

# How successful were President Obama's efforts in climate diplomacy?

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THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

How successful were President Obama's efforts in climate  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the possibility of combating climate change as a result of climate diplomacy exercised by President Obama. The aim is to examine President Obama's actions through a method of norm-centred constructivism. This thesis' core research question is: to what extent was President Obama's diplomacy successful in addressing the problem of climate change? Chapter One contextualises the subject matter by providing a background and laying out the criteria for success. Chapter Two argues that there is a lack of consensus regarding what classifies as effective climate diplomacy. This chapter explores the theoretical assumption of norm-centred constructivism, which stated that norms introduced by leaders could change collective identity and overcome anarchy through the creation of a collective community. Chapter Three outlines the methodological framework of norm-centred constructivism. Chapter Four assesses the extent to which President Obama's climate diplomacy was innovative and creative. Chapter Five discusses President Obama's achievements and lost opportunities. The core analysis reveals an evaluation of President Obama's normative influence. Chapter Six summarises the research findings and presents conclusions offering problem-solving solutions. The Obama administration promised dramatic changes in regard to climate leadership. However, the momentum occurred late in the second term. President Obama achieved a reasonable degree of success given the lack of sustained support from public opinion, a number of competing national priorities, political gridlock and constraints exerted by the structure. Although President Obama did not change the system's structure, his main success was that the worldwide shift toward low-carbon energy has been irreversible. President Obama's climate

diplomacy succeeded in creating the norm of environmental stewardship. The signing of the Paris Agreement generated unprecedented levels of global solidarity. President Obama helped to unite the world around “*the spirit of the times*”. The creation of a global climate community offers hope for a successful solution.

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***“A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.”***

***- Mahatma Gandhi***

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This thesis aims to examine effectiveness of President Obama's climate diplomacy. This chapter will briefly outline the rationale behind investigating and analysing the attempts of President Obama's administration climate diplomacy's attempts to promote global governance.

#### **1.1.1 The Idea Behind the Thesis**

The idea for this thesis arose during the aftermath of the presidential election in 2008 when Barack Obama historically became the first Afro-American President in the history of the United States of America. President Obama was officially sworn in as the 44th President of the United States of America on January, 20, 2009.

The aim of the thesis is to evaluate the effectiveness President Obama's climate policy. It will do this by applying an analytic lens of norm-centred constructivism through which to examine his diplomacy. In order to evaluate effectiveness of President Obama's climate policies. It is widely believed that the actions and reactions of America can influence the nature of international politics and the prospects of peace or of change without war, more than any other country.

President Barack Obama made protecting the environment and combating climate change one of the cornerstones of his presidency. On numerous occasions, the President has stressed that he "believes that no challenge poses a greater threat to our children, our planet and future generations than climate

change - and that no other country on Earth is better equipped to lead the world towards a solution” (Obama, 2015).

### **1.1.2 The Core Research Question and Sub-questions**

In light of this, this thesis will answer the core research question: 1) To what extent was President Obama’s climate diplomacy successful in addressing the problem of climate change? And two concomitant sub-questions that help to answer the core research question: 2) What are some of the innovative and creative forms of climate diplomacy employed by President Obama? 3) What were the major successes and failures of President Obama’s climate diplomacy?

### **1.1.3 Rationale for Investigation**

According to this thesis, successful global leaders are most often those who achieve international legitimacy through either ‘the mandate of the heaven’ or acceptance from wider society. There is no sense in going it alone, as the world will not give its mandate to rule to any leader who stands against the collective will, the Zeitgeist, or “*the spirit of the times*”. In every era, there is usually one idea at work which is more powerful than any other. This idea which shapes the events of the time and determines its ultimate success. To paraphrase Victor Hugo (1977), “there is nothing more powerful than the idea whose time has come”. Therefore, it would be prudent for leaders to remember that “the strength of a great power is diminished if it ceases to serve an idea whose time has come” (Brzezinski, 2007: 152).

According to this thesis, “*the spirit of the times*” is climate change. Catastrophic, meteorological events in the recent time provide just one example of the urgent

need for a solution to climate change. Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century and the repercussions of inaction of American foreign policy agenda, as well as for the world, are substantial. Increasing water scarcity, additional flooding and extreme weather events directly threaten the livelihoods of millions of people worldwide. In some cases, it forces people to migrate or triggers violent conflict. A stronger role for foreign policy in international climate policy has been called for globally, namely through climate diplomacy. President Obama placed particular emphasis on the need to find solutions to these problems. And did it lead to a substantial breakthrough?

The rationale for the suggested evaluation is because overreliance upon one International Relations theory is problematic. This is because no one theory provides a comprehensive explanation of international relations. since all of these theories have weaknesses as well as strengths. Equally, utilising a synthesis may enable researchers to "...view problems from a different prospective and to escape the bounds of conventional thinking" (Sternberg, 1999: 11). Moreover, "theory synthesis is not only possible and desirable, but is constitutive of any coherent understanding of International Relations as a progressive and empirical social science" (Moravcsik, 2003: 131). Therefore, foreign policy is required to work with harmony with complex global dilemmas.

Despite focusing narrowly on one theory, this thesis hopes to demonstrate that reliance upon a synthesis may prove a worthwhile analytical activity for supporting practice. Thus, the focus of the literature review that will follow this chapter aims is to assess to what extent International Relations Theory embedded within the English School Theory can inform American foreign policy.

The context of a meta-theoretical focus in International Relations Theory (fourth debate between rationalism and idealism), whilst not new, is relevant to this thesis since the value of such an approach is reflected in the complexity of the problems facing policymakers and political actors. Analytic approaches promoted the idea that scholars of International Relations Theory should not be on the sidelines. Instead, they are encouraged to remain active and take initiative in attempts to bridge the gap between the world of theory and policy. Often, governments rely on particularistic, biased perspectives and problem-solving approaches originating from academia are not taken into consideration.

#### **1.1.4 Analytical Framework**

Notwithstanding that many aspects and elements in developing foreign policies *per se* could be utilised within a method of the analytic eclecticism, the preferred methodology is via an analytical framework of constructivism. More specifically, the analytical framework of this thesis will emphasise that cognitive factors such as intuition and intellect can determine and legitimise decisions that relate to the diplomatic process.

This will be done by comparing the foreign policy achievements of President Obama with trans-national challenges such as climate change from a constructivist point of view. As Brzezinski (2005: 46) observed, “only with America’s sovereignty dedicated to a cause larger than its own security will the American interest again coincided with the global interest”.

In light of this, this thesis will discuss evidence using a combination of historical and theoretical literature that identifies and indicates values, ideals, and

normative principles as constituents of the formation of American identity. Equally, identity is prone to evolution, and thereby has an impact, in particular on historical circumstances. This means that current periods of internal and external changes to the state, may lead to re-definitions of national identity, as well as foreign policy interests. However, national identity is never fixed or stable. Instead, it can be seen as a continuing exercise in the redefinition of basic interests and the elaboration of convenient fables about '*who we are*'. In other words, it includes America's perception as a legitimate global leader in the fight against climate change. Consequently, it may be inferred that when America leads International Society based upon invocation of traditional American values and ideals, its leadership was and is, more effective in gaining universal recognition, respect, and international legitimacy. Lebow and Kelly (2001: 595), support this view. They advocated that great powers are required to behave in a manner consistent with their claims or professed values. This, they argue, is in order to secure and maintain the voluntary compliance of allies or subjects. This is achieved by taking adequate measures to promote global interests and avoiding crises.

America's consistent commitment to the rational humanist approach, America has successfully prepared great power to lead the international community in a spontaneous, constructive, and active dialogue. This is to be achieved through global recognition of its ability to uphold international society as a whole and not only simply acting to secure its own interests. In order to effectively implement foreign policy aimed at tackling emerging challenges such as climate change, the final requirement is that of 'consensual leadership', which is needed to restore America's global role.

## **1.2 Aim of the Thesis**

This thesis aims to examine President Obama's climate diplomacy. The secondary aim is to bridge positivist and post-positivist methodological extremes. As a result, this thesis will rely on the thoughts of prominent global thinkers such as: Martin Wight, Adam Watson and Hedley Bull. In addition, the thoughts of contemporary American statesman will also be examined. These include, for example, Dr Henry Kissinger and Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski.

In this case, comparisons proved to be challenging. This is because there is no definitive method available to determine which vision of American strategy could prove to be the most promising. Moreover, because some accessible theoretical literature is in itself inadequate and inconclusive, policy advisers fail to assist policymakers in making an informed decision about the appropriate method to adopt. The value of the juxtaposition presented by Hastedt (2011: 362) enables (a) the researcher to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of six competing vision of American foreign policy and (b) to demonstrate to readers that there is a need for a precise method to assist in making appropriate choices related to American foreign policy.

This thesis will argue that that climate diplomacy resulting in global solidarity through a method of consensual leadership could be successful. It will be argued that consensual leadership could bridge the gap between competing visions of American foreign policy. This is because it is conducive to the overall trajectory of the American grand strategy, which aims "towards a global community of shared interest" (Brzezinski, 2004: 229). One vision of American foreign policy not included by Hastedt's (2011) account, and which may be a particularly

valuable option to this thesis, is one of 'America the Balancer and Conciliator' (Brzezinski, 2012: 190).

Based on the strategy outlined above, this thesis will attempt to build a theoretical basis to demonstrate and suggest why consensual, climate leadership based on activating global leadership centres could be a promising and analytically suitable approach to American foreign policy. In addition, the way in which it is linked to America's role as "the *balancer* and *conciliator*" between the major powers in the East will also be discussed (Brzezinski, 2012: 185). In doing so, this thesis will suggest proposals to address the growing gap between theory and policy in the field of International Relations. This thesis will try to apply a particular strand of theory to address the challenge in the world of policy. As Nye (2008: 654) noticed, there is a growing "gap between theorists and practitioners in the field of International Relations. In recent years, the gap has been widening and bridging efforts have become more difficult". The growing withdrawal of university scholars behind curtains of theory and modelling leads to the situation in which "scholars are on the sidelines" since they do not have a real, tangible impact on policymakers and the decisions that leaders make (Nye, 2009). To make things worse, Walt (2005: 23) observed, "Policy makers pay relatively little attention to the vast theoretical literature in IR, and many scholars seem uninterested in doing policy-relevant work". Such trends and tendencies are unfortunate because theory is an essential tool of statecraft and not paying attention to theory might lead to major foreign policy disasters. Decision makers who act on behalf of global leaders often choose not to rely on the voices of the so-called 'outsiders' as they have their own narrow circle of policy advisors. In such situations, voices who defend the common good and objectivity are often rejected or neglected and



states pursue their own particularistic policies missing the bigger picture or a common purpose. Consequently, this thesis original contribution to knowledge is that that norm-centred constructivism could be useful when analysing leaders' responses to global challenges such as the problem of climate change.

### **1.3 Structure of the Thesis**

The first chapter briefly contextualises the subject matter by providing a background and explains the idea behind the thesis. This chapter also provides a rationale for addressing the topic and outlines the structure of the thesis. In Chapter Two a Review of the relevant Literature will be conducted. This includes what has been already been written about the effectiveness of President Obama's actions in combating climate change. Chapter Three outlines the methodological framework of the thesis. Norm-based constructivism provides the framework and theoretical basis for this research. This is because it assumes agency to shape international structure. In addition, this chapter will also justify this choice by putting forward reasons for rejecting other established methods. Chapter Four presents results by assessing the extent to which President Obama's climate policies were creative and innovative. Chapter Five provides a discussion of achievements and lost opportunities. It assesses to what extent President Obama's was acting an effective climate norm entrepreneur and evaluates whether the Obama Administration has 'done enough' to revitalise American climate diplomacy. Chapter Six, summarises research findings, presents problem-solving solutions and final conclusions. In order to set a background to the introduction, the following section will present President Obama's view on the environment and challenge of climate change.

## 1.4 President Obama's View of the Environment and Climate Change

During his visit to Alaska in 2015 President Obama said,

The United States of America recognises our role in creating this problem and we embrace our responsibility to help solve it. And, I believe we can solve it. This is not simply a danger to be avoided, this is an opportunity to be seized. If we were to abandon our course of action, if we were to stop trying to build clean energy economy..., we will condemn our children to a planet beyond their capacity to repair... On this issue of all issues, there is such a thing as being too late.

President Obama's worldview on climate change and of the environment derived from his upbringing in Hawaii. In particular, he was inspired by his Mother. As a teenager in Hawaii he was exposed to the beauty of nature, including pristine landscapes, majestic seaside and coral reefs full of fish. Obama believed that such natural beauty may become a privilege experienced only by his generation. As President Obama himself noted, "the world is full of wonders and we still have a time to save most of them". As a result, President Obama believed he had a duty to draw the world's attention to climate change. While no single step can reverse negative impacts of climate change, President Obama believed that the current generation have a moral obligation to future generations to leave behind an unpolluted and undamaged planet. The 2013 "President's Climate Action Plan" stated, "we the people, still believe that our obligations as Americans are not just to ourselves, but to all posterity". President Obama was determined to solve this problem, as he stated, "We will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that the failure to do so would betray our children and future generations" (Obama, 2013). Despite these ambitious plans President Obama's outlook on climate change remained realistic and pragmatic. He believed in the power of human reason and imagination to solve important challenges. President Obama also stated that although there are still some who "deny the overwhelming judgement of science", none can avoid "the devastating impact of raging fires,

crippling droughts and more powerful storms” (Obama, 2013: 4). During his second inaugural address speech, President Obama has acknowledged that the path towards clean sustainable energy sources may be long and difficult, but that America must offer a proactive and energetic leadership on this key global issue:

The path towards sustainable energy sources will be long and sometimes difficult. But America cannot resist this transition; we must lead it. We cannot cede to other nations the technology that will power new jobs and new industries – we must claim its promise.

(Obama, 2013).

President Obama’s believed his role was to sound the alarm (Obama, 2015). This is evidenced by his powerful rhetoric and talent for oratory. His public speeches, interviews and announcements were often used to convince the American public of the importance of acting quickly on this issue. The American democratic process is considered to be painfully slow. This means that major change only happens when the American public cares deeply. President Obama understood the importance of cultivating a sense of urgency by the American people. He therefore attempted to ensure the concept of climate change was not an abstract one to the American people. Through his climate diplomacy, President Obama’s attempted to persuade and unite people around the idea of responding to climate change. He attempted to stimulate discussion on innovative, alternative energy solutions that could be adopted by cities and states and that would be favorable to job creation and accepted by business circles. He believed that the challenge of addressing climate change although one of the greatest challenges of our time is uniquely suited to America’s strengths of innovation, industry and entrepreneurship. He did not want to be paralysed by the magnitude of the problem and he did not want the people to think that climate change is out of their control (Obama, 2015). The President had ambitious plans stated in the 2013 “President’s Climate Action Plan”, “our scientists will design new fuels and our

farmers will grow them. Our engineers to design new sources of energy, our workers will build them, and our businesses will sell them” (Obama, 2013: 5). President Obama believed that all members of the society have a duty to do their part in decarbonizing the economy. Renewable energy sources, such as: solar, water, geothermal, biomass, and wind energy offer the greatest opportunities to turn the fight against climate change into a lucrative business model. He appealed to the American public to embrace the challenge, believing that effective solution would not only create new jobs and new industries but also keep America on the cutting edge of technology. In addition, he believed that a broad climate initiative spurred on by climate diplomacy would “save the lives, protect and preserve treasured, natural resources, cities and coastlines for future generations” (Obama, 2013: 5).

President Obama’s worldview is reminiscent of the simple, major fact stated at the United Nations Climate Change Summit, “There is one issue that will define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other, and that is the urgent threat of a changing climate” (Obama, 2014). Climate change has global impact. Therefore, President Obama saw this as an essential important internal and foreign policy initiative that could be properly addressed locally and globally to protect the most vulnerable and future for generations to come. He believed that America is at a critical juncture in the combat against climate change. As a result, he offered a broad-based plan to cut carbon pollution that causes climate change and affects public health. It was hoped that cutting carbon pollution would encourage business innovation to modernise American power plants, resulting in the generation of cleaner forms of energy such as solar, wind and geothermal that will create jobs and reduce American dependence on foreign oil supply.

America is gradually attaching increasing sums of dollars to the issue of climate change in way that might not have been true a decade ago (Obama, 2015). Obama stated, “this is an opportunity, as it gives the chance to generate a political consensus not just in America but internationally that is going to be necessary to solve this enormous problem”. The Obama administration attempted to increase the efficiency of cars and household appliances in order to reduce the average amount of energy consumed by American families, cutting down on their gas and utility bills. It was a broad initiative enabled by climate diplomacy encompassing speeches, public announcements and social media. The effectiveness will be examined further in Chapter Four.

#### **1.4.1 Climate Diplomacy**

The effectiveness of diplomacy is measured by whether the strategy adopted is both prudent and skilful. It should combine trust in rational statecraft with a capacity to influence and persuade other actors. Effective climate diplomacy “attempts to forge agreements but also to move political boundaries, expanding the realm of the politically possible” (Mabey et al., 2013: 35). Diplomacy has traditionally been seen as a reactive discipline. However, while trouble-shooting and crisis management will always be a major part of the diplomatic high-table practice, multilateral climate diplomacy is a novel idea which has become a modern version of diplomacy in the twenty-first century, as exercised by President Obama. The criteria for success of such climate diplomacy are that it should be creative, innovative and pro-active (Ibid.: 7). “Effective climate diplomacy merges climate and foreign policy by proactively linking national interest debates and international cooperation on climate change” (Craft, 2014). For the purpose of this thesis, climate diplomacy will be defined as,

The practice and process of creating the international climate change regime and ensuring its effective operation. The evolution of climate diplomacy therefore precedes and shapes the construction of the climate regime.

(Mabey et al., 2013: 23).

In addition, this thesis will adopt a broad definition of diplomacy encompassing all diplomatic actions, speeches, actions and initiatives employed by President Obama that were aimed at tackling climate change and searching for possible solutions including moving beyond international climate regime (Cf Figure 4.1).

According to Mabey, Gallagher and Born (2013: 7), the successful practice of climate diplomacy requires three core capabilities:

1. **“Know yourself:** the capability to develop and action a clear national position based on an objective understanding of how climate change influences and impacts core national interests. As in all other areas of policy, the process of forming the national interest is politically contested, may be dominated by unrepresentative and narrow interest groups, and often depends on less than perfect information.
2. **Know the other:** the capability to gather and analyse intelligence on the interests, constraints and capacities of other actors and how they perceive your own actions and positions.
3. **Capacity to influence:** the capability to effectively integrate national priorities into political and diplomatic channels. The command of basic tools of diplomacy and the capability to create a clear influencing strategy and to implement it through multiple venues, building alliances and strategic confidence, and framing and driving debates through private and public messaging.”

These core capabilities of successful climate diplomacy are analysed in the context of President Obama’s service later in Section 4.6 on pages: 158-164.

Literature on climate diplomacy displays no consensus about the method best utilised to conduct it. Some authors argue that in order to be successful, climate diplomacy must draw on the successful legacy of the past multilateral, diplomatic projects. Scholars associated with this approach applaud the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement as a turning point, as the moment that could have saved the planet

or “a global solidarity contract for the twenty-first century” (Tänzler, 2017). Others state that given the dysfunction of the current climate regime with twenty-three years of unsuccessful negotiations climate diplomacy has to be at the same time innovative and offer an alternative to working within the system. As Christoff and Eckersly (2013: 164) observed, “given the diminishing time our civilisation has to avert the ecological crisis, we must find a way of working more with, around, above, and below this system rather than entertain the political fantasy that we can design and build new global governance institutions from scratch.”

The challenges facing climate diplomacy appear daunting. However, some authors suggest that agreement on an effective climate regime is unachievable (ibid.: 7). Proponents of the bottom-up course on the other hand, argue that given the stalemate in international climate change negotiations, a carefully crafted, minilateral solution could “inject political momentum into gridlocked international processes in order to move beyond the current impasse” (Falkner, 2015: 21). Such a solution, they argue would provide “new forms of collective leadership in a post-hegemonic world” (ibid.). Therefore, ensuring high levels of international agreement for its implementation in major power centers around the world would be essential for success. It would require reconciling existing multilateral regimes with shifts in the global power balance. In other words, away from governments and towards nongovernmental actors. Although this strategy would be met with initial resistance among conservatives. It would require holding those in power responsible for climatic degradation. This would probably result in the enactment of a carbon tax. It would also require a creative, pro-active and persuasive climate diplomacy strategy in order to convince the followers. Followers could include the global climate community united in the mission of overcoming a common

challenge. Perhaps, more importantly, it would require ameliorating arguments, abandoning disputes and rejecting selfish ambition, so that those who deny climate change could not be given space to convince others of their views. Innovative approaches to global governance would demand constructive, enlightened, and extraordinary ideas.

History has demonstrated that great transformations are possible in the course of a few years. For example, the achievements of the current climate regime in delivering large-scale, global shifts in investment to ease global governance are often overlooked. Diplomacy has deployed soft power and smart power to shape mindsets and influence international and national agendas (Mabey, et al., 2013: 21). For example, diplomacy engineered the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe after World War Two. The use of skillful diplomacy enabled the largely peaceful transition of economies and governance in Europe after the Cold War. Diplomacy has also created systems to seize terrorist assets across the globe and has crafted an array of multilateral regimes from the World Trade Organisation to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). These institutions balance sensitive and complicated geopolitical landscapes which impinge on vital areas of sovereign control. Experience shows that with the application of political support and concerted diplomacy, international cooperation can be forged to handle both longstanding and emerging global challenges such as climate change (Mabey, et al., 2013: 21).

Diplomacy is primarily concerned with negotiation and can be characterised as, “the art of relating states to each other by agreement rather than by the exercise



of force” (Kissinger, 1957: 326). In other words, diplomacy then is the conduct of international relations by means short of war. Consistent with this approach, diplomacy is the conduct of international relations principally as an instrument with which world powers accept the limits of self-restraint; “it is the art of restraining the exercise of power, of keeping power potential” (Kissinger, 1955: 8). In light of Kissinger’s search for stability and moderation, diplomacy is therefore a key element of modern international politics, and complementary to the principle of international legitimacy and the mechanism of the equilibrium. Such diplomacy “functions best within legitimate world order, “when each major power accepts the legitimacy of the existence of the other” (Kissinger quoted in Otte, 2001: 194).

Brzezinski (2010: 38) suggests that appropriate diplomacy requires active engagement in a new era of “a more inclusive system of global great power management”. It is for this reason that there is a need for cooperation. This is in the context of a time when non-Western countries and civilisations may become dominant players on the international stage. Nye (2010) observed that one of the two power transitions in the world is change of power amongst states. This is from West to East to the extent that they may gradually supplant the West. A member of the English School, Buzan (2010) agreed with this trend, stating that the world is becoming ‘decentred’. Whilst others, such as Kissinger (2011) are convinced changes in the behaviours of great powers can lead to shifts in shared norms and values. This may have an impact on grand strategies leading to Great Power co-operation in some crucial areas such as: nuclear non-proliferation, energy security, space activities and environmental sustainability. If this should happen, will the great power co-operation reach a sufficient level of consensus

to agree on the binding agreement that would finally help to solve climate change, or will it be rather a victory reserved for minilateral diplomacy?

However, Ferguson (2011: xv) proclaims the end of half millennium of Western ascendancy or Western predominance, with regard to Western decline of power, especially in the face of Eastern countries, such as China's current economic, rapid ascendancy. This is defined as the simultaneous rise of Asia and the Far East: the shift of economic power and political influence from West to East. However, Brzezinski (2012: 121) suggests that if the above is true, then a change in the behaviour and application of American foreign policy is necessary. He states, "If America tries too boldly to act in foreign affairs or too meekly to accommodate the rising powers, it is headed for trouble" (Brzezinski, 2012).

As a result, according to Buzan (2008: 82), diplomacy becomes the last resort for the creation of "a more stable and more legitimate international order." Climate diplomacy seems to be uniquely fashioned to achieve this task in its attempt to persuade countries of the need to care for something they share in common: global climate. However, the conflict outlined above raises the questions: How does President Obama's foreign policy address the need for effective climate diplomacy? And what is the most effective method to make multilateral diplomacy work in order to generate global followership? Is multilateralism still effective? In response, the classical English School scholars prescribe the new and innovative solution that could consider the consensual notion of responsibility. That is why America cannot give up its global responsibilities especially when global public goods are in short supply. However, America could and should engage in a constructive dialogue with major secondary powers to take their demands into

account while collectively solving major, trans-national challenges. As a result, in their view civilisation could be saved by equipping societies with strategic vision, guided by global leadership and following ethical directions to overcome the threat of disintegration. These actions would create a basis for survival leading to prosperity. However, many scholars, such as Brzezinski (2010) believe that such a vision can only be achieved successfully, if America constantly adapts its techniques of policy and decision-making to that of a consensual leader acting as ‘the *promoter* and *guarantor* of a revitalised West and as the *balancer* and *conciliator* of a rising new East’ (Brzezinski, 2012: 192). There is a need for a genuine idea, a platform on which such a consensus could be built. This implies that as a consequence of which by acting in as a team member with other great powers and by building sustainable partnerships, America could achieve its foreign policy goals.

To achieve this, America must return to the classical formula of foreign policy: peaceful engagement. This is defined by a persistent prudence in order to not squander its power due to irresponsible military interventions. America must assertively defend its national interest, an interest that must ultimately be defined as a global interest based on the idea of community of nations working alongside each other to solve important global problems. Hence, this thesis will explain the principle of consensual leadership based on collective climate action. The building of a climate community does not require global interventionism. It requires adapting to change; repairing what has been damaged; working with allies by building ‘a global community of shared interest’ (not be confused with world government) (Brzezinski, 2010: 342); and protecting global public goods which ultimately implies solving the climate crisis.

### **1.4.2 Sustainable Partnerships Enabled by Diplomacy**

Central to this thesis will be to demonstrate that focusing upon building sustainable partnerships, supported by a restoration of the traditional American values and ideals and adopting a persuasive negotiating process (supported by a structure of multilateral institutions) will be a crucial variable in renewing American legitimacy and buttressing America's leadership in climate politics. The key issue for the future of America and the world is whether global political awakening will be seized and exploited by hate-mongering Anti-American demagogues, or whether a compelling vision of global community of shared interest will come to be identified with America's global role (Brzezinski, 2010: 342). Effective response to avert global turmoil requires major reliance on American power as the essential prerequisite to global stability. However, it also calls for a far-sighted commitment, derived from a sense of moral justice as well as from America's own national interest, to progressively transform America's prevailing power "Into a co-optive hegemony – one in which leadership is exercised more through shared conviction with enduring allies than by assertive domination" (Brzezinski, 2012: 342).

This task may not be easy given the fact that the institution of sovereignty is currently experiencing a historical decline. In addition, globalisation and revolution in communications have created new and complex challenges for modern diplomacy. It seems that the quest for a wise foreign policy must begin with the realisation that globalisation is an inevitable reality. This is because its essence implies a global interdependence and unremitting quest for a more just global community. This would reflect a project for upgrading of the current system of global governance. Further, diplomacy can be viewed as a more mature and more inclusive system of great power management in an increasingly, interactive and

interdependent world. As President Obama stated in Cairo (2009),

Recognising our common humanity is only the beginning of our task. Words alone cannot meet the needs of our people. These needs will be met only if we act boldly in the years ahead, and if we understand that the challenges we face are shared and our failure to meet them will hurt us all.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the election of President Obama generated huge worldwide expectations for a change in America's approach to diplomacy through restoration of traditional American ideals and values. However, questions remain about whether America can once again act as 'a great responsible', possessing special rights and responsibilities. In addition, there is a question about whether, the country can conduct an effective, timely and wise foreign policy that would improve America's legitimacy in the world. That is: "the one that avoids the pitfalls of a beleaguered mind-set but still comports with America's historically novel status as the world's paramount power since 1945" (Brzezinski, 2004: xi). For the purpose of this thesis, President Obama's foreign policy will be defined as the preservation of our planet through climate diplomacy.

### **1.5 Innovation in the Practice of the Twenty-First Century Diplomacy**

Watson, a former British diplomat, describes the English School concept of diplomacy and sustainable partnerships in the following terms: "the process of dialogue and negotiation by which states conduct their relations and pursue their purposes by means short of war" (Watson, 1982: 11). It is often taken for granted in the literature about diplomacy that it thrives in a dynamic environment (Melissen, 1999: xix). Dealing with change imaginatively is what diplomacy has been centred around since the very beginnings of international relations. "Flux or change" as Wight (1991: 189) put it, "is the great objective condition" of diplomacy. Therefore, to describe the nature of diplomacy as conservative would be a

contradiction in terms. It would be erroneous to infer that diplomacy aims to maintain the status quo. As Melissen (1999: xix) explained, consistent with the classical understanding of the term, “diplomacy is neither about maintaining the status quo nor the management of order as an end in itself, it is the management of change, and maintenance by continual persuasion of order in the midst of change” (Watson, 1982: 223).

Confronted with change on many fronts and at a breathtaking pace, diplomacy must be inherently adaptive and elastic as it is an organic process. Its capacity to absorb the impact of change on international relationships and to preserve an essential degree of cohesion in international society as a whole is continually being tested and re-examined. The observation that diplomacy must be innovative in order to adapt to the prevailing practices of the given era is especially true in times of great flux. If it is agreed that diplomacy is the management and facilitation of change in international relations by means of adaptation, then diplomacy almost inevitably becomes subject to innovation (Melissen, 1999: xix). Innovation may occur through: a) “science for diplomacy” which is often conceived as the use of the “soft powers” of scientific collaboration to smoothen the political relations between two or more nations or through (b) “Diplomacy for science”, which refers to establishing scientific collaboration between two or more nations with the goal of addressing common problems such as climate change (Leijten, 2017: 1). This thesis aims to answer the questions about whether President Obama’s diplomacy was sufficiently innovative to play a role in uniting nations around a number of challenges that the world faces, such as climate change. Atlee (2009: 137) stated that although these are ambitious and noble goals, President Obama’s achievements in his first months in office were remarkable and innovative.

An academic understanding of the term diplomacy is presented in the Oxford English Dictionary (quoted in Murty, 1989: 1). It states that, “Diplomacy is the management of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomatist; skill in the conduct of international intercourse and negotiations.” In line with the above, McGrath (1966: 121) drew attention to the representative nature of bargaining and negotiation whilst defining sustainable partnerships as “an occasion when one or more representatives of two or more parties interact in an explicit attempt to reach a jointly acceptable position” (Bercovitch and Jackson, 2009: 20).

Consequently, a diplomatic approach to foreign policy making process leading to sustainable partnerships may be more persuasive than crude, power-political realism or utopian idealism in the present international system, where the belief in the inevitability of the state-centred balance of power is in decline and the world is moving towards ‘the G-Zero world’ (Bremmer, 2012: 4). President Obama has observed that the new approach of diplomacy and sustainable partnerships is neither naïvely idealistic nor myopically realistic (Obama, 2007). President Obama, contrary to the views of classical realists’, managed to translate his climate policy in to practice. This is evidenced by the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement as the best proof of that. Nevertheless, as this thesis intends to show President Obama exposed his diplomacy strategy to criticism due to a lack of coherent, strategic vision and comprehensive climate policy. This criticism stems from an argument that suggests that he simply followed the pragmatic approach of restoring international legitimacy while pursuing nation-building at home. There has been no comprehensive, strategic success of his climate strategy. This is

despite the fact President Obama has made clear during his first four years of administration that he is inclined towards an 'active' and 'supportive' foreign policy, rather than narrowly 'promoting' America's objectives. His foreign policy assumed balance of realist and idealist insights. Thus, it could be described as Realist-Liberalism, however, this thesis intends to show that much of his climate policies could be explained by constructivism.

### **1.6 Constructivism in the Field of International Relations**

Constructivism has been chosen as the methodology for this thesis as a result of the growing interest in constructivism within the field of International Relations Theory (IR) to which this thesis hopes to contribute.

Furthermore, norm-centred constructivism is an ambitious lens through which to view International Relations Theory. It assumes that the anarchical structure of the international system can be shaped and moulded by creative agency. Constructivists argue that "ideas matter" in international relations. They have shown that culture and identity help to define interests and constitute the actors' identity in international politics. Consequently, this thesis relies on constructivism as a primary methodological approach in an attempt to bridge the gap between British idealists and American realists. Constructivists experts may offer a helpful explanation on President Obama's actions in diplomacy. This is because constructivism works on the premise that there is a reciprocal connection between human beings and the social world. Rational choice analysis takes values and beliefs for granted. Constructivists however, see beliefs and values as something that have to be explained and are crucial in shaping and determining reality.



While Intuitionists focus on rules as the driving forces in constraining and shaping behaviour in a context where identity is essentially fixed. Norm-centred constructivism posits that norms and values go beyond shaping actors' interests. Instead constructivists suggest that they in themselves constitute identities, and hence interests. In short, constructivists share several mutually reinforcing characteristics: 1) A belief in the social construction of reality and the importance of social facts; 2) A focus on ideational as well as material structures and the importance of norms and rules; 3) A focus on the role of identity in shaping political action and the importance of logics of action; 4) A belief in the mutual constitutionality of agents and structure; and 5) A focus on practice and action. Constructivism is, therefore, seen as a potentially useful tool for understanding foreign policy. Scholars of International Relations need new theories as a form of organising principle in order to make sense of a complex world. As there is no definitive method available to determine which one could prove to be the most promising, to conduct comparisons are difficult. Moreover, because accessible theoretical literature is in itself inadequate and inconclusive, they fail to assist policymakers select appropriately among the schools of thought.

Constructivism assumes that the international system is not something 'out there' like a solar system – it does not exist on its own. It exists only as an intersubjective awareness, or a common understanding among people. Therefore, it is suggested that the international system is to a large extent constituted by ideas, discourse and diplomacy rather than by material factors (Jackson and Sørensen, 2016: 206). It is considered to be a human invention or creation not of a physical or material kind, but of a purely intellectual and ideational kind. It exists as a set of ideas, a body of thought, a system of rules and norms which has been arranged

by certain people at a particular time and place in history (Ibid.). If positive and true is the key assumption that history is not some kind of unfolding or evolving process that is external to human impact, then it makes an academic case for the hypothesis that agency can change and shape the system. Global leaders make their own history. They make states too. The international system is made by men and women and if they want to, and are sufficiently motivated, they can change it and develop it into new pathways. If skilled, knowledgeable policy advisors will utilise knowledge of the past in order to change the future. This is because if thoughts and ideas that enter into the existence of international relations change, then the system itself will also change, because the system consists of thoughts and ideas. (Jackson and Sørensen, 2016: 206). This is the most powerfully intellectual insight behind constructivism's, often phrased in Wendt's words: "anarchy is what state makes of it" (1992: 394). The claim sounds innocent, however, the potential consequences are far reaching. This is because suddenly the world of international relations becomes less fixated in an age-old structure of anarchy. When people decided that we change, then self-help, power balancing and the realist pursuit of power suddenly stop and all these remnants of the past rivalry can change into cooperation. Change becomes possible in a big way because people and states can start thinking about each other in new ways and thus create new norms of existence that may be radically different from the old-fashioned ones. As a result, states are no longer constrained by the condition of anarchy, since the creative and consensual leadership gives a potential for agency to shape and change the condition of anarchy. From this perspective, both the identity and interests of states are not only given and permanent being defined by the environment of anarchy. Wendt (1992) provides a framework for thinking about identity and interests as constructed and thus

potentially subject to a process of transformation. It is the ideas and beliefs concerning the political entities that are the most important, and what those entities signify in the minds of people. The premise for this is based on the idea that the material world is indeterminate and is interpreted within a larger context of meaning. Ideas therefore define the meaning of material power (Tannenwald, 2005: 19). The international system of security and defence, for example, consists of territories, populations, weapons and other physical assets. However, it is the ideas behind, and understandings about, what is most important. The physical, or material element exists, but that element is secondary to the intellectual element, which infuses it with meaning, plans it, organises it and guides it. The thought that is involved in international security is more important, far more important, than the physical assets that are involved. This is because those assets have no meaning without the intellectual component, territories, weapons and power are mere things in themselves. "Power and interest explanations presuppose ideas, and to that extent are not rivals to ideational explanations at all..." (Wendt, 1999: 135-136). Put simply, if mind-sets of leaders change, then foreign policy can also change. This thesis argues that foreign policy should be more oriented on climate and American leaders should be pursuing a consensual style.

Historically, whilst American foreign policy has progressively evolved, it indisputably still requires an overall direction. The goal of any good foreign policy is to have a vision, aspirations and ideals but also trying to realistically recognise the world as it is and figuring out how to make change so that things are better than they were before (Obama, 2015). As such, theoretical work within the field of International Relations could assist in suggesting an adequate foreign policy

vision that will underscore guidance for America. Existing policy literature does not advise American policy makers on what to choose or what would have the most effective impact. As a result, such task is challenging. Consequently, this thesis will suggest that International Relations theories could be more useful when considered collectively. For instance, a creation of a climate community could be explained by bridging interests pursued by Realists and values espoused by Idealists.

### **1.7 Consensual and Creative Leadership**

Consensual leadership in the context of this thesis requires converting power into international legitimacy. At the same time, it requires replacing cynicism and inaction with modesty, strategic vision, the sense of the spirit of times, and common purpose. Diplomacy, under the form of integrative framework, thanks to building bridges, ties and opening up, attains a profound meaning in this period of transition, an era of global change. In this sense, it is the art of directing the country further down the road toward the still-distant goal of fulfilling its mission and final destiny. However, foreign policy implementation, in the time of uncertainty, also needs has to be highly flexible. Foreign policy is more than orientation, more than a tendency and even more than action program. It is what individuals representing the state do, or do not do, in their interactions with individuals, groups, or officials elsewhere in the world. Humanity lives in an era where American, consensual leadership is necessary, but not sufficient, to shore up the increasingly fragile process of globalisation. Globalisation may be neither positive nor negative, but it is explicit, it is there. Consensual leadership bringing about climate resilience to civilisation is arguably the best option for governing globalisation.

