grid was proposed to promote energy independence. The use of resilience reached a greater prominence in the US with the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in November 2002 (formerly the Office of Homeland Security) (Neocleous, 2013). In the 2002 Strategy for Homeland Security (Office of Homeland Security 2002), homeland security is defined as (p. 2): 'a concerted national effort to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States, reduce America's vulnerability to terrorism, and minimize the damage and recover from threats that do occur'. Between the 2002 and 2007 Strategies for Homeland Security, Walker and Cooper (2011) argue that the experience of Hurricane Katrina (in August, 2005) blurred the distinctions between an unidentified terrorist threat, environmental disaster and financial threat, reinvigorating the need for 'resilience'. In the 2007 Strategy (Department of Homeland Security 2007), the DHS widens its vision to incorporate preparedness for environmental disasters. As George W. Bush (2007) writes in the foreword: 'We have applied the lessons of Katrina to this strategy to make sure that America is safer, stronger and better prepared'.

However, the 2007 Strategy does not contextualize resilience specifically in relation to climate change. In their testimony to the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, David Heyman and Caitlin Durkovitch (12 Februray 2014, on 'Extreme Weather Events: the Costs of Not Being Prepared') argue that it is with Barack Obama's election (2008) that resilience becomes a crucial part of US security policy. They identify the creation of a *Resilience Directorate* (2009) which articulated 'resilience' and 'security' as the twin pillars of homeland security. In her exploration of the use of the words 'resilient' and 'resilience' in Barack Obama's security discourse, Selchow (2017) identifies that the terms appear more in his public papers than in those of all previous US Presidents combined. Examining the 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS), Selchow (2017) contends that resilience is associated with discourses of American nationhood: first, as a fundamental, almost 'natural' tenet of American national security; second, as a disposition that is distinctively American in character; and finally, as a 'global' value which is shared across nation-states. In March 2011, the National Presidential Policy Directive on National Preparedness was released and this defines resilience as 'the ability to adapt to changing conditions and rapidly recover from disruption due to emergencies' (cited in Heyman & Durkovitch, 2014). This was followed in September 2011 by the National Preparedness Goal establishing what it means for the US to be prepared for a range of contingencies across themes of prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery (Heyman & Durkovitch, 2014). In these policy statements, resilience is posited as a national trait associated with characteristics of adaptability and strength. One of the clearest early examples of this comes in the 2010 DHS Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (Department of Homeland Security 2010), in which the DHS state (p. 15–16):

> The challenge is to foster a society that is robust, adaptable, and has the capacity for rapid recovery ... This concept is not new, and different eras in our history reflect an unwavering focus on building national resilience. The history of civil defense in the United States … is marked by sweeping national debates about concepts that, if not by name, were nevertheless entirely about resilience. Notable among these was the debate spanning the Truman and Eisenhower administrations about whether to expand resources on sheltering individuals in the face of nuclear attack or to focus investments in a national highway system to facilitate

> mass evacuation of urban populations … The rapid evolution of national security threats and the arrival of the information age have increased the urgency of building up – and reemphasizing – our historically resilient posture.

In this Review, resilience is classified as a collective capacity to be aspired towards with 'urgency'. The collective, possessive pronoun 'our' suggests that resilience is something that America can own or possess. A 'resilient posture' suggests a strong America in the face of uncertainties. The DHS draws upon historic significations of what 'our historically resilient posture' represents in order to suggest how this should inform a resilient nation into the future ('the rapid evolution of national security threats' and 'the arrival of the information age'). Rather than an endpoint or condition to be aspired towards, the DHS utilize historical examples – civil defence, sheltering individuals from a nuclear attack and a highway system – to 'reemphasize' what a 'resilient America' should be in insecure futures. As Furedi (2008) argues, this form of temporality recognizes the present condition as one of vulnerability, of being susceptible to a variety of uncertain dangers, e.g. terrorism and natural hazards. Resilience is something grounded in history: historical examples of resilience that can be used to construct future national resilience (Furedi, 2008).

Contemplating the bombsite in the aftermath of the Bali bombing (2002), Heath-Kelly (2015) argues that resilience discourses signify ideas of uncertainty and unpredictability as catalysts for security. Heath-Kelly (2015) postulates that resilience redeploys past examples of security failure in order to promise a better future but does not act on the visceral realities of the bombsite in the present (emergency triage and disaster recovery). This feedback loop – 'securing through the failure to secure' – casts resilience as a 'chimera': a temporality which invokes past examples of security failure and national trauma for anticipation of resilient futures, but which is completely absent from the present (Heath-Kelly, 2015, pp. 70–71). This temporality is drawn into narratives of nationhood. Discussing how Australian journalists covered the Bali bombing, Heath-Kelly (2015, p. 76, original emphasis) writes: 'Such responses frame violent events as evidences of the natural resilience of the nation's people … *the past is reworked as success* … it is resignified to speak of national endurance, identity and wholeness'.