Despite the efforts of countless scholars, practitioners, and leadership developers to grasp at the essence of consensual leadership in order to make it more effective, they have seen little success. It is difficult to introduce it to the masses and ascribe popular support. Thus, leadership remains a craft, as is always a creative effort proclaiming something indispensable: “an idea whose time has come”. In the words of the leadership scholar, James MacGregor Burns (2003: 240), strategic leaders create relationships,

The key distinctive role of leadership at the outset is that leaders take the initiative. They address their creative insights to potential followers, seize their attention, spark further interaction. The first act is decisive because it breaks up a static situation and establishes a relationship. It is, in every sense, a creative act.

According to Burns (2003: 240), successful, transformational leadership begins “with the first spark that awakens people's hopes”. Then it creates opportunities and opens new possibilities that empower people to pursue happiness for themselves” (Ibid.). In the context of President Obama’s climate diplomacy, successful leadership required that diplomacy was creative, innovative, based on a consensual process. Success also required a steadfast purpose and determination to succeed. Creative climate diplomacy is linked to basic mechanisms of problem-solving, innovation, evolution and survival. If humanity could unlock the key to creativity and learn how to organise civilisation on Earth wisely then this could lead to a renovation of civilisation. It could be rearranged according to the rules of sustainability and in agreement with nature. Perhaps miraculous inventions and creative solutions could be introduced to solve global challenges such as climate change. The ability to solve climate change was and is a test for global leaders. Whereas we live in a complex and interdependent world where even agreeing on the nature of an issue is difficult. Considering the big issues facing our civilisation: energy, climate, population pressures,

distribution of wealth, species extinction, addiction to growth - that may really all be one big, interconnected challenge facing us and Earth (Taylor, 2012: 2).

Some scholars talk about climate change, while many others respond by saying: “well it is really all about carbon-based energy and we need to move to renewable energy sources” (Ibid.). Yet, others say that it is really about how civilisation produces food, that much of our carbon use stems from food production and distribution, and that we need to create (or perhaps re-create) a local and organic food system. Still, others argue that at the root of all of these issues is the ever-growing human population and that we have long since passed the ability of the planet to support so many people (Ibid.). Some say that it is not population, but rather consumption. This is because even if population stabilizes as it is predicted to do, we still expect our economy to grow every year, and so growth in consumption is the core issue. Still others follow this argument further and suggest that investor capitalism has growth at its core and that we need a new system of organising our political economy that does not require constant growth. “Deep down, people recognize that there is more than a grain of truth in all of these positions” (Ibid.). According to Taylor (2012: 2), “A leader who could solve these problems would be a pioneer in the art of consensual and creative leadership”.

Thus, with confidence in the cause and a commitment to traditional guiding normative principles and values, America can call on all peoples of the world to recognize their rights and responsibilities, whilst building common security mechanisms for all of humanity. A leader can only exercise leadership of fellow states by convincing them of the need to define a common good. This reveals a hope that by defining a common challenge such as climate change states can

embrace cooperative strategies to effectively address it. Transformational leaders have to continually adapt new foreign policy ideas. A key to successful leadership is an enlightened definition of the self-interest. As Legro (2005, 4) stated the social constructivist view, “new foreign policy ideas are shaped by preexisting dominant ideas and their relationship to experienced events”.

### **1.8 International Legitimacy**

Whilst many scholars are engaged in the debate over how America can recover international legitimacy, many have suggested solutions are incompatible and contradictory towards one another. As a result of this diverse conflict of opinion, it will be demonstrated that none of the suggested theories are precisely persuasive. This is problematic. Therefore, this thesis will attempt to develop a theoretical and practical foundation that offers suggested ways in which America may restore international legitimacy in the world by exercising a prudent and timely foreign policy. Prior to this, it is necessary to very briefly set a foundational background as to its perceived importance, which will be discussed throughout this thesis.

International legitimacy is ... the equilibrium point around which international society develops a consensus, accommodating as best it can the incongruent norms to which it is more or less formally committed.

(Clark, 2007: 208).

To avoid disastrous policy mistakes, America must act in accordance with the formal and informal rules of the current institutional order (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2008: 171). In other words, America’s preponderant material resources can effectively translate into real political influence only when they are bound by the generally recognised rules that constitute the institutional order. That is, America “must pursue its interests in a manner consistent with those norms or the legitimacy of its leadership will fast erode” (Reus-Smith, 2004: 102, quoted in

Beeson, 2006: 16). More precisely, legitimacy is extremely scarce in International Politics. Therefore, restoring international legitimacy may be connected to investing in skilful diplomacy. This is because it is one of the instruments of American Foreign Policy that is often under-estimated. As described above, diplomacy often proves an effective tool for shaping broader geopolitical foundations that enable constructive co-operation in the global arena.

### **1.9 Summary**

This chapter has outlined the aims of this thesis. It has also offered a brief introduction to some of the complexities, problems and issues facing any researcher investigating President Obama's pursuit of his climate diplomacy. In order to substantiate the importance of diplomacy, sustainable partnerships and international legitimacy these are briefly detailed as (a) an introduction to more detailed analysis of the subject matter, and (b) alongside the provision of the reasons behind the adoption of constructivism as a primary methodological approach in this thesis. More specifically it is a theoretical approach that accepts the possibility of a political leader or agent transforming the structure of the international system through his authority (legitimated power) and through collective effort. This point is very important because it underpins the latter development and construction of the argument. The following chapter will review the relevant literature through critical examination of existing research relating to the thesis topic.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to review the relevant literature on the subject of climate diplomacy conducted by President Obama and to identify areas within this literature where more research is required. The significance of this subject stems from the importance of the complex and comprehensive environmental challenge posed by climate change. One possible response to this challenge was presented by President Obama. More specifically, he embraced a strategy of climate diplomacy, which refers to “all purposeful mechanisms and measures aimed at steering social systems towards preventing, mitigating or adapting to the risks posed by climate change” (Jagers and Stripple, 2003: 385). President Obama played a central role in raising awareness about climate change and advancing solutions such as negotiating agreements.

Today, this subject constitutes an area of significant interest around the world. In part the interest in solving the problem of climate change became more intense as a result of vigorous speeches made by President Obama and the signing of the 2015 Paris Climate Treaty has been more intense than ever before. Climate change has become a frontline subject within numerous governmental reports and academic publications. This has been further magnified by a series of recent and more frequent extreme weather conditions such as hurricanes, rising sea levels and changing flora and fauna in the most affected parts of the world. Severe climate events are not only destructive but also extremely costly to human civilization. For some economists, climate change is the greatest challenge facing

the American and the global economy. According to economist, Joseph Stiglitz,

Under a “business as usual” approach, climate change will likely cost the U.S. economy \$3.8 billion per year by 2020, \$6.5 billion per year by 2040 and \$12.9 billion by 2080. The U.S. economy may be held back by 2% of GDP over the next 20 years because of climate change.

(Stiglitz quoted in Sarro, 2013).

In light of this, the literature review will discuss the achievements of President Obama’s climate diplomacy and seek to explain them through International Relations (IR) Theories. In particular, constructivism will be examined in significant detail. This is because, as Manuel-Navarrete (2010: 781) argued, climate researchers need to “move beyond realist tradition of political thought, and engage in critical theories and idealist approaches that question contemporary power relations”. Constructivist perspectives on IR can provide explanations for some of the aspects of climate change politics that are problematic or that have been unexplored by more traditional theories such as realism. Consequently, this review will explain why the current research is relevant in relation to the existing literature. It will use a variety of sources to back up original insights and ideas with theoretical assumptions.

## **2.2 Structure**

This review has been organised using a funnel technique. This means that the examination of the literature begins with sources that cover a broad subject matter, and then gradually moves towards narrowing the research subject. Therefore, it begins by addressing the background literature related to the general area of research. It then progresses by examining the literature that more specifically addresses the research questions of this thesis. The research questions which are: 1) Has President Obama’s diplomacy been successful in

addressing the problem of climate change? 2) What are some of the innovative forms of diplomacy employed by President Obama? 3) What were the major successes and failures of President Obama's climate diplomacy?

This topic has not so far been widely researched. As a result, there is not yet a single comprehensive assessment of President Obama's role in popularising climate diplomacy. Existing analysis focuses on President Obama's foreign policy in relation to specific countries and discusses his different approaches to addressing climate change within them. Therefore, this chapter aims to contribute to filling this gap in the existing research to address proposed research questions. There is a considerable degree of debate and controversy surrounding this topic. Not all scholars agree about whether climate change is real and if diplomacy can solve the climate crisis. Some established experts believe that "formal intergovernmental diplomacy has a role to play in shaping energy transitions, but a limited one" (Victor and Jones, 2018: 1). While there are numerous approaches presented throughout this literature review, it is not clear-cut whether President Obama has successfully addressed climate change in his policy making. It is rather a highly ambitious task that one man could stop climate change. Thus, it is subject to investigation whether President Obama has met assumptions of his climate policy as specified in his 2007 "Foreign Affairs" article entitled: "Renewing American Leadership." In this article, President Obama (2007: 13) pledged commitment to "strengthening institutions and invigorated alliances and partnerships crucial for the defeat of the epochal, man-made threat to the planet: climate change".

### **2.3 Lack of Consensus on Effectiveness of Climate Diplomacy**

This literature review will show that the issue of the effectiveness of President Obama's actions in combating climate change is both contested and insufficiently examined in the existing literature on the subject. Darian Kimberly Mahar (2017) presents the only thorough analysis of President Obama's leadership in an MA thesis entitled: "President or king? Obama's unilateral action on climate change in the face of a hostile Congress". He argues that: "Congressional Republicans undermined policies to curb greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, denying the existence of anthropogenic climate change and blocking President Obama's efforts to cap carbon dioxide emissions" (Mahar, 2017: iii). Therefore, "President Obama had to act unilaterally on multiple occasions to promote climate legislation" to the extent that some in Congress and the media argued that, "he overstepped his constitutional authority and behaved like a King rather than a President" (Mahar, 2017: 3). This highlights a weakness of his ambitious approach. Instead, President Obama could have attempted to engage with a range of actors at different levels and forms of authority. As Betsill and Bulkeley (2004: 471) observed, rather than conceiving of climate change as a global problem,

It needs to be considered as a multilevel problem, in which different levels of decision-making – local, regional, national, and international – as well as new spheres and arenas of governance that cut across such boundaries – are involved in both creating and addressing climate change.

Authors who advocate a multilevel governance approach argue that solving climate change involves addressing a number of actors: national, subnational, state and non-state from a multilevel angles (Betsill and Bulkeley, 2006: 154). This is due to the fact "global environmental politics are not merely a matter of international negotiation and national policy development, but are also taking

place locally creating new spheres of authority” (Ibid.: 154).

In this context, it is contested to what extent President Obama managed to strengthen institutions and invigorate existing partnerships at all levels. President Obama initial goal has been probably too ambitious to be realized all at once, but he evidently played the key role of a climate pioneer or ‘a climate policy entrepreneur’ in relatively new field of climate leadership. President Obama was sounding an alarming bell and warning of the “catastrophic impact of climate change without consequential action of the collective civilization” (Obama, 2008). His role, however, according to the literature review has been very much underappreciated and many have criticised his actions.

The argument of this thesis can be summarized by stating that President Obama initial goal was arguably too ambitious to be realized all at once. However, he evidently played the role of a climate pioneer or ‘a climate policy entrepreneur in the relatively new field of climate leadership. President Obama warned others of the “catastrophic impact of climate change without consequential action of the whole civilization” (Obama, 2008). However, according to this literature review his role has been underappreciated and many have criticised his actions.

As this thesis ultimately suggests, President Obama could not have solved the climate crisis alone. Instead, he needed support from other world leaders, epistemic communities, regions and cities. This follows the logic that climate change is a multi-level problem, as suggested by Betsill and Bulkeley (2006). Due to the crisis of global leadership, world leaders could not overcome the slow progress of diplomacy to enact prompt decisions. As Englebret (2016: 186)

noted, this resulted in a sense of “too little and too late” being agreed in terms of practical, remedial policies. America might have reengaged in climate diplomacy under President Obama, but a critical lack of domestic support for a decisive action continues to hold back a more proactive international role (Falkner, 2010: 37). In addition, bureaucracy often delays policy implementation. The literature to date highlights disappointment over the fact that the global community have so far been unable to enact policies that would bring meaningful change.

Despite this, the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement showcases of the President Obama’s major successes. Since the agreement was signed, it has become “much clearer that effective climate policy is not about finding quick fixes to an emissions problem but about putting in place the structure for a long-term technological transformation” (Falkner, 2016: 1118). As Keohane and Victor (2016: 570) explained, “averting dangerous global warming will require major investment in low-carbon technologies and a redesign of existing transport and urban infrastructures.” In their report for the Brookings Institution, Victor and Jones (2018: 5) state clearly that, “Stopping climate change is fundamentally about decarbonizing the world’s energy system.” The complexity of the task is amplified by because this needs to be achieved on a global scale and sustained over decades. Therefore, any expectation that a single international summit or treaty as the Paris 2016 Accords could provide a breakthrough solution, was always illusory (Keohane and Victor, 2006: 570). Thus, the literature highlighted above suggests that however constructive, the 2015 Paris Agreement is neither ambitious nor effective enough to prevent dangerous climate change. Therefore, a widespread and universal moral consensus, combined with a global consciousness that climate change is the defining global challenge that must be

immediately, decisively and dynamically resolved is required.

### **2.3.1 'Global Deal Approach' versus 'Building Blocks Approach'**

The scientific community appear to have sent a clear message about a possible solution to climate change. Steffen sums this message up, “An effective architecture of a governance system for planetary stewardship is likely to be polycentric and multi-level rather than centralized and hierarchical” (Steffen et al., 2011: 757). If they are correct then scientists seeking effective solutions to climate change need to find ways in which ad hoc, minilateral solutions can be integrated by policymakers to reach convincing decisions and shape policies at the global level. One approach preferred by international diplomats is the strictly hierarchical, top-down, governmental approach or ‘global deal’ approach. According to this approach, “the only conceivable remedy to climate change is for the governments and parliaments of the world to formally agree on the extent to which future emissions should be cut” (Verweij, 2011: 45).

Advocates of this approach such as (Falkner 2010, et al.; Keohane and Victor 2011; and Victor, 2011) emphasize state-based, multilateral negotiations. However, given the gridlock in climate negotiations these authors tend to reconceptualize the tools and strategies at the disposal of nations states. They came to believe that a binding, universal treaty would need to constitute the core of the global efforts to stop global climate change. However, based on an assessment of the twenty-three years of climate negotiations to-date, it seems that global leaders meet and convene participating in protracted, high-table and great-power diplomacy. Nonetheless, they have failed to reach a consensus that would be sufficiently comprehensive, enduring and that would enable a bold

'jump' or a decisive 'cut' through the Gordian knot of climate policy impasse ensuring practical solution and effective enforcement. Moreover, 'the global deal' approach has been producing diminishing returns for some time. The dominant view presented within the literature on the subject is that "even the brief periods of US leadership on global warming have not lessened the grip of gridlock" (Victor, 2011: xxviii). The collective answer that the international community embraced was climate diplomacy based on protracted negotiations. One thing that has not been considered is that "diplomacy is failing because the architects of the diplomatic process adopted a strategy that could never succeed" (Ibid.). Both practitioners and academics raise serious concerns about the effectiveness of the United Nations climate negotiations. Engelbrekt (2016: 190), who noticed that one weakness of the top-down approach is the existing gridlock among the great powers, supports this view,

The overall findings on climate change mitigation are that contemporary great and middle powers increasingly resort to informal institutional arrangements to address challenges in this policy area, with debates in formal settings... Attempts to forge an agreement on measures that would transcend the traditional-nontraditional security nexus are highly contested by a number of major actors, though, such as China, India, and Russia.

Even when negotiations are conducted at United Nations forum, the process is ineffective because it is difficult for so many different nations to reach a unanimous agreement. As noticed by experts from the Council on Foreign Relations (2013), the process is long and mechanistic,

The IPCC has also been criticized, from the other side, for underplaying the risks of extreme climate change, again because of the need for political consensus. Similarly, it has been criticized as lagging behind the current state of science because of its long and bureaucratic approval process.

In other words, it aims for progress too quickly, and delivers very little in practice.



As Victor (2011: xxviii) observed, the fruits of the process in real terms are minimal, “the result is the style of diplomacy that concentrates on getting agreement where agreement is possible rather than crafting deals that actually make a difference”.

Furthermore, it is often the case that “diplomats concentrate their energies on symbolic goals such as limiting warming to 2 degrees”. They appear to forget that these limits have been set by humans and are artificial. As a result, they do not ensure success in actually stopping or preventing climate change. While diplomats focus on broad and ambitious goals, as described above, they ignore, or are too shortsighted to include, “a more practical need to set goals that governments can actually honor” (Victor, 2011: xxviii). Voices from academia are equally critical claiming that the whole process is not only lengthy but also complicated and does not guarantee overall success,

The current UN negotiations are more inclusive, but they are also cumbersome, painstakingly slow and may not deliver an agreement with the narrow window of time that is left to prevent the dangerous climate change.

(Eckersley, 2012: 38).

Diplomacy had, overall, been considered unsuccessful until the Paris Climate Treaty was signed in 2015. As a result, it has been indicated as one of the most significant accomplishments of President Obama’s administration. Proceeding the conference a considerable amount of pressure was placed on world leaders. This was in light of scientists around the world claiming that “effective planetary stewardship must be achieved quickly” since “the momentum of the Anthropocene threatens to tip the complex Earth System out of the cyclic glacial-interglacial pattern during which Homo sapiens has evolved and developed” (Steffen, et al., 2011: AMBIO).

Therefore, the argument that climate change occurs cyclically, and so humanity should not worry, does not hold true anymore. As scientists have confirmed, "without planetary stewardship, the Anthropocene threatens to become for humanity a one-way trip to an uncertain future in a new, but very different, state of the Earth System", when our whole planetary civilisation might undergo a crisis. (Ibid.). A crisis of global leadership and inability to unite in the name of practical solutions could turn into a planetary catastrophe. That was the reality that President Obama understood and conveyed persistently in his attempts to secure a lawful climate deal. The hope was that "human imagination and ingenuity can help to solve important global problems" (Obama, 2015). In practice, "every system of domination including our twenty-first-century globalization generates its own distinctive set of opportunities for a challenge, response and finally transformation" (Steffen and Eckersley, 2013).

Given the diminishing amount of time our civilisation has to avert an ecological crisis, other scholars have shifted their attention to transnational climate governance by cities. NGOs, firms and other sub- and non-state actors (Andonova et al., 2009; Hale, 2011; Hoffman, 2011). For example, a number of British scholars associated with the London School of Economics, such as Robert Falkner, have come up with a comparative, alternative theory. This theory is known as the indirect approach or the 'building blocks approach' (Falkner, Stephan and Vollger, 2010: 252). The idea behind this approach originates from the reality that in order to find an effective solution "we must find a way of working more creatively with, around, above and below this system rather than entertain the political fantasy that we can design and build new global governance institutions from scratch" (Christoff and Eckersley, 2013: 164). Falkner, Stephan

and Volger (2010) criticise the 'global deal', top-down approach of imposing a governmental climate regime as an ineffective for combating climate change. At the international level, intergovernmental treaties and coordination may be sufficient for resolving minor issues, but challenges of the scale of climate change can only be resolved in an unconventional manner. Therefore, critics of big climate summits and governmental policies argue that given the stalemate in international climate change negotiations, "a carefully crafted, minilateral solution could inject political momentum into gridlocked international processes and move beyond the climate policy impasse" (Falkner, 2015: 21). An alternative to 'the global deal approach' is known as the 'building blocks' approach. This strategy "develops different elements of climate governance in an incremental fashion and embeds them in a broader political framework" (Falkner, Stephan and Volger, 2010: 252). Fundamental to thinking through the 'building blocks' approach is "the recognition that, given prevailing interests and power structures, a functioning framework for climate governance is unlikely to be constructed all at once, in a top-down fashion" (Ibid.: 258). Therefore, the argument follows that climate politics is an ongoing political process that seeks to create trust between nations and build climate governance step by step relying on several regime elements. A number of variants of this strategy exist. One version has been to advance climate stability by "disintegrating global climate governance into component parts that can be developed in a more flexible manner" (Falkner, Stephan and Volger, 2010: 258). Critics of the processes of the United Nations, such as Heller (2008), Hulme (2010), and Prins (et al., 2010), imagine different elements of climate governance as self-standing initiatives that could be realised at the national level. As Nordhaus and Shellenberger (2010, quoted in Falkner et al., 2010: 258) stated, "Rather than forcing economic change towards a low-carbon

future through top-down regulation, they seek to bring about such change through promoting energy efficiency, introducing alternative energy sources and inducing technological breakthroughs throughout the economy.” These critics argue, “a more strategic, long-term vision is required for the building blocks model to lead to the creation of an ambitious international architecture for climate protection and prevent the slide into a purely decentralized, “bottom-up” approach” (Falkner, Stephan and Volger 2010: 252).

If possible, this vision would provide new forms of collective leadership in a post-hegemonic world. Therefore, ascribing high levels of international agreement for its implementation in key, world capitals would be essential. It would require reconciling existing multilateral regimes with shifts in the global power balance that is separate from governments to nongovernmental actors. Initially, this would be met with resistance among the advocates of traditional policies. In addition, it would require holding those in power responsible for climatic degradation. It would necessitate a creative, imaginative and persuasive climate diplomacy based on something new. For example, having an agent of change (diplomacy that would enable to move beyond the contemporary gridlock as already initiated by President Obama) would be needed to convince the rest of the world. In such a situation, inventing and implementing supportive policies for this new system would simply be a pro forma. The key to succeed would be to fix the present system and introduce better policies that transform the way energy is used in the biggest economies. Perhaps, even more importantly, it would eventually involve ameliorating international arguments, abandoning ongoing disputes, and rejecting selfish ambitions.

However, the new approach will have limitations. This is because innovative approaches to global governance require a period of testing and experimentation. It has been argued that national governments who introduce a climate regime in the form of formal, nationally binding treaties will no longer be successful in solving the climate crisis. As Hsu (et al., 2015) argues, a new kind of climate politics is emerging in which national actions prove insufficient to address the changing climate. Therefore, subnational actors from provinces and cities, to civil sector organisations, and private companies are acting alongside nation states, making up for lost ground and missed opportunities. As Ladislaw (2015: 112) noted, “pressure to act on climate change is not entirely or even mostly an effort led by national governments”. States, provinces, local communities and representatives from different sectors of the economy, civil society and companies offer a united voice on the issue. They request change, therefore they have banded together to reduce emissions and adapt to a changing climate on the planet (Ibid.). (Cf. Figure 4.1). However, it is difficult to state unequivocally which policy method whether that be a global deal or a building blocks strategy, is more successful. As a result, there is a gap in the literature assessing the impact of President Obama’s initiation of debate on climate and inspiring problem-solving experimentation with possible solutions.

According to Betsill and Bulkeley (2004: 471) climate change is a multilevel problem. Therefore, governmental policies should be complemented by smart actions at the local, regional and community level. President Obama pointed out that although climate change is a massive problem, a more organized civilisation could adopt an all-encompassing strategy to help deal with the problem. In other words, he encouraged the spread of ‘a green revolution’ in renewable energy

resources such as solar, water, geothermal, biomass, and wind energy which offer the greatest opportunities to turn the fight against global warming into a lucrative business that would ultimately help the economy. If the system of humanity it ultimately based on the concept of capitalism, effectively capitalising climate change could provide a more organic solution. This reality is reflected in a statement made by President Obama in 2017, "This is [climate change] not a danger to be avoided, this an opportunity to be seized". The key fact on the ground is that "trends toward a clean-energy economy that have emerged during Obama's presidency will continue and that the economic opportunity for America to harness that trend will only grow" (Obama, 2017: 127). Therefore, the momentum generated by presidential policies concerning clean energy has been become irreversible.

Arguably then, critics of the 2015 Paris Agreement should not be prematurely disappointed with its policy impact because it has not yet been fully implemented. Most of its assumptions are expected to be put into action by 2020. Therefore, it "nationally determined contributions" are fulfilled, there is a significant chance of curbing global emissions and channeling vast financial resources in to combating climate change. Diplomats who have contributed to the success of negotiations and who applauded the Paris Climate Accords, including French President François Hollande and the former United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, may be satisfied that President Obama's diplomacy has finally "caught up with the reality of the global warming problem". However, it will require "a long-term political effort to steer global investment in the direction of a low-carbon economic future" (Falkner, 2016: 1125).

Despite the shortcomings of the top-down, 'global deal approach' as explained above, some observers argue that the Paris Climate Accords were successful. There was a lot of justified diplomatic self-celebration about the agreement because it was enshrined in to international law. It is difficult to estimate whether it was a victory for diplomacy or whether it was a surprising breakthrough. The pledge-and-review system enshrined in the Paris Climate Treaty transformed climate diplomacy from the past gridlocked state into a form creating flexibility. (Victor, 2015). Paris was made possible thanks to "a more flexible strategy, a willingness to accept nonbinding commitments, and smart leadership" that contributed to "a milestone in a process, not an end in itself" (Ibid). However, success is far from assured. Decisions made in the near future will be crucial in determining whether the Paris Agreement was a brief triumph of diplomacy or a real shift toward a genuinely more effective strategy. The brilliance of the Paris Agreement stems from the fact that it is a hybrid, combining both approaches. Thanks to its flexibility, "it is organized around the idea that every country has its own national interests and needs the flexibility to align what it does globally with what is doable locally" (Victor, 2015). Theories underpinning this claim may be neoliberal institutionalism and constructivism if the assumption about a change agent motivating others and enlisting followers is accepted.

To analyse it from another perspective, the indirect 'building blocks' approach equally has contains both positive and negative aspects. After all, it would be almost impossible for the world to come up with a united voice and demonstrate inclusive effort on all fronts merely through a carefully crafted, minilateral solution. Therefore, there is a degree of truth in Eckersley's (2012: 24) fair observation that, "inclusive multilateralism is unlikely to produce a timely climate treaty, while

exclusive minilateralism is elitist, procedurally unjust, and likely to be self-serving". The 2015 Paris Agreement demonstrates that climate diplomacy exercised by President Obama promised and realized 'inclusive minilateralism', based on "common but differentiated representation," or representation by the most capable, the most responsible, and the most vulnerable" (Eckersley, 2012: 24). The adoption of climate diplomacy is becoming a defining feature of twenty-first century multilateralism under the form of alternative forms of collective action "as complements to, and often, substitutes for traditional intergovernmental cooperation" (Patrick, 2016). Collective global leadership is fragile because of the global diffusion of power among countries with widely divergent interests, or the so-called G-Zero World (Bremmer, 2012: 4). However, states increasingly participate in a wide-ranging array of flexible, ad hoc frameworks whose membership varies based on situational interests, shared values, or relevant capabilities (Patrick, 2016). Informal meetings organised at the club level could make a real difference while also cultivating hope about future success. This is because "serious policy coordination requires initially working in small groups – clubs rather than through a global United Nations framework" (Victor, 2011: xxxi). These institutions are often "minilateral" rather than universal, in the sense that they offer, "a smarter, more targeted approach" (Naim, 2009). To be more specific, arguments in favor of clubs suggest that they focus on practical, systematic policies instead of overly ambitious global goals, which are difficult to achieve. Such small groupings offer a tangible promise of effectiveness of the future climate negotiations since they are,

Voluntary rather than legally binding; disaggregated rather than comprehensive; trans-governmental rather than just intergovernmental; regional rather than global; multi-level and multi-stakeholder rather than state-centric; and "bottom-up" rather than "top-down."

(Patrick, 2016).



According to Patrick (2016), although the answer is not straightforward, “Such ad hoc, disaggregated approaches to international cooperation bring certain advantages, including speed, flexibility, modularity, and possibilities for experimentation”. Yet there are certain risks of unilateralism as well. For example, “undermining the legitimacy and effectiveness of indispensable international organizations and even acceleration of the world’s coalescence into rival coalitions” (Patrick, 2016). Therefore, although “the building blocks approach” provides no guarantee of success it offers some hope of breaking the stalemate in climate change negotiations. What is needed is coherence and focus on long-term solution so that climate policies reinforce each other rather than trigger competitive dynamics (Biermann, et al., 2009).

#### **2.4 Realist versus Constructivist Approaches**

The secondary focus of this literature review is the debate between realists and constructivist thinkers. This is because these theories put forward different assumptions about the role of President Obama and the role of states in solving climate change. In the field of International Relations (IR), there is a long-standing divide between realists, who view nation states as unitary actors in international politics and constructivists, who view individuals and groups as having impact on shaping of world affairs (Behraves, 2011).

First, classical realists have a pessimistic view of human nature, which is most evident in Hans Morgenthau (1965, 1985), who as the leading classical realist saw men and women as having a ‘will to power’. This statement pertained to international politics: “Politics is a struggle for power over men, and whatever its ultimate aim may be, power in its immediate goal and the modes of acquiring,

maintaining and demonstrating it determine the technique of political action” (Morgenthau, 1965: 195). Second, realists are sceptical that there can be progress in international politics. Third, their core assumption is that the world politics consist of international anarchy among sovereign states. Fourth, realists see international relations as essentially conflictual. In other words, for realists international politics is based on ‘power politics’. This is because ‘offensive realism’ rests on the assumption that great powers “are always searching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals, with hegemony as their final goal” (Mearsheimer, 2001: 29). Therefore, foreign policy is an instrumental activity based on intelligent calculation of the country’s interests as in comparison to the power and interests of potential rivals and competitors (Jackson and Sørensen, 2017: 93).

Realist thinkers tend to view the issue of climate change in two main ways. First they view the issue through the prism of national interests within the context of an anarchical world system. Second, “they see climate as just another issue pertaining to the struggle for power amongst nation-states” (Doyle and Chaturvedi, 2011: 282). According to realists, climate is a form of environmental security, usually portrayed as a ‘threat-multiplier’; rather than a base or fundamental threat (Ibid.). In this vein, climate can exacerbate tensions among states, but as an alternative form of security (and not fundamental one such as race, religion, ethnicity, or finance). Instead, it acts as an accelerator or catalyst for existing tensions between nation-states. (Such dominant realist thought and militaristic approaches are presented in: Myers 1992; Edwards 1999; Salehyan, 2005; Reuveny 2007; and Chin 2008). The realist worldview not only imagines an anarchical world system, but also views political processes themselves as

anarchical not subject to change by the individual. From this world-view, humanity has not only declared a war against itself; but it is also locked into mortal combat with the earth itself (Doyle and Chaturvedi, 2011: 283). Realists do not believe in prospect of cooperation among selfish states because they believe states are inherently selfish. As Pfefferie (2014) observed, “in many ways, this is reflected by the frequent lack of cooperative behavior among the parties to global climate change negotiations”. Very often in the process of negotiations, more powerful states tend to coercively force their own stance in order to realise their own narrow interest. At the same time, weaker states are forced to accept their inferiority. “Furthermore, realist theory highlights that states are looking for relative gains compared with other states” (Powell, 1991; quoted in Pfefferie, 2014). Even when cooperation would lead to absolute gains distributed equally among all participants involved, its occurrence might be impeded by the uneven distribution of such gains. There are several authors who argue that “realism’s concern with relative gains is one of the central explanatory features within a realist approach to climate change” (Purdon, 2013: 4; quoted in Pfefferie, 2014). As a result, realists do not believe in the prospect of cooperation between nation states during the United Nations summits. Realism provides a powerful theoretical explanation of why climate negotiations often fail (Pfefferie, 2014).

Conversely, constructivists tend to focus on human awareness or consciousness and its place in world affairs (Jackson and Sørensen, 2017: 227). The international system is constituted of ideas about how the world should look like and not just by material forces. In social theory, constructivists emphasise the social construction of reality. In other words, the social world is not a given, it is a world of human consciousness, composed of thoughts, beliefs, ideas and

concepts, languages and discourses. Therefore, from this perspective, ideas about change matter in international politics. Alexander Wendt, a leading constructivist thinker, rejects the neo-realist idea that anarchy leads only to self-help. This is because he believes the identities and interests of states are created in the process of social interaction. Furthermore, identities and interests are defined by international forces such as norms of accepted behavior embedded in the practice of international society (Ibid.: 227). In terms of climate change specifically, constructivists mostly try to understand the issue as a social process. At this stage, it is crucial to provide a definition of a climate regime to embed it in the context,

International regimes are social institutions that consist of agreed upon principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programs that govern the interactions of actors in specific issue areas.

(Bulkely and Newell, 2010: 5).

In this context there are several strategies that powerful states such as America can approach climate regime. They can either use their resources and power to create and finance climate regimes out of an enlightened self-interest or, in contrast, they can exercise a veto role by withdrawing their support for a regime or just ignoring it (Bulkely and Newell, 2010: 6). President Obama reproached the existing climate regime, suggesting that international institutions are more than the sum of their parts and that climate change must be addressed through reforming and reinvigorating these institutions and giving them more power. In this sense, the constructivist approach is critical to understanding his role. As observed by Bulkely and Newell (2010: 7),

By opening up the question of how nation-states come to have interests, and how these evolve, constructivist accounts widen the temporal and spatial horizons of regime theory by including pre-negotiation phases of interest development, domestic processes

through which interests come to be conceived, and the range of non-state actors involved in developing norms and knowledge about the nature of climate change problem and how it should be solved.

Another way in which constructivist scholars could seek to explain of President Obama's climate actions is through identity construction and discourse within global climate change politics which is left unexplored in the existing literature. This is significant, since in the process of negotiations among countries can redefine their basic interests and make them subject to change. As stated earlier, "constructivism acknowledges the importance of both material as well as normative features of the international system" (Pfefferie, 2014). According to Colin Hay (quoted in Pettenger, 2013: 6), "constructivism argues that the material and ideational are complexly interwoven and interdependent". As Pfefferie (2014) noticed, "This constitutes a major difference between constructivism and more positivist theories of International Relations, which give primacy to material factors" championed mainly by realists. This author pointed out that "a further distinction introduced by constructivism is that it does not treat structure in the same way that realist theories do" (Ibid.). In fact, "constructivists allow for a more dynamic notion of structure" which allows for the possibility of transformation (Pfefferie, 2014). Hence, a number of core constructivist studies highlight the interrelationship between structure and agency, in addition to the possibility of agency to shape and ultimately change the structure (Kratochwil, 1991; Wendt, 1999). This point is critical to this thesis as it provides a framework of assessment of President Obama's diplomacy. To highlight a similar point, Adler (1997) pointed out "that human agency creates a social context in which the meaning of structure is continuously defined and redefined". Equally, another constructivist, Finnemore (1996: 24) underlined the interplay between structure and agency, stating that Constructivism "emphasizes the construction of social structures by

agents as well as the ways in which those structures, in turn, influence and reconstruct agents” (Finnemore quoted in Pfefferie, 2014).

In summary, constructivism helps scholars of International Relations to understand climate change as a social and political process, which is subject to change thanks to discourse. Equally, international politics can change if there is a change agent who relies on ingenious, novel solutions and possess superior knowledge. Persuasive agents can provide a discourse through which interests of states are redefined and perhaps aligned with the greater good of protecting the environment. Important contested concepts such as sustainable development or shared, common responsibility may be brought to light by different actors within this specific, political language. This manifests itself throughout negotiations over climate change policy. Moreover, constructivism provides for scope to analyze the influence of non-state actors, referred to by Fogel (2007: 99) as, ‘climate policy entrepreneurs’, “which have become increasingly crucial within the formulation of climate change policy, particularly at the domestic level” (Pfefferie, 2014). Consequently, constructivism captures the very political nature of climate change as a social problem and suggests that climate change could be solved by thinking beyond the international, nation-states regime towards the conceptualising of climate community.

Contrary to constructivists, realists tend to think in terms of material factors such as interests, power, resources, conquests, and money as the driving forces in American foreign policy. Therefore, there is no space in such a policy to defend a global public good such as climate. A possible failure of the realist logic is that it advocates downplaying the role of nonmaterial values and broader changes in

identity through persuasive discourse and diplomacy. As a result, it is important to state that these two theories make very different predictions about the significance or non-significance of the role of President Obama, his speeches, and climate diplomacy. Realists may actually undervalue President Obama achievements while constructivists would suggest that he was acting as a typical norm innovator or 'climate policy entrepreneur' in his individual campaign for climate diplomacy.

The realist interpretation is problematic. This is because President Obama himself has emphasised values as an essential ingredient in his policymaking. He has made it very clear the he bases of his foreign policy upon understanding, compassion, unity, empathy, and change. These are fundamentally different from values espoused by President Bush (Jr). President Obama has rejected a tension between those who describe themselves as realists and idealists,

There has long been a tension between those who describe themselves as realists or idealists – a tension that suggests a stark choice between the narrow pursuit of interests or an endless campaign to impose our values. I reject this choice.

(Obama, 2009).

President Obama also acknowledged that political leaders must be able to think beyond the often-narrow confines of realpolitik. Through his speeches, President Obama intended to convince minds and change long held identities. For example, in his Cairo-Speech (2009) President Obama quoted Thomas Jefferson by saying, "...I hope that our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us that the less we use our power the greater it will be". Thereafter, his series of presidential speeches demonstrate that America has moved away from the unilateral 'might is right' approach and the International Politics characterised by his predecessor, and towards the value-based "greater common good approach". This fact is

sustained by numerous minutes and published speeches. For example, speeches explicitly stating this strategy include: the Democratic National Convention Keynote Speech from 2004; Speech to the People of Berlin; the New Beginning Speech at Cairo University in 2009; the Jerusalem International Convention Center Speech in 2013; President Obama addressing climate change at COP21 in 2015.

For example, in Cairo he stated: "...there must be a sustained effort to listen to each other, to learn from each other, to respect one another and to seek common ground" (Obama, 2009). Therefore, although actions may not run parallel to words, this thesis will discuss the issues that relate to the powers of any President of America, since the President is uniquely positioned to instruct the nation, implement favourable policies the President defines as America's foreign policy. Thereby, having the potential to influence larger social forces within the American nation or even recalibrate foreign policy towards a focus on climate change.

## **2.5 Constructivism and the Study of Change**

Within International Relations Theory, the English School (ES) Theory of International Society is very prominent. International Society theorists emphasise the existence of common interests and common values between states. According to Buzan (2004), the primary understanding of the English School Theory is that some scholars understand it as a set of ideas existing in the minds of statesmen (ibid.: 12). As a consequence, Wendt (2006) emphasised elements, such as the quantum processes and their impact on International Politics. This is relevant to this thesis, particularly with regard to the agent-oriented constructivism. This is because it is argued that the changes in the identity of



organised Western societies do not only influence agents' interests, but may also have an impact upon the direction of foreign policy (Cf. Figure 4.4). Thereby, for the grand strategy to be effective, it is essential to inspire the nation (Bass, 2002: 105). Constructivists claim that they study change through the analysis of social interaction.

However, scholars associated with offensive realism, such as Mearsheimer, are more sceptical about the possibility of these type of change. Mearsheimer (1995: 91) offers a much more pessimistic perspective, "the distribution of material capabilities among states is the key factor for understanding world politics". The English School scholars advocate a more flexible concept of International Society concept that can be applied by constructivists. For instance, classical English School scholars, such as Wight (1991) and Watson (1984) argue that a whole approach provides a more sophisticated theoretical starting point for the study of political social reality than the dominant Realist perspectives do.

However, one limitation of the English School model of thinking is that its theoretical assumptions have often lack clarity because they are not specific (Suzuki, 2009: 5). Constructivists, however, advocate that ideational factors play a crucial part in shaping international social reality. For example, "...agent interests are derived from identity-construction, which is constituted in the course of social interaction" (Hobson, 2002: 24). The fact that countries need to become a member of International Society indicates that a country's interests and actions will be shaped accordingly by this identity and in particular by ideational notions of legitimate membership to a community (Suzuki, 2009: 5). This raises questions of: (a) how, or has, President Obama fulfilled his foreign policy, whilst integrating

other different cultural values and identities that are in direct conflict to accepted American ideals and values? And (b) How realistic is the concept of a climate community to solve climate change given enormous national divisions?

An English School theorist, Barry Buzan (often classified as a constructivist), appears to agree with Wendt insofar as accepting the possibility of great power management, subsequent to the inevitability of the emergence of a world state. However, Buzan simultaneously emphasises a credible case that suggests for this to happen, there must be an inevitable decline of American global influence allowing the emergence of the so-called 'decentred world'. In other words, there will be no more superpowers or hegemonic global leadership. Either single power or the West collectively, will no longer be acceptable, "...the benefits of the revolution of modernity are more widespread than they were during the nineteenth century" (Buzan, 2012).

However, Buzan fails to state how traditional values, diversity, and conflict between nations will be resolved. According to Buzan (2012), if America fails in restoring international legitimacy and ensuring robust, global leadership, the trend towards decentred globalism will accelerate. Should this happen, the result will be a more chaotic International Society, with no effective leadership or managerial role performed by traditional great powers. So how has President Obama addressed this issue, and who will arbitrate and lead a de-centred world of many diverse cultural nations?

From the English School perspective, Clark (2009: 36) agrees, to a degree with Buzan. Clark states that: "...any singular hegemony is likely to represent an

unstable fulcrum or tipping point, always prone to tip towards either collective or coalitional forms” (Ibid.). Thus, it may be argued, that Clark’s point is more consistent with the more globalized international society’ perspective rather than a decentred one. Moreover, Clark (2009) also suggests that there is still room for hope, provided that America regains international legitimacy. Whilst not impossible to be realised under President Obama to a great extent American has become more global great power.

To exemplify Clark’s argument more precisely, this thesis will discuss the Constructivists’ point of view that tends to be more sophisticated, thereby complementary to arguments of classical English School scholars. This thesis hopes to demonstrate that reality is much more complex than the one purported by Buzan’s interpretation. This is because his analysis of the International Society seriously questions the capability of the so-called transformational leadership capacity to energise American society, economy, and eventually, then the whole world in order to create a collective, climate community. Furthermore, Buzan (2010: 4) fails to appreciate the role of ideals and normative principles in revitalising the American nation. By focusing on constraints in the international role of President Obama’s America he is inherently sceptical of the success of this project. Consequently, he accepts the eventuality that President Obama may have accelerated the process of the decline of America. Therefore, it could be argued that this view is pessimistic. Whilst advocating that application of foreign policy may be extremely difficult at times, Buzan (2012) appears to possibly under-estimate the fact that President Obama has shown a sense of strategic direction when it comes to the formulation of American foreign policy. For example, after decades of ‘Cold War’ with Russia and thus the isolation of Cuba,

he has begun an acceptable all parties' solution by recognising that new foreign strategies are essential to the end of the nuclear threat which was very real throughout the Cold War. Therefore, President Obama has offered a hand of friendship and much needed social, financial, and technical aid to Cuba. Despite the new evidence presented by Buzan (2012), Clark's analysis of the International Society continues to be viable.

The question still remains however, to what extent is it possible to renew the American nation and has President Obama been successful? This is still subject to heated debates between American and British scholars. To avoid this tension, constructivists argue that if there is a problem of increasing complexity of decision-making associated with the decline of the nation state (in this case America), it must be understood as an international social construct on the part of decision-makers. In other words, the discourse about whether Obama has contributed to America's decline could be superseded if the problem is approached from a constructivists point of view. In other words, as a part of a set of political projects, associated with responses to perceptions of external and internal constraints. Traditional realist explanations fail to offer any constructive solution to the actual, relative American national decline.

## **2.6 Preventing Decline and Creating Inclusive Climate Community**

The theoretical pendulum model designed by Adam Watson and Martin Wight to exemplify the course of history (Watson, 1992: 14) operates on a spectrum that extends from an empire at one extreme, to hegemony, then onto the anarchy of independent states at the other extreme (Cf. Figure 4.1). Therefore, to attempt to bridge the gap between American and British scholars, this thesis will evaluate

the above model of International Society. Nonetheless, once the workings of hegemony are examined against the historical record, it may be that the strongest power in the system will tighten its grip beyond hegemony, thereby establishing its own empire. Although, afterwards, in line with this view (Watson, 1992: 14) and because the course of history operates on a spectrum, it is very likely that it will inevitably collapse (Watson, 2007: 18). Therefore, many International Relations thinkers are challenged and fascinated with the question: What kind of International Society will emerge in the future and is it possible to supersede the stage of empire with America playing the role of a pioneer in new climate politics?

Arguably, however, it also asks whether or not America is going into decline and eventually collapse as a great power. Although, this does not prevent scholars from claiming that given the diminishing political, economic, and military reach of America, the most instructive point of reference from which to study American foreign policy is embedded within the historical past of prominent empires. Is America following the path of previous empires with decline as an inevitable conclusion e.g. the Roman Empire? Could America undergo a transformation of its power status whilst channelling its influence into a more inclusive system of global power management to create a climate community?

Clark (2011: 67) postulated that America's new, consensual style of leadership, is conducive to addressing such questions. For example, the American-led reform of the United Nations Security Council creation of the multi-layered order in East Asia to cope with the rapid rise of economic, financial power of China and a collective approach to tackle climate change. The chief task of President Obama was whether America could persuade China to become a responsible great

power in American terms of cultural and traditional values, in order to share the burden of international responsibility for climatic issues? The danger was that if not possible, International Society could turn into anarchy of independent states or a more decentred world without great power cooperation, as Buzan (2012) described it.

Whilst diplomacy can also work to ensure justice, as it can contribute to what Watson (1984: 223) described as ‘...an orderly change.’ However, Watson’s metaphorical model does not include, however, is the possibility of the emergence of great power management or a more loosely an inclusive, climate community<sup>1</sup> (Cf. Figure 4.1). Whilst there is a degree of validity in the arguments offered by classical English School scholars such as Watson (1984) and Wight (1991) and their contemporary disciples, such as Buzan (2010) and Clark (2011), when one considers Slaughter (2012), Zakaria (2008), and Cox’s (2012) views it is reasonable to conclude that America is not in an absolute state of decline and that it is more about the rise of power of other world nations. As such, consistent with arguments presented by Slaughter (2009: 94), America will endure as a Great Power. This is because it “...possesses the most networked society and economy in the world” (Ibid.). Each of these arguments will be relevant when analysing case studies later in the thesis.

## **2.7 American Grand Strategies and International Relations Theory**

As stated in the introduction, this review has examined the literature about

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<sup>1</sup> This as a collective, inclusive and global climate community consisting of states, cities, coasts and regions under America’s informal leadership reflecting the idea that America’s sovereignty could be dedicated to a cause larger than its own security. Therefore, American interest could coincide with the global interest. The concept of a climate community is discussed and examined in more detail later in this thesis. Please see Figure 4.1 on page 128.

President Obama's climate diplomacy and attempted to address the address the various explanations of this strategy within International Relations Theory. The task involves considering the two most recognised, and to a degree opposite, International Relations theories as influencing factors in American diplomacy: realism and constructivism. This is because these theories provide a different understanding and interpretation of President Obama's leadership role and his climate diplomacy.

A full definition and application of grand strategy is detailed in the following section. The field of grand strategy (as opposed to the field of strategy and tactics) remains in many respects *terra incognita*, an unexplored subject. Consequently, the discipline is the subject of heated debates. This is because there is a considerable degree of failure to develop a clear consensus relating to President Obama's grand strategy. Therefore, it is a contested area that demands further research and analysis. Thus, International Relations scholars often speculate about future scenarios, hence, pertinent questions relevant to International Politics are: What sort of development will the forthcoming decade bring? Is humanity facing a crucial turning point?

This makes it necessary to review literature related to analytical prediction, albeit with a degree of reservation. This is because,

...the future does not yet exist and it is therefore open. We can reasonably infer some predictions, but we cannot predict the future completely. The future can produce phenomena that are genuinely novel, in the sense that no knowledge of the past could have anticipated them.

(Smolin, 2013: xiv).

What type of international stage has President Obama left for the next generation to inherit if the present state of International Politics does not change? Conversely, if certain conditions continue and international processes take place regarding the “failure to hew to the accepted rules in the security realm could degrade American legitimacy and weaken American power” (Bell, 2008: 2).

Constructivist scholarship generates an argument that has profound implications for America and the whole world relating to an accurate understanding of American grand strategy. More specifically, within American foreign policy, prioritising legitimacy may not suffice for America’s global role in the post-crisis economic world order. To set the evaluation of President Obama’s climate diplomacy into context, questions as to the correct, strategic definition of American grand strategy in the future will be discussed in the following sections.

## **2.8 America in Search of a Grand Strategy under President Obama**

Despite the fact that there is no single vision of American foreign policy, numerous International Relations analysts and scholars have provided justification for what should be its driving mechanism of it. Consequently, Walton (2012: 8) argues that the subject matter of grand strategy has become one of the primary disciplines in International Relations. This discipline, he argues deserves and demands exploration, examination, and evolution. English School scholars perceive diplomats and policymakers as agents of International Society with a real capacity to change the world. Based upon this assumption, this thesis will examine the phenomenon of the working of agency in International Politics, along with the best source of proof that the argumentation offered by constructivists is very relevant. The critical question is whether constructivism is valid to explain President



Obama's diplomacy? And, can it elucidate the notions of agency and quantum individualism?

Since realist approaches present a worldview that International Politics cannot be malleable to human agency and interaction, this thesis will discuss by comparing and analysing a number of scholarly and academic views related to realism and constructivism in International Relations theory.

No matter how wisely or carefully they are chosen, selecting a set of foreign policy instruments in and of themselves, will not result in a successful foreign policy. Therefore, this thesis will analyse whether President Obama managed to devise an overall course of action that brings these policy instruments together into a unified and coherent whole.

Grand strategy is potentially the lynchpin that unites goals and tactics. It differs from military strategy or diplomatic strategy as a result of its scope. Where they are concerned with the effective use of hard power or soft power, grand strategy is concerned with a government wide approach that brings together all elements of power.

In turn, whilst the discipline of strategy and its horizons are restricted and therefore bounded by war, grand strategy is a more sophisticated discipline because it looks beyond war to the condition of peace.

Military strategy is mainly the province of generals. Grand strategy is mainly the purview of statesman. Grand strategy controls military strategy, which is only one of its elements.

(Collins, 1973:15).

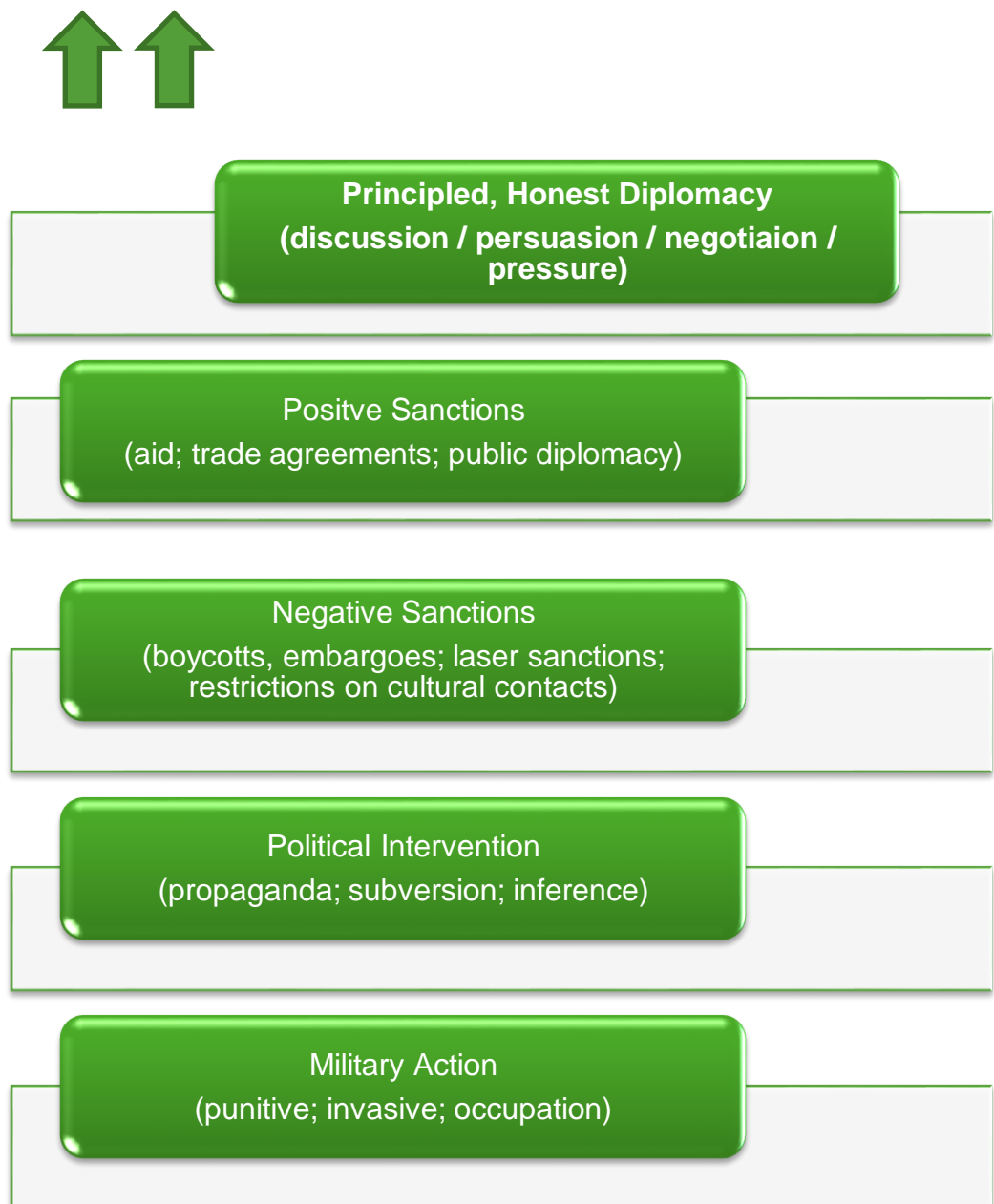
The idea that grand strategy should integrate military, political and economic means to pursue states' ultimate objectives in the international system may be prudently correct. Thus, this definition is compatible with the idea that grand strategy should not only combine the various instruments but should regulate their use in order to avoid damage to the future state of peace for its security and prosperity (Hart, 1967: 322). Moreover, this concept is consistent with a prominent British military historian, Sir B. H. Liddell Hart: "...grand strategy comprises the purposeful employment of all instruments of power available to a security community" (Hart quoted in Gray, 2007: 283).

Therefore, grand strategy is a foundational key discipline of International Relations Theory that requires further analysis. For the purpose of this thesis, it will be argued that the primary, though not the only purpose of the American grand strategy, ought to be climate diplomacy. This is seen as the best weapon of choice. Along with climate diplomacy and environmental sustainability and focusing on nuclear disarmament and the slashing of nuclear arsenals around the world, focusing on these were the main assumptions within President Obama's foreign policy.

Consequently, the primary role of grand strategy (or in other words higher strategy) is to co-ordinate and direct all the resources of a nation towards the attainment of a certain political objective. At the same time, grand strategy should both calculate and develop the economic resources and manpower among nations in order to sustain their military services. It should not be limited to the one-dimensional function. On the contrary, it could embrace the moral resources aimed at fostering the people's willing spirit.

Furthermore, more important than the possession of concrete forms of power, grand strategy should regulate the distribution of power between several services, as well as between other services while balancing the principles of Realism and Idealism. It must be remembered that according to Hart (1967), fighting power is, but one of the instruments of grand strategy, as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1



Consequently, it should take account of, and apply several aspects: 1) diplomacy; 2) positive sanctions; 3) negative sanctions; 4) political intervention; 5) ethical pressure; and if necessary 6) military actions to weaken the opponent's will (Cf. Figure 2.1). The totality of the grand strategy may be something difficult to exercise and extremely unrealistic especially in the times of technological improvement and accelerating processes of globalisation.

## **2.9 The Need for a Unified Vision of American Grand Strategy**

Concerning the American grand strategy, some scholars have expressed anxiety related to the strategic, long-term vision for America. They ask important questions: "...what principle should we use to describe American grand strategy?" (Ferguson, 2011). Is there a need for a continuous change of the American grand strategy? Is grand strategic thinking really applicable to the changed realities of the twenty-first century? Is the logic of grand strategy useful in the times when great power conflicts seem unlikely?

There might not be a prepared, clear, coherent, and well-defined grand strategy for America at the moment (Drezner, 2011). It would appear that there are no straightforward answers to these questions. Buchan (2011) argued that the events of the past decade have left many Americans with the sense that the American grand strategy for a more liberal and stable order has failed. Hence, there are many competing points of view and rival visions of what should constitute an American grand strategy. These include: neo-isolationism, selective engagement, cooperative security, and primacy models (Posen and Ross, 1996: 3). Accordingly, they further advocate that Americans need to recognise that the issue of grand strategy is not a straightforward one.

However, one field that has not been systematically examined is the defining of the American grand strategy and in particular, American foreign policy as a contribution of the English School. As English School scholars are renowned for maintaining that great powers ought to attain special responsibilities for managing international order and for managing their relations with one another. In short, with great power comes great responsibility (Bull, 2002: 222). All nations can learn from this assertion that our there are great civilizational responsibilities of all nations, including taking care of the climate.

### **2.10 Constructivism and Agency of President Obama**

President Obama figured out that cotemporary climate diplomacy was not working. However, he also recognised diplomacy as a particularly well suited instrument to American body politics. This is because it is generally associated with advising, shaping, and implementing foreign policy. In other words, it is the management of relationships between states and other actors through negotiation (Barston, 2013: 1).

A central constructivist insight suggest that International Society is not a fixed, external, material structure. Instead, it is a socially produced structure of shared meanings, mostly rules and norms. Hence, International Politics is social, and malleable to human action. Thus, political agents such as President Obama can mould and shape the direction of it. In addition, the importance placed on norms and rules, and societal processes implies that great personalities can have a major impact on International Politics. Examples used to evidence this often include personalities such as Winston Churchill or Margaret Thatcher. Academic literature on the topic confirms that President Obama was acting “as a goal

oriented predominant leader when it comes to climate change policy” (Mahar, 2017: 51). As a result of possessing specific leadership traits and having the ability to activate the world by inspiring a positive change and promoting environmental norms transformational leaders may exert pressure on advanced, organised societies. According to Mahar (2017: 54), leaders such as President Obama tend to “score high in task focus, they seek solutions to problems and see those around them as instruments to solving those problems”. These types of leaders use reason to assume that it is impossible to keep all the people happy. They also believe that they have to make hard decisions based on the common good of the majority of individuals. As Mahar (2017: 54) showed, “Leaders high in task focus are not opposed to working with others, but rather focus less on the feelings and needs of individuals and more on attending to the problems that face the administration”. For such leader, problem solving is one of the primary motivations for seeking office. As exemplified by Mahar (2017: 54), “this personality trait is emblematic of President Obama’s leadership on climate policy and passion to cement his climate legacy”. President Obama came into office pledging that it would mark the “moment when the rise of the oceans began to slow and our planet began to heal” (Obama, 2008).

However, it is crucial to distinguish between President’s rhetoric and action. According to Kopra (2016: 25), “Constructivists have studied ideas as explanandum of social phenomena”. Such an approach has much to recommend to the study of climate responsibility since a significant part of international climate politics is “discourse and dialogue concerning what policies or activities, ours as well as theirs, are desirable or advisable or appropriate or acceptable or tolerable or prudent or politic or judicious or justified in the circumstances” (Wendt, 1999

quoted in Kopra, 2016: 25). In this sense, diplomacy and discourse on climate change define the nature of the phenomena, for example, “the politically perceived causes and consequences and thus situate and control how we think about the issue and what kind of action we can take (or not take) in order to respond to them” (Kopra, 2016: 25). However, creating a positive discourse is only one half of solving the problem. Diplomacy must be translated into consistent and consequential policy action. Constructivists tend to dismiss the role of great power in international society since they focus on norms.

In this sense, constructivists offer a far more optimistic worldview than the view proposed by realists. Therefore, it could be argued that constructivists lean more towards idealism. Idealists, put simply tend to be more interested in how the world ought to be, rather than how it actually is. As Manuel-Nvarrete (2010: 781) observed, “climate researchers have to move beyond this tradition of political thought [political realism], and engage in critical theories’ and idealist approaches that question contemporary power relations”. Climate research has not paid sufficient attention to idealist approaches to the study of power. This is perhaps because it seems that prevailing, established structures of modernity, globalization and capitalism seem unable to be reformed. However, it is necessary to reform or transform them since they are pushing advanced societies along unsustainable paths. In addition, they are fostering alienation from people’s own creative powers (Manuel-Navarrete, 2010: 784-785).

Furthermore, realists do not share the constructivist belief in the agency of the individual in International Politics. According to realists, individuals are perceived as lacking in agency, or in the ability to significantly act within International Politics

on their own, or to alter the course of history. Put simply, states are more important than the individual. Consequently, individuals are not seen as worthy of significant consideration. Individuals are not perceived as empowered 'agents of history' who can reframe existing power structures. For realists, it is rather power that matters next to states. One of the most important contributions made by constructivists is the introduction of human agency into International Relations through identities, which are clusters of meaning expressed in political cultures. Wendt (1999) argued that it is practices and events that are more important in world politics, than agency. Wendt's analysis of social political reality starts from two basic assumptions about social life. First, is the belief that "human beings and their organisations are purposeful actors whose actions reproduce and transform society of states" (Wendt, 1987: 337). Second, is based on our conviction that "society is made up of social relationships which structure the interaction between these human beings" (Wendt, 1987: 337–8). Consequently, people are born into a world which is pre-organised, pre-structured, and which shapes us in a number of different ways. However, we are also intentional agents who act in this world and who re-create or transform the structures it contains. According to Wendt (1987: 360),

Agents and structures as mutually constitutive yet ontologically distinct entities. Each is in some sense an effect of the other; they are 'co-determined.' Social structures are the result of the intended and unintended consequences of human action, just as those actions presuppose or are mediated by an irreducible structural context.

Detailed analysis of the field presented by this literature review suggests that just as structure shapes individuals it is agency that can transform the structure by directing humanity in the right direction, provided that the right direction is carefully identified, and then chosen. According to Manuel-Navarrete (2010: 785), in order to solve climate change civilisation needs to: 1) deemphasise realist



approaches that portray climate change as a 'collateral effect' of globalisation, or market externality; 2) remain prepared to reform existing power structures of modernity and capitalism; 3) Encourage individuals and invest in leaders to see themselves as agents of history and co-creators of themselves and the world. Change may not happen immediately, however. This is because, as Drezner (2000: 747) noticed, there are different types of agencies that shape foreign policy making process; "An insulated agency has the advantage of making an immediate effect, but overtime that effect is much less likely to grow" (Ibid.). This type of agency does not characterise President Obama's personal leadership style. On the contrary, "an embedded agency is much less likely to have an immediate impact and over time it might not have any impact at all". However, according to Drezner (2000: 747) "it might also acquire much more influence than a horizontally autonomous agency". Drezner goes on to write, "An embedded agencies have a much lower chance of keeping their ideational mission intact, but if they do survive, their odds of thriving are greater", even post factum. (Drezner, 2000: 747).

In light of this, could President Obama's accomplishments in climate diplomacy be retrospectively resonating and providing stimulus for global action even after the end of his administration? Realists would deny this stance. This is because they believe that selfish states always compete for power and security in the state of international anarchy. Equally however, if the stance put forward by constructivists is correct, then it remains within the scope of individuals to overcome anarchy. The statement, "Anarchy is what states make of it", captures the essence of constructivism. Equally, it can be argued that norms are introduced by individuals or leaders to ensure shared understandings, change

collective identity, and overcome anarchy. In addition, there is a need for persuasive diplomacy. Agents of change could be states, if a more realist approach is adopted. However, from a more idealistic perspective, agents can also be individuals or organisations. Arguably, a social structure leaves more space for agency to influence the environment. According to President Obama, one of these areas in which American diplomacy could affect positive change was climate. Leadership from both President Obama and France, led to the Paris Climate Treaty, signed in 2015, bringing with it the sense that diplomatic gridlock had finally been overcome. It could be argued that President Obama was acting as an international norm-innovator, championing climate diplomacy, refocusing on the fundamentals of convincing climate diplomacy while stampeding global cooperation. More importantly, President Obama cultivated a norm of climate consciousness, promoting climate solidarity worldwide. President Obama believed that climate diplomacy could become a more decisive driver of change in its own right. This attitude was developed as a result of difficulties associated with an obstructionist Congress that served to undermine many of his policies. Although solving climate change completely proved to be a far greater task than designed for the duration of a relatively short span of, presidency the seeds of action have been sown and the ripple effect continues. With the result that “a critical momentum of clean energy has been created which now is irreversible” (Obama, 2017: 126). As President Obama himself observed, “the urgency of acting to mitigate climate change is real and cannot be ignored, the business case for clean energy is growing, and the trend toward a cleaner power sector can be sustained regardless of near-term federal policies” (Ibid.: 129). As a result, his ideas have outlived his time in Office.

President Obama's presidency is historic because the president is often considered to be the first American leader to adopt a robust climate policy. In Fogel's (2007: 99) words he was a 'climate policy entrepreneur'. Although being equally a head of the nation-state state. Analysis of the literature suggests that President Obama promoted 'global solidarity sentiment' based on collective action mobilising all countries to solve the climate crisis. The main insight that constructivists bring is that humans can change what humans have made. The President's Speech at Cairo University in June 2009, called, 'A New Beginning', provides the clearest example of the shift in rhetoric from a realist towards a more constructivist worldview, which at the time, was signalling a shift in foreign policy (Walsh, 2011: 195). International public opinion polls showed an almost immediate and positive perception about America. This is in part due to President Obama's image and rhetoric (Brzezinski, 2012: 122). President Obama won the re-election in 2012 and "became only the sixth president since the Civil War – and the first since Ronald Reagan – to win a majority of the popular vote in at least two elections" (Pika and Maltese, 2014: 480). More importantly, presidential speeches in Prague and Cairo raised worldwide expectations about change to America's foreign policy and signalled America's new, positive, and constructive role in the world.

Significantly, presidential speeches provide an example of the mechanism of agency in International Politics. Similar proof of the change in rhetoric and tone is exemplified by the following extract from the President's address to a Joint Session of Congress, "a new era of engagement has begun. For we know that American cannot meet the threats of this century alone, but the world cannot meet them without America" (Obama, 2009). This extract provides evidence which

demonstrates that the rhetoric of American foreign policy changed during President Obama's administration. He signalled a change in tone and America's resolve. However, moving from rhetoric to practicality was a challenge in itself.

Did Obama's team invest enough effort into climate diplomacy and was President Obama trying hard enough? This is a significant question because events of the past remind American leaders of the striking inconsequence of foreign policy actions. There is always a tendency to return to diplomacy in episodes of multilateralism.

In such cases, diplomacy must be particularly strong and decisive. For example, in the period between two world wars, America was a potentially powerful nation. However, America played a relatively minor role in world affairs because it refused to place the full weight of its potential strength on to solving international challenges (Morgenthau, et al. 2005: 153). The Obama's team decided that diplomacy was the main tool of statecraft and understood that American participation and co-leadership is essential to solving new and emerging global challenges such as climate change. This was a strategic move demonstrating to the world that America is prepared to lead again on providing solutions to novel, global challenges.

In the twenty-first century, there has been a need to use diplomacy intelligently and innovatively in order to cultivate international consensus in response to global challenges. In particular, the president of America is uniquely positioned to enable such changes and to drive global change forward through reshaping processes governing international political reality. However, critics have accused President

Obama of failing in his climate policy due to insufficient strategic planning, a highly centralised decision-making process, constraining bureaucratic structures and processes leading to delay in policy implementation (Dueck, 2015: 109). This thesis will examine whether such voices can be substantiated and to what extent the overall assessment of President Obama's climate diplomacy could be qualified as a success.

## **2.11 Summary**

This chapter has provided a detailed review of the relevant literature. It ultimately found that there is no consensus about the effectiveness of climate diplomacy and the various contrasting approaches such as 'global deal' and 'building blocks'. Literature analysing President Obama's achievements in climate diplomacy was presented with the arguments in support of, and against, the significance of the main success, which was the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. This chapter has also compared various aspects of current scholarly debates and arguments related to the contribution of constructivists (Alexander Wendt) and English School scholars (Ian Clark, Barry Buzan) in providing for an explanation and understanding of President Obama's climate initiatives through the lens of International Relations Theory.

This review also presented the juxtaposition between the arguments of realists and constructivists. This was followed with an explanation of how constructivists study change through analysis of social interaction. In light of this, it was important to also highlight areas of disagreement between realists and constructivists about the role of President Obama and American grand strategy. It was discussed to what extent President Obama's actions in terms of moulding

and reshaping of the structure of the political realm marked by the unsolved climate problem was effective and innovative what will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

It is concluded that if America is to solve climate change effectively it needs to refocus its foreign policy on climate change leading to effective construction of a collective, global climate community. President Obama was attempting to realise that goal through powerful rhetoric and climate diplomacy. The narrative of hope and faith expressed in the Obama's speeches helped to transform the image of America from an ineffective leader of international society to an invigorated leader on the international stage. At the same time, President Obama instilled an optimistic belief in others that novel, global challenges such as climate change could be resolved. Nowhere has this been more visible than in 2008 when during the inauguration speech President Obama (2008) has said,

America, this is our moment. This is our time. Our time to turn the page on the policies of the past. Our time to bring new energy and new ideas to the challenges we face. Our time to offer a new direction for the country we love.

Consequently, as evidenced above, President Obama detected the need to more decisively recalibrate American policy on issues related to climate. Considering the theoretical views presented above, it can be justified to say that constructivist theory of International Relations can provide, to some extent, an explanation of the new developments in American foreign policy under President Obama. Therefore, this review also attempted to define the need for an overall conceptualisation of American grand strategy and its possible calibration on climate change. A review was conducted outlining the details of what constitutes a grand strategy and how the requirement of the mastery of the grand strategy

by American presidents implies the need for a unified vision of American foreign policy. After which, a case for constructivism and President Obama's agency was made. In addition, this review demonstrated that sound theoretical literature could offer effective assistance when discussing policy options.

This literature review has provided a foundation for the discussion within the next chapter. The following chapter will detail and justify the selection of the preferred selected methodology used in this thesis. It also puts forward the research design and a justification for rejecting other established research method.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, President Obama's climate diplomacy will be considered and discussed against the framework set out by norm-centred constructivism. In order to do this chapter describes the methodology used by breaking it down into five main sections. Firstly, it will elaborate on the thesis research design. Second, it will present a discussion of climate change in the context of constructivism as a means of justifying the methodology selected. Third, it will explain why this thesis focuses on insights from a specific, narrowly defined strand of International Relations theory (norm-centred constructivism) as a framework for evaluating President Obama's efforts in climate diplomacy. In order to do this, it will present a critical approach to investigating theory based on Mearsheimer and Walt (2013). Forth, it will outline the research aims and questions. Finally, discussion of the scope and limitations of the research method will be discussed. This includes an outline of areas that are outside the scope of this research and suggestions for future American foreign policy. A summary of this chapter will also be included at the end.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The principal method of evaluation against which President Obama's success will be measured is constructivism. Constructivism provides this thesis with a specific lens through which to view this subject. This is because it is based on a certain set of assumptions made by constructivist thinking. Essentially, these



assumptions are based on the idea that “human beings and their organizations are purposeful actors whose actions reproduce and transform society of states” (Wendt, 1987: 337). In light of this assumption, this thesis will evaluate whether President Obama can be qualified as ‘an effective agent of history’, or to state it within the parlance of norm-centred constructivism, ‘a norm entrepreneur’, specifically with reference to his climate change policies. Many scholars have objected to Wendt’s constructivism on the grounds of incoherence of the placement of agency in his theory. As Shannon (2005: 581) hypothesised, “Agency conceptually is denied by the logic of inevitable, progressive change”. Sceptics, could easily ask whether it is just an illusion of a ‘hero leader’ endowed with a mythical super-power capacity for changing the world. Despite President Obama’s optimistic vision, sceptics argue that in world politics the eventual decline of leaders is inevitable. Similarly, they argue that all empires or even whole civilisations end and so their claims to greatness fail. Is the concept simply of a ‘hero leader’ who has the power to change his country and save his or her civilisation a reality? Harry S. Truman captured the idea that for a country to be strong it needs to have strong leadership,

Men make history, and not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.

(Truman, quoted in Maxwell, 2008: 78).

This thesis will investigate whether President Obama managed to change the course of history for the better. To quote Garrett James Hardin's (Farnam Street, 2018), “To survive indefinitely in good shape a nation must take as its advisers people who can see farther than investment bankers.” If true, then it could be also applied to the global civilisation. Equally, some political critics

and advisors often present a distorted view of political reality as they confuse what is desirable with what is achievable. Sometimes political leaders may act out of intuition about what is good and what should be done to engender positive change. However, from their vision or statements there is actually a gap, which is often underestimated since words must be put into action. Good leadership transforms intentions into actions and visions into realities (Cronin and Genovese, 2016: 35). Had President Obama been successful, which this thesis will explore, he would have transformed a group of his supporters and followers around the world into a meaningful community united by some kind of greater purpose or a worthy ideal, for example, the need to heal the Earth. President Obama had a chance to offer a compelling vision of a world without climate change. The question is whether he managed to inspire people to join him in making this vision a reality. In fact, leadership involves not only an infusion of vision into a political enterprise but also the implementation of political action. In other words, “it entails mobilising people and resources to undertake desired patterns of cooperation” (Cronin and Genovese, 2016: 35). Leadership requires tenacious action in pursuit of desired results. It is a widely held view that vision and action can change the world. In addition, as Joel A. Barker (1991) observed, “Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes time”. What kind of energy (strategic vision plus action or diplomacy) could really change the world for the better? Stern (2010: 2) attempted to answer this question by pointing to the value of the good policy on climate change, by noting that, “Good policy, together with opportunity, unleashes entrepreneurship and achievement”.

Political leaders have to overcome many obstacles. These come in the form of obstruction, bureaucracy, a variety of influential institutions, counterfeiting forces and contradictory processes which means politics not always transparent, lawful and honest. It is also subject to change by capable individuals. Often, it is the case that the twenty-first century political processes require consensus seeking, succumbing to compromises, and trying to please all parties involved in the political process. Decisiveness in politics is both scarce and in demand. President Obama had an opportunity to become 'an action president' thanks to his charisma and versatile leadership skills. In addition, his first one hundred days in office offered many breakthroughs. However, due to numerous visions of American foreign policy and strong opposition from Congress, President Obama might not have been consistent enough to choose and persistently adhere to the a successful, previously chosen solution. In politics, different institutions try to influence president's choice of 'the best' strategy.' There is no one strategy, universal agreement on policy, or common vision. Instead, there are several competing options and viewpoints. This is especially true in large, democratic countries such as America. Therefore, it is not enough to decide for one's self about what is best. There are always other people to persuade and compromise with. In the end, 'the best strategy' often gives way to 'the possible strategy'. Very often leaders offer promising starts, even having achieved the so-called all-out comprehensive strategy of 'the Entry of the Dragon' (Bruce Lee, 1973). However, over time, the intensiveness and scale of their achievements tend to decline. As a result, global leaders often lack the decisive 'Samurai sword cut' that enables them to introduce an all-out initiative while launching a

comprehensive and consistent counterattacking political campaign ensuring a persistent effort, lasting legacy and historical significance of the action they have pursued.