It could be that the DHS's (p. 15) invocation of civil defence in the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review operates similarly to a temporal 'feedback loop' because it reworks historical significations of resilience – 'our historically resilient posture' – into assumptions about resilient American futures ('a society that is robust, adaptable, and has the capacity for rapid recovery'). Hence, resilience is situated in both the American past and the American future. Resilient nationhood is thus constructed as a 'trans-historical subjectivity' (Charland, 1987, cited in Bean et al., 2011, p. 443), in which historical concepts of the national subject are injected into contemporary Americanness and future visions of a resilient America. In the context of a neo-Malthusian world characterized by resource scarcities, dangers to the 'homeland' posed by rising sea levels and extreme weather events, a specifically climate-resilient America is a condition that the nation must work towards collectively. The American nation must draw upon all of its resources, including historical precepts and conditions of resilience (the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, histories of civil defence, etc.), as well as collective solidarities (the need to foster a 'robust', 'adaptable' 'society' and to draw upon 'our' 'historically resilience posture'), to construct the American imagined community in uncertain futures.

One of the first articulations of climate-resilient American nationhood emerges with the establishment of the Interagency Climate Change Adaptation Task Force (ICCAF) in 2010 (ICCAF, 2010). The Task Force was co-chaired by the Council on Environmental Quality, the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration, and the Office of Science and Technology Policy and consisted of more than 20 government agencies (ICCAF, 2010). In 2010, the Task Force produced a report that documented key principles and policy recommendations for climate resilience in the United States. This was followed in 2011 by a subsequent report that evaluated how policy recommendations were being implemented across Federal agencies. 'Resilience' is defined in the 2011 report as 'a capacity to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from significant multi-hazard threats with minimum damage to social wellbeing, the economy, and the environment' (ICCAF, 2011, p. 2). This definition chimes with that in the National Presidential Policy Directive (2011, cited in Heyman & Durkovitch, 2014), but broadens beyond 'emergencies' to the term 'multihazard threats'. Additionally, the ICCAF note 'the environment' as an important dimension of resilience, expanding on 'natural disasters'. A significant aspect of these reports is the plurality of possible futures: uncertain, 'turbulent' (Amin, 2013), climate-changed futures which incorporate a unified American nation. In the conclusion to the 2010 ICCAF report, the authors (2010, p. 53) write:

> Through the actions described in this report and the collective actions of stakeholders at all levels, we strive to be a Nation that better understands, and is better prepared for, the impacts of a changing climate. Adaptation across all scales and sectors will enable us to reduce the risks and seize the opportunities presented by climate change. These efforts, in tandem with advancing efforts to manage greenhouse gas emissions, are initial steps in what must be a long-term, iterative, and collaborative approach to make our Nation more resilient to a range of possible futures.

In this example, the ICCAF (2010) stresses the need for a collective, unified nation through the use of the pronouns 'we' and 'our'. This resilient nationhood is adaptive across a 'range of possible futures'. As such, a politics of futurity is suggested in which, out of a range of possible futures, involving the 'impacts' of climate change, as well as more specifically the 'risks' and 'opportunities' that climate changed-futures offer, a shared nationhood is constructed which can co-exist with these futures, adapting and shifting its subjectivity in relation to these. The climate-resilient American national subject is a collective subject that is resourceful and entrepreneurial: with appropriate adaptation, the climate-resilient nation can 'reduce' the risks and 'seize' the opportunities that climate change may bring. It is in a better position to adapt to and exploit climate-insecure futures in such a way that fundamental tenets of American nationhood are not transformed. In another excerpt, this time from the 2011 ICCAF report, the authors (p. 25, original emphasis) state:

> Partnerships and actions across all scales will be necessary to more fully realize the Task Force's vision of *a resilient, healthy, and prosperous Nation in a changing climate*. Agencies across the Federal Government are developing a diversity of non-Federal partnerships to maximize opportunities for coordination and collaboration, and to exchange information and lessons learned with cities, states, tribes, and other nations that are incorporating adaptation into their own decision processes. The Task Force will work to align Federal efforts

> with those of communities, states, tribes, and regions to reduce the risks of extreme events and climate impacts through adaptation. These collective efforts will help advance the Nation toward a more sustainable future.