To an achievement-motivated leader concerned with reaching the 'one best solution,' such compromises resulting from a lack of decisiveness, poor determination to proceed, lack of leadership, and becoming significantly influenced by advisors, may appear to be seen as 'selling out.' However, there is a tendency in American politics for leaders to seek compromises in order to satisfy all the lobbies and appease those involved in the political process. This often results in neither maintaining the status quo nor being innovative. President Obama intuitively chose to seek innovation and sought to work with *'the spirit of the times'* by attempting to solve, novel, global challenges such as climate change. If somebody seeks something honestly, they will faithfully stick to the idea, generate high levels of enthusiasm and determination, and maintain audacious hope that the goal will be eventually achieved. Once the commitment has been made, action should follow vision not for sake of opportunity or benefits, but because of the necessity and natural motivation. "Leadership is about enabling things and making things happen that might not otherwise happen and preventing things from happening that ordinarily would happen" (Cronin and Genovese, 2016: 35). In this sense, President Obama could have attempted to create a global, climate community united by the common challenge. Thereby, a single leader, by building momentum on international norms could have succeeded in organising international action aimed at preventing the climate crisis from escalating. Arguably, the last one

would ensure the heroic survival of the whole civilisation and perhaps even a move to a more advanced level. It would also ensure the lasting legacy of President Obama's administration. Climate change is a big challenge, but surely it will be somebody's brainchild and whoever attempts to solve it will have to afterwards lead the world in not only in finding the right solution but in also consequentially adopting it. The drive to solve climate change should ultimately be a matter of determination, perseverance, and above all, consequential and consistent global action and cooperation. To quote President Obama (2013),

We will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that the failure to do so would betray our children and future generations. (Applause.) Some may still deny the overwhelming judgment of science, but none can avoid the devastating impact of raging fires and crippling drought and more powerful storms.

In light of the statement above, it may only be added that, "Only when the last tree has died and the last river been poisoned and the last fish been caught will we realize we cannot eat money" (Chief Seattle quoted in Leroux, 2013: 112). As a result, the actions of every leader need be re-examined and re-evaluated, not least to assess if they have lived up to their expectations and ambitions, but also to draw important lessons for future leaders and prevent the collapse of civilisation. Had all the world of policy and leadership united in providing for a united way forward on the climate crisis the right solution would arise eventually.

Is it within the powers of the twenty-first century global leaders to effectively change the world? If yes, how can we measure their successes? Against what

framework can we assess them? According to this study, actions of global leaders could be tested against constructivist's thinking on international society, which assumes that international anarchy can be shaped by meaningful and determined global leaders. The emphasis of this study will be placed on whether President Obama pursued sufficiently innovative and adequate diplomatic tools to realise the goals of his climate diplomacy and whether the assumptions of his foreign policy have been fulfilled. Therefore, a significant analytical dimension of this study is to critically analyse President Obama's measurable achievements in climate diplomacy.

In addition to evaluation of primary and secondary documentation, it is acknowledged that there are other legitimate research methodologies available. For example, face-to-face interviews and discussions with some of the principal scholars cited throughout the thesis that might have served to enrich this thesis. These could have been embraced to gain insights into, and an opportunity to attempt to, ascertain the processes through which these scholars made insights in order to arrive at the conclusions and theories they postulate. Due to financial restrictions and time constraints, this was not possible.

America is currently facing serious dilemmas in its global policy. More specifically, in the formulation and implementation of its foreign policy. Therefore, an investigation into President Obama's chosen leadership style is worthwhile. President Obama's preference of becoming a good manager with an inclination towards working by aligning team members' values, examining problems within 'the Obama Team', and thereby gaining valuable insight into

the nature of problems has a practical dimension and is seen as a supportive element that could have assisted on the journey to resolve global challenges. It is argued that to achieve the goals of his foreign policy and ensure an enduring dimension of his legacy President Obama could have adopted a consensual style of his diplomacy by enlisting followers and convincing global, public opinion. Subsequently, the President himself should have been more steadfast, consistent, and persistent in his actions so that to intuitively choose one policy direction and stick to it more decisively. This involved a change of the stated grand strategy of American great power from a unilateral 'might is right' style towards co-optive hegemony with consensual leadership as the predominant style. This implied a radical break away from President George W. Bush's strategy, but most observers and critics of President Obama were united in the view that there it is difficult to evaluate his actions (Stachura, 2009: 28). In addition, there are still more elements of continuity rather than change from the previous grand strategy (Ibid.). A radical change would imply appreciating one basic truth that power implies more than just hegemony. And indeed in the twenty-first century, the world should be moving away from interpreting American power as hegemony,

...However, hegemony means something more than greatness. And a hegemon is more than a great power. To be hegemonic means to possess the authority of command. It includes a notion of primacy based on a component of just and legitimate leadership... Hegemony [consensual leadership] involves pre-eminence which is sustained by a shared understanding among social actors of the values, norms rules and laws of political interaction...

(Knutsen, 1999: 11).

It may be added that America should use more a consensual dimension of leadership with diplomacy as the weapon of choice to overcome the hindrance

of hegemony. Hegemony is a theoretical concept that stands at the opposite end of the continuum at which international community is placed. At the same time, American leaders, such as President Obama should have been much more decisive, offering a solid value system that could capture the world, so that the emergence of the meaningful climate community could follow. Remaining consistent with constructivists' theoretical assumptions about the idea that climate diplomacy could lead to a construction of a more stable world leading to an effective climate prophylactic and healing of the planet Earth. The evidence presented in later chapters shows that President Obama was learning and experimenting with this climate strategy. However, he could have projected a much more consistent vision of his climate diplomacy based on not only rhetoric but also on forward-led, far-sighted policy and planning based on preparing the whole system for transformation. Above all, what should have followed President Obama's climate diplomacy was the proper internalisation and institutionalisation of formerly introduced climate norms sufficiently enshrined into the international law so that the whole world could follow. As Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 893) noticed, "making successful law and policy requires an understanding of the pervasive influence of social norms" on the behaviour of international actors such as states. The theoretical model displaying this process will be described later in section 3.6.

### **3.3 Climate Change in the Context of Constructivism**

Constructivism is an approach to international politics that deals with the role of ideas and human consciousness. The focus on human consciousness implies a commitment to idealism and holism, which according to Wendt (1999), represents the essence of constructivism. Therefore, constructivism,



alongside with other critical and idealist theories, can provide a supportive analytic tool to offer hope to climate politics by “questioning contemporary, hegemonic power relations” (Manuel-Navarette, 2010: 781). This is since constructivists argue that material factors and ideational factors “are complexly interwoven and interdependent” (Hay, 2001: 7). Consequently, the study of climate change must be considered not only from a realist view but also from a constructivist one. Such an approach does not negate the power of material realities, but “assists in the understanding that material realities gain meaning thanks to social interaction” (Pettenger, 2007: 6). Constructivists are interested in how structure constructs the identities and interests of actors, how the actions of leaders are organised and constrained by that structure, and how interaction between agents and structure serves to either reproduce or transform social reality. Constructivists see an opportunity of bending the structure since they rely on the idea that the humans are prone to the search for understanding “through underlying intersubjective meanings embodied in identities, interests and structures such as norms and discourse” (Pattenger, 2007: 6). In allowing for ideational forces to shape actors’ interests, actors gain agency that is defined by constructivists as “the ability to make choices as social beings interacting within a structure and so the agent/structure duality becomes recursively co-constituted” (Pattenger, 2007: 6). The social context generated from human consciousness enables not only the reality of structure restricting human actions but also human effectively shaping and moulding the structure. As Pattenger (2007: 7) brilliantly captured the essence of constructivism, “the social construction of actors’ identities and interests, and of structures such as discourses and norms is the heart of constructivism”. In

addition, as Guzzini (2000: 147-182) observed, constructivism, “is understood as a reflexive meta-theory”, with a significant element of the ideational. Thus, it allows for setting the bar for what is achievable in politics very high in order to examine actions of leaders.

President Obama promised change, and to some extent, he has understood the value of norm-centred constructivism as a method of delivering that change. This specific brand of constructivism prescribes a theoretical model for successful normative action, which is incremental and could lead to a possible solution. Analogously, this thesis uses the method of norm-centred constructivism. Giving primacy to the material and ideational and agent/structure duality offers a real promise to understand change in politics, especially in climate politics (Pattenger, 2007: 7). Politics is not only about naked power and material forces but also about social processes, which are intrinsic to the political process. Social processes are not always determined by material realities, but sometimes they are constructed in social settings such as in speeches, negotiations, and pronouncements from leaders. These are enabled thanks to more advanced social norms, political discourses, and institutions such as international law. The stigma of acting against the united voice of the community while being called a lawbreaker has a role to play. The process of change has become more transparent, more understandable, and consequently, more accepted or more embedded within the political reality, which according to this thesis, is principally social. To paraphrase Burch, constructivism shifts the attention of scholars of International Relations from objects such as material power, agents, and structures towards processes such as constitution, construction, creation, and learning (Burch, 2002: 62;

quoted in Pattenger, 2007: 7). Designing a successful solution to climate change is a process that will require convincing the global public opinion. For this reason, as Pattenger (2007: 7) noted, “constructivism and climate change appear well suited for each other”. If the actions of President Obama could initiate a domino effect that would send ripples of hope towards a larger change of the system bringing about effective climate solutions, then norm-centred constructivism would be acclaimed as a theory that has provided an explanation of how all of that was possible. If true, then Pattenger (2007: 7) is correct in his suggestion that investing in constructivism might be a worthwhile theoretical activity of experimentation and a theory that may occur to shed some light on a difficult international challenge,

Constructivism allows us to view climate change from a new perspective with the hope of uncovering processes, actors and structures that have been obscured in the current framing of climate change.

(Pattenger, 2007: 7).

Consequently, constructivism has offered a challenge to realism. This is insofar as it is focused not on states and their security. If the nature of international political reality is socially constructed, then human beings might have it in their power to construct a better world based upon ideas, norms, and discourse which all operate within the realm of diplomatic discourse and norms. This is because powerful leaders can consciously control social processes even at the international level by shaping debates, building coalitions, providing ideas, and directing societies. Sometimes the prevailing structures may be deeply embedded and complex (Cf. Section 5.9 on page 230). As a result, they may be resistant to change because deliberate manipulation by agents is not

possible. In such cases, a much more decisive and wide-ranging action is demanded on behalf of political leaders. In the discipline of International Relations, constructivism claims that significant aspects of International Relations are historically and socially contingent rather than inevitable consequences of human nature, or other essential characteristics of world politics. However, the impact of constructivism on conflict resolution and its influence on world politics is yet to be discovered. This thesis will argue that adopting norm-centred constructivism as a theoretical lens through which to analyse certain political events could offer a breakthrough for the solution of the climate crisis. As Stevenson noticed, solving the climate change will necessitate some kind of transformation of the system into a climate community.

Responding to the problem of climate change will require a transformation of existing structures, but so far the nature of the problem has been distorted to accommodate it with existing unsustainable structures. The dilemma presented by climate change has prompted some degree of innovative behavior and reasoning but this has only produced small changes in the existing structures, rather than the transformations required for long-term sustainability.

(Stevenspn, 2013: 48).

The above argument is of vital importance since the following chapters will analyse if President Obama succeeded in building such a community. Consistent with constructivists, diplomacy is one of the main methods through this process may be possible. Therefore, President Obama choice of methods was correct. This is because traditionally, diplomacy has been preoccupied with advising, shaping, and implementing policy. However, climate policy is not a simple concept. Instead, it is a diverse and challenging process. In the present, interactive, interdependent, and unstable world, traditional diplomacy

may be not enough. There is a need for a much more decisive action aimed at innovating diplomatic methods in order to avoid the dangers of tapping into the world of natural disasters, uncivilized chaos, global catastrophes, and international turmoil resembling anarchy. Consensus seeking on international issues such as climate change is essential. As Nye (2013: 159) observed, future global leaders and “presidents will face an increasing number of issues in which obtaining preferred outcomes will require power *with* others as much as power *over* others”. Therefore, America’s capacity to maintain alliances, build bridges through diplomacy, and create networks will be an important dimension of both hard and soft power (Nye, 2013: 159).

More importantly, the nature of diplomacy is subject to constant change. Therefore, modern diplomatic practices, such as negotiation, persuasion, agenda setting and coordination have to be understood properly and applied adequately within the context of transformational leadership, climate science and forward-deployed climate diplomacy. In such cases, leaders must have the courage to act as bridges between the world of science, society, business, investments and policy implementation.

### **3.4 Constructivism’s Theoretical Assumptions of Diplomacy**

This section will outline the theoretical assumptions of Constructivism within the specific context of President Obama’s achievements in climate diplomacy. The main assumption of constructivism is that human beings (state leaders and their organisations) are purposeful actors whose actions help “...to reproduce or transform the society or the structure in which they live” (Wendt, 1987: 338). Therefore, from a constructivist perspective, it is necessary to

draw attention to the unique qualities of state leaders, such as charisma and persistence, that can transform existing anarchic structures into joint initiatives and common projects, for example, climate community, thereby combating climate change through persuasive climate diplomacy. Some critics would argue that this might be an unachievable utopia. However, as Alexander Wendt (1987: 338) and Collin Wight (2006: 107), it can happen due to human agency. More specifically, due to possibility of political leaders to become agents of change and shape the international structure. Constructivism assumes that sovereign, political communities can coexist and co-operate without radical structural alterations at the international level (Suganami, 2011: 46). Thus, diplomacy is not only a response to the uncivilised and anarchic international structure but it “is the system and the art of communication between great powers”. The diplomatic system is the forum on which states agree or disagree about their master projects. In other words, it is the master-institution of international relations (Wight et al., 1979: 113). From this theoretical standpoint, diplomacy minimises the effects of friction in International Politics. Therefore, this function of diplomacy symbolises the existence of the society of states interconnected and bonded up through common norms and principles (Bull, 2002: 165-166). In light of this particular perspective, President Obama’s climate diplomacy had an opportunity to establish an effective, climate community united by the common goal of combating and hopefully finally solving the problem of climate change. To believe that only climate diplomacy alone will solve climate change is naïve. Therefore, negotiation and rhetoric which should be followed by consistent and consequential action and policy as diplomacy is the art of persuasion.

Whether President Obama succeeded in achieving these aims will be subject to the discussion in Chapter Five.

### **3.5 Constructivist View of Realism**

The constructivist view of realism is, in its most simple form, that reality is a social construct. Hence, within International Politics, states not always act in accordance with their national interests, or the interests of the hegemon. Instead, they are idealistically motivated by the common global good. “Leadership on such issues as climate change requires cooperation, new institutions and defence of public goods from which all countries can benefit but none can be excluded” (Nye, 2013: 157). In this context, realism, which is centred on interstate military relations, the formation of alliances, and balance of power, might be limited. This is because realism is centred upon only four core theoretical assumptions, which can be refuted or supplemented by constructivists. These core assumptions are: 1) The International System is anarchic. This is highly debatable. Constructivists, for example, state that anarchy can be overcome. In addition, if achieved this will result in the formation of International Society. 2) States are the most important actors. However, constructivists might ask: what about processes and ideas, which are still important? 3) All states within the system are unitary, rational actors. Here constructivists state that diplomacy and normative justifications evidently influence and change selfish interests. 4) The primary concern of all states is survival. However, constructivists would add that it is the survival of the whole social community and not just the single most powerful state.

Put simply, realists believe that humankind is not inherently benevolent, but rather self-centred and competitive. The realist approaches to International Relations focus on competition and conflict between independent states. They argue that a condition of anarchy involves a permanent struggle for security and power rather than for peace and stability. Realism, “implicitly supports developmentalist logics of perpetual material growth which are precisely at the root of global environmental problems” (Manuel-Navarrete, 2010: 781). Realists discard the role of international legitimacy, while constructivists believe that by recovering international legitimacy America can become a more sociable leader, gain more followers (that is more climate leaders whether institutionalised or not), and put forward a vision of a more peaceful world order.

### **3.6 Norm-Centred Constructivism as the Selected Methodological Tool**

This section will justify the selection of constructivism as a primary methodological tool in this thesis. More specifically, this section highlights that norm-centred constructivism is the chosen methodology. Subsequently, it will answer the secondary research question of how American diplomacy under President Obama can be analysed. The analysis performed will demonstrate to what extent President Obama’s diplomacy was consistent with the model of norm-centred constructivism. After analysis, the concluding statement will be revealed which suggests that President Obama could have invested more in the consensual leadership with stress on the promotion of climate norms. As Barnett (2014: 164) observed, “Norms do not simply erupt but rather evolve through a political process”. Central to this thesis will be the process of internalisation and institutionalisation of norms or what has been called by



Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 898) ‘the life cycle of norms’, as shown in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1

**The Life Cycle of an International Norm:  
Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.**

	Stage 1: Norm emergence	Stage 2: Norm cascade	Stage 3: Norm Internalization
Actors	Norm entrepreneurs with organizational platforms	States, international organizations, networks	Law, professions, bureaucracy
Motives	Altruism, empathy, ideational commitment	Legitimacy, reputation, esteem	Conformity
Dominant Mechanisms	Persuasion	Socialization, institutionalization, demonstration	Habit, institutionalization

The process of acceptance of norms is not always easy, inevitable, or without problems. This is because “many emergent norms fail to reach a tipping point” (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 895). However, if norms are internalized, the benefits are huge with the potential to create a deepening sense of an international community (Barnett, 2014: 165). This thesis will argue that by introducing and internalising climate norms President Obama could have succeeded as an effective, global leader ensuring that the world moves towards tighter international community united by a common challenge and

efforts of solving it. Internalisation of climate norms would have had a remarkable impact on the success of President Obama's climate diplomacy since internalisation "suggests that actors are increasingly accepting standards of behavior because they are connected to a sense of self that is tied to the international community" (Barnett, 2014: 165). Having studied International Relations at Columbia University, President Obama must have, at least to some extent, followed the model of the life cycle of norms. This thesis will evaluate to what extent the process of internalisation of climate norms was effective. In order for President Obama's climate diplomacy to be more successful it would have to entail climate norms introduced by President Obama and bounded up with the values of the whole international community.

The following section describes the process of the emergence of norms as specified by norm-centered constructivism.

1. The first stage is "norm emergence". This is where norm entrepreneurs rise to power with a sincere conviction to change the existing state of affairs rise to power (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 898). The initial actions of the Obama's campaign provide an example of promising norm entrepreneurialism. President Obama was highly critical of the existing power structures and his whole political campaign revolved around the ideas of change and breaking away from the unpopular policies of President George W. Bush. "Norm emergence is typified by persuasion by norm entrepreneurs [who] attempt to convince a critical mass of states (norm leaders) to embrace new norms" (Ibid.: 895). In this case, climate and environmental norms are

viewed by constructivists “as shared understandings that reflect ‘legitimate social purpose’” (Payne, 2001: 37). The focus in constructivism is on “the ideational building blocks that undergird a community’s shared understandings, rather than material forces” (Payne, 2001: 37). This is why, persuasive communication is considered fundamentally essential to norm building (Ibid.). At this stage, norm entrepreneurs call attention to significant global problems that demand change or even create discursive frames by using language that names, interprets, and dramatises (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 897). This was clearly visible in numerous speeches embraced by President Obama. He attempted to build momentum by speaking about the inevitable threat to civilization if climate change is not addressed quickly. During the norm emergence stage, norm entrepreneurs attempt to establish “frames... that resonate with broader public understanding and are adopted as new ways of talking about and understanding issues” (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 898). President Obama actively attempted to ensure public understanding of climate issues and frequently worked with non-governmental organizations and with international organisations such as the United Nations. This is because he believed they are “custodians and the seals of international approval and disapproval” (Claude, 1966, quoted in Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 903). As Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 900) explained, “In most cases, for an emergent norm to reach a threshold and move towards the second stage of norm cascade, it must become institutionalized in specific sets of international rules and organizations”. For example, since 1948, emergent norms have been institutionalised in international law, in the creation of rules for multilateral organisations and in bilateral foreign policies (Ibid.). However,

climate change norms specifically have so far not been successfully implemented. Despite efforts targeted at the resolution of climate change, combatting it is proving to be one of the most difficult political challenges that the world has ever dealt with (Kopnina and Shoreman-Ouimet, 2015: 14). According to *The Economist* (2009: 4), climate change, “is a prisoner’s dilemma, a free-rider problem and the tragedy of the commons all rolled into one”. Difficulty of dealing with this issue lies in, “allocating the cost of collective action and trusting other parties to bear their share of the burden” (Ibid.). Institutions that can resolve similar problems to climate change have been created over centuries. However, climate change is a relatively new problem for which there is no framework. The United Nations may be useful as an organisation to provide a structure for dialogue, but it, “does not get much done” (Ibid.). “Despite ongoing discussions, proposals, and protocols, mankind has not produced a framework for dealing with intricate, multifaceted and contradictory ‘wicked problems’ such as climate change” (Pokrant and Stocker quoted in Kopnina and Shoreman-Ouimet, 2015: 15). More specifically, the problem with climate norms is that so far, “countries have struggled to integrate norms around climate-change governance with their own deeply unsustainable domestic systems, leading to profoundly irrational, ecological outcomes” (Stevenson, 2013: 4). Stevenson (2013: 4) argues that there is an evident paradox of global climate governance. He suggests that “although successful global action to avoid climate change depends on states complying with international agreements, the present system induces states to comply with global norms in ways that actually exacerbate unsustainable development” (Ibid.). Stevenson (2013: 214) also states that global climate

governance has been weakened because supposedly rational and technical solutions have only ended up institutionalising unsustainable practices. He writes, “rather than norms being developed in places, and among people, where they will have meaning and acceptance, climate change policies have been developed by ‘state elites and bureaucrats’ with a tendency to avoid responsibility”. (Stevenson, 2013: 214). In other words, material interests and not global solidarity of the community of nations have driven existing climate efforts.

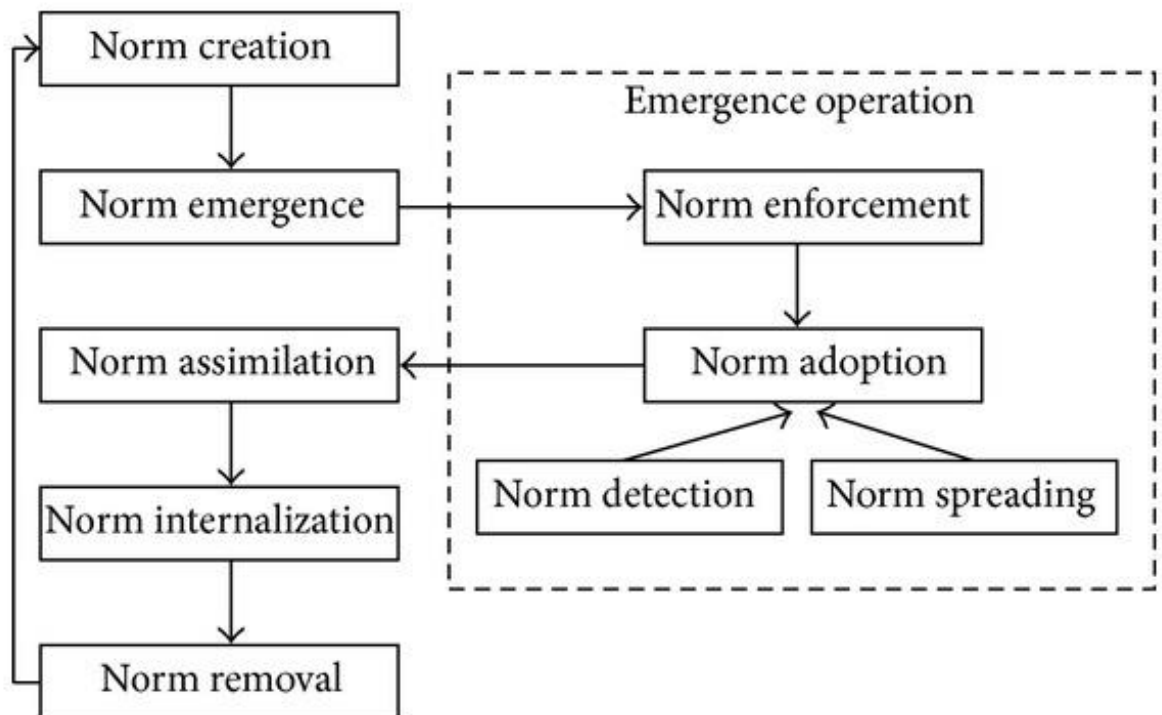
Noticing this pattern, President Obama promoted placing pressure to conform with new climate norms. He reflected the desire to enhance international legitimation and decisively enhanced his self-esteem in order to facilitate the norm-cascade. Effective institutionalisation of norms may be key to success in skillfully responding to the challenge of climate change. Had President Obama realised that the international community had been institutionalising unsustainable norms he would have acted as the first, real climate pioneer, who managed to solve one of the greatest of all challenges in an enduring manner. As Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 901) noted, “After norm entrepreneurs have persuaded a critical mass of states to become norm leaders and adopt new norms... the norm reaches a threshold or tipping point”.

2. The second stage is known as “norm cascade”. During this stage, international actors adopt norms in response to international pressure. Resourceful norm entrepreneurs press for the adoption of the norm even if there is no domestic coalition. This is consistent with the views of Finnemore

and Sikink (1998: 904) who suggest that, “state leaders conform to norms in order to avoid the disapproval aroused by norm violation and thus to enhance national esteem (and, as a result, their own self-esteem”. This stage is marked by the dynamic of imitation. In other words, states leaders attempt to socialise other states into becoming norm followers. In essence, the norm cascade is principally about socialisation. As suggested earlier, President Obama’s actions are the evidence of his attempts to convince public opinion of the urgency of the climate crisis. Nevertheless, successful norm entrepreneurs go a step further. They are “able to ‘frame’ normative ideas in such a way that they resonate with relevant audiences. Framing, in fact, is viewed as a central element of successful persuasion” (Nadelman, 1990: 482). “To the degree that states and states elites fashion a political self or identity in relation to the international community, the concept of socialisation suggests that the cumulative effect of many countries in a region adopting new norms” (Finnermore and Sikkink, 1998: 903). This process may be analogous to peer pressure among countries. Possible motivations for responding to such peer pressure are legitimation, conformity, and esteem. For example, in the period directly preceding the signing of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement there was a pressure on every country to support the Paris Climate Treaty so that the whole world could offer a united voice and implement action on climate. The 2015 Paris Climate Treaty has become the source of international legitimation shaping the behavior of states. Conformity and esteem also involve evaluative relationships among states. Conformity involves “social proof”. In other words, “states comply with norms to demonstrate that they have adapted to the social environment – that they belong” (Axelrod, 1986: 1105).

3. Finally, the third stage is called “norm internalisation”. If the pressure from norm entrepreneurs is maintained, then international norms become fully institutionalised both domestically and internationally. In such cases, norm compliance becomes a habitual practice among actors and it is enforced by international law. Consequently, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 898) noted, “Norms acquire a taken-for-granted quality and are no longer a matter of... debate” – they are automatically honoured. As Figure 3.2 below shows norm creation, if successful, leads to norm emergence and then norm adoption.

Figure 3.2



What follows is the final process of norm internalisation. At this point, the international community adopts norms and professional institutions are held responsible for legal duties that enable codification and lawful adherence. Eventually, norms become habit of daily lives and people cease to notice or question their presence. For example, few people today discuss whether

women should be allowed to vote or whether slavery is useful (Barnett, 2014: 165). These norms become law and part of our objective and widely accepted reality. Conceptualising climate change problem from the perspective of social norms that coordinate interactions between states could be a pioneering subject that could lead to a possible solution. Although there is still no evidence for that since normative climate community is in the emergence form. Once a particular way of action becomes established as a rule, it continues to operate because members of the international community prefer to conform to the rule given that everyone else is doing the same and is going to follow. (Lewis, 1969; Schelling, 1963). The process of the life cycle of norms explained above is presented in Figure 3.2 and is based on Mahmoud, et al., (2014: 17).

Based on the above, this thesis will attempt to test President Obama's climate diplomacy against the above-described model propounded by constructivists. The issue of climate change was well suited to the transformational rhetoric of President Obama and his ambitious vision of building a new global order and saving civilisation. Throughout analysis, it will be demonstrated that President Obama invested more in the theory of the life cycle of norms by adopting a consensual style of leadership on behalf of America. He did not simply pursue a transformational, climate diplomacy independently. He believed that he would achieve a higher degree of success as a result. Political success would have been achieved thanks to elements of inclusiveness, socialisation, consistency, institutionalisation and the self-propelling process of norm internalization. The lawful process of effective climate norm internalisation, means that the international community would not only listen to President



Obama but would also follow and implement his actions. Arguably, this would release much of the workload for President Obama, save his energy for other tasks while pushing for greater and more economical action and collective responsibility on behalf of the whole international community. Indeed, the measure of success in the process of life cycle of norms is achieved when an increasing number of members of the international community ensure internalisation of an international norm. In order to aim for this, it seems reasonable to suggest that President Obama must have understood the processes connected with the origins and emergence of climate norms such as human agency, indeterminacy, chance occurrence, and favourable events (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 896). In order to become more effective, President Obama could have applied successful, normative actions that would match his ambitious political vision pronounced in numerous speeches. In this case, ambitious vision required a transformation of the international system to bring about a climate norm shift. To use the idea of John Ruggie, it can be said that “having identified the possibility of system transformation in the macro level, corresponding micro practices that may have transformative effects must be identified and inventoried” (Ruggie quoted in Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 894). President Obama aimed for transformation on the macro-level. Arguably, he achieved much less but with some considerable successes as well. However, setbacks emerged at the point in which the international community was supposed to follow and implement his vision. Had the world followed his vision and translated it into action, perhaps it could have saved our future as an intelligent species.

For constructivists, international structure is determined by the distribution of prevailing ideas. As Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 894) observed, “shared ideas, expectations and beliefs about appropriate behaviour are what give the world structure, order and stability”. A change could be explained by the constructivist idea of norm shifts when the whole world follows “*an idea whose time has time*”. “As some authors observed, “In an ideational international structure, idea shifts and norm shifts are the main vehicles for system transformation” (Finnermore and Sikkink, 1998: 894).

There is a clear working example of a political process resembling the spiral model, or a vicious circle of strategic vision and climate action that could literally and positively span the globe, impact and consequently change the world. Moreover, President Obama could have initiated such a spiral model. First, persuasive diplomacy initiated by President Obama, may have led to internalisation of climate norms, initially by one state, and then the other states imitating it. Second, a dynamic of climate norms would create its own action momentum by spearheading causal forces that can shape the behaviours of actors. Initially, change would occur in America so that its leadership could be renewed and its potential for world leadership based on a defence of the global, collective public good, or a noble ideal such as climate, could be restored. However, change within America would gradually spread to other countries. Like drops of falling water making greater and greater waves uniting more countries around the world, or in other words, potential followers. Even after President Obama’s the progress has been already set in motion and America still has the best chance for success in shaping a positive future and

avoiding a climate catastrophe through the reestablishment of a transcendent capacity for global, climate leadership through championing climate norms. This is a practical blueprint for a global transformation based on political leaders inspired by hope. It would bend the no more sustainable structure of the international system to ensure build-up of effective and collective coalition of states, coastal cities, regions, and finally the whole world. The aims of such action has been slow the effects of climate change so that humanity leaves a cleaner, more stable environment for future generations. From the perspective of the timescale of development of human civilisation on the Earth it seems that climate change is one global challenge that cannot wait any longer because it is undermining the future for the next generations and hurting the Earth. As Pope Francis (2015) observed during his visit to the White House,

Accepting the urgency, it seems clear to me also that climate change is a problem which can no longer be left to a future generation. When it comes to the care of our 'common home,' we are living at a critical moment of history. We still have time to make the changes needed to bring about 'a sustainable and integral development...

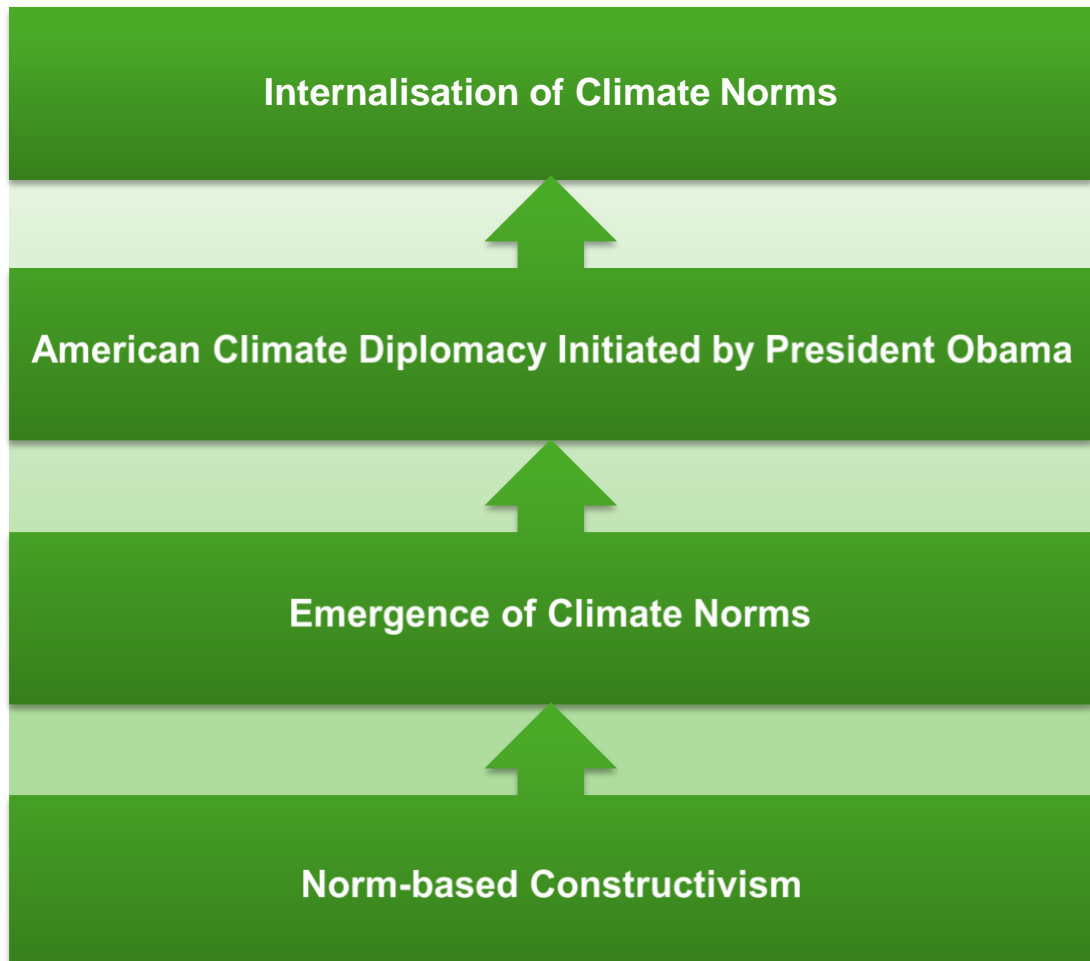
The framework of the spiral of hope, vision, action, and change described above marks a constructivist shift of the world towards the idea. It is the idea of hope leading to vision, that is consequently leading to action, and finally, producing a long-awaited, global change in the form of a climate community protected by international norms and international law. For success to be complete, President Obama's administration could have mobilised the initiative of global leaders bringing together cities, states, regions, businesses, and citizens from around the world to address climate ambitions. This would entail embracing coherent and swift decision making not only after climatic disasters have struck, but preventively. When America exercises wise foreign

policy, it can accommodate more countries, communities, and regions not only to preserve liberal order, but also to try to heal the Earth. Prudent global leaders develop visionary skills, invest great effort, and demonstrate political sagacity in to doing the right thing at the right time. They do not only promise change but also deliver it. By making climate change a priority, America could establish the healthy functioning of the country's political and economic system to the point where it can once again provide visionary leadership to the community of nations, while also, perhaps even more profoundly, healing the Earth.

Accordingly, norms can be transformed into action by constructing new social structures and in turn influencing and reconstructing agents and their interests (Finnemore, 1996: 24). To illustrate this model more accurately, we can borrow Bobby Kennedy's phrase, "the tiny ripples of hope" could "build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls" (Kennedy quoted in Hockenberry, 2016). Could President Obama overcome the structure of the system and inspire millions around the world so that to ease the climate crisis? As some authors have observed, there are clear parallels between the spiral model and actions of President Obama. First, there was culture change initiated by campaigning and diplomacy, "which creates political space to create laws, which can build markets, which can scale technologies, which can feed back into that culture [system] change", enabling consequential, global action. (Berners-Lee and Clark, 2013: 199). This classic example of 'a normative play it forward' would allow for a sufficient number of international actors to choose to follow norms. This would provide an adequate explanation of agency and transform the

system into a community by effectively solving the climate change problem. An illustration of this process is shown below.

Figure 3.3



Another important approach, whose insights are complementary to constructivism is known as the neoliberal regime theory or rational institutionalist approach to understanding multilateral institutions (Keohane, 1989; Nye, 1991). This is because, “Constructivism shares neoliberalism’s conclusion that cooperation is possible under anarchy” (Hopf, 1998: 189). Regime theory developed by Krasner (1982) states that regimes affect the behaviour of states and other international actors. “International regimes are

defined as principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actor' expectation converge in a given issue-area" (Krasner, 1982: 185). Rational institutionalist approach "emphasises the functions that institutions perform and how they affect incentives for major actors" (Keohane and Victor, 2016: 3). Both approaches to International Relations Theory deriving from liberalism provide a powerful explanatory lens through which to understand President Obama's climate diplomacy. Preceding the 2015 Paris Agreement, the Obama administration pursued a strategy of decentralised policy coordination. This might not solve the problem, "but that could lead incrementally to deeper coordination" (Ibid.: 1). Before President Obama came to office, climate change politics was not conducive to meaningful cooperation. There was a lot of talk about climate, but little action. There was a problem of free riding and organised hypocrisy (ibid). Instead of choosing a universal agreement with legally binding targets and timetables, President Obama and the international community have relied to a high degree on the assumptions of liberal institutionalism. Consistent with which international institutions are the main drivers in international politics and climate actions should focus on mitigation rather than adaptation. Therefore, President Obama and international community have embraced other cooperative strategies such as climate clubs, pledges and a review system, and collaboration with interest groups. As Kennel (et al., 2016: 421) observed, "Instead of climate commitments centrally through a 'top-down' process, the genius of the Paris approach is to decentralize. Countries set, then extend, their own pledges". If successful, this system, has a greater chance of cultivating deeper global cooperation that is, "flexible to accommodate the diversity in national interest

and capabilities” (Ibid.: 421). The crucial point necessary for the success of the Paris Agreement will be to move from shallow coordination towards deeper coordination. At the same time, “creating the conditions for favourable political coalitions within countries” (Keohane and Victor, 2016: 3). The Paris approach is rooted in the idea of “building cooperation by working on smaller, easier problems and in smaller groups where progress is feasible” (Ibid.). Effective cooperation requires focusing first on areas where progress is possible and then moving to deeper collaboration over time (Ibid.). The liberal institutionalist approach suggests that while no path is likely to be globally effective on its own when dealing with climate change, a multiplicity of actions which are ‘polycentric’ should be taken (Ostrom, 2009). Although the process might be slow, the success may be hidden in the adoption a combination of climate clubs, coordinated research efforts, pledge and review, coordination of national policies, and other strategies based on real preferences and appropriate incentives (Keohane and Victor, 2016: 5). However, scholars associated with this approach warn that the process might be slow since, “Serious international cooperation will have to emerge incrementally” (Ibid.). Deep cooperation is difficult to create, according to the logic of global public goods. (Ibid.: 5). Other liberal critics, observe that progress is painstaking due to corporate international capital’s response to climate change is weak (Newell and Patterson, 1998). For that reason, this thesis rejected liberal institutionalist approach as the main methodological framework.

### **3.7 Justification for the Selection of Norm-centred Constructivism**

The primary justification for selecting constructivism as the methodological tool

for this thesis is that invention or discovery in the field of International Relations mostly “takes place by combining ideas” (Hadamard 1945 in Doyle, 2011: 102). Based upon the above assertion, this thesis will apply constructivist theoretical assumptions in an attempt to achieve a better understanding of the complexity of American climate diplomacy under President Obama. As stated earlier, constructivism is the only theory that provides for the theoretical chance for individuals and leaders acting as agents of change to effectively implement change by constructing the new world. If people believe that each of us has the power to change ourselves, and subsequently, the whole world, then change becomes more possible. First, civilisation has to envisage change to make it happen. In other words, International Politics is “a world of our making” (Onuf, 1989).

Further to this, constructivism as a methodological basis can serve as a helpful, analytic tool. Constructivism is the only theory of International Relations that provides a theoretical chance for a change in International Society. Through using constructivists’ theoretical assumptions scholars can more easily explain the change. Change was promised by President Obama in his diplomatic campaign. This leads to questions: What was the degree of change? How has it impacted the world? To what extent has President Obama’s diplomacy actually managed to mould and move International Society from its more anarchic end towards its more civilised, diplomatic and discursive end? Was change based only on rhetoric or has President Obama captured ‘the spirit of the times’, persuaded the people, and responded with measured action? Was dialogue and constructive solutions for the problem of the magnitude of climate change actually conceptualised, communicated to society, and effectively



implemented? This is subject to examination. The President's credo of the belief in things not seen required that something amazing and truly revolutionary is going to happen.

As Fierke (2016: 163) observed, the most basic tenet of constructivism is that International Relations are socially constructed and 'the world is of our making.' (Onuf, 1989). Norms, rules, language, and diplomacy do matter in politics and they can change the world for the better. There are several examples throughout history that show that a positive idea or an energising speech can give birth to a sequence of transformative, cumulative events. For example, the importance of Gorbachev's 'New Thinking', the 1962 Kennedy's Moon speech when the goal was clearly stated and then realized. Examples such as these show that the exclusive emphasis on, and impact of, the realist theory of material interest and the pursuit of naked power is not definitive or compressively explanatory in International Politics. Constructivists emphasise that realism is not complete, not definitive of all political processes, and that it must be supported by other theories. "Constructivists emphasized that realism was unable to account for some of the key issues of post-Cold War international politics" (Ibid.). As Barnett (2014: 158) suggested, "Although the structure of the cold war seemingly locked the USA and the Soviet Union into a fight to death, leaders on both sides managed to creatively transform their relations and, with it, the very structure of global politics". This thesis agrees with Fierke (2016: 162) in that "Constructivists sought to provide more complete or better explanation, based an analysis of how material and ideational factors combine in the construction of different possibilities previously not considered outcomes" (Fierke, 2016: 163). Investing in the

exploration of the norm-based constructivism can shed more light on the possible solution to the climate crisis. This is because if our global leaders cannot reach a tipping point by internalising climate norms and accelerating the process then all of humanity organised in a civilisation may face an ecological tipping point where our planet will reach its limits and become no more inhospitable to the human race.

Consequently, constructivism is the only theory that provides a clear model of how climate pioneers, political agents, and norm entrepreneurs can stimulate internalisation and institutionalisation of climate norms. As Harris (2009: 55) noted, an explanatory approach such as constructivism which focuses on the internalisation of norms seems fruitful and promising, “especially for the explanation of a long-term change of national and international behaviour in the field of environmental politics”. To change the whole system required extraordinary energy sources from President Obama if he were to achieve success in positively impacting the world and pushing it towards climate solutions, adaptations, and sustainability.

### **3.8 Critical Approach to Investigating Theory**

The decision to use the ideas of norm-centred constructivism as a methodological tool within this thesis was undertaken with the critical lesson prescribed by Mearsheimer and Walt (2013) in mind. They suggest that the reason for any theoretical investigation of International Relations should be to encourage a sharpening of ideas. As Mearsheimer and Walt (2013: 43-44) observed,

The study of IR should be approached with humility. There is no single theory that makes understanding world politics easy, no magic methodological bullet that yields robust results without effort.

The main objective of this thesis is to attempt to offer a critical analysis of President Obama's climate diplomacy and his leadership style. Based on this, the analytical method adopted by this thesis adopted is to conduct analysis through the theoretical lenses of constructivism. Checkel (2010: 11) offers a definition of bridge building as follows, "It is in order to connect different theories in a middle-range sense to make better sense of some analytic puzzle". This is consistent with the ability to "synthesize specific arguments in hope of gaining more compelling answers and a better picture of reality" (Fearon and Wendt, 2002: 68).

### **3.9 Research Aims and Questions**

A variety of elements play a role in determining the instruments for the data collection. These include cost and time. It also considers the research questions to be addressed, the research purpose, and the types of information that researchers intend to collect. In line with Fraenkel and Wallen (2008), this thesis hopes to reflect a serious debate within the discipline about the future of American climate policy. Therefore, an analytical approach to research will be adopted. Its aim is to analyse President Obama's climate diplomacy, examine America's actions in climate and understand whether it was possible to renew American leadership, restore international legitimacy, and in effect regain global followership by framing climate change issue.

In light of this, the following research sub-questions will be addressed:

- Has American climate diplomacy under President Obama been sufficiently innovative, creative, proactive, and effective?
- What were the major successes and failures of President Obama's climate diplomacy?
- To what extent were these successes due to President Obama's norm-entrepreneurship?
- To what extent norm-centred constructivism is effective as a framework with which IR scholars can evaluate achievements and failures of President Obama's climate diplomacy?
- Did President Obama realise his climate diplomacy objectives?

### **3.10 Selection and Collection of Primary and Secondary Sources**

Based on the aims of this thesis aims, the following data was collected and used:

- (a) Primary resources. These include President Obama's speeches and papers, policy briefings, and official documents from the White House.
- (b) Secondary resources. These include established publications, mainly Foreign Affairs articles and academic journals, to access the current debates in the House of Representatives, The Senate, and other Foreign Policy committees. In addition, they enabled a comparison of theories and contrasting the theories and views of scholars detailed in the Literature Review.

The use of sources outlined above enabled the utilisation of as much documentation as was possible to compensate for the lack of time and financial constraints.

### **3.11 Limitations**

The limitations of this study are due primarily to time and financial constraints beyond the working capacity of the researcher to conduct in-person interviews with policymakers or to analyse congressional documentation that was not available online. New primary or secondary sources may also inform or invalidate the conclusions drawn from the existing results of the research analysis.

There are numerous and contradictory stances stemming from various scholars' assessment of President Obama's climate diplomacy. However, whilst these are explored in this thesis, they do not offer a clear, concise or demarcated attributable arguments. Similarly, with the current global, political, and economic changes, it is reasonable to suggest that President Obama's foundational principle for his foreign policy was one of building sustainable partnerships to unite the world with strong, principled diplomacy.

### **3.12 Summary**

This chapter has described the justification for the methodology utilised. It also investigated norm-centred constructivism as the selected methodology for analysing the achievements of President Obama's climate diplomacy. This chapter covered a description of the research design, and a brief discussion as to why the norm-centred constructivism has been chosen in preference to other research methodologies. This led to an analysis of the life cycle of norms in three stages following the model described by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 896). Description and justifications of the reasons behind the selection of

primary and secondary sources were also presented. The choice of methodology was validated, and the context of climate change and constructivism was explained. Finally, the limitations of this thesis were identified.

Establishing the rationale for the selection of the preferred research methodology sets the foundation for the next chapter which will present a results and critical analysis of President Obama's innovation in climate diplomacy.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

# **How Innovative and Creative was President Obama's Climate Diplomacy?**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter will analyse whether the Obama administration embraced innovative and creative methods in the practice of climate diplomacy. It also asks whether the methods used by President Obama enabled him to become an effective norm entrepreneur. First, the key research aims and questions will be outlined. The main research question discussed is whether both administrations of President Obama applied new tools, innovative approaches and modern ideas in order to successfully affect climate strategies of other countries while addressing the challenge of climate change. In other words, how innovative was President Obama's climate diplomacy in enlisting global followership? Second, the effectiveness of President Obama's mission to conduct innovative climate diplomacy will be discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of President Obama's official pronouncements in order to understand both his ambitions and his belief about the need for innovation in climate diplomacy. Third, an exploration of the future of innovation in climate diplomacy will take place in order to assess whether innovative, climate diplomacy combined with international partnerships and the utilisation of science, can play a role in uniting the international community around a possibility of solving climate change. Fourth, examples of successful American climate diplomacy introduced by the Obama administration will be highlighted. This will be followed by a summary and evaluation of President Obama's

leadership in innovation diplomacy. Finally, answers to the research questions will be put forward concisely and outline the main conclusions.

#### **4.2 Research Aims and Questions**

This sections outlines relevant questions and establishes the primary research aim of this chapter. The main aim of this chapter is to provide answers the second sub-question of this thesis, namely: 2) What are some of the innovative forms of diplomacy employed by President Obama? More specifically, what innovative strategies did the Obama Administration embrace in order to encourage the international community to adopt climate norms? In order to answer this question, several sub-questions that are constitutive of the main question will be discussed throughout this chapter. These sub-questions are as follows:

- Did the Obama administration apply new tools, innovative approaches and modern ideas to effectively unite global leaders on the issue of climate change and influence changes to the climate policies of other countries?
- Did the Obama administration rely to a sufficient degree on innovation in his climate diplomacy and climate policymaking process?
- Did the Obama administration harness science, technology, and innovation to a sufficient degree to solve the climate crisis?
- Did President Obama act as a catalyst for sufficient number of breakthroughs? Did he invest sufficiently in Research and Development in order to solve climate change?



- Did the Obama administration utilise the effective combination of young talent, innovative thinking and technological tools in order to deliver effective climate policies?
- Was President Obama's 'Green New Deal' equivalent to unleashing a 'New Industrial Revolution' in clean energy?
- Did Obama administration apply innovation on a large scale and energetically enough so that progress in clean energy could be embraced by the international community?
- Did America thanks to innovation in climate diplomacy play a leading role in uniting the international community?
- Did President Obama's climate diplomacy encouraged internalisation of climate norms resulting in the creation of a global climate community?
- Has progress on climate leadership and clean energy continued, and become irreversible, after President Obama's term in office ended?

#### **4.3 President Obama on the Need for Innovation in Climate Diplomacy**

On numerous occasions President Obama spoke about the need to embrace innovative diplomatic tools to tackle the challenges of climate change. He included such statements in his official, state documents, State of the Union Addresses and other official pronouncements. For example, in his document entitled, *Strategy for American Innovation* he highlighted America's successful history in innovation. He emphasised the need to utilise America's ability to innovate in order to address the grand challenges of the twenty-first century,

The Administration is supporting targeted efforts to meet Grand Challenges, which are ambitious but achievable goals that harness science, technology, and innovation to solve

important national or global problems and that have the potential to capture the public's imagination.

(Obama, 2015a: 7).

Further to this, in his document entitled *National Security Strategy* he argued that one nation, or even a group of nations, are unable to effectively solve global challenges. Therefore, he suggested that the success of American climate diplomacy lies in its ability to build a robust international coalition and facilitate effective global cooperation. As the *National Security Strategy*,

The United States will therefore confront climate change based upon clear guidance from the science, and in cooperation with all nations - for there is no effective solution to climate change that does not depend upon all nations taking responsibility for their own actions and for the planet we will leave behind.

(Obama, 2010: 47).

The highlighted in the quote above was first pursued through the adoption innovative strategies in America. As stated in the document itself, these strategies include: “1) stimulating American energy economy; 2) reinvigorating American domestic nuclear industry, 3) increasing efficiency standards, 4) investing in renewable energy, and 5) providing the incentives that make clean energy the profitable kind of energy” (Obama, 2010: 47). In addition, in order to extend the goal of increased international cooperation, the document stated that America would build on “efforts in Asia, the Americas, and Africa in order to forge new clean energy partnerships” (Ibid.). Globally, the Obama administration aimed to ensure maximum diplomatic action by embracing “a response to climate change that draws upon decisive action by all nations” (Obama, 2010: 47). Put simply, the goal of President Obama's strategy in climate diplomacy was to lead “an effective, international effort in which all major economies commit to ambitious national action to reduce their

emissions” (Ibid.: 47). The document stated the need for transparency, mobilisation of global finances, “so that developing countries can adapt to climate change, mitigate its impacts, conserve forests, and invest in clean energy technologies” (Ibid.). In order to put these plans into action, the *National Security Strategy* also listed a wide range of flexible and innovative, diplomatic tools. These include, for example,

We will pursue this global cooperation through multiple avenues, with a focus on advancing cooperation that works. We accept the principle of common but differentiated responses and respective capabilities, but will insist that any approach draws upon each nation taking responsibility for its own actions.

(Obama, 2010: 47).

A significant development for President Obama’s innovative diplomacy lies in his acknowledgement of the need to mobilise science diplomacy in order to address the problem of climate change. Challenges such as climate change require enhanced science, technology, and innovation. Evidence of Obama’s acknowledgement of this can be seen in the *National Security Strategy* where he stated,

...We must continue to expand cooperation and partnership in science and technology. We have launched a number of Science Envoys around the globe and are promoting stronger relationships between American scientists, universities, and researchers and their counterparts abroad.

(Obama, 2010: 31).

On numerous occasions, President Obama emphasised the importance of America’s role leading climate innovation, “Reaffirming America’s role as the global engine of scientific discovery and technological innovation has never been more critical” (Obama, 2010: 30). Leadership was undertaken at the federal, local, regional and global level. For example, in a speech at the 2014

Climate Summit, President Obama directed federal agencies to begin factoring climate resilience into international development programmes and investments (Obama, 2014). President Obama also announced the deployment of unique scientific and technological capabilities of America such as climate data and early warning systems. Similarly, President Obama promised to build a new partnership that could draw on the resources and expertise of America's leading private sector companies and philanthropies to help nations from the developing countries to better prepare for weather related disasters (Obama, 2014). President Obama's national policy statements, official announcements, and speeches were persuasive and powerful. They demonstrated that after several years of silence and inaction on climate change America was determined to take an active part in the global leadership. President Obama recognised that the progress might be slow. Despite this however, he also stressed the need to embrace innovation. President Obama recognised America's significant contribution to the creation of the problem of climate change. He therefore understood America's responsibility to combat the problem through effective climate innovation, new technological developments, and by mobilising the international community (Obama, 2014).

#### **4.4 Beyond International Regime towards the Creation of a Climate Community**

The current, unsuccessful climate regime was built under auspices of the United Nations and centres on the global governance of great powers. This can be understood by the application of the several International Relations theories such as neoliberalism, regime theory, institutional functionalism and

global governance. However, explaining innovation in the future of climate diplomacy requires that scholars move beyond the thinking only in terms of regimes and accept the possibility of a relative American decline (Keohane, 1984: 181). One theory that allows for such a possibility is constructivism. According to some scholars, combating climate change “implies a strong solidarist development in global governance” (Falkner and Buzan, 2018: 3). However, “environmental stewardship has made only limited progress on the path from a pluralist logic of international co-existence to a solidarist logic of cooperation”. In other words, states’ attempts to create and internalise a norm of environmentalism have been so far unsuccessful. Given the slowness and conflict involved in achieving a global solution through a ‘global deal approach’ there is a potential of opening more effective channels of reducing energy use at multiple levels including the one of building of a climate community (Cf. Figure 4.1).

As a result of the relative decline of American hegemony, the conditions could be favourable to the creation of an effective, decentralised, and bottom-up climate community (Cf. Figure 4.1). This is because as Keohane (1984: 181) observed, “a decline in hegemony may increase the demand for international regimes, which after hegemony may become potentially more important as means of limiting uncertainty and promoting mutually beneficial agreements”. If America qualifies as a hegemonic power, then this theory might hold true and may shed more light on an actual solution to climate change with the help of President Obama. Einstein’s assumed that the solution to a problem requires rising above the level of consciousness that created it. In light of this,

this section follows evolutionary constructivist thinking, preparing the ground for the revolutionary argument. This novel argument is that President Obama inadvertently might have initiated an effective climate change solution as a result of his innovative climate diplomacy even though his term in office is over (Khan, 2016). More specifically, his climate diplomacy recognised “*the spirit of the times*” which suggested that the time to address climate change had come. The genius of President Obama’s climate diplomacy was that it prioritised action not only among nations or governments but more importantly among peoples. As Gregory noted, “Sustained ‘engagement among peoples - not just governments’ is a metanarrative for the Obama administration’s foreign policy and central to its vision of diplomacy” (2011: 357). President Obama increased the role of public diplomacy significantly. However, it was difficult for climate diplomacy to become a game changer. As Gregory (2011: 351) observed, “the characteristics shaping the US public diplomacy continue to place significant constraints on its capacity for transformational change”. Climate diplomacy when applied by the determined and persuasive norm innovator could lead to wider public engagement. This is because although national governments always have their own interests in mind, they tend to emphasise common interests and global public goods when they practice climate diplomacy (Melissen, 2013: 450). The evidence presented by this thesis suggests that President Obama’s climate diplomacy has found enough followers not only within the domestic, governmental system and among the leadership of great powers, but also among non-federal and non-nation-state actors, who reacted to President Obama’s message retrospectively after his time in office has ended. As a result, these followers are more determined to drive the progress

on global climate action. Across the world, counties, regions, cities, firms, government agencies, civil-society groups and individuals in response to President Obama's inspiring rhetoric are taking joint actions towards a safer climate (Hale, 2011: 100). This highlights the power of spreading a hopeful message on climate until it gains enough followers to enable the adoption of successful solution. This process has been already initiated. Namely, hope pronounced by President Obama ignited a passion that may have led the international community to envision success (Kennedy, 1991: 69). Vision of success could encourage the international community to recognise that the time has come to change something by initiating negotiations. In turn, this could inspire far-reaching possibilities which help enlist support from others. (Ibid.). At the same time, support from followers helps to keep the international community focused and committed. This in turn could foster more effective climate action, which would lead to progress. Finally, progress leads to achievement and successfully inspiring more dreams and more hope (Ibid). This process proves that there is a great validity in the statement by Hale (2011: 100) that political leaders such as President Obama could "create a global coalition of the willing" to direct their prestige, resources and by activating hope to the cause of combating climate change. As a result, initiatives can be built action, followers can be inspired, and more importantly, new climate leaders, institutions and finance can also be generated.

It must be noted that the preliminary constructivist model of climate norm entrepreneurship model is at an embryonic stage because the climate community is a recent development. Much is expected from the premises of

this theory although nothing has yet confirmed its feasibility. Although President Obama has generated a yearning for hope, and although the actions of cities, companies, and states are not insignificant they cannot fight climate change by themselves (Milman, 2018). This is because emissions reductions have been relatively low and are therefore unlikely to compensate for the eventuality of a 'big player' withdrawing from the ripple effect of climate politics (ibid.). Therefore, further conceptualisations by constructivist theorists working on different versions of effective climate governance can be expected. These conceptualisations aim to move beyond the current ineffective climate regime that has taken a lot of time and effort to construct without discernible results.

It is worth mentioning, that the climate community model described above aligns with Watson's (2007) conclusion from his study of world history (Cf. Figure 4.1). Watson imagined the development of history as a continuum with a pendulum that swings across the continuum. At one end of the spectrum is anarchy, at the other is an "empire where independent communities are directly administered from an imperial centre" (Little, 2007: 17). Historically, the pendulum has tended to pull away from both world government and anarchy towards hegemony. From Watson's perspective, it may be deduced that the hegemony displayed by America in the contemporary international system is not the exception, but closer to the rule. What might be envisaged is that America's relative hegemony will decline at some point. What could follow is a form of an informal world government, or world federation of cities, regions and coasts united in overcoming a common challenge.



Figure 4.1

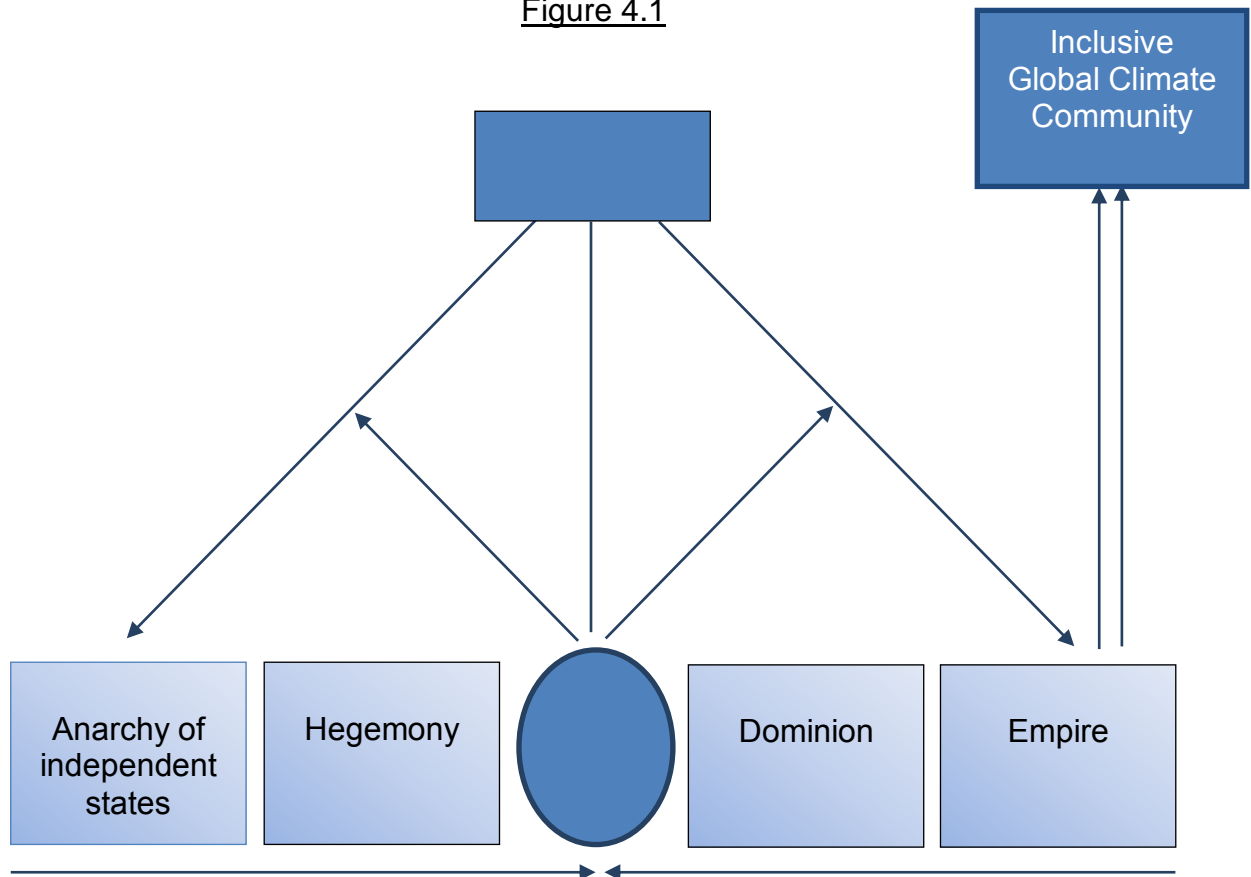


Figure 4.1. A theory of history: Watson's metaphorical pendulum model extended through the institution of a non-federal climate community. Source: (Little, 2007: 17).

This has the potential to give birth an inclusive, global climate community inspired by presidential diplomacy as outlined by the constructivist model of norm entrepreneurship. Further to this, Martin Wight (1978: 289) went on to speculate about the prospect of a future of nongovernmental units overcoming anarchy. In other words, the possibility of authoritative agency transforming the structure of the international system through the creation of a community bound together by collective efforts in overcoming a common challenge (Watson, 1992: 16). Success of such a community will depend on its political endurance and practical leverage. Evidently, a number of cities such as Toronto, London and New York, as well as, regions started “green initiatives”. As Ostrom (2012: 124) noted, “mayors of other large cities are also banding

together to discuss actions to reduce carbon emissions that can be taken locally but that if taken jointly can have a much bigger impact”. Cities, regions and communities began to discuss ways of encouraging more investment in climate-friendly technologies that are not harmful to the Earth (Ibid.). In 2008, the C40 Cities Climate Leadership group was created whose members jointly pledged to reduce emissions to meet the Kyoto standards. Likewise, the World Mayors Council on Climate Change, was initiated by the mayor of the city of Kyoto (Ostrom, 2012: 124). According to Alberti (2013), “a city that thinks like a planet is simultaneously resilient and able to change”. Had all climate vulnerable cities and regions engage in a long-term planning by combining adaptation and transformation strategies in order to become more climate resilient, then they would have succeeded in the creation of a global climate community. This would signify unprecedented levels of unity forming a global community of shared future for mankind. A global climate community based on an open, inclusive, clean, and sustainable world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security, and common prosperity. A partnership of organisations from all regions of the world emerging in response to President Obama’s climate diplomacy. The global impact of such a community is yet to be verified.

#### **4.5 Innovative Forms of Diplomacy Employed by the Obama Administration**

In light of the description provided above of the aims and pronouncements about what can be achieved through innovation in climate diplomacy, this section discusses what are the specific forms and methods of climate diplomacy utilised by President Obama following the chronological

presentation adopted by Dimsdale (2016: 1).

When it comes to the need for innovation and renewal in America, writing in the midst of the Mexican War, and on the death of John Quincy Adams, William Seward argued that, “All nations must perpetually renovate their virtues and their constitutions, or perish” (Tucker and Hendrickson, 1992: 198). Every great power must pursue innovation in order to adapt to the changing system. Similarly, at the civilisational level, the renowned British historian, Arnold Toynbee (1946: 578) in his work entitled, *Study of History*, argued that the nature of the breakdown of civilisations could be summed up as follows,

...A failure of creative power in the creative minority, which henceforth becomes merely ‘dominant’ minority; an answering withdrawal of allegiance and mimesis on the part of the majority; and a consequent loss of social unity in the society as a whole.

Kouzes and Posner (2017: 16) state that challenging the process is the crucible to achieving leadership innovation. As they argued,

Every single personal-best case involved a change from the status-quo. No one person achieved a personal best by keeping things the same.

(Kouzes and Posner, 2017: 16).

Therefore, leaders are pioneers who willingly step into the unknown seeking innovative ways to improve (Ibid.). Based on this, it could be argued that there had never been such a need to renovate the practice of American climate diplomacy as during the Obama administration. In practice, this meant that achieving progress in international negotiations and persuading the global public opinion was of great importance. Because innovation and change

require experimenting and taking risks, President Obama's role was to create a climate for experimentation, the recognition of good ideas, and the willingness to challenge the ineffective climate regime (Ibid.). This implied that the Obama Administration secured domestic political support that could effectively be translated into a global leadership advantage and political leverage to influence other governments. This is because, as Kouzes and Posner (2017: 17) noticed, "grand dreams do not become significant realities through the actions of a single person. Achieving greatness requires a team effort". Innovative leaders foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships or in President Obama's case global coalitions.

In addition, Robert Putnam (1988) famously captured this quality of international negotiations with an analogy of "two-level game". Namely, that statesmen need to prioritise between two tables, "one representing domestic politics and the other international negotiation" (Moravcsik, 1993: 4). The diplomatic tactics and strategies utilised by President Obama were constrained simultaneously by what members of the international community could accept and what domestic constituencies could ratify. In order to enable successful negotiations President Obama must have bargained in-between these two tables trying simultaneously to take account of and if possible, influence the expected actions, reactions, and policies of other international actors both at home and abroad (Moravcsik, 1993: 15). The key to success was not only to reach an international agreement but also secure domestic ratification (Ibid.: 4). In other words, "diplomacy is a process of strategic interaction in which actors simultaneously try to take account of and, if possible, influence the expected reactions of other actors, both at home and

abroad” (Ibid.). The capacity to influence and mould the system was, at this stage, of vital importance. This is because it is the third key requirement of successful diplomacy (Cf. page 13). If President Obama had public opinion on his side, he could have delivered a landslide climate victory. Therefore, if applied successfully, President Obama’s climate diplomacy had the potential to become a double-edged sword by both smashing the opposition in Congress while also ensuring success in international negotiations. Ultimate success required an extremely skilled chief diplomat with a clear plan, exerting a decisive impact and possessing a subordinate diplomatic service.

The Obama administration had a significant responsibility to introduce sufficiently innovative and effective forms of diplomacy. Arguably, this responsibility was even more significant given the unsuccessful efforts of climate diplomacy during the previous twenty-three years of climate diplomacy. For example, although the United States did not sign the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, the agreement itself failed to actually reduce global emissions. This failure also served to strengthen the divide between developed and developing nations, making future negotiations more difficult and driving America further away from diplomatic success (Holland and Rosetti, 2015: 3).

However, since 1997, new developments in international politics have enabled a sense of hope surrounding international negotiations. The first of these developments stems from the increased robustness of scientific research which has ensured old arguments which deny climate change untenable. Second, the costs of renewable energy dropped meaning became

less expensive to take climate action (Holland and Rosetti, 2015: 3). Rapid recent growth in developing countries, coupled with stagnation in Europe, Japan, and America meant that climate diplomacy had very little chance of success in addressing climate change without meaningful emissions reductions from large developing nations such as China or India (Ibid.). Furthermore, climate-related incidents, particularly within great powers, such as drought in California, wildfires in Russia, and Superstorm Sandy in 2012, have proved that wealthy nations are equally as vulnerable as the developing nations to the effects of climate change. Not surprisingly, a global environmental movement has gained momentum. Urgent climate action demanding a legally binding agreement was therefore prioritised. The changing political landscape has gradually enabled America to reengage with climate negotiations. American climate diplomacy, that can be understood by applying the constructivist model of norm entrepreneurship became more vocal in pushing for measurable, transparent, accountable, and verifiable international action on climate from all nations. By the time John Kerry was confirmed as Secretary of State in 2013, it became clear that America was ready to take an active leadership role (Holland and Rosetti, 2015: 3). Consequently, the Obama Administration capitalised on its progress, hedged its bets, acted on opportunities, and embraced innovative forms of climate diplomacy. Nine forms of climate diplomacy utilised by the Obama administration are outlined below:

## **1) Senator Kerry's Policy Guidance (March 2014)**

The Secretary of State, at the time, John Kerry, issued a Policy Guidance on "Elevating Climate Change Across All Our Platforms". It included internal instructions for American diplomats on climate change. For example, it stated: "We need to elevate environment in everything we do" (Kerry, 2014). This instruction was particularly relevant and important, because it instructed chiefs of mission and bureau leaders to make climate change a foreign policy priority. The publication of this guidance indicated a shift in American policy towards treating climate change as a top security challenge. It offered method in which the hierarchical diplomatic system could follow with consecutive actions on principal, governmental strategy. Essential to its success, however, was immediate support for the guidance extended and amplified through the implementation of a robust set of internal diplomacy institutions and diplomatic corps.

According to Dimsdale (2016: 2), the instructions were clear. They included "seven objectives including achieving an international agreement, enhancing and expanding multilateral and bilateral engagement, and integrating climate change with other cross-cutting challenges like women's empowerment, conflict and national security" (Kerry 2014 quoted in Dimsdale 2016: 2). Simultaneously, Secretary Kerry led the creation of a new task force of senior government officials to "determine how best to integrate climate and security analysis into overall foreign policy planning and priorities" (Ibid.).

This policy guidance is significant because during President Obama's first term, climate change did not have an independent department. Instead, it

remained largely in the State Department. It was mainly covered by the Special Envoy's office, but not integrated into other sections of the Department (Ibid).

This department-wide policy memo demonstrated Secretary Kerry's commitment to professional diplomatic responsibility. In addition, he elevated climate to a priority political issue not only through this guidance, but also by including climate in most of his major speeches and ensuring it was on the political agenda at major bilateral meetings. Therefore, climate change became the top priority for the State Department, marking a significant shift in governmental strategy. Thereby Secretary Kerry made climate a priority on par with issues like cyber security and trade and allowed senior diplomats to include it in all high-level engagements,

I am counting on Chiefs of Mission to make climate change a priority for all relevant personnel and to promote concerted action at posts and in host countries to address this problem. I have also directed all bureaus of the Department to focus on climate change in their day-to-day work... We are talking about the future of our earth and of humanity.

(Kerry, 2014).

Secretary Kerry showed that the Obama administration recognised the urgency of the climate problem and their willingness to act on it. The note effectively meant that America was prepared to play a leading role, both in "getting the house in order" and in influencing, persuading, and convincing other nations and key international players such as the EU, China, India, and Brazil of the need to take part in climate negotiations (Kerry quoted in Dimsdale, 2016). This strategy sent a signal for action. However, its lack of execution at the domestic level did not successfully enable the adoption of



climate norms to reach a domestic tipping point by being adopted by internal agencies.

## **2) The US-China Climate Agreement (November 2014)**

The US-China Agreement in 2014 was arguably a significant achievement of the Obama Administration's climate diplomacy. It was the result of a careful and patient diplomatic process and is considered a breakthrough that led the way to successful climate negotiations in Paris in 2015. As discussed in Chapter Five, the key to success was a ground-breaking commitment on behalf of both countries to cut greenhouse emissions. Climate change experts and officials pronounced the agreement as a "historic pact" (Kwok, 2014). The main task of the Obama administration's climate diplomacy was to convince and influence the developing countries such as China to reduce their emissions. This agreement was "critical to unblocking the stalemate between those countries" and for moving beyond business as usual in climate negotiations (Dimsdale, 2016: 3). For the first time, China agreed to limit its emissions. President Obama developed a friendly, personal relationship with the President of China, Xi Jinping and diplomatic efforts continued up to the final days of negotiations in Paris in 2015 (Ibid). Both countries signed the U.S.-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change and Clean Energy Cooperation in which they pledged to strengthen cooperation on climate and clean energy. This was, in large part, due to successful policy dialogue and technical work. From this time onwards, China agreed to maintain coordination and cooperation with America on both climate change and other issues of

strategic importance such as cyber-attacks, geopolitical rivalry, and differences over freedom of navigation,

Together, the U.S. and China account for over one third of global greenhouse gas emissions. Today's joint announcement, the culmination of months of bilateral dialogue, highlights the critical role the two countries must play in addressing climate change. The actions they announced are part of the longer range effort to achieve the deep decarbonization of the global economy over time.

(The White House, 2014).

The US-China Climate Agreement is an example of a strategy that could be qualified as coordinated national action with substantial benefits for the states taking action, or simply bilateral agreement. The strategy proved to be a state-of-the-art success and a breakthrough for President Obama's innovation diplomacy. It demonstrates the willingness of other countries to adopt climate change norms norm and proves the validity of the norm cascade model. This agreement can be considered as a success because the two biggest greenhouse gas emitters committed to a close international cooperation in addressing climate change. It sent a clear signal to the world that the two largest economies can work together based on the idea of partnership. Liberal institutionalist International Relations scholars would argue that such a strategy is a rational form of cooperation between governments and thus by itself theoretically "does not engender further collaboration" (Keohane and Victor, 2016: 5). However, strategic policy planners would probably respond by stating that successful fulfilment of US-China dialogue is a positive step towards the promise of cooperative action on climate change on behalf of two leading great powers. This has raised the question of whether the agreement has the potential to lead to a broader norm of climate responsibility that "will

develop into a new “standard of civilization” that defines and validates the practices of “civilized” members of international society – as well as world society – in the future” (Kopra, 2016: 1). Indeed, for the majority of analysts across all spectrums, it was a breakthrough. As Sussman (2016) noticed, “This demonstration of solidarity by the world’s two largest emitters was further evidence of convergence between developed and developing economies and a powerful driving force for a successful outcome in Paris”. Equally, Lewis (2017) observed, “Bilateral engagement between the United States and China on climate change allowed for the two countries to leverage their size and significance to mobilize action from other countries, thereby helping the United States achieve several multilateral outcomes in which it had a stake”. As a result of the agreement, climate diplomacy gained momentum and climate norms were cascading following the model in norm-centred constructivism to other members of the international community.