In this case, the notion of shared, collective efforts to build a climate-resilient 'Nation' is rearticulated. The ICCAF suggests the desire to 'advance the Nation towards a more sustainable future'. In articulating a resilient future for the Nation, a sustainable future in conditions of climate insecurity, the ICCAF acknowledges that this national subject is formulated from many different actors. The 2010 report (p. 53) discusses 'stakeholders at all levels' and from all 'sectors'. In the 2011 publication, American climate resilience draws in 'cities, states, tribes and other nations' with descriptors such as 'partnerships', 'coordination' and 'collaboration'. Whilst the ICCAF does incorporate a range of actors and sectors across geographical scales, these are still included within a *single* vision of the climate-resilient nation: 'a resilient, healthy, and prosperous Nation'. The notion of a 'healthy' nation reinforces the concept of an active, embodied national subject. This folding of social and political heterogeneity into the singular subject of 'the Nation' echoes Anderson's (1991/2005) description of the 'imagined community'. As Anderson (1991/2005) describes, the nation brings together millions of heterogeneous actors who may never know nor meet one another, but they nonetheless share a collective identity, an image of 'the Nation' which binds them. In this case, resilient nationhood in the face of multiple climate-insecure futures is a binding national subject that brings different actors together to 'advance' and 'realize the Task Force's vision' of a climate-resilient American future (ICCAF, 2011).

In 2013, Barack Obama authorized Executive Order 13653 – 'Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change' (White House, 2013). The Federal Government used this initiative to promote 'resilience' and 'preparedness' as important concepts of climate adaptation. The Interagency Climate Change Adaptation Task Force was dissolved and an Interagency Council on Climate Preparedness and Resilience was created to integrate climate resilience into all areas of government (White House, 2013). Presidential Policy Directive 21 (on 'Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience') was also issued in 2013, providing guidance for resilience planning across a variety of federal agencies on issues such as intelligence, cyber-security and utility infrastructures (Tierney, 2015). This was followed in September 2014 with an Executive Order to facilitate 'climate-resilient international development'. This Order calls for the integration of climate resilience into all US international development work, including investments, programmes and overseas facilities (White House 2014). These efforts speak to a shift in American climate change and security discourses. Boas and Rothe (2016) note a transition whereby earlier conflict-based, 'threat' based narratives which utilize neo-Malthusian accounts of resource competition and 'climate refugees' (prominent in the mid-late 2000s) move towards a more nuanced account of climate security grounded in complexity and resilience. Focusing on UK climate security debates, Boas and Rothe (2016) argue that increasing uncertainty about the effectiveness of market-based mechanisms (e.g. the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism) and the failure of international climate politics in the late 2000s (particularly the 2009 Copenhagen Conference of Parties) are connected to the rise of resilience. The capacity of resilience to appeal to multiple policy communities (from international development to security and health) is also an important factor in its discursive ubiquity (Boas & Rothe, 2016). Alongside the election of Barack Obama in 2008, with a political agenda which included climate policy, it could be that these factors also contributed to the emergence of climate resilience discourses in an American context.

In the examples above, including the two ICAAF reports (2010 and 2011), perhaps the predominant theme is one of integration in US climate resilience discourse. The 'climate resilient Nation' envisaged under Obama's administrations is one which brings together wide coalitions of different actors – with 'agencies across the Federal government' developing 'a diversity of non-Federal partnerships' (ICAAF, 2011, p. 25) – in order to create an adaptive, entrepreneurial subject. To an extent, this collective national subject corresponds closely with critical scholarship on neoliberal subjectivity (Coaffee, 2013; Howell, 2015): the neoliberal subject (individual or collective) as one which is adaptive, entrepreneurial and responds productively to uncertain (climate-changed) futures. As such, climate resilience discourses under Barack Obama's administrations could be characterized by a neoliberal subjectivity in which national identity is constructed as collective and adaptive to a range of uncertain environmental, political and economic futures. I argue that under Trump's administration, this articulation of climate resilience changes, with an anti-climate resilient national subject which draws on populist discourses, is 'frankenstein neoliberal', and draws on white nationalism.