### **3) Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (April 2015)**

The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review was published by the State Department in 2010 and 2015. It presented diplomatic developments and set priorities. While the 2010 edition placed less focus on climate change, the 2015 edition extensively highlighted two core strategies of mitigating and adapting to climate change. Combating climate change was identified as one of four core strategic priorities for the U.S. along with countering violent extremism and open democratic societies and inclusive economic growth (Kerry, 2015: 42-29). Official documents could be classified as innovative forms of diplomacy. However, they were applied even before President

Obama came to office. As such, the 2015 Review provides for a strategic framework for action and a sense of mission to the diplomatic service. Therefore, its value is still considerable because, it “serves as a clear signal both domestically and internationally of American priorities and required reforms to ensure the country is prepared to meet global challenges” (Dimsdale, 2016: 3). The review set a realistic goal of responding to climate change by reaching an agreement and by building international partnerships,

Unless we act dramatically and quickly, science tells us our climate and our way of life are literally in jeopardy... No single country causes climate change, and no one country can stop it. But we need to match the urgency of our response with the scale of the science. (Kerry, 2015: 42).

The Review acknowledged that, “the global climate is changing at an accelerating rate, and that the primary cause of that change is human activity” (Kerry, 2015: 42). It stated that America is vulnerable to extreme weather. At the same time, it stressed that “climate change provides an economic and public health opportunity (Ibid. 43). It stated definitively that America can “lead the transition to a cleaner, more energy-efficient global economy and help to lay the foundation for a climate-resilient world, with benefits lasting centuries” (Ibid.) The Review affirmed that the challenge of climate change can be solved through effective policies and economic incentives, “Smart policy choices and investments in development can mitigate the negative impacts of climate change” (Ibid.: 44). The Review also suggested lines of American effort in tackling this problem by stating, “America takes a leading role in confronting the threat of climate change through action both at home and abroad” (Ibid.). The Review endorsed integration of climate change into all diplomacy and development efforts, identified critical countries in need of engagement, and

explored diplomacy beyond capitals to include other sectors (Dimsdale, 2016: 4). It also compiled a coordinated and comprehensive set of strategies, alongside U.S. security strategy and President Obama's Memorandum on Climate Change and National Security Strategy, which both put climate risk at the heart of U.S. national security planning. The innovative idea behind the Review and a sign that climate change has been gaining on importance is that its focus on engagement and effective strategies helped to shift the previous failed strategy from the environment to climate change. The review, demonstrated that America was prepared to lead on climate by setting a bold example "supported by concentrated actions to reduce emissions from every significant source and in every economic sector" (Kerry, 2015: 47).

#### **4) Mission Innovation (November 2015)**

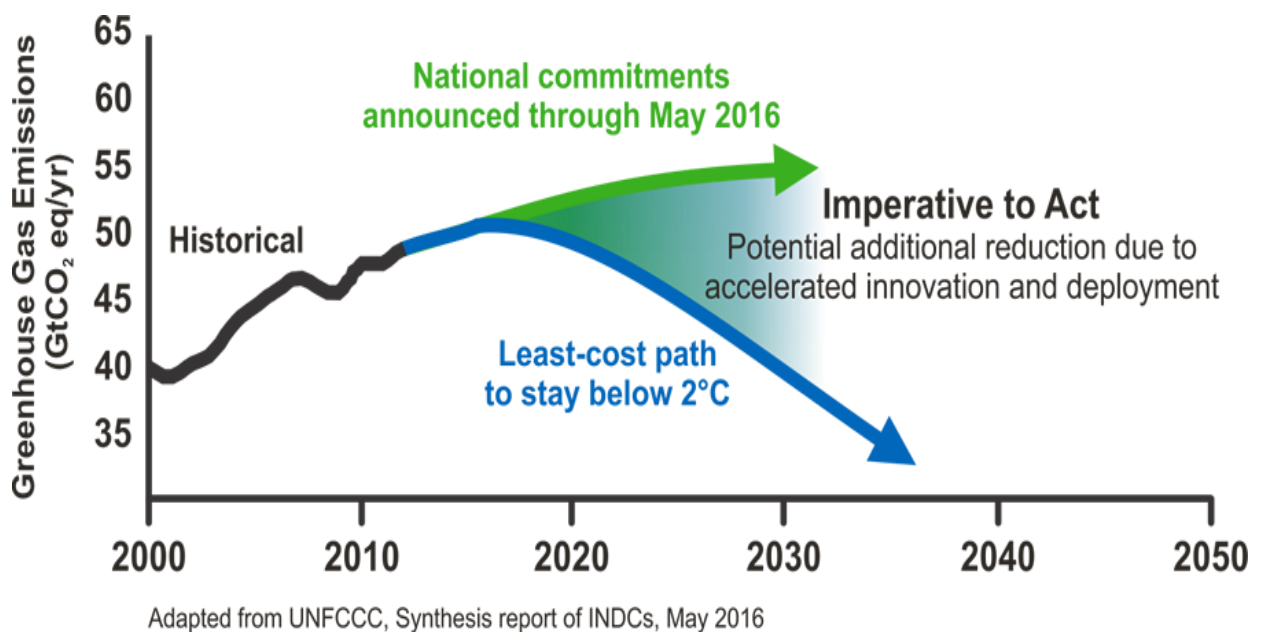
Mission innovation is an example of multilateral, climate diplomacy with the aim of accelerating progress in clean energy innovation. The Mission was announced at the United Nations climate-change conference in Paris on November 30, 2015 (Department of Energy, 2015). At the announcement of the Mission Innovation President Obama stated, "We are here because we have recognised the urgency of the climate change and we believe that there is something we can all do about it as long as we work together" (Obama, 2015). Mission Innovation is an agreement between twenty countries (at the moment, twenty-three countries plus the European Union) including the world's top three emitters, China, the United States, and India who have committed to double their respective clean energy research and development (R&D) investment to 20 billion dollars annually by 2020. "These additional

resources will dramatically expand the new technologies that will define a future global power mix that is clean, affordable, and reliable” (Mission Innovation Net, 2015). “Over half of the target will come from doubling the U.S. Government’s current 6.4 billion dollars budget” (Dimsdale, 2016). Mission Innovation is an important example of a comprehensive global alliance between groups of selected states designed as a complement to the Paris Agreement, which was forged by governments and focused only on emission reductions targets and adaptation (Ibid.). The targets set by the international community in Paris will be realised, in large part, by the efforts of scientists, businesses, workers, and investors (Obama, 2015).

Assessed from a strategic perspective, Mission Innovation was an attempt to include the private sector in the process of tackling climate change. As such, it was an entrepreneurial innovation. The connection between private and business leadership may occur to be vital in tackling climate change. As a result, “Private sector plays a vital role in the commercialization and cost-effectiveness of clean energy breakthroughs” (Mission Innovation Net, 2015). Effective climate action must be conducted not only by governments but also entrepreneurs, investors, and businesses, who drive innovation from the laboratory into the marketplace. Moreover, it was an intervention pursued in response to the demand from India and China, helping those developing nations to skip ‘the dirty phase’ of development. In the presence of Bill Gates, President Hollande, and Prime Minister Modi announced at 21st annual session of the Conference of the Parties to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21), President Obama announced the imperative to act. He stated that, “Accelerating progress in

implementing clean energy innovation is essential to achieving the goal of limiting the rise in global temperatures to below 2°C.” (Obama quoted in Bodnar and Turk, 2015). The strategic imperative to act on climate change is depicted in Figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2



While the international community has made remarkable progress in lowering costs and raising the use of clean energy options, they are still insufficient for meeting the long-term climate goal of staying below 2°C providing affordable, reliable, and secure energy supplies (Mission Innovation Net, 2015). However, the Mission Innovation statement quite rightly observed that the power of innovation, driven by sustained public investment in research and development (R&D) and coupled with business leadership, can further decrease the costs of clean energy (Ibid.). In general, mission Innovation was a smart, strategic move by the Obama Administration, who found a way of accommodating and including developed nations into collective commitment

to solving climate change. This was particularly essential because “60 percent of global emissions come from developing nations and that share is growing rapidly” (Purvis et al., 2015: 7). Through initiating Mission Innovation, the Obama administration made a decisive move towards persuading developing countries to change their climate policy agenda. As a result, President Obama achieved, to some extent a goal of building “strengthened institutions and invigorated alliances and partnerships” to combat climate change (Obama, 2007: 13). According to Sanchez and Sivaram (2017: 123), “Mission Innovation was an especially promising initiative to advance global clean energy innovation because of its political prominence and membership that accounted for nearly all global energy R&D funding”. American government identified this initiative as an important task that would appeal to Prime Minister Modi of India, who named the initiative, stating,

This partnership will combine the responsibility of governments with the innovative capacity of the private sector. We will double our investments in research and innovation; and, deepen collaboration among ourselves.

(Modi quoted in iDream News, 2015).

The only criticism of the alliance is that it might not be enduring because it “is in danger of collapsing if the Trump administration fulfils promises to withdraw U.S. support” (Sanchez and Sivaram, 2017: 123).

## **5) International Coal financing restrictions (November 2015)**

By placing restrictions on U.S. government financing for new coal plants overseas, President Obama demonstrated a major policy shift (Plumer, 2013b). Placing limits on international coal financing was, for a long time, a



priority for the Obama administration. However, announcing his goal and implementing policies on behalf of developing nations marked a real change in strategy. President Obama made a firm statement on climate change by addressing governors and officials in Los Angeles in 2008. Since that time, the ambitious plan was to cut America's greenhouse gas emissions which in effect was "a pledge to upend the existing energy system and put the world on a path toward avoiding severe climate change - all in one gigantic push" (Plumer, 2013a). In practice, it was a strategy aimed at solving climate change "once and for all" and without a delay (Ibid.). However, in 2013, after speaking at Georgetown University in 2013, President Obama decided to change the previous, and perhaps overly ambitious and unrealistic strategy. President Obama decided that he would "use whatever executive power he has to chip away at the problem, little by little" instead of adopting a grand strategy on climate change (Plumer, 2013a). This point has a profound meaning for the whole thesis since it confirms the validity of the constructivist model described in the methodology. As Dimsdale (2016: 5) noticed, President Obama demonstrated skilled leadership and encouraged further followership by "pledging to work to encourage other countries and international financial institutions to follow America's example". This was the first phase of recovering global followership. The result was that "representatives from 34 of the world's developed and major emerging economies reached an agreement to phase out public financing that supports the construction of new coal power plants around the world" (Bovarnick and Ogden, 2015). Member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) agreed to "stop providing export credit support for new coal-fired power plants, except

when the most efficient technology is used or in the poorest countries where there are no viable alternatives” (Ibid.). The strategy proved to be effective and was an example of a successful climate leadership in practice. America was the first country to change its export credit policy. Soon after, a host of other countries and institutions such as the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom followed the leader (Ibid). According to experts from Think Progress, “this agreement marked a major diplomatic achievement by the Obama administration”, despite the strong opposition from Japan (Ibid.). To address this issue, “U.S. officials worked diligently so that overcome this deadlock and the prospects for a deal improved after Japan agreed to a compromise proposal with the United States” (Dimsdale, 2016: 5). The OECD agreement is an example of President Obama using “a weaponised form of finance” as a tool of climate diplomacy (Bremmer, 2015). It is reasonable and justified for America to use financial methods alongside diplomatic and scientific tools to effectively address climate problem.

According to Friedman (2015a), the agreement “marks the first time a large number of nations have set common standards for coal subsidies”. Friedman (2015a) explained, “The White House estimated that about 80 percent of coal technology in the current export credit agency pipeline would become ineligible for financing because of the agreement”. The U.S. has also extended its climate diplomacy beyond the (OECD) by ensuring there is compliance and implementing a no ‘free-riding’ strategy on behalf of China, as the U.S. and China “agreed to work towards strictly controlling public investment flowing into projects with high pollution and carbon emissions both domestically and

internationally” (Bovarnick and Ogden 2015). Although not all exported financing for coal was eliminated, it may be considered as a diplomatic success for the Obama Administration. Some commentators noticed,

“It is a huge breakthrough,” said one person familiar with the discussions. If approved by other countries, it would probably make the “vast majority” of about 1,000 planned coal plants ineligible for export credit agency backing, he said.

(Clark, Financial Times, 2015).

By limiting subsidies for fossil fuels, President Obama took a step towards an energy industrial revolution (Wolf, 2015). This is because President Obama believed that, with the right push from governments, a virtuous cycle of technological innovation combined with reduced local pollution and rapid adoption of low-carbon technologies could initiate a civilisational move on a sustainable path away from disaster (Ibid.). International Coal financing restrictions achieved by President Obama prove that even in the twenty-first-century government’s actions, such as restrictions or subsidies, when planned in advance and implemented with the collective agreement, prove to be an effective tool of climate diplomacy. It seems to demonstrate that President Obama was far-sightedly constructing a coalition determined to adopt climate norms.

## **6) High Ambition Coalition (November 2015)**

The High Ambition Coalition enabled Europe and its allies to put pressure on the ‘big emitters’ (Cañete, 2015). The genius of President Obama’s Administration was to convince the developing nations to conduct effective action on climate change. It is widely acknowledged that “Today, developed

countries account for less than 35 per cent of total emissions - and falling. Developing countries account for 65 per cent” (Ibid.). As a result, without major developing countries emitters such as China, India, Brazil, South Africa or Indonesia, the international community could not achieve effective progress on climate change. The High Ambition Coalition was first set during COP 21 in Paris. It consisted of an alliance formed through diplomatic efforts with a view to ensure an ambitious agreement. According to Mathiensen and Harvey (2015), the key four goals for the group were: 1) “The agreement at Paris is legally binding; 2) There is a clear long-term goal on global warming that is in line with scientific advice; 3) A mechanism for reviewing countries’ emissions commitments every five years; 4) Creation of a unified system for tracking countries’ progress on meeting their carbon goals”. Initially, the group was formed informally as a ministerial gathering while the driving force behind the group was a coalition between the European Union, a group of Pacific countries, African and Caribbean governments. When America joined the coalition, it gave the group an increased political momentum and it became stronger (Cañete, 2015). As Goodell (2016) noted, “Joining the island coalition not only increased America’s moral authority but also disarmed a potential bomb in the negotiations”. Simultaneously, the European Union made an announcement in calling for an ambitious deal and agreed on the core elements of the Paris Deal. “Special Envoy Stern was the first delegate; who used the name “high ambition coalition” in a press conference at the COP 21” (Dimsdale, 2016).

The coalition continued to play a strategic and vital role even after the Paris Agreement was signed. This was mainly achieved by “building momentum for

early entry into force of the agreement and acting as a cooperative and collaborative support preceding the next climate summit and the Montreal Protocol HFC Agreement” (Dimsdale, 2016: 6). It was a strategic move by the Obama administration and even more significant because it formed a power structure which prepared the ground for the actual negotiations aimed at producing as strong agreement as possible. The idea generator behind the coalition was the foreign minister of the Marshall Islands. However, it quickly became a club that other nations wanted to join. As Little (2015) noticed, “Nobody wanted to be the spoiler, and that ended up being a huge advantage for vulnerable nations in the negotiations”. In contrast, at the previous climate summit in Copenhagen, a bloc of developing nations withdrew from the negotiations, “protesting what they felt were strategies intended only to protect the interests of rich countries” (Little, 2015). President Obama’s notable diplomatic input was that he sympathetically encouraged the talks early in the conference, “when he called himself an “island boy,” referring to his childhood in Hawaii and Indonesia” (Little, 2015). As a result, it was agreed that the voices of small island nations must be heard and special priority would be placed on the most vulnerable island nations (Ibid.).

Formation of the High Ambition Coalition was an important diplomatic achievement for the Obama’s Administration. This is because it demonstrated that developed and developing countries can work together effectively (Cañete, 2015). It was possible as a result of an innovative form of diplomacy, known as “climate clubs” that allow cooperation in small groups. These groups then gradually expand to cover more ambitious areas and more countries. The advantage of these clubs is that, “In small clubs it is easier for negotiators to

craft complex deals. And when groups are small it is easier to channel the benefits of cooperation to other club members, which creates stronger incentives to sustain cooperation” (Victor, 2011: 243). Moreover, the coalition inspired a creative spirit, promoted a positive atmosphere, and enabled the success of the future negotiations,

These negotiations are not about them and us. They are about all of us, developed and developing countries, finding common ground and solutions together. We urge other countries to join us. Together we can do it.

(Cañete, 2015).

## **7) North American Leaders Summit (June 2016)**

On June 29, 2016, President Obama met with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada and President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico for the North American Leaders’ Summit in Ottawa, Canada (The White House, 2016c). Climate was the core issue of the summit. This is because the leaders, known as, the “Three Amigos”, announced initiatives to expand their efforts on climate change, clean energy, and the environment. They also aimed to solidify regional and global cooperation and strengthen security and defence (Keane and Wingrove, 2016).

Even before the summit, America, Canada, and Mexico already had a “strong track record of actions to tackle climate change, from supporting the Paris Agreement to ambitious domestic actions that support a clean and resilient economy at home” (The White House, 2016c). The three leaders declared their common vision in a historic North American Climate, Clean Energy, and Environment Partnership and committed to pursuing certain goals, such as:

increased clean power production across North America by 2025, support for the Paris Agreement and working together through to address climate change through “the Montreal Protocol, International Civil Aviation Organization, G-20, and other forums” (Ibid.).

The North American Leaders Summit (NALS) forms part of President Obama’s climate diplomacy. This is because it helped to “cement America’s climate commitment by affirming support for delivering Paris Agreement, the Montreal Protocol, ICAO and G20 climate agreements” (Dimsdale, 2016: 7). In addition, the three leaders committed to setting important targets. As President Obama noticed,

We are making sure that North America remains a leader in the fight against climate change. And I could not be prouder of the work that Justin and Enrique have done to help realize this important goal. All three of our nations are now committed to joining the Paris agreement this year so we can bring it into force. We are announcing a new goal across our continent of generating 50 percent of our electricity with clean power by 2025 - which is a bold goal, but is an eminently achievable goal.

(Obama, quoted in U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Canada, 2016).

Summit diplomacy and international, high profile visits such as NALS provide an opportunity for the leaders of North America to discuss their visions of a prosperous and secure future for the citizens of the countries that they represent and their shared commitment to working together to realise that vision.

## **8) Amendment to Montreal Protocol on HFCs (September 2016)**

On October 15, 2016, under the leadership of United States, 197 countries adopted an amendment to phase down highly potent greenhouse gases

known as hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) under the Montreal Protocol outlined in Kigali, Rwanda (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2016). According to the White House (2016d), “This super polluting greenhouse gas, used in air conditioners and refrigeration, can be hundreds to thousands of times more potent than carbon dioxide, and represents a rapidly growing threat to the health of our planet”. Arguably, the most important was the commitment made by the attending countries to “cut the production and consumption of HFCs by more than 80 percent over the next 30 years.” (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2016). The agreement also included 80 million dollars in funding from donor countries and philanthropists to support early action within developing countries (Dimsdale, 2016: 7).

The Agreement is significant because it was a key priority for both the Obama Administration and for the High Ambition Coalition. Arguably, this Agreement makes the achievement of the 2° Celsius goal more likely in the future (Dimsdale, 2016: 7). This is because, “It will avoid more than 80 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide by 2050 – equivalent to more than a decade of emissions from the entire U.S. economy”. At the same time, the ozone layer continues to be protected (Ibid.). As a result, it could “avoid up to 0.5°C of warming by the end of the century – making a significant contribution towards achieving the goals we set in Paris” (The White House, 2016d). Similarly to the Paris Agreement, it also included a ratchet mechanism and calls for periodic reviews every five years (Dimsdale, 2016: 7). The signing of the Agreement, according to President Obama, marked a critical period in global efforts of the international community to combat climate change,



Together, these steps show that, while diplomacy is never easy, we can work together to leave our children a planet that is safer, more prosperous, more secure, and more free than the one that was left for us. (Obama 2016).

The Montreal Protocol is an example of coordinated research to invent new technologies that create energy sources that are cheaper than high-carbon fossil fuels. In fact, it has already resulted in the generation of new technological advancements (Keohane and Victor, 2016: 4). Successful technological innovation would have enormous consequences on halting global emissions. Similarly, efforts to coordinate innovation policies on climate could alter the preferences of countries and direct them towards further cooperation in the future (Ibid.).

#### **9) The Emergence of U.S. Non-federal Climate Diplomacy (post 2016)**

One innovative form of diplomacy that emerged in the aftermath of President Obama's term in office is the non-governmental, bottom-up climate movement. As Hale and Roger (2013: 59) noticed, while "multilateral efforts to mitigate climate change are in gridlock, attention has turned to transnational climate governance initiatives, through which sub- and non-state actors seek to reduce greenhouse gases". Such initiatives work separately and parallel to national governments and they include networks of cities that remain committed to lowering their carbon footprints. (Ibid.).

The creation of an effective climate community in America was possible because the momentum initiated by President Obama is irreversible. The announcement that the Trump administration, who intended to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, precipitated a flourishing non-federal climate movement

with a high possibility of the ultimate success (Taraska, 2017). The movement includes numerous non-federal actors across the country including cities, states, companies, tribes, and regions who have configured themselves into an array of coalitions that are committed to minimising the effects of climate change (Ibid.). Although these coalitions are not a substitute for national climate leadership, they demonstrate that the President Obama's successor is not representative of the country at large. Indeed, the cities and states that support effective climate actions now account for nearly half of America's population and more than half of the U.S. economy (Taraska, 2017). If these groups were a country, they would be the third largest in terms of GDP and the fourth largest in terms of greenhouse gas emissions (Ibid.). These entities have formed numerous climate initiatives and movements. They put forward a united and cohesive political movement, which constitutes a coalition formed to counteract the recent absence of climate diplomacy and climate actions under President Trump. These initiatives implemented are described below.

- **U.S. Climate Alliance**

"The U.S. Climate Alliance is a bipartisan coalition of states and Puerto Rico that have pledged to reduce their collective emissions 26 percent to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025. The coalition currently has 15 members" (Taraska, 2017). The Alliance has three core principles: 1) "States are continuing to lead on climate change, 2) State-level climate action is benefiting the states' economics and strengthening American communicates, 3) States are showing the nation and the world that ambitious climate action is achievable" (United States Climate Alliance, 2018).

- **We Are Still In**

This is a cross-sectoral coalition of American states, cities, states, mayors, governors, universities, and business leaders that have pledged to support climate action and the Paris Agreement. It was based on “the promise to world leaders that Americans would not retreat from the global pact to reduce emissions and stem the causes of climate change” (We Are Still In, 2018). The coalition has expanded and doubled in size, including “over 3,500 representatives from all 50 states, spanning large and small businesses, mayors and governors, university presidents, faith leaders, tribal leaders, and cultural institutions” (Ibid.).

- **America’s Pledge**

“America’s Pledge is an initiative to quantify, aggregate, and communicate how nonfederal actors in America are pressing forward on climate action” (Taraska, 2017). In its mission statement, America’s Pledge acknowledged that “a decentralized, bottom-up agenda for U.S. climate action is not only achievable, but in fact already exists and is being implemented quietly and swiftly” (Nichols and Pope, 2016: 1). Its mission statement also discussed the strategy in which America’s pledge aims to achieve its aim,

Tackling global climate change demands a multistakeholder partnership and deep collaboration between national governments and their broader societies: states, cities, businesses, universities, communities, and other real economy actors whose decisions shape greenhouse gas emissions, drive innovation, and are determinative of the speed and direction of the global low-carbon energy transition.

(America’s Pledge, 2016: 4).

- **Global Climate Action Summit**

The Global Climate Action Summit has taken place in San Francisco in September 2018 showcasing non-federal climate leadership. It served “as a target date for non-federal climate initiatives and announcements” (Taraska, 2017).

While these coalitions are fully operating, the U.S. non-federal climate movement has an opportunity to evolve into an effective force in the global effort to support the Paris Agreement. Domestically, the movement has worked to identify and implement the policies that aim to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Internationally, the movement has engaged in climate diplomacy with other countries that serves as a credible proof that it has taken up the mantle of American climate leadership (Taraska, 2017).

The emergence of an informal, climate community movement inspired by President Obama appears to support the validity of the argument presented by Keohane and Victor (2016: 570) stating, “Effective mitigation of climate change will require deep international cooperation”. This cooperation, they argue is a complex and slow process, difficult to implement but not impossible. A success could be hidden in the fact that it moves beyond the shallow coordination that existed before President Obama came to office.

#### **4.6 Evaluation of President Obama’s Leadership Style**

Based on these examples of innovation in climate diplomacy outlined above, it could be argued that largely President Obama followed a transformational leadership model in his climate diplomacy. According to Burns (1978), this is a

leadership “that causes change in individuals and social systems”. It is the leadership that, “creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders”. This is showed in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3



In addition, President Obama effectively balanced the need for official, governmental actions with informal grassroots gatherings. One characteristic of transformational leaders is their ability to remain unsurprised by the seemingly unexpected. Climate experts have warned about catastrophic climate impacts. Transformational leaders are better prepared to deal with the problem of climate change as they appear equipped with an instinctive consciousness, cognitive intelligence and emotional intelligence. In addition, their leadership behaviours are moderated by cultural factors that determine the global leadership posture thereby demonstrating success (Alon and Higgins, 2005: 501).

Transformational leaders discerningly anticipate that the quest for economic growth on a global scale may be difficult and eventually may stall at some point during the forthcoming centuries, circa 2025 – 2050 (Heinberg, 2011: 2). This may be caused, among other things, by depletion of important natural resources, including fossil fuels and minerals, crushing debt levels that may eventually lead to financial disruptions, and institutional failures (Ibid.). According to Heiberg (2011: 2), humanity has reached a fundamental turning point in its economic history. He suggests that the Earth's capacity for providing humanity with unlimited resources and fossil fuels to produce economic growth may be diminishing. Humanity may have already entered a period of maximum world oil production. As a result, the global economy may shrink and industrial output and food production may fall, leading to a decline in population (ibid.: 6). Consequently, transformational leaders must consider the existence of an intermediary, transitional alternative to unlimited, compound growth. However, this should not deter them. Since transformational leaders overcome challenges by demonstrating creative thinking and strong leadership qualities, rallying followers around a vision, and implementing ways forward and effective solutions. Effective transformational leaders know what they want to do, and have the strength of character to pursue their objectives in the face of opposition and in spite of initial failures.

With reference to the core capabilities of successful climate diplomacy (listed on page 13 of this thesis), President Obama met or not the criteria of success in the ways described below.

## 1. Know Yourself

The Obama Administration developed and put in place a clear national position based on the objective of combating climate change and understanding of how it influences and impacts core national interests. Climate change has been positioned as a top national security threat in response to extreme weather events such as Hurricane Sandy in 2012. The process of defining climate change as a national security threat was politically contested and dependent on the support from the public and various interests groups. Without public support, at least initially, President Obama was not prepared to act. However, some of his leadership traits helped him to establish a firm, uncompromising position on climate change. As evidenced by Greenstein (2009: 218), “Obama’s cognitive style is marked by intelligence, analytic detachment, and a capacity for complex thinking”. Such cognitive traits might have meant he was predisposed to dealing with complex challenges more effectively. In addition, self-awareness, or understanding of one’s own strengths and weaknesses have provided President Obama with credibility. This ultimately contributed to successfully garnering public support. According to Cartwright (2009), as “a young African-American from a single-parent background, Obama took a fiercely disciplined approach to life and was conscious of his image and how he presented himself”. Equally, Tomasky (2010) noted, “Obama had a strong capacity for self-reflection and awareness, and for arriving at fresh solutions”. As a climate leader, President Obama demonstrated emotional awareness of “*the spirit of the times*” to warn and sound an alarm bell. The key to his self-awareness was emotional intelligence,

Emotional awareness enables leaders to understand the emotional implications of their own feelings and thoughts.

Leaders who are self-aware possess high level of self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-assessment and provide orientation for followers.

(Bensal and Hingorani, 2013: 28).

Leaders practicing self-awareness become more effective. This ability provides the opportunities for skills development, knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses, developing intuitive decision-making, and enhanced motivation. President Obama was a skilled problem-solver. As Wayne (2010: 9) suggested, "Obama enjoys and thrives on the challenge of problem solving. He has considerable synthetic and analytic skills". The skill set enabled President Obama to effectively respond to climate change.

## **2. Know the Other**

The capability to gather and analyse intelligence on the challenge of climate change and how it can affect the national interest was central to President Obama's success. However, the real constraint on President Obama's actions was that his administrations were not omniscient. Gathering information about climate scenarios has been done proficiently and with awareness of the seriousness of the situation. Although climate change was not immediately treated as a national security threat, the decision to make it a priority after 2013 was made as a result of increasing climate catastrophes. This thesis confirms that President Obama recognised the implication of ignoring climate change. A key to this success lies in his level of emotional intelligence. This is because emotional intelligence enables a leader to more easily gain an understanding of their own ability to implement change. In other words, this model of leader is able to assess the appropriate leadership response tailored to the particular challenge. Although the Obama administration signaled the need to combat



climate change during the initial time in office, it was a realistic assessment of the challenge. This allowed understanding of the challenge and application of adequate policy tools to deal with it effectively. Once President Obama understood the complexity of climate change, he could have effectively communicated the seriousness of the challenge. The evidence suggests that initially he attempted more ambitious action for resolving the challenge. However, after this strategy failed, he then attempted to frame the challenge as an economic opportunity, enabling him to arrive at a potentially brilliant solution to the problem “little by little” (environmental incrementalism) whatever executive power he had. The American presidency has plenty of experimental ways in which a committed, determined President can enact pioneering policies by circumventing a gridlocked political system. This required creatively and consensus seeking. Such prudent actions could have inspired global followership to uphold, extend and multiply President Obama’s spirit and dedication. However, it required President Obama not only to get to know the problem but also the structure in which it was embedded.

### **3. Capacity to Influence**

Rallying public support when executing climate diplomacy is crucial to achieving a success. As Pika and Maltese (2014: 105) noted, “Presidents are not passive objects of public attitudes; instead, presidents and their aides take the initiative in shaping public perceptions”. The American President in the head of a large, bureaucratic institution. He is responsible for delegating tasks and he relies on different agencies. Aides performing these tasks, “take action and fashion appeals designed to win the support of different kinds of audiences, including other elites, the public at large and specific

constituencies” (Pika and Maltese, 2014: 105). The capability to integrate national priorities into political and diplomatic channels was effectively executed by the Obama administration. As evidenced above, President Obama skillfully managed basic tools of diplomacy and was adept at creating a clear influencing strategy stated in numerous official documents. Climate strategy was announced publicly and implemented using multiple channels. Internally tasks were delegated to the diplomatic service and internationally tasks were distributed by building alliances and diplomatic bridges. In doing so, President Obama was effectively framing the discourse around climate change and stimulating debate on the issue through numerous speeches and public announcements. The goal was to maximise the power of persuasion in order to convince the American public of the dangers of climate change. In particular, President Obama’s understanding of the importance of social media allowed him to utilise the internet effectively in order to achieve this goal. In addition, shaping public opinion often meant finding ways to speak to young people. The ability to influence was critical for President Obama to effectively address climate change. This is because effective innovative leaders encourage the heart (Kouzes and Posner, 2017: 18). The President himself has quoted Abraham Lincoln, saying, “With public opinion there is nothing I cannot do, and without public opinion there is nothing I can get done” (Obama, 2017a). He accepted the task of framing the debate, shaping the public opinion with the view of eventually changing it. According to Greenstein (2009: 215), “Obama was strikingly successful in commanding public attention during the transition with televised events”. With equal persuasiveness he spoke about issues related to climate change. However, effective the norm internalisation

required an active role on behalf of the followers. This implies that President Obama's diplomacy should spur further action by others, which in theory should be particularly effective since followers emerged voluntarily to support his policies (Mayer, 2013: 967). However, Kouzes and Posner (2017: 18) observed, people often become exhausted, disenchanted and frustrated with politics and are often tempted to give up. Therefore, the role of a leader is to bring people together and draw them forward. According to the Saylor Foundation (2009), "A good leader can adapt his or her style to suit the purpose (i.e. the situation) or audience (i.e. the individuals involved)". Consequently, President Obama was extremely flexible, sensitive and publicly responsive. "The key to the power of influence is for President Obama to recognise which influential style will be most effective in any given situation". (Ibid.). President Obama was aware of his own leadership style. He applied entrepreneurial leadership, cognitive intelligence and effective means of influence. As a result, he was able to utilise rhetoric according to the situation and environment in which he was speaking. This was his strength, equally as creating an inspiring vision of the future. In addition, clear vision was necessary for success, particularly if President Obama sought to enlist support across the political spectrum. This required him to be politically flexible and focused on problem-solving strategies. As Greenstein (2009: 217), noticed, "Obama's policies were less influenced by abstract doctrine than by a pragmatic effort to devise workable, politically feasible policies". Despite this strength, his weakness on many occasions, was that he seemed to act like as a trained politician, who was not always prepared to go against the tide, "his first use of influence was targeted toward voters" (Ibid.). Arguably, if he had

maximised his powers of persuasion he could not only have responded to but also shaped and changed, the public debate on key issues such as climate change. As a president, he used his powers of influence on members of Congress, leaders of other nations, as well as, businesses and community leaders (Ibid.). Each of these groups requires a different approach from each other, as well as a change of approach, depending on the situation. In other words, flexibility was required for success. Arguably, many of America's greatest presidents, such as Lincoln and Reagan, possessed a wide range of influencing skills and used many techniques, such as anaphora (Ibid.). It is a technique that consists of repeating words or phrases within a speech in order to build emotion and create a dramatic effect. President Obama also used these techniques. In addition, he had a unique talent for speaking with power and meaning. This enabled him to communicate a wide range of emotions and appeals (Ibid.). According to the Saylor Foundation (2009), "President Obama's influencing skills also included humility, charm, the ability to negotiate, and the ability to facilitate bridge-building". These skills were necessary for convincing the American public to the necessity of immediate action on climate.

However, President Obama's climate project remains unfinished. This is because according to Gandhi, "The reward of a worker lies in the work he does" (Ghandi 1982, quoted in Bansal and Hingorani, 2013: 28). Hence, a successful leader, consistent with this model, should be Sithpragya (Ibid.). He should be unaffected by both adoration and criticism. Instead, the focus of such a leader should be on the effective performance of the task,

Leadership is not the private reserve of a few charismatic men and women; it is a process that ordinary people use when they bring forth the best from themselves and others. A real leader is someone who makes others believe that they can make a difference.

(Bensal and Hingorani, 2013: 27).

This thesis suggests that President Obama established achievable goals and then pragmatically realised them. Presidency Obama revealed the clash between the transformational rhetoric and slogans of invigorating optimism that the President projected in his speeches with his policy approach which was “careful, cautious, and conciliatory, one that focuses on commonalities, strives for consensus, and seeks common ground” (Wayne, 2010: 14). Effective and successful transformational leaders achieve their goals because they believe passionately in their success. Such leaders tend to have a positive outlook on who they are, what they love and what they do. In addition, they manage the delivery of their vision effectively. Their passion for life becomes a guiding star for others to follow. They work not from the top down, but from the bottom up. For example, they work with the climate community and the developing nations to empower people and enable them to make a difference. Such leaders often create more leaders because they radiate positivity, inspire hope, demonstrate integrity and convey an aura of honesty. Above all, such leaders are generally motivated by something grander than the self-interest as they take care over the whole planet and all of humanity.

Through inspiring and motivating others to believe and trust in their visions for the future, transformational leaders accomplish extraordinary achievements. They propose acceptable solutions to the functioning of a zero-growth

economy where levels of inequality are reduced. For example, the roots of the 2007 economic crisis were in the system of urban capitalism because there are some inherent contradictions with every capitalist system (Harvey, 2012: 28). One of them is the looming climate bubble which is based on exponential curves and also has its origins in the corporate system (Berners-Lee and Clark, 2013: 97). As these scholars suggested, "Fossil fuel companies have a huge amount to lose from a successful effort to tackle climate change" (Ibid.). This thesis suggests that an alternative social order must be devised in order to counteract the contradictory, eroded and unstable capitalist system based on vested interests. This new, social order would not be a utopia but economic inequality would have to be eradicated and environmental degradation stopped (Ibid.). Environmental degradation is particularly important. Although President Obama attempted to address this issue, he did so while fossil fuels were becoming scarcer and more expensive. In addition, in the process of burning them, humanity is systematically ruining the environment. It has been proven that the more industrialised a nation is, the more intense their contribution to depleting the atmosphere is. However, opponents would argue that industry is essential to the livelihoods of their citizens. Notwithstanding that this argument is short-sighted, it remains relevant. This is because without industries and trade there cannot be financial gain. Lack of financial gain means lack of money to purchase essential commodities. Lack of essential commodities, means that the average citizen becomes poorer. Eventually this will lead to the scarcity of food and water causing local riots, battles and conflicts. What is the ideal solution? How can any one person, or group of people, deemed as transformational leaders

devised satisfactory solutions to novel, global challenges?

As suggested by Galbraith and Buck (1977: 330), a further characteristic of transformational leaders is “the willingness to confront unequivocally the major anxiety of their people in their time. This, and not much else, is the essence of leadership”. Such leaders are usually comfortable with extraordinary levels of uncertainty. Indeed, in the times of uncertainty, they pursue all possible means to achieve ecological rehabilitation. They seem to have an adaptability that allows them to balance up the measure of the challenges they face, assess what needs to be done, and act accordingly. At the same time, they are able to accommodate and adapt to changes.

Therefore, transformational leaders must not only be active and adaptive, but also visionary in their thinking, dynamic, resilient, and effective in their responses. This is because they are required to intuitively understand that global resilience in the face of constant change demands constant creativity. Developments in politics are in flux, they live by moving and gain strength as they develop. Effective leaders view sustainable development as a persuasive option to make the necessary investment in the world that future generations will inherit.

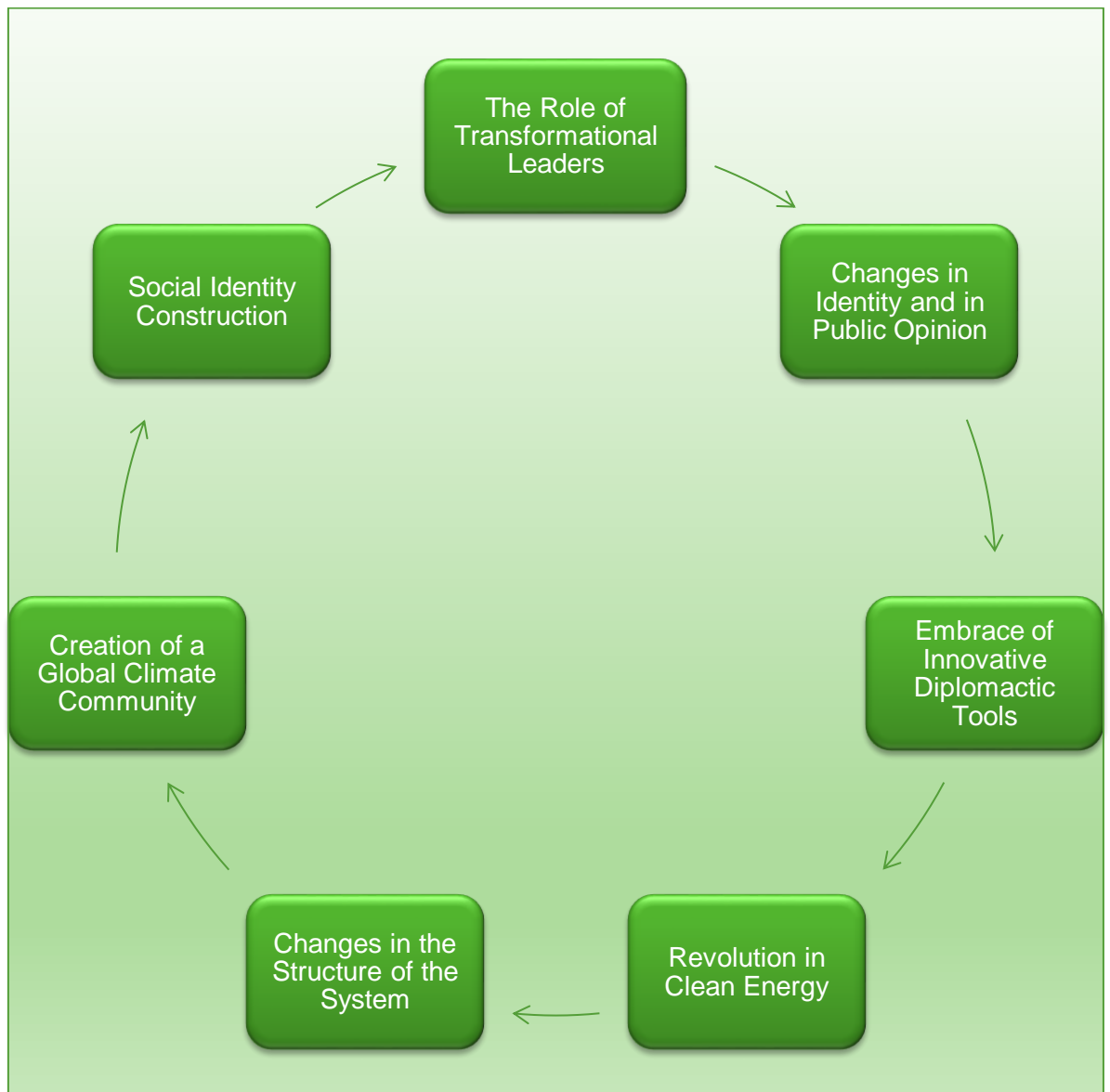
Furthermore, transformational leaders are particularly sensitive to, and astute at finding new ways of utilising the materials and tools available to them in order to solve pressing, trans-national challenges. They tend to favour attraction, cooperation and co-option rather than rule by command.

Consequently, such leaders attempt to construct new norms and rules that may alter the very structure of the international system whilst still gaining the support of other leaders. Thus, through persuasive discourse, global leaders may act as agents of change. They therefore enable stimulation of new attitudes, modern practices of dialogue, diplomacy, problem solving and conflict resolution on a global scale. They have to balance and perform the role of important intermediaries during the continual evolution and adaptation of societies. Working on effective climate solutions during a period of transition from fossil fuelled, growth-based, industrial civilisation toward an environmentally friendly, sustainable, low-carbon and thus more advanced civilisation is no easy task. This is because changes in human behaviour and thinking are necessary for humanity to devise effective ways to solve civilisational problems such as climate change, extreme poverty and inequality, financial and economic crisis, food crisis, water scarcity, energy security, migration, population growth and demographic shift, urbanization, health pandemics and infectious diseases. Equally, where the development is not sustainable, the degeneration of civilisation may occur. This is what Smith (1776 quoted in Ferguson, 2012a: 10) named as 'the stationary state'. One symptom of this may be institutional decay, ultimately leading to economic decline (Ferguson, 2012a: 10). To solve problems listed above constructively, and to avoid Smith's 'stationary state' humanity cannot expect the responsibility and work to be left to be done only by individual nations or even single leaders (Asimov, 1989). Therefore, this thesis argues that each member of humanity must begin to think of themselves as living in a global, or even, a planetary civilisation. This excludes tribalism and putting one's country first.



Movement to a higher level of civilization is necessary. Only this way, will humans start to solve global problems such as climate change in the most effective way that sustains and supports everyone. Most scientific accounts suggest that a successful transition to a 'higher level' of civilisation will be realised by a society that maintains respect for the natural environment and for the Earth as a whole. The role of transformational leaders when responding to social movements, enlisting followership to pay for global public goods is shown in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4



As the diagram shows, thanks to their initiative, authority and legitimacy transformational leaders encourage simultaneous changes in the identity of societies exerting impact on public opinion. In fact, it remains within their scope to generate formal or informal cooperation for viable solutions to global challenges through climate diplomacy. More specifically, this can be achieved, by building international consensus on the need to preserve global public goods and manage the climate. Subsequently, the creation of an inclusive, climate community could eliminate negative consequences of climate change in the future. Humans and global leaders in particular have a responsibility to shepherd nature and the whole of creation. Therefore, leaders have a responsibility to organise our societies in a way that civilisation does not damage the long-term viability of sustaining life.

This thesis defends the argument that when transformational leaders such as President Obama when they are perceptive, prepared, persuasive and persistent they can effectively and creatively respond to the gravest of challenges facing civilisation. According to Avolio and Bass (2002: 2), transformational leaders act on the world stage in a way that motivates and inspires those around them by providing meaning and engendering trust that leads to a team spirit. As a result, they lead people to ask not, “What can my country do for me?” [instead people ask] “But what can I do for my country?” (President John F. Kennedy, 1961).

President Kennedy, for example, inspired a generation that transformed America: they marched for justice, they served in the Peace Corps, in the inner

cities, and even in outer space. His followers carried on that work by fighting against poverty, violence and war, and championing human rights, health care and freedom of immigration. As Kennedy stated in his Inaugural Address: "This work will not be finished in our lifetime". In light of this, it is up to us to pass these values on to future generation. The current generation has inherited a complicated world with countless, unsolved problems such as climate change. This is the type of challenge that America thanks to policy innovation should be energised about and eager to solve. Latest innovations from the world of environment, science and technology can offer a degree of hope, wisdom and progress for all of humanity. If America is to lead the world in solving global challenges, it must ensure that is done right. A simple, yet important lesson to be learned is that during a crisis the awareness of the danger among ordinary citizens is vital. Courage is also needed to recognise opportunities to solve problems. In fact, "Great challenges are opportunities and it is each generation's responsibility to meet those challenges with the same combination of energy, faith and devotion that President Kennedy and his contemporaries displayed decades ago" (Kennedy quoted by JFK Library, 2017). In light of this, it could be argued that global voluntarism could be further promoted. At the same time, people should demand greater climate action from leaders. Equally, effective transformational leaders understand and respect their followers, who are involved in envisioning and believing in vision of a better future. Leaders such as President Obama are skilled in persuasive communication thereby effectively encouraging people to commit to common goals and build on a shared vision. Even if the problem of climate change remains unsolved, President Obama will be remembered as a leader who at

least attempted to address it and was motivated to enact change. He showed a strength of spirit and determination. As Kennedy stated,

...I am certain that after the dust of centuries has passed over our cities, we, too, will be remembered not for victories or defeats in battle or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit.

(Kennedy, 1962).

#### **4.7 Summary**

Following from above evidence, President Obama's climate actions lived up to the model of norm-centred constructivism. President Obama offered a broad and comprehensive initiative on innovation in climate diplomacy. This was supported by a wide repertoire of innovative, diplomatic tools and methods to ensure that his climate diplomacy was both modern and effective. Under President Obama, America followed 'the hub Strategy on climate change', which according to Holland and Rosetti, (2015: 1) required American robust leadership in three areas:

- 1) "America acting as the 'Hub' of interlocking and multilateral climate agreements,
- 2) America buttressed the United Nations responsibility to measure and verify that nations are meeting their commitments, and
- 3) America creating and enforcing a norm that nations should move toward a lower carbon economy".

America addressed climate change promisingly, although not wholly successfully. Taking on an active role required moving beyond the functions of a coordinator or conciliator (Holland and Rosetti, 2015: 4). It also required a norm innovator and "a decisive instigator" with "a capability to influence other

nations to make commitments that they would not otherwise make” (Ibid.). As a leader of the international community, America was the only viable actor to fulfil this role under the leadership of President Obama. That required lots of authority and ability to influence in order to exert verifiable impact. Climate change is a collective action problem. This means that the incentive and temptation to free ride were high (Ibid.). Therefore, American strategy for addressing this problem focused on bargaining power to improve cooperation and increase influence. This was a persuasive power of President Obama’s diplomacy to enlist followers. This thesis has found out that thanks to ‘the hub strategy on climate change’ President Obama created a norm of environmental stewardship. States feel a considerable pressure to follow this norm under America’s leadership. However, the norm is not yet strong enough to “threaten any state with either expulsion for global international society or status demotion within its hierarchy” (Falkner and Buzan, 2017: 30).

However, major diplomatic action on climate change occurred after 2013. This is because during Obama first presidential campaign, the focus of presidential goals shifted to other priorities. This means that climate change was ignored for a long time, “The president made climate change a surprise centrepiece of his second inaugural address, promising to use unilateral executive powers to bypass congressional opposition” in order to enact policies that dismantle climate change (Pika and Maltese, 2014: 496). In light of the evidence presented above it is concluded that:

- The Obama administration used governmental channels, informal diplomatic tools, innovative and creative approaches to gather global leaders around the issue of effectively addressing climate change.
- President Obama is the first American president to both reduce U.S. climate pollution and convince developing nations to act.
- The Obama administration relied sufficiently degree on innovation in climate diplomacy and the climate policymaking process. The most explicit example of club diplomacy and decentralised, bottom-up approach were visible during the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.
- President Obama applied a variety of innovative climate diplomacy tools such as: universal agreements with legally binding targets, pledge and review system, coalitions, transitional networks or alliances, leaders' summits, bilateral agreements, climate clubs, subsidies, formal diplomacy aims stated in official policy documents and non-federal climate diplomacy movements.
- President Obama harnessed science, technology, and innovation to a sufficient degree (Zewail, 2010: 204). President Obama stressed a "comprehensive policy of partnership, especially between the developed and developing worlds" (Ibid.).
- The Obama's administration successfully built networks with educational institutions. The U.S. Secretary of State at the time, Hillary Clinton, announced the Science Envoy program in 2009 educating the world's children. This demonstrated that it is not impossible to open new doors for economic opportunities, involvement in democratic governance, or building knowledge-based societies (Ibid.).

- President Obama demonstrated an understanding of the importance of science and technology innovations, especially in their ability to drive economic development. The Science Envoy program outlined by President Obama in his historic Cairo speech in 2009 redefined the role of science, and applied both “science for diplomacy” and “diplomacy for science”.
- President Obama succeeded in creating quality jobs and lasting economic growth alongside environmental conservation. The main assumption of his climate diplomacy was based on the belief that it is possible to protect the natural environment and promote economic growth at the same time.
- President Obama remained at the cutting edge of innovation. Therefore, he provided a catalyst for a number of significant breakthroughs. He also invested in Research and Development. This means he was informed about, and relied on, science in order to address climate change.
- The Obama administration utilised an effective combination of young talent, innovative thinking, and technological tools in order for the American government to deliver effective climate policies.
- President Obama’s ‘Green New Deal’, although promising, was not wholly equivalent to unleashing a ‘new Industrial Revolution’ in clean energy. However, this is an ongoing process that must be considered.
- The Administration of President Obama applied innovation on a large scale and energetically enough. This enabled progress in global clean energy.
- As a result of innovation in climate diplomacy, America was energised to play a leading role in uniting the international community around effective

solutions to climate change. In addition, the American government built lasting coalition and implemented experimental, problem-solving ideas. This includes, for example, Mission Innovation.

- The progress in adopting clean energy solutions is ongoing and momentum on clean energy has become irreversible.
- President Obama's climate diplomacy encouraged internalisation of climate norms. However, the project is ongoing. Therefore, expected results are part of the process of building a global climate community.

In conclusion, the Obama administration embraced and enabled both long-awaited change and accelerated progress in climate diplomacy. Alternative diplomacy, the so-called guerrilla diplomacy, alongside climate have been gaining momentum since President Obama took office (Copeland, 2010). The evidence suggests that President Obama attempted to become a transformational leader. He was led by innovative, persuasive and visionary methods and activated cross-cultural, grassroots approaches to diplomatic practice (Copeland, 2009). At the governmental level, climate diplomacy cultivated new partnerships and coalitions thanks to building diplomatic bridges. At the non-governmental, bottom-up level the process of building climate community is still not finished. An effective climate community could drive climate action forward, even in the case of relative American decline. Although the Obama administration opened numerous channels and emphasised the urgency of the issue, in a long-span perspective there are still some continuities in US climate change politics since the early 1990s leading many authors to uphold the argument of a dominant American hegemony.



(Paterson, 2009: 140). Despite this, it can be observed is that America began to put pressure to reform the architecture of the ineffective climate regime in order to ensure a swifter progress in arriving at a constructive solution. This is mainly because extreme weather events put an increased amount of stress on the economy. President Obama's efforts, at least in his rhetoric, were a classic example of catalytic, inspirational and entrepreneurial diplomacy. He acted as a new kind of diplomat, one who is more flexible, innovative, adaptive, uses the methods of climate and public diplomacy and who is more adept at using social media while being more comfortable with social networks (Copeland, 2010: 205). President Obama succeeded at mobilising multiple governmental and non-government partners around combating climate challenge. Climate diplomacy exercised by president Obama shows that ideas matter. However, it also shows that their execution is more important. Success required convincing public opinion. President Obama invoked science and technology which have been "backbone of innovations that have driven economic development throughout human history" (Zewail, 2010: 10). State-based, closed-door great power diplomacy was still taking place under President Obama. However, the advocates of a "new diplomacy" would describe President Obama as an "entrepreneurial diplomat" who was willing to work directly with populations, and non-government actors by representing different peoples in a public dimension of diplomacy (Lalani, 2011: 236). As an "entrepreneurial diplomat", President Obama was innovative and creative. He was more willing to take political risks by engaging with a highly contested issues while also attempting to build trust and warn others of the danger of climate change. His approach demonstrated agility, acuity, resilience and

persuasiveness. He utilised intelligence, personal and situational sensitivity, plus catalytic and transformational orientation focused on collective initiatives.

Having discussed innovative forms of climate diplomacy utilised by President Obama, the following chapter will discuss both successes and failures of his climate diplomacy.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **The Achievements and Failures of President Obama in Climate Diplomacy**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter will detail President Obama's accomplishments and lost opportunities in climate diplomacy during his eight years in office. Discussing these pertinent issues will enable answering the third research questions of this thesis. First, the chapter will outline theoretical perspectives on the kind of leadership model that would be efficient for dealing with climate change. This will then be followed by a discussion of President Obama's recognition of the climate crisis and his 2013 Climate Action Plan. Analysis will then be conducted on the enduring triumphs and missed opportunities of President Obama's climate diplomacy. It will end with an assessment of the political endurance of President Obama's climate change policies and suggest what additional policies President Obama could have pursued.

The analysis conducted in this chapter will reveal that President Obama's climate legacy is impressive. This is mainly because of his goals were ambitious. President Obama's climate diplomacy was justified, necessary, and successful in addressing the problem of climate change. As Dimsdale (2016: 1) noticed,

After sitting on the sidelines during the previous administration, the United States has emerged under President Obama as a leader in international climate diplomacy. In particular, during President Obama's second term the U.S. has invested substantial political capital and foreign policy resources into the pursuit of an ambitious domestic and international agenda...

President Obama's actions in embracing climate diplomacy were proportionate to the scale of the danger that climate change poses to the survival of civilisation. However, the formation of the climate community that could effectively solve the problem is not complete. Despite Obama's successes in initiating the start of the formation of a climate community, his climate policies are at risk of being withdrawn (Bailey, 2017).

Data has been obtained through researching official policy documents, White House papers and fact sheets, speeches, numerous assessments presented in academic journals, and commentaries available in the press and online. In addition, other documentary sources cited in the literature review will be used in discussion. The aim of this chapter is to evaluate to what extent President Obama's climate actions were effective, innovative and successful.

Using evidence from both primary and secondary sources, this chapter will briefly identify the achievements and failures of President Obama's climate diplomacy. In order to do this, his actions will be discussed in comparison to what President Obama promised. In addition, his actions will be compared with different stances on climate offered by constructivist scholars. By utilising the proposed methodology outlined in the previous chapter, an evaluation of President Obama's successes and failures in climate diplomacy will be pursued. In addition, various important and salient aspects are identified, and possible solutions are put forward for future leaders of America.

## **5.2 What Kind of Leadership Would Be Required to Solve Climate Change?**

This section will outline an analytic framework on which the rest of the chapter will be based. This framework also makes suggestions about what kind of leadership President Obama could have displayed when dealing with global climate change. Despite predictions and visions of the eventual collapse of civilisation, norm-centred constructivist scholars believe that human agency is shaping global configuration of power to the extent that it can even change its predominant structure. Change has the potential to occur by designing an effective solution to civilisational problems such as climate change. If true, it follows from this theoretical model that transformational leaders could rescue not only a nation but also a declining civilisation by implementing appropriate policies that aim to resolve the crisis. How can this be achieved? This thesis suggest that it would be necessary to cultivate a broader international consensus that was already generated during Presidency of Barack Obama alongside with tactical skill and strategic firmness. This could be followed by the persistent introduction and internalisation of climate norms. This would serve to change established international practices consistent with the model of the life cycle of international norms put forward by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 898), described earlier in this thesis (Cf. Figure 3.1). Acting as a transformational leader President Obama had an ability to motivate followers and to accomplish difficult goals in moments of crisis. In particular, this task required decisive leadership based on: firmness in overcoming opposition, motivating undecided followers, winning the support of public opinion, negotiating with deniers and gaining support for the constructive solutions.

Transformational leadership is made possible when leaders' values, (internal standards) are adopted by others (internalised) thereby producing changes in the attitudes, beliefs, and goals of followers (ibid.). This can result in more effective change. Values such as integrity, humility, honesty, hard work, courage, justice, tolerance, curiosity, loyalty, and patriotism have the potential to transform the mindsets of followers'. In addition, the commitment of followers to their leaders' values enables the influence of such leadership to permeate through to the whole international system (Bass, Waldman and Avolio, 1986). According to this model, a crisis such as the global warming could become the prime source of transforming strategic vision into a creative solution. As Burns (2003: 167) observed, "Creative insight is transforming". Such a spark or diplomatic initiative might arise, "as a fundamental challenge to an existing system, calling for its overthrow and replacement, or it might be a deep restructuring, or the inclusions of significant excluded elements, [such as climate norms], or perhaps a revitalisation, anew birth of "founding principles" (Burns, 2003: 167).

Some authors have referred to President Obama's goal of overcoming the established order of fossil fuel even calling it the true revolution or 'green New Deal' (Palea, 2016: 49; Nicola, 2009: 14). This is because according to Palea (2016: 49), "it entails transitioning to an energy paradigm that is completely different from the current one, i.e. based on energy saving, the rational use of energy, and relying on renewable sources to produce energy (in particular solar and wind power)." (Palea, 2016: 49). If President Obama had not been met with the strong opposition from institutions with vested interests in

defending the old energy regime his climate diplomacy may have exerted a more significant impact and possibly lead to, as described below, a revolution. Furthermore, consistent with this model, creative leadership re-frames values, sets priorities, and provides direction to the sense of the word, its defining spirit and key challenges (Ibid.). According to Burns (2003: 167), “re-framing means the transformation of values”. Above all, “the ultimate test of creative leadership lies not only in having a new idea but in bringing it to life” (Ibid.). Whether such leadership succeeds or not depends on the quality and possibility of “accomplishing the real-world change it has promised” (Ibid.). Burns goes on to explain what this necessary precondition is by stating, “The would-be leader must reach out to others for help. But would-be followers will respond only if the new frame articulated by creative leadership speaks directly to them, to their underlying wants, discontents, and hopes” (Burns, 2003: 168). Therefore, followers must choose to follow, they must grasp the urgency for change, perceive its possibility or opportunity, and envision the potential for a new direction (Ibid.). As Burns (2003: 169) explained, “transforming leadership mobilizes only those who are, if latently, ready to be mobilized, and then only if the frame is true to their wants”. As a result, “the effectiveness of a transforming frame and ultimately a leader’s success depends on the ability to transform a vision into reality” (Ibid.). In other words, it is frame’s potency, “its ability to strike a deep chord” (Ibid.).

Thus, leadership succeeds when creative diplomacy engenders for leaders and followers together, the conviction that their situation is not hopeless, or without possible solution, but rather a “limiting situation which they can

transform” (Freire quoted in Burns, 2003: 169). In other words, the success of any diplomatic efforts depends on the intensity of, “a mobilizing and empowering faith” in the midst of the collaborative struggle for real change. President Obama followed this model to a great extent. In light of this, it is worth mentioning that Pope Francis complained that humanity lacks, at the present time, a proper culture for responding to the ecological crisis. He believed that the current responses from leaders are weak. Pope Francis (2015: 2) believed that current leaders are short-sighted and incapable. He stated, “We lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations”.

Based on this, these explanations make a key contribution to this thesis. America was presented with an opportunity and may have been able to bring about a new beginning for all nations, based on President Obama’s climate diplomacy. This may have occurred, had President Obama assumed the role of a transformational, creative, and heroic leader. Provided that his actions were powerfully redirected towards solving of global challenges such as climate change and not only on national issues.

Does the international community have an alternative to the active role of President Obama and his climate diplomacy in solving climate change? According to Quigley (1961: 17), civilisation’s decline occurs when its instrument of expansion is transformed into a self-serving institution. That is, when social arrangements that meet real social needs are transformed into



social institutions which serve their own purposes regardless of real social needs. As solving climate change is considered to be 'the common global good' President Obama stated that no group of people should put themselves above any other group. As a result, the international community should unite to attempt to solve the problem together. More importantly, some civilisations can reform and renew themselves thanks to productive innovations. This is despite theoretical models claiming the opposite. Therefore, could such an innovation be generated by directing America's attention towards environmental sustainability based on effective global action against climate change? Ehrlich and Ehrlich (2008) suggested that if an environmental disaster is to be averted, humanity will need to drastically limit the flow of greenhouse gases into the environment. In addition, more effort will need to be placed into the preservation of natural ecosystems that are critical for survival.

New standards are needed with comparative costs and benefits derived from synthetic chemicals that are inevitably released into the environment. Much more effort needs to be put into the prevention of pandemics, especially of pathogens, such as the Zika virus. Ehrlich (2008: 365) advocates that belief that humanity must deal promptly with a number of challenges, such as: population, resource depletion, poverty, equity and environment. Over-consumption by the rich will need to be curtailed, and under-consumption by the poor will need to be eliminated. Human population growth also ought to be humanely prevented if sustainability is to be achieved.

Consistent with Ehrlich (2008), humanity must gain control of, and eliminate, weapons of mass destruction before sub-national groups make malign use of them. This will need to be done whilst investing huge amounts of money in completely revising the energy infrastructure over the next decade or so. Ehrlich (2008) further states that humanity must be prepared to modify the way in which water is stored and transported. This is because precipitation patterns and river flows change are at great peril to the agricultural industry. With close to a billion people underfed, malnourished, and millions dying of hunger and hunger-related diseases annually, the world's food situation is already marginal. The main lesson that Ehrlich (2008: 3) attempted to convey to future generations is that humanity has become so powerful that it has the ability to significantly undermine the ability of the Earth's environment to support life.

This is a statement with which prominent ecologist, Lovelock (2006) would likely support. This is because he suggested that humanity has become dangerously ignorant of its own ignorance. As such, it rarely attempts to view things as a whole. In other words, he ascribes to 'a big-picture' perspective. By looking at a global ecosystem as a whole, Lovelock (2006) has warned of advancing trends, including human population increase, degradation of land, depletion of resources, accumulation of wastes, pollution, climate change, abuses of technology, and destruction of biodiversity in all forms. Together they constitute a threat to future, human welfare and security unknown to previous generations.

"If human beings are to achieve a constructive human society in harmony with nature, then it must be guided by more respect for it" (Lovelock, 2006: xiii).

Humans must recognise that they are no exceptions in the universe, so must work alongside the forces of creation. To preserve the planet, environmental leadership is required. A sustainable world must be characterised by a balance between the level of economic growth and by ecosystem viability (Schmandt and Ward, 2009: 6).

This raises the question of whether President Obama offered such a new kind of leadership? Did he create solidarity among humanity, with America as a constructive frontrunner? To what extent has President Obama been successful? The answer to these questions, will be suggested below. However, regardless of the answers, extensive co-operation between all nations in the interdependent world is required. Whilst effectively navigating the processes associated with globalisation, by persuading leaders of the world that there is a need to work together, to address common global challenges and to initiate a new era of constructive, global cooperation, President Obama appeared to have learned the lessons of history. When imagination is joined to a common purpose and courage, there is no challenge that is overwhelmingly difficult. The first step on this long journey may be to address the tragedy of global actions eroding the earth's natural resources. The next step may be to reform of the system of global governance to make it much more inclusive. The third step could be based on establishing effective channels of communication between the great powers who focus on solutions to climate change.

The modern diplomacy exercised by President Obama could have been applied to reach necessary international agreements, compromises, and

settlements, particularly when governments' objectives are in conflict. New and innovative methods of diplomacy, whether through global summit meetings, private meetings between negotiators, publicised conferences, or informal, minilateral meetings, must lead to attempts to exert effective impact and changes to policies. In addition, the actions, objectives, and attitudes of other governments can also be influenced through persuasion, offering rewards, and exchanging concessions (Holsti, 1992: 144). As mentioned before, the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement is evidence of successful climate diplomacy in practice.

This thesis argues that through tightening the bond of cosmopolitanism, enabled by diplomacy, humanity could have overcome the challenge of climate change. However, often it is the case that global leaders gathered at diplomatic forums or summits discussing issues ineffectively. Often unproductive disagreements take place and no constructive decisions are made. Diplomacy could foster a sense of urgency among policy makers, especially during the crisis stage of global issues where such an influence could become a mobilising factor. This is because when leaders feel that only a little time is available for making critical decisions, they tend to cooperate much more effectively, thereby, spontaneously reaching compromises. Furthermore, evidence shows that policy makers tend to proceed more successfully when decisions and actions are taken rapidly and decisively. There is an urgent need to solve the climate crisis through climate diplomacy. In other words, the spirit of voluntarism, global coordination, constructive dialogue and the support from earth sciences and modern satellite

technologies is needed. Disastrous consequences may result if this is not achieved. As studies of how scientific data stemming from various fields of research, such as the atmosphere, oceans, land ice, and others can fit together constitute Earth system science. Inconspicuous, incremental steps and innovative, diplomatic breakthroughs can lead to finding effective solutions to even greater, global challenges. Human creativity can and will decide the future of civilisation. Therefore, a possible scenario, which President Obama is likely to have contemplated, is the movement towards a new and enlightened beginning for civilisation by creating climate community where new solutions and new ideas are introduced. This could result in new life, a burst of creative spirit leading to new hope for the planet.

### **5.3 President Obama's Recognition of the Climate Crisis**

President Obama was one of only a few global leaders not to ignore the problem of climate change. He recognised the urgency of the climate crisis and soundly and vocally demonstrated this in his numerous pronouncements. President Obama acknowledged this by stating, "Climate change is no longer a distant threat – we are already feeling its impacts across the country and the world" (Obama, 2013: 4). "The Record of President Obama on Climate and Energy" clearly stated that,

President Obama believes that no challenge poses a greater threat to our children, our planet, and future generations than climate change - and that no other country on Earth is better equipped to lead the world towards a solution.

(The White House, 2013: 1).

The evidence accumulated and prepared by a creative minority of scientists, scholars, and intellectuals over the past several decades has shown unequivocally that the planet has been warming, primarily due to human activities, over the past fifty years (The White House, 2013d). As a result, “summers have been becoming longer and hotter. Winters have been becoming shorter and warmer. Ice on land and in lakes and seas has been melting” (The White House, 2013d). “Global sea levels have been rising. And from storms, hurricanes, and heavy downpours to droughts, fires, and floods, extreme weather events have been becoming more frequent and intense” (Ibid.). Simply put, “climate change has been dramatically altering the planet, and altering it in ways detrimental to the preservation of life on the Earth” (Ibid.). At the same time, greenhouse gas emissions were projected to increase indefinitely when the President took office (The White House, 2013d).

In light of this, the most difficult challenge for the President’s climate diplomacy was how to quickly and purposefully convince and effectively persuade both the American and global public about the catastrophic consequences of climate change threatening even the existence of civilisation (McCarthy, 2017). Some authors have been explicitly warned that the societal and environmental decline of civilisation is already under way (Brown, 2011: 7). As the experts from the Earth Policy Institute observed, “no previous civilisation has survived the ongoing destruction of its natural supports” (Ibid.: 7). However, “the archaeological record indicates that civilisation collapse does not come out of the blue... Economic and social collapse was almost always preceded by a period of environmental decline”. In this context, President

Obama had a responsibility to act quickly not only as a national, American leader but also as a global leader whose goal was to save civilisation.

As Gore (2013: 326) observed, more recently “the frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events connected to climate change have begun to have a significant impact on public attitudes toward global warming”. Public support to reduce greenhouse gas emissions has been steadily increasing in America despite the ongoing denier propaganda campaign put forward by those who deny climate change. In response to growing public support for a major climate action, President Obama, in his major Foreign Affairs Article in 2007 entitled, “Renewing American Leadership”, clearly his ambitious political goal of fighting climate change,

Strengthened institutions and invigorated alliances and partnerships are especially crucial if we are to defeat the epochal, man-made threat to the planet: climate change.

(Obama, 2007: 13).

President Obama’s 2013 “Climate Action Plan”, discussed in more detail in following section of this thesis, stated unequivocally that “due to climate change, the weather is getting more extreme”. Temperatures have been rising across the United States of America and around the world and, “Fifteen of the sixteen warmest years on record globally have occurred between 2000 and 2015, and 2015 was the warmest year on record” (CEA Report, 2016: 3). According to the White House (2013c), the ten warmest years on record on a global scale have all occurred since 1998. The global annual average temperature has increased by more than 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit between 1880 and 2012. The main cause this is carbon pollution. Furthermore, extreme

weather could cause an economic collapse that threatens civilisation's survival. In 2012 alone, climate and weather disasters costed the American economy more than 100 billion US dollars (The White House, 2013c). Climate scientists are united in public announcements. They warn that global civilisation needs to avert an additional two-degree temperature increase to avoid catastrophic impacts of climate change.

Consequently, President Obama responded with a firm political campaign. His proposals focused on addressing climate change and there has been growing support for this action among the majority of citizens for many years. However, as Gore (2013: 327) noticed, "the intensity of the majority's feeling has been too low to overcome the efforts of the carbon polluters to paralyse political action". In 2008, President Obama's administration meant that climate action had the chance to gain accelerating momentum. It was believed this could be achieved if President Obama from the very start was serious and wholly committed to a decisive, consequential and confident action by successfully enacting national climate legislation and securing actual and tangible climate policies. As Lavelle (2016) noticed, "had the White House pushed for a comprehensive national climate plan early, it could have given Obama's climate agenda legislative backing, making it much harder for his successor to undo". In order to achieve success an all-out political push in the style of 'the Samurai sword cut' through the climate policy gridlock immediately followed by a solid build-up of the congressional and global coalition in support of the previously chosen climate action plan was necessary (Gore, 2013: 328). However, there were still some pockets of resistance from powerful vested



interests that were both obvious and covert. Despite this, political support for climate action provided the ideal time to introduce 'a Samurai sword cut'. Therefore, during the early stages of President Obama's time in office, in 2009, there was significant hope that America's policy on climate change would change, and it did (Gore, 2013: 327). President Obama demonstrated an understanding of the value of diplomacy and need to build bridges with the Vatican, with fellow global leaders and businesses across America, and the world. To what extent his policies changed is subject to discussion below.

The following section aims to answer pertinent questions necessary to objectively evaluate President Obama's achievements in climate diplomacy. These questions are as follows: 1) Has President Obama's diplomacy been successful in addressing the problem of climate change? 3) What were the major successes of President Obama's climate diplomacy?

- To what extent did climate policies change under President Obama?
- Has this change been enough and was it sufficiently ambitious?
- Has President Obama moved decisively from rhetoric to action in his climate diplomacy?
- How did President Obama's Climate Action plan affect the strategies of other nations in combating climate change?
- Was climate treated as a priority by the Obama administration?
- Has climate action pursued by President Obama been sufficiently decisive, immediate, and all-encompassing?
- Were the policy mechanisms selected to address the climate crisis adequate?

- Were the actions of President Obama’s administration on renewable energy performed at the scale necessary to confront the climate crisis?
- Did the change happened at the right time, pace, and early enough in order to prevent the climate crisis from escalating?
- Were President Obama’s climate programs mainly designed just as a strategy for improving the American economy or were they equally intended to heal the planet?
- Has the Administration of President Obama applied climate diplomacy powerfully enough to ensure that the effort to combat climate change was a global one?
- Has the Administration of President Obama sufficiently secured their climate policies so that they cannot be undone or rolled back?

The following sections will discuss the enduring achievements and lost opportunities of President Obama’s climate action. This will be preceded by a discussion of President Obama’s action plan and followed by discussion of enduring achievements of President Obama’s climate diplomacy.

#### **5.4 The President’s Climate Action Plan**

Once President Obama established his goal of defeating climate change, it was then necessary to develop a plan, framework, or strategy. He made it through the announcement of the Climate Action Plan. The plan, was announced on June 25, 2013. It outlined ambitious seventy-five ambitious goals in three areas: 1) Cutting carbon pollution in America 2) Preparing the United States for the impacts of climate change, and 3) Leading international

efforts to combat global climate change and prepare for its impacts (Obama, 2013: 5).

As Revkin (2013) noticed, “the three main sections describe planned regulations, rules and standards aimed at cutting releases of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from power plants, heavy vehicles and buildings; a suite of new steps to cut vulnerability to climate and coastal hazards; and a fresh summary of international initiatives the administration plans to pursue with other countries”. However, the 2013 Climate Action Plan was only a framework and it needed to be translated “into on-the-ground action” (Revkin, 2013). Below is a short description of the three policy sectors into which the Climate Action plan was divided into as described by the White House.

**1)** The key goal of President Obama’s climate action plan was to “reduce the amount of energy consumed by American families, cutting down on their gas and utility bills” (Obama, 2013: 5). This plan acknowledged that even as America acts to reduce the greenhouse-gas pollution that is driving climate change, the American government must be also ready to, “empower the nation’s communities, businesses, and individual citizens with the information they need to cope with the changes in climate that are already underway” (The White House, 2013b). President Obama “made a pledge that by 2020, America would reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in the range of 17 percent below 2005 levels if all other major economies agreed to limit their emissions as well” (Obama, 2013: 4). The second goal was to reduce economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 26 to 28 percent (from the 2005

levels) by 2025. Carbon pollution has also been acknowledged as the main cause of climate change affecting public health (Obama, 2013: 5). According to the Plan, “cutting carbon pollution will help spark business innovation so that to modernize power plants, producing cleaner forms of energy thereby creating more jobs and cutting dependence on foreign oil” (Ibid.: 5). The Executive Office of the President observed that, “In 2012, U.S. carbon emissions fell to the lowest level in two decades even as the economy continued to grow” (Obama, 2013: 5). To build on this progress and to cut carbon pollution President Obama promised to put in place tough new, more stringent rules. He also promised several initiatives as described in “The President’s Climate Action Plan”:

- I. “Deploying Clean Energy”
  - Cutting Carbon Pollution from Power Plants
  - Promoting American Leadership in Renewable Energy
  - Unlocking Long-term Investment in Clean Energy Innovation
- II. Building a Twenty-Century Transportation Sector
  - Increasing Fuel Economy Standards
  - Developing and Deploying Advanced Transportation Technologies
- III. Cutting Energy Waste in Homes, Businesses, and Factories
  - Reducing Energy Bills for American Families and Businesses
    - Establishing a New Goal for Energy Efficiency Standards
    - Reducing Barriers to Investment in Energy Efficiency
    - Expanding the President’s Better Buildings Challenge
- IV. Reducing Other Greenhouse Gas Emissions
  - Curbing Emissions of Hydrofluorocarbons

- Reducing Methane Emissions
  - Developing an Interagency Methane Strategy
  - Pursuing a Collaborative Approach to Reducing Emissions
- Preserving the Role of Forests in Mitigating Climate Change

#### V. Leading at the Federal Level

- Leading in Clean Energy
- Federal Government Leadership in Energy Efficiency”

(The White House 2013a: 6-11).