Anti-climate resilience under Trump

Whilst this paper has thus far argued that a climate-resilient national subject adopts neoliberal climate mitigation and adaptation strategies to embrace uncertain futures, in this section I argue that discourses of some, context-specific articulations of national resilience under the Trump administration are configured as anti-climate resilient. By anti-climate resilient, I do not necessarily mean that it is against resilience to climate change (as in climatic variability and the impacts derivative from this), but rather against climate resilience where this is understood as *mitigation* and *adaptation policies*. In other words, anti-climate change policies. In the context of a Trump presidency, American resilience is not that which accepts climate risks and builds resilience strategies accordingly; instead, it is that which builds resilience through its racialized, deregulation-driven opposition to climate policies. Discussing the cases of Trump's appeals to white masculine subjects employed in extractive industries, and his enrichment of white business elites through environmental deregulation, this section outlines this argument in the context of Trump's hostility to climate action.

Donald Trump won the US election on 8 November 2016, followed by his inauguration on 20 January 2017. In an Executive Order issued on 28 March 2017, signed at a highly publicized event at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the prescence of coal miners, Trump revoked Barack Obama's Executive Order 13653 (1 November 2013) on 'Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change' (White House, 2017a). This Executive Order rescinded several of Obama's signature climate policies, including his 2013 Climate Action Plan (White House, 2017a). Trump hired a range of individuals hostile to environmental protections into senior positions, including Scott Pruitt to the Environmental Protection Agency and Rick Perry as the Secretary of Energy (Sparke & Bessner, 2019). Under Trump's leadership, the EPA suffered from heavy deregulation, budget cuts, staff cuts, restrictions on positions EPA scientists were permitted to adopt and a reluctance to enforce environmental regulations (Dillon et al., 2019). Trump himself has a well-publicized history of climate change denial. In a series of 2012 Tweets, he claimed that climate change was a Chinese invention that disadvantages US industries (Wong, 2016). In an interview with the *New York Times* (November 2016), Trump bemoaned what he claimed were the economic implications of environmental policies, identifying the US as 'noncompetitive' and attacking wind energy generation. These comments were made in the context of jocular remarks about the risks to Trump's golf courses from sea-level rise. On 1 June (2017), Trump announced his intention (later carried out) to withdraw the US from the Paris Agreement. In the speech to announce this withdrawal, he stated (Trump 2017):

> We're having a big opening in two weeks. Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, so many places. A big opening of a brand new mine. It's unheard of. For many, many years, that hasn't happened.
>
> The Paris agreement handicaps the United States economy in order to win praise from the very foreign capitals and global activists that have long sought to gain wealth at our country's expense. They don't put America first. I do, and I always will.
>
> It is time to put Youngstown, Ohio, Detroit, Michigan, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania – along with many, many other locations within our great country – before Paris, France.

As with other moments in this speech, for instance, where Trump talks about his 'love' for coal miners, Trump opposes workers, particularly in Rust Belt locations such as Michigan and Ohio, with the deleterious economic effects of the Paris Agreement. In addition to this, supporters of the Paris Agreement, identified with 'foreign capitals' and 'global activists', are argued to be counter to American national interests. Trump repeats his nationalist mantra to put 'America first'. Unlike Obama's administrations which constructed a resilient nationhood as one which promotes international cooperation, for Trump resilient nationhood is constructed as a populist discourse explicitly opposed to climate action as defined in international climate politics. His ambitions to restore the competitiveness of American industry and resource extraction (to end the 'war on coal') frame national resilience as that which is opposed to climate action. Instead, American resilience prioritizes particular workers located in 'Youngstown, Ohio, Detroit, Michigan, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania' and polluting industries, including coal mining and automobile production. As Kojola (2019) notes in his study of resource nationalism in the Iron Range mining region in rural Minnesota, Trump has drawn on racist, nationalist and populist rhetoric to articulate a 'way of life politics' in which white, working class males employed in extractive industries are threatened by 'outside' pressures from migrants, environmental regulations and urban Democrats. Appealing to an ideal of the American nation characterized by resource extraction, Trump locates resilience in a specific white masculine subject which is victimized by the ways in which international climate politics renders this subject 'noncompetitive'. In doing so, Trump identifies climate policy as a threat to American resilience, not a potential source of resilient nationhood.