2) The second key pillar saw the Obama Administration acknowledged the need to, “prepare for the impacts of a changing climate that are already being felt across the country”. Therefore, the Obama Administration promised to, “help state and local governments strengthen roads, bridges, and shorelines so we can better protect people’s homes, businesses and way of life from severe weather” (Obama, 2013: 5).

The 2013 Climate Action Plan states that the Obama Administration had already made significant progress towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions as a result of “doubling generation of electricity from wind, solar, and geothermal, and by establishing historic new fuel economy standards.” (Obama, 2013: 6). As Tubman (2015: 3) noticed, in general, “the second pillar focuses on strengthening resilience to climate change impacts”. As the outline below demonstrates the plan committed federal resources and assistance to help communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems develop more climate-resilient strategies while also improving the scientific basis on which future climate initiatives could be based (Ibid.: 3).

- I. “Building Stronger and Safer Communities and Infrastructure”
  - Directing Agencies to Support Climate-Resilient Investment
  - Establishing a State, Local and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness
  - Supporting Communities as They Prepare for Climate Impacts
  - Boosting the Resilience of Buildings and Infrastructure
  - Rebuilding and Learning from Hurricane Sandy
- II. Protecting Our Economy and Natural Resources
  - Identifying Vulnerabilities of Key Sectors to Climate Change
  - Promoting Resilience in the Health Sector
  - Promoting Insurance Leadership for Climate Safety
  - Conserving Water and Land Resources
  - Maintaining Agricultural Sustainability
  - Managing Drought
  - Reducing Wild Fire Risks
  - Preparing for Future Floods
- III. Using Sound Science to Manage Climate Impacts
  - Developing Actionable Climate Science
  - Assessing Climate-Change Impacts in the United States
  - Launching a Climate Data Initiative
  - Providing a Toolkit for Climate Resilience”

(The White House, 2013a: 12-16).

**3)** Finally, the third pillar involved promises from the Obama administration which stated that while it was taking action domestically to achieve significant global greenhouse gas emission reductions and enhance climate

preparedness it was, in addition, working “on major international initiatives focused on spurring concrete action, including bilateral initiatives with China, India, and other major emitting countries” (Obama, 2013: 17). Consequently, the third pillar of the President’s Action Plan, as detailed below, “focuses on strengthening international leadership to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to climate impacts” (Tubman, 2015: 4). The plan “commits the administration to work with other countries bilaterally, through international fora and international organizations, and multilaterally, through multilateral negotiations, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)” (Ibid.). According to President Obama, “these initiatives not only serve to support the efforts of the United States and others to achieve our goals for 2020, but also will help us move beyond those and bend the post-2020 global emissions trajectory further” (Obama, 2013: 17). As a key part of this effort, America was working intensively to forge global and collective responses to climate change through a number of important international negotiations:

I. “Working with Other Countries to Take Action to Address Climate Change

- Enhancing Multilateral Engagement with Major Economies
- Expanding Bilateral Cooperation with Major Emerging Economies
- Combating Short-Lived Climate Pollutants
- Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
- Expanding Clean Energy Use and Cut Energy Waste
- Negotiating Global Free Trade in Environmental Goods and Services
- Phasing Out Subsidies that Encourage Wasteful Consumption of Fossil Fuels
- Leading Global Sector Public Financing Towards Cleaner Energy

- Strengthening Global Resilience to Climate Change
- Mobilizing Climate Finance
- II. Leading Efforts to Address Climate Change through International Negotiations
- Working with Other Countries to Take Action to Address Global Climate Change
  - Engaging with Major Economies
    - ✓ A historic joint announcement with China’s President Xi Jinping
    - ✓ Working with Prime Minister Modi of India on advancing our ambitious climate and clean energy goals
    - ✓ The U.S. welcomed the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) of Mexico, announced by President Peña Nieto in March 2015.
  - Leadership in International Forums
    - ✓ Major Economies Forum
    - ✓ G-7 Summit
    - ✓ Clean Energy Ministerial
    - ✓ International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
  - Bolstering Global Public-Sector Financing Towards Cleaner Energy
  - Combatting Short-Lived Climate Pollutants
  - Mobilizing Climate Finance
  - Negotiating Global Free Trade in Environmental Goods
  - Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
  - Strengthening Global Resilience to Climate Change
  - Enhancing Climate Resilience in Developing Nations”

(The White House 2015a: 18-22).



According to Tubman (2015), the administration of President Obama, “has made increasingly significant progress toward achieving many of the goals of the Climate Action Plan”. However, the details of some the initiatives have not yet been detailed or announced. The plan demonstrates a commitment toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions, “one that is important to meet the U.S. goals of reducing emissions 17 percent by 2020 and 26 to 28 percent by 2025, especially in the absence of congressional action” (Tubman, 2015). Over all, it can be argued that the plan constitutes an ambitious strategy aimed at consequential action. The key question necessary for evaluation is whether President Obama’s new climate policy had any impact on other countries. In other words, was it effective? (Victor, 2013). The plan did succeed in predicting and working around the political gridlock in Washington. As a result, it “relied mainly on regulatory and funding actions President Obama could take alone, rather than new legislation that would require help from Congress” (Ibid.). However, it has been suggested that plan was introduced relatively late, in 2013. This was five years after President Obama took office. As Lavelle (2017) observed, “had the White House pushed for a comprehensive national climate plan early, it could have given Obama's climate agenda legislative backing, making it much harder for his successor to undo”. However, despite this argument presented by Lavelle, it could be suggested that, “the Administration of President Obama also understood that its diplomacy would lack credibility unless it made headway domestically first, which is why the Climate Action Plan was released in 2013” (Dimsdale, 2016).

In light of the goals of President's Climate Action Plan outlined above, how much of this plan has actually been accomplished, so far?

### **5.5 The Enduring Achievements of President Obama's Climate Diplomacy**

This section will present the official view of the White House of President Obama's achievements in climate diplomacy. For the entirety of his time in office, between January 2009 and January 2017, President Obama's administration believed that "no challenge posed a greater threat to our children, our planet, and future generation than climate change" (Obama, State of the Union Address quoted in Geman, 2015). However sincere these motives were, tangible and remedial policies are required for effective politics. President Obama believed acting on climate change was a moral obligation of the present generation of leaders, and not a distant problem of the future. In fact, long before President Obama assumed office, "the planet has been changing in ways that – if left unchecked – would have a profound impact on all humankind" (The White House, 2013d). Having a leader in the White House, who is truly committed to clean energy, protecting American natural heritage, and making consistent climate progress by initiating a positive chain reaction of climate diplomacy was a reason for being proud for any global citizen and presented the world with a promising trend. President Obama was determined to move beyond the ineffective climate policies implemented in the past and instead act in the way that would lead to consequential climate policies and establishment of a solid climate and environmental legacy. President Obama's eight years in office resulted in major climate policy

achievements. This will be discussed and analysed below, according to the three key policy sectors:

## **1) Cutting Carbon Pollution**

The Obama administration made climate change a cornerstone policy issue. In particular, during Obama's second term they took specific action to cut carbon pollution. The Obama administration made the largest investment in clean energy in American history. This should arguably be considered as a significant achievement. This included, "increasing solar generation by twenty-fold and tripling electricity production from wind power" (The White House, 2013b). According to the White House (2013b), "the Clean Power Plan' will lead to 30 percent more renewable energy generation in 2030". President Obama established the first-ever national carbon pollution standards for power plants, the largest source of carbon pollution in America. The Clean Power Plan gave states, "flexible, cost-effective tools to cut carbon pollution from inefficient plants by 32 percent from 2005 levels by 2030, while preventing thousands of premature deaths and tens of thousands of childhood asthma attacks by reducing dangerous co-pollutants" (The White House, 2013b). President Obama's Clean Power Plan is a remarkable achievement. This is because it is, "the first ever national limit on carbon pollution for its largest source" (Gaby, 2017). As Gaby noticed, the plan sent an important signal to states and businesses. It initiated a momentum that could transform the way America produces energy in the future. In addition, President Obama also used his time in office to popularise the issue of climate change. On numerous occasions, the President attempted to educate American citizens about the

dangers of climate change. He did this through major speeches, video conferences, and television appearances. For example, he gave a speech at the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Summit. During this speech he aimed to convince the American public about the urgency to address climate change.

In addition, President Obama set standards that, according to the White House (2013b), “will nearly double the fuel economy of passenger vehicles by 2025 and established ground-breaking fuel economy standards for medium and heavy-duty trucks”. The President set new energy-efficiency standards for appliances and equipment. This has cut consumers’ electricity bills by hundreds of billions of US dollars. According to the White House (2013b), “Taken together, the final energy conservation standards completed during President Obama’s Administration will avoid 2.5 billion metric tons of carbon emissions by 2030”.

Furthermore, President Obama succeeded in launching the American Business Act on Climate Pledge. This demonstrates that President Obama’s actions focused on both global and national interests. This included focus on the American economy. This initiative grouped major American companies to voice their support for a strong international climate agreement. This ultimately led to Paris negotiations in 2015. At the same time, they also made “new commitments to cut carbon pollution, boost clean energy, and increase low-carbon investment” (The White House, 2013b).

A further achievement, the Obama administration stems from his goal to reduced emissions. To achieve this, he “developed and implemented a

strategy to reduce methane emissions, including new standards to cut emissions from new sources of oil and gas development and landfills” (The White House, 2013b). This was the first step to regulate existing sources in the oil and gas sector while also providing, “support for new technologies to detect and measure methane emissions” (The White House, 2013b). Obama also announced two rounds of private-sector commitments and executive actions that aimed to reduce America’s reliance on Hydrofluorocarbons and reduce cumulative global consumption of these greenhouse gases equivalent to more than 1 billion metric tons of carbon-dioxide by 2025. (The White House, 2013b).

At the federal level, the Obama administration managed to “reduce the government’s greenhouse gas emissions by more than seventeen percent and set a new aggressive goal of reducing Federal emissions by forty percent from 2008 levels by 2025” (The White House, 2013).

In addition, the administration collaborated with agricultural producers to cut emissions and increase carbon sequestration in the agricultural and forestry sectors through voluntary and incentive-based measures, and improved monitoring and measurement of land-sector greenhouse gas emissions. (The White House, 2013b). President Obama also placed focus on the education sector. He announced support for strong international climate action from more than three hundred colleges and universities, who signed the American Campus Act on Climate Pledge (The White House, 2013b).

## **2) Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change**

The second key pillar in the Climate Action Plan provided “federal agencies and communities with the resources they need to improve their resilience against sea level rise, extreme weather events, drought, and the other increasingly harmful impacts of climate change” (Gutin and Ingargiola, 2015). President Obama acknowledged that even though America was acting to cut carbon pollution, the American government, “must also prepare for the impacts of a changing climate that are already being felt across the country.” (The White House, 2013b). Consequently, in order to achieve progress, the Obama Administration promised to: a) help states, cities, and towns build stronger communities and infrastructure, b) protect critical sectors of American economy as well as natural resources, and c) use sound science to better understand and manage climate impacts (The White House, 2013c).

Therefore, the goal of the Action Plan was first, to place was to assess the impact of climate change on the United States. By adopting such a strategy, it aimed to, “translate scientific insights into practical knowledge so that to help decision-makers prepare for specific impacts” (The White House, 2013c). Second, the plan promised to support climate-resilient, local strategies by removing counterproductive policies and providing federal support in order to strengthen ‘communities on the ground.’ In other words, the second goal of the Plan was to “remove policy barriers, modernize programs, and establish a short-term task force of state, local, and tribal officials to advise on key actions the federal government can take to support local and state efforts to prepare for climate change” (The White House,

2013c). The third goal was to encourage rebuilding projects and develop from the lessons learned after Superstorm Sandy (this storm hit on 22nd Oct 2012. It costed 64.8 US dollars in damages and affected areas of the Caribbean, the East Coast of the United States, and Eastern Canada). In this regard, it promised to embrace “innovative strategies in the Hurricane Sandy-affected region to strengthen communities against future extreme weather and other climate impacts” (The White House, 2013c). It also committed to building “a new, consistent flood risk reduction standard established for the Sandy-affected region” and obligated agencies to “update flood-risk reduction standards for all federally funded projects” (The White House, 2013c). The fourth was to launch an effort to create sustainable and resilient hospitals. This goal was about to be realised “through a public-private partnership on increasing resilience of the health care industry” (ibid.). The fifth goal was to maintain agricultural productivity. This goal was about to be fulfilled by “delivering tailored, science-based knowledge to farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to help them understand and prepare for the impacts of climate change” (The White House, 2013c). The sixth goal was to provide tools for climate resilience. According to the White House, this task involved, “Including existing and newly developed climate preparedness tools and information that state, local and private-sector leaders need to make smart decisions” (ibid.). The final goal was to reduce risk of droughts and wildfires in order to “make it easier for communities to get the assistance they need to adapt to drier conditions” (The White House, 2013c).

### **3) Leading International Efforts to Combat Global Climate Change and Prepare for its Impacts**

The third pillar of President Obama's Climate Action Plan was to establish America as a world leader in climate action. Within this role, President Obama called for international bilateral and multilateral agreements to speed up a global transition away from fossil fuels and to increase international investment in clean energy technologies (Gutin and Ingargiola, 2015). The Obama administration aimed to position the United States of America as a key player in international climate negotiations, particularly in preparations for the 2015 United Nations (UN) Climate Conference in Paris. The White House (2013c) stated that, "America will continue to take on a leadership role in engaging the world's major economies to advance key climate priorities and in galvanizing global action through international climate negotiations". First, America worked with other countries to act to address climate change. The Record on President Obama's Action Plan stated that America realised that goal because the country has "led global efforts on climate change, resulting in a historic Paris Climate Agreement, with more than 190 countries coming together to adopt the most ambitious climate change agreement in history" (The White House, 2013b: 4). The White House paid special recognition to the treaty. This is because, "the Paris Agreement establishes a long-term, durable global framework to set the world on a course to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the most dangerous levels of climate change" (The White House, 2013b: 4). Furthermore, the Record stated that America would only sign the Paris Agreement but also will lead "an unprecedented international effort to push the Paris Agreement into force" more quickly than



other agreements (Ibid.). The 2015 Paris Climate Treaty is a major achievement of President Obama's climate diplomacy. It was long sought after and it committed to a significant reduction in climate pollution (Gaby, 2017).

Second, America committed to steer public sector financing toward cleaner energy sources. The White House (2013c) stated that President Obama has,

... led an international coalition of countries to secure an amendment to the Montreal Protocol to phase down HFCs, potent greenhouse gases. The amendment, which has strong support from U.S. industry, will avoid more than 80 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2050 – equivalent to more than a decade of emissions from the entire U.S. economy – and could avoid up to 0.5°C of warming by the end of the century.

Another key accomplishment of President Obama is his success in cultivating greater climate cooperation between major economies. Consequently, America forged,

A historic joint announcement with China, under which the United States launched an ambitious but achievable target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025, while China announced for the first time its intent to peak carbon emissions around 2030 and increase the share of zero-carbon energy capacity to 20 percent.

(The White House, 2013b: 4).

In fact, during Obama's presidency "the United States pursued an aggressive bilateral agenda to scale up cooperation with China on clean energy and climate change" (Lewis, 2017: 93). This strategy appears to have paid off and President Obama "announced an additional Joint Presidential Statement on Climate Change with China's President Xi Jinping that further defined implementation of the countries' post-2020 emissions targets" (Ibid.). The China-U.S. deal on carbon emissions that Obama and President Xi Jinping

announced in November 2014 already has stood out as “an even more important moment than the Paris agreement” (Kammen quoted in Lavelle, 2016). According to Dimsdale (2016),

..the centerpiece of US climate diplomacy was the US-China climate agreement in November 2014. The joint announcement of post-2020 targets was the result of careful and painstaking diplomacy over many months, and was the key to unlocking the stalemate between developed and developing countries in the negotiations.

Achieved cooperation with China was a significant accomplishment and demonstrated the ability of the Climate Action Plan to provide America with greater practical leverage over the actions of other countries. “For two countries that together account for 40 percent of the world's energy use and carbon emissions to go from laggards to leaders is really extraordinary” (Ibid.). The hope is that U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue initiated during Presidency of Barack Obama will serve as a foundation for building a new architecture of global peace while further enhancing dialogue on successful climate solutions.

President Obama represented America to lead over 190 countries in to securing both a global standard for reducing carbon emissions from commercial aircraft and an innovative, market-oriented and industry supported agreement to limit emissions across the aviation sector. President Obama launched the Mission Innovation, a landmark commitment, which aimed to double public funding for clean energy research and development from 15 billion US dollars to 30 billion US dollars in five years (The White House, 2013b: 5).

President Obama has also,

... pledged \$3 billion to support the Green Climate Fund to reduce carbon pollution and strengthen resilience in developing countries, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. The GCF will play an important role in improving resilience to climate impacts and addressing the security risks associated with climate change.

(The White House, 2013b: 5).

America has made a commitment to combat short-lived climate pollutants. In cooperation with Canada and Mexico, America has proposed an amendment to the Montreal Protocol to phase down production and consumption of potent greenhouse gases known as hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). At the Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol in November, the parties involved agreed to work together on the amendment in 2016. Phasing out these substances could avoid up to 0.5°C of warming by the end of the century (The White House, 2013b: 5).

America has committed to doubling the 400 million US dollars annual grant-based resources in global climate adaptation by 2020. They have fostered the commitment of more than 30 countries from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to dramatically reduce financing for coal-fired power plants overseas (The White House, 2013b: 5).

The Obama administration made a commitment towards renewable energy solutions in order to transition to a low-carbon economy. It has announced "joint measures with Brazil, in which both countries will increase the share of renewables, beyond hydropower, in their respective electricity generation mixes to 20 percent by 2030, and Brazil will restore and reforest 12 million

hectares of forests, roughly the size of Pennsylvania, by 2030” (Ibid.). Furthermore, they announced cooperation with Indonesia, including an unprecedented level of collaboration to conserve ecosystems, promote climate change adaptation, and foster the next generation of scientists. The partnerships represented approximately 60 million US dollars under the Tropical Forest Conservation Act and 50 million US dollars under the Millennium Challenge Corporation compact (The White House, 2013b: 5). In addition, President Obama has announced bilateral cooperation with India to adopt and develop clean energy solutions to help transition toward a climate-resilient, low-carbon economy (The White House, 2013b: 5).

President Obama mobilised climate finance to strengthen adaptation and resilience efforts. It has joined ten other countries in announcing contributions totalling 248 million US dollars to the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF). This played a key role in addressing urgent and immediate needs of the least developed countries. The Obama administration also launched an international public-private partnership, known as the Climate Services for Resilient Development. The aim of this partnership was to empower developing nations to boost their own climate resilience by providing much needed climate services. This included, actionable science, data, information, tools, and training (The White House, 2013b: 5). Further to this, President Obama has announced a contribution of 30 million US dollars to support insurance initiatives under the Pacific Catastrophic Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative, expand the Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance Facility to cover Central American countries, and support the African Risk

Capacity program (The White House, 2013b: 5). The Administration also released high-resolution elevation data globally to help local communities mitigate the impacts of frequent river basin flooding, storm surges, and sea-level rise. Finally, President Obama committed to negotiating free trade for environmental goods and services. Consequently, he “reduced tariffs on environmental goods, which range from clean technology for air conditioners to wind turbines to bicycles” (The White House, 2013b: 6).

The action taken by President Obama described above demonstrates a clear commitment to leading international efforts to combat global climate change and prepare for its impacts. Action mainly focused on increasing domestic action in order to achieve significant global greenhouse gas emission reductions and enhance climate preparedness through major international initiatives focused on spurring concrete action. This included bilateral initiatives with China, India, and other major pollution emitting countries (Genius Media Group Inc, 2018). These initiatives not only serve to support American efforts to achieve these goals for 2020, but also will help America and the world to move beyond this and bend the post-2020 global emissions trajectory even further. As a key part of this effort, President Obama also worked intensively to forge global responses to climate change through a number of important international negotiations, including those conducted at the United Nations (Genius Media Group Inc., 2018).

To conclude, in a significant number of cases the Obama administration embraced cooperation strategy to combat climate change. When it comes to

global environment protection, President Obama established twenty-three national monuments, more than any other president in history. This included the Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Monument in Hawaii, an ocean reserve twice the size of Texas (Lavelle, 2016). Overall, the Obama administration embraced numerous small steps and used “a thousand of small hammers” to fashion American climate policy without the help of Congress (Victor quoted in Lavelle, 2016). As a result, as evidenced by Clark (2018: 123-130), the efforts of President Obama in climate diplomacy are now difficult to be ‘rolled back’ by the next president.

### **5.6 Lost Opportunities**

Despite Obama’s achievements in climate diplomacy, some climate change experts and critics have highlighted several weaknesses in President Obama’s approach to tackling climate change. The main criticism is based on the suggestion that President Obama relied heavily on executive actions rather than seeking congressional legislation (Hammond, 2013). Such criticism stems from the belief that President Obama appeared to act alone, was utterly convinced about the focus of his aims, but failed to rely on the follow up responses from both followers and the international community. However, this strategy was adopted by President Obama towards the end of his time in office. During this time, Republicans dominated Congress. This meant that Congress became uncompromising and heavily influenced by the oil industry lobbyists. As a result, they became “hostile to any restrictions to the use of fossil fuels” (Palea, 2016: 51). Therefore, Pika and Maltese asked an important question, “How could President Obama be expected to get much done on the

domestic front when confronted by obstructionist tactics in the Senate and uncompromising opposition in the House?” It could be argued then that President Obama was given little choice but to “sidestep legislative obstacles by effectively exploiting his legislative potential to its fullest extent, even though the Federal agencies under his control” (Ibid.). It could also be argued that this strategy proved to be reasonably effective. For example, pursuing this strategy enabled the creation of “new programs with China to study and test low-emission energy technologies” (Victor, 2013).

Despite the fact that this change in strategy helped President Obama to achieve more success in his climate diplomacy, critics also highlight this as one of the weaknesses of his climate policy. This is because critics state that the momentum of climate diplomacy only began to increase its pace at the end of the second term. In other words, momentum was gained after Obama began sidestepping legislative obstacles. Lavelle (2016) put forwards this particular criticism by stating that, “For all of President Barack Obama's sweeping and historic achievements on climate change, most have come in a last rush of momentum in the final years of his second term” (Lavelle, 216). President Obama’s greatest opportunity to reshape how America deals with what he called the greatest threat to future generations could have been addressed during his first term. However, the momentum was lost to the pull of other priorities such as the healthcare and financial reform. Zurcher (2017) presents a similar point of view by stating, “Early in his administration, when Democrats had large majorities in Congress, the House of Representatives passed a stringent cap-and-trade programme for controlling carbon emissions”.

Arguably, this was the moment to build a successful, decisive, and lasting initiative. This was a moment to wage an all-out and lasting campaign on climate. However, “the Senate focused on financial and healthcare reform first and the Democratic majority was gone before President Obama could take action”. As a result, President Obama was forced to act more independently. Therefore, while internationally President Obama was given more freedom of action, domestically his climate actions were constrained. This example shows that American president may be temporarily strong because Congress has been made of his party representatives, but by midterm elections the political tide may considerably change and the majority necessary to enact strong policies may disappear. As Pika and Maltese (2014: 480) observed, “The Democrats’ historic losses in the 2010 midterm elections demarcate the boundary between President Obama’s early first-term legislative success and later failures”. America’s national issues occurred at the sacrifice of the quest to solve climate change. The continuation of Obama’s aims was therefore left to his successor.

Having said that, President Obama deserves a credit for his ambitious climate goals as he had promised “a new chapter in America’s leadership on climate change”. When Obama took office, he was facing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. As a result, his priorities were quickly refocused on saving major American industries, restoring faith in the economy, and stemming rising unemployment. Extending action to global issues would have drained resources and require a level of commitment difficult to justify given the national demands. Despite this, President Obama proved to be a versatile



in his approach to the issue of climate change. As early as 2008, President Obama expressed his maximum commitment to solving climate change and stated that he, “had no intention of softening or delaying his aggressive targets for reducing emissions that cause the warming of the planet” (Broder, 2008). As Broder (2008) confirmed, when President Obama delivered a video message to US governors at a climate change summit in Los Angeles in California, he reiterated his vow to reduce climate-altering carbon dioxide emissions by 80 percent by 2050, and set his intention to invest 150 US billion dollars in new energy-saving technologies. He stated,

Now is the time to confront this challenge once and for all. Delay is no longer an option. Denial is no longer an acceptable response. The stakes are too high, the consequences are too serious.

(Obama, 2008).

Furthermore, President Obama detected the problem of climate change to be an opportunity by stating that,

This is a matter of urgency and national security... [but] it is not only a problem, it is also an opportunity. We have the opportunity now to create jobs all across this country in all fifty states to repower America, to redesign how we use energy and think about how we are increasing efficiency to make our economy stronger, make us more safe, reduce our dependence on foreign oil and make us competitive for decades to come – even as we save the planet.

(Obama, 2008).

Has the opportunity of a bipartisan, market-based solution to climate change been realised or missed? As Broder (2008) suggested, some industry leaders and members of Congress have rejected President Obama’s climate proposal by selfishly suggesting that it “would impose too great a cost on an already-stressed economy - having the same effects as a tax on coal, oil and natural gas - and should await the end of the current downturn”. Therefore, a bill

similar to President Obama's plan failed to clear the Senate in 2008. This was largely as a result of concerns about its impact on the national economy. However, President Obama remained persistent and rejected that view. Instead he suggested, that his plan "would reduce oil imports, create jobs in energy conservation and renewable sources of energy, and reverse the warming of the atmosphere" (Obama, 2008). Obama believed this was the right time to start the industrial revolution of the Twenty-First Century based on a low-carbon, clean energy economy while, at the same time, creating millions of new jobs in the process. However, it could be argued that the momentum has been lost due to costs and the selfish, partisan interests of the oil companies and lobbyists. Therefore, some state officials, arguably hypocritically, criticised President Obama in his choice to address climate change as only the second major policy area. In a press conference and television interview President Obama admitted that his first priority as president was to revitalise the economy (Broder, 2018).

However, a counterargument to these criticisms could be that President Obama dealt with issues methodically, logically, and according to their priority. Only after he had addressed national issues such as the economy and health service could he justify pursuing a moral authority to lead global climate negotiations with important international actors. However, critics have responded to this. For example, Lavelle (2016) suggested that, "Obama had Democratic majorities in Congress during his first two years in office, and failing to press for national climate legislation during that time turned into perhaps his greatest strategic miscalculation".

According to climate experts and advocates, “the first term was essentially lost territory, whereas the second term was a totally different story” (Daniel Kammen quoted in Lavelle, 2016). From the very first stages of his presidency, President Obama offered an ambitious policy approach. What was needed however, was an all-out clean energy revolution in renewables and a decisive move towards a green economy, although it should be noted that this could not be achieved immediately. Stern (quoted in Lavelle 2016) seems to offer the most pertinent conclusion of President Obama’s efforts in climate policy when he noted that, “It is regrettable that President Obama did not push this issue harder during his first term, which could have accelerated domestic and global action to curb greenhouse gas emissions”. For example, “President Obama did not attend the Rio+20 Earth Summit and climate change did not figure as a key issue” in the first presidential election (Bradshaw, 2014: 72).

However, his first 100 days in office turned out to be busy for President and his climate ideas were confronted with a serious opposition. It was extremely difficult to overthrow the established structure of the international system. As Nicola (2009: 16) noticed, “The oil and coal lobby is still strong in the US, and even inside his Democratic party, there are voices that call for less ambitious targets in light of the global financial crisis”. Some states such as California were responsive to President Obama’s diplomacy. However, this was not the case among all of the United States. Even Senator John Kerry, who was President Obama’s representative at the United Nations climate change conference in Poznan, expressed the opinion that some projects, such as the national cap-and-trade system, “should not be dealt with in the first 100 days

of Obama's presidency" (Nicola, 2009: 16). Furthermore, it became clear that speeches and climate diplomacy would not be sufficient to ease the climate crisis. Some political observers were initially impressed with the scale of President Obama's "Green New Deal" and his investment programmes, which committed to spending 150 billion US dollars over the next decade to boost renewable energy sources and create at least 2.5 million jobs in the process (Douglas Arendt quoted in Nicola, 2009: 15). Others remained skeptical of President Obama's plans and suggested that much more needed to be done. For example, they suggested that in order "to realise a greater share of renewables in US power generation, there is also still some homework to be done, in particular creating a more efficient electricity infrastructure" (Randall Swisher quoted in Nicola, 2009: 17).

Therefore, for the President to succeed in solving climate change, his actions should follow words. For example, "Large amounts of electricity generated by wind power plants require a stable grid, and that is exactly what the US lacks. We cannot solve the climate challenge without the green electricity superhighways that we are calling for" (Ibid.). Even though President Obama has expressed a long-term goal to install a smart electricity grid, to build it would require lots of financial costs and a significant amount of time (Nicola, 2009: 17). Similarly, McKibben (2015b) suggests that President Obama had an opportunity to become 'a climate champion' had shown the commitment to the idea, "If you begin to strand some carbon beneath the earth, the wisdom of investing instead in renewable energy will become even clearer". However,

President Obama failed to stop the Shell Oil from drilling in the Arctic (McKibben, 2015a).

It could also be suggested that President Obama, initially at least, did not really think in global terms of the preservation of the planet. During his first term, the president appeared not to believe that it was possible to solve the climate change during the short span of his presidency. As evidenced by Bradshaw (2014: 72), “in its first term, the Obama administration has been unable to deliver the required domestic legislation”. Therefore, President Obama adopted a more realistic mindset by articulating the need “to slow the effects of climate change so that we leave behind a cleaner, more stable environment” (Obama, 2013: 4). In 2012, Obama was facing a re-election and global warming was becoming an increasingly prominent political topic. During this time, Obama talked about his climate programs, “but mainly as a strategy for improving the economy, not the whole planet” (Lavelle, 2016). Arguably, this contributed significantly to the weakness in his climate strategy. Therefore, critics may suggest that President Obama sacrificed care for America over the preservation and comprehensive healing of the Earth. Had he matched his ambitious climate goals with equally ambitious and global climate action relying more on followers, he might have achieved the more long-term and by far more important goal while also possibly stopping climate change more effectively and decisively.

## **5.7 President Obama's Climate Diplomacy on Balance**

On balance, the evidence presented above shows that President Obama's climate diplomacy was marked by both triumphs and lost opportunities. On the one hand, his achievements are often summarized as follows, "President Obama has forged an impressive legacy on climate change, and his administration has transformed the reputation of the United States in the international negotiations" (Stern quoted in Lavelle, 2016). Despite a continued battle with Congress, the Obama administration made steady progress towards achieving its climate goals outlined in the Climate Action Plan. On the other hand, it could be argued that President Obama's effective climate actions were initiated relatively late, during his second term. Moreover, these actions were targeted mainly at the recovery of the American economy rather than at the preservation, or indeed, a comprehensive healing of the whole planet. President Obama might not have the tools to save the planet, indeed it would be a far too ambitious goal, probably requiring the formation of a global government.

It could also be argued that President Obama's goals on climate change were unwaveringly ambitious (Nicola, 2009: 14). For example, in 2009, President Obama made a pledge that by 2020, America would reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in the range of 17 percent below the 2005 levels if all other major economies also agreed to limit their emissions as well. Likewise, President Obama planned to reduce emissions by 2050 to 80 percent below 1990. Moreover, President Obama "has pledged to reduce electricity demand by 15 percent and to boost the share of renewables in US power generation

to 25 percent in 2020” (Nicola, 2009: 15). Most of President Obama’s goals were long-term, such as the promise to “raise American petrol efficiency standards and make all new buildings carbon-neutral by 2030” (Ibid.). Similarly, President Obama pledged to implement a national cap-and-trade programme and aimed to ensure one million plug-in hybrid cars were on American roads. (Nicola, 2009: 15). These ambitious aims were articulated early, and some political commentators described them as the ‘Obama’s Green New Deal.’ (Ibid.).

However, the momentum of action on climate was not achieved until his second term. During this time, the President remained committed to building on the progress of his first term to help put America and the world on long-term trajectory for sustainability (Genius Media Group Inc., 2018). The Obama’s administration saw success in doubling America’s use of wind, solar, and geothermal energy. They also established the toughest fuel economy standards in American history. As a result, government succeeded in creating new jobs, building new industries, and reducing dangerous carbon pollution (Genius Media Group Inc., 2018). For all of this, President Obama deserves a huge credit. In fact, in 2011, carbon emissions from the energy sector fell to its lowest level in two decades. At the same time, there is more work to do to decarbonise American economy. In 2012, America’s net oil imports fell to its lowest level in 20 years and America has become the world’s leading producer of natural gas – the cleanest-burning fossil fuel (Ibid.).

In light of this, it is suggested that President Obama offered a sound vision of a better America. However, if his vision had be extended or redirected to encompass all global issues or a global vision of a sustainable planet free from climate change he would have probably saved the world of a significant amount of suffering and destruction resulting from extreme weather events. To go even further, he might have succeeded in solving the climate change altogether. What was necessary was to apply climate diplomacy immediately, powerfully and strategically in order to build a global coalition of not only of global leaders, but more importantly, of coasts, cities, states and businesses so that to ensure that the effort to combat climate change is a global, united and a collective one (Cf. Figure 4.1). The America's Pledge movement, led by California governor Jerry Brown and former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, which consists of cities, states, businesses, and universities committing to reducing their emissions may be a sign that such a community inspired by President Obama's climate diplomacy could be possible. In line with this argument, President Obama could have used climate diplomacy not only responsively but also preventively to discharge severe weather events and so that to mobilise adequate institutions, finances and urge communities so that to prevent some of the most severe climate disasters. If the climate crisis is to be solved at the spiritual level of every individuals, this begs the question: What motives have really driven President Obama? Why did he intend to solve climate change? Did he really wanted to solve climate change for America or for the whole world? In what categories was President Obama thinking, and was he sufficiently global in his chosen approach?



On balance, consideration of the research questions listed on page 115 has led to suggestion that norm-centred constructivism is a valuable, analytical tool with which to analyse the presidency of Barack Obama. The American President broke several years of silence and inaction as a result of his climate diplomacy (Victor, 2013). President Obama was, in line with the constructivist model, trying to change the underlying interests or states and interest groups so that to make his climate diplomacy work and generate global followership. Predominantly, he chose to do so by relying on soft power, the power of persuasion, discourse and ideas, as well as, the authoritative power connected with the office that he represented. This aimed to affect the climate strategies of other nations and garner political leverage and ultimately change the structure of the international system. Thus, on a significant number of cases, President Obama acted as a successful climate norm entrepreneur. He stressed that the enemy of progress on climate is cynicism (Obama, 2015). Hope instead, was rotted in collective action. It was rather the public opinion and international community that reacted slowly to President Obama's persuasion.

The positive development initiated by President Obama is based on his understanding that solving climate change might not happen all at once, but would require a campaign led at many fronts. To change the system through championing climate norms required a long process of experimentation with different solutions, continued learning, refinement of possible solutions, and adaptation. Overall, while climate experts might be increasingly demanding, President Obama's environmental legacy is a solid and impressive one.

President Obama embraced an ambitious goal and was a pioneer in new climate diplomacy politics. Alongside the accomplishments of the John Fitzgerald Kennedy's administration, this is the most consequential of any president in American history.

Given the numerous examples of initiatives, policies, and speeches discussed above, it could be stated that, "President Obama continued to show great leadership on climate change even in the final days of his presidency. His public comments and speeches on climate change leave no doubt about his sincerity and commitment on climate change, both as president and as a father to two children" (Stern, quoted in Lavelle, 2016). Finally, it could be argued that his persistent and determined climate diplomacy resulted in a cleaner, more sustainable world for the future generations. At the same time, it must be added that the future will verify if America will meet the long-term targets he set out for at the beginning of his administration (cutting emissions by 17 percent by 2020 and more than 80 percent by 2050).

### **5.8 Assessment of Clarity and Strength in Both Strategic Vision and Climate Action of President Obama**

According to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, vision, is "a mental image of what the future will or could be like" (Soanes and Stevenson, 2004: 1615). The quote from Shiv Khera perfectly sums up the essence of a proper vision, "Have a vision. It is the ability to see the invisible. If you can see the invisible, you can achieve the impossible". However, strategic vision is more substantial because it involves the ability to think about the nature of present, global

problems in a strategic sense, with relevance and accuracy, and with imagination and wisdom. Most importantly, the strategic element implies the scope for a successful formula or an indication of direction for action. Therefore, vision is not only a dream but also the ability to realise that dream. According to Gill (2011: 109), "Vision is like a statement of the likely, necessary or desired future of a group, organisation or nation". Stanley Deetz et al., (2000: 73) adds, "vision is essential to creating the norms, mission and rules...". President Obama put forward an idealist dream of climate change as an opportunity to build a clean energy economy. He believed people will follow only those leaders, "who can see beyond today's problems and visualise a brighter tomorrow" (Kouzes and Posner, 2012: 124). However, James Kouzes and Barry Posner (1991: 124) go even further than this emphasising the need for a shared vision,

Leadership is not about imposing the leader's solo dream; it is about developing a shared sense of destiny ... A vision is inclusive of the constituents' aspirations...

What is added by this definition is the element of a shared future and that a common vision must equally apply to all members or constituent parts of the community. As Kouzes and Posner (1995: 30) explain, "Leadership is the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations". This idea implies that followers, equally as a common purpose and a need for change are necessary requirements