As a consequence of this shift in resilience discourses, the terms 'climate resilience' and 'climate-resilient nation' are rarely employed under Trump's leadership. As

Sparke and Bessner (2019) document, the 2017 National Security Strategy (White House, 2017b, p. 14) contains a section on 'American resilience', but does not associate this with climate change and instead discusses preparedness and protection of American interests from 'foreign' threats. In addition to this, the 2018 National Defense Strategy (p. 8) cites resilience in the context of cybersecurity and the flexibility and adaptability of military forces (Department of Defense 2018), but unlike its predecessor, the Quadrennial Defense Review (2014), does not discuss the security or resilience implications of climate change (Department of Defense 2014). Instead, Sparke and Bessner (2019, pp. 540–541) argue that the term 'resilience' has been redeployed by the 'Trump Behemoth' as a strategic euphemism, focusing on the management of particular disasters (for example its use in response to Hurricane Irma in 2017) as opposed to global climate change. The reterritorialization of 'resilience' by the Trump Behemoth is part of a broader context in which hypercapitalist neoliberal deregulation combines with a racist disaster capitalism to further disenfranchise low-income people of colour (Sparke & Bessner, 2019). At the same time, this disaster capitalism enriches and empowers wealthy, white American elites able to adapt to climate change. As Trump himself states (in the 2016 *New York Times* interview) about his golf courses (specifically Trump National Doral Miami) and sea-level rise: 'Some will be even better because actually like Doral is a little bit off … so it'll be perfect … the ones that are near the water will be gone, but Doral will be in great shape' (Trump 2016). The Trump Behemoth enhances the resilience and adaptive capacity of wealthy, white, gated elites whilst exacerbating the extreme vulnerabilities of communities affected by these destructive dynamics of power.

Therefore, two logics of anti-climate national resilience can be identified in Trump's politics. One refers to his situation of American resilience in the masculine, competitive, energy extracting American worker that has been detrimentally affected by climate policies. The second refers to his simultaneous acceleration of a deregulatory disaster capitalism which enriches and empowers white, gated, 'golf-playing' elites from the vissitidues of climate change whilst accelerating the extreme precarity and vulnerability of low-income communities of colour both within and outside of the US. What both of these visions of national (climate) resilience share is a white nationalist conception of Americanness, a shared hostility to climate justice which crosscuts white masculine class interests. As Brown (2018) notes, authoritarian rightwing nationalism and populism under Trump is characterized by a 'frankenstein neoliberalism'. As neoliberals have promoted values of market-based freedom and individual rights above state protection, this logic has extended into the realms of social rights to engender sustained attacks on egalitarianism, social justice and claims for political equality. A neoliberal move towards 'individual freedom' intersects with reactionary 'family values' and an intersection of the domestic, personal and national, particularly as it manifests in the 'aggrieved power' of white rural and suburban males (Brown, 2018, pp. 68–69). Thus, there are calls to 'get off my ['our'] land', to 'build a wall' to defend against outsiders, to protect 'our' national 'home' and 'family' from the threats of LGBTQ rights, 'climate accords', urban liberals, Muslims, migrants, etc. (Brown, 2018, pp. 67–68).

As such, this populist anti-climate resilient nationhood, one which coalesces around a strange alliance of the aggrieved, white male miner on the one hand, and a disaster capitalist white elite on the other, articulates a 'frankenstein neoliberal' subject, one which conceives of climate justice as a threat to white American supremacy. As Pulido et al.

(2019) note, Trump's elaborations of 'spectacular racism' occured at the same moment as a less discursively 'spectacular' but rapid deregulation of US environmental provisions. As Gökariksel and Smith (2016, p. 79) argue, Trump's performances epitomize a fascist body politics in which his white masculinity – his aggressive, violent, impenetrable attitude and posture – reinforces and reassures a nation which fears 'white decline'. This embodied geopolitics extends to Trump's affective fetishization of the rugged, masculine factory worker threatened by climate action: his 'love' for the coal miners gestured towards in his speech withdrawing the US from the Paris Agreement. Collectively, the anti-climate resilient American subject, a frankenstein neoliberal subjectivity, arguably contributes to a broader 'counter-revolutionary' movement of which Trump is a part (Inwood, 2019, p. 581). Inwood (2019) argues that at different moments in American history, particularly points in which periods of economic uncertainty and precarity for whites (for example decades of neoliberal dispossession compounded by the 2008–2009 financial crash) coincide with increased calls for racial justice (including from Black Lives Matter), a white counter-revolutionary politics responds to these shifts with reassertions of white supremacy. This paper argues that an anti-climate resilient national subject is one such example of such a reassertion of white supremacy. The intersectional figure of the aggrieved, white factory worker or coal miner, strangely aligned with the gated, golf-playing business elite (even if these groups have different class interests and levels of vulnerability to climate change impacts in reality), are together constituted as an anti-climate resilient national subject resisting the threats posed by climate action to their superior social position.

(Anti-)climate-resilient nationhood as an immunopolitical strategy?

As this paper approaches its close, it is important to restate that I do not seek to morally equate Barack Obama's climate policy with the authoritarian white nationalism of Trump's climate denial. Although both share neoliberal modes of subjectivity, they are grounded in fundamentally different orders of violence and anti-democratic exclusion. Perhaps the key characteristic that they do share is an immunopolitical drive to secure – with national identity as the means of immunization – particular populations demarcated as 'resilient'. As Esposito (2008; developed by Neyrat, 2010) argues, immunopolitics develop Foucault's (1978/2008) theories of biopolitical governmentality to account for the processes by which a population attempts to immunize itself from harmful intruders or outsiders which threaten its integrity. Immunopolitical strategies suspend the collective body's requirement for communal obligation and gift-giving: an immunizing body is that which is preserved from the violences of social interconnectedness (Swyngedouw & Ernstson, 2018).

In the case of a climate-resilient America under Obama's leadership, an immunopolitical drive harnesses nationhood as the means to render the population 'adaptive', 'entrepreneurial' and 'resilient' to futures of climate insecurity. However, as Baldwin (2017) identifies in his examination of migration-as-adaptation discourses, a climate change-induced migrant who is able to adapt to climate change also implies that which is 'maladaptive' or non-resilient. Examining the differences between migrants on the basis of insurance, Baldwin (2017) argues that a type of racial divide, a topological racism which does not necessarily assume discursive identification (as 'Black', 'Muslim', 'Jew', etc.), is opened between a minority of 'adaptive' subjects that can be assessed by their insurability against climate risks, and those deemed to be 'risk failures', for example, migrants gathered in informal settlements in the Majority World. A climate-resilient nationhood can be interpreted as an immunopolitical form of this biopolitical racial divide: a distinction between the 'adaptive' subject afforded a form of social insurance by its nationhood and those excluded from this nationhood, deemed to be 'maladaptive' and 'non-resilient'. In the sense that nationhood works as an immunopolitical strategy, Trump's white supremacist anti-climate resilience is also grounded in a fundamental biopolitical divide. Perhaps the key difference is that the 'contagion' to be immunized from – in this case, a range of racialized others to the white nation and the threat of (international) climate regulations – is explicitly named as such. The anti-climate resilient national subject is an explicitly white nationalist subject, and in this case white supremacist nationalism – underpinned by a frankenstein neoliberal combination of fossil fuel extractivism, degregulation and aggrieved masculinities – functions as that which immunizes the protected population.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that climate resilience as a concept intersects with nationhood in multiple ways in US climate politics. Through an empirical study of the construction of resilient national subjects under Barack Obama and Donald Trump's presidencies, the paper has argued that under the former a climate-resilient nationhood is discursively constructed as an adaptive national subject in climate-insecure futures. Under the latter, an anti-climate resilient national subject is discursively constituted which promotes a populist vision of environmental deregulation and resource extraction as a means to reassert a white supremacist agenda. Although fundamentally different in terms of anti-democratic violence, both constructs of national (climate) resilience are grounded in neoliberal ideologies, to varying extents. Both also, through immunopolitical logics grounded in (often gendered, racialized) nationhood, are constituted through relations of biopolitical exclusion.

To challenge the 'nation-form', Closs-Stephens (2013, p. 15) argues that critical scholars must move beyond a 'common unitary framework' and boundaries of 'our' community and 'their' community to imagine different ways in which political community can be 'conceptualized, negotiated and actualized'. As constituted in US climate politics over the last decade, particularly as an intersectional identity grounded in white masculinities under Trump, (anti-)climate-resilient nationhood does not fundamentally challenge the ways in which political subjectivities are conceptualized or the political-economic systems of which they are a part. As Manuel-Navarrete and Pelling (2015) note, what is required is an ethos of transformation: the formulation of emancipatory subjectivities that challenge unequal distributions of exposure to climate-induced risk. Transformational climate adaptation involves a fundamental change in societal norms, institutions and practices (O'Brien, 2012), as well as a fundamental emphasis on an equitable society (Garcia et al., 2020). Importantly, as this paper has argued, any transformative adaptation agenda should not only challenge the political-economic structures which perpetuate climate injustice, but also subjectivities which rest on the nation-form and the exclusions that these create.

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Notes on contributor

Andrew Telford is an Assistant Professor in European Studies (with a focus on climate change and conflict) at the University of Amsterdam. His research focuses on the politics of climate change and security, with a particular focus on climate change, racialization and national identity

ORCID

Andrew Telford http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8430-4866

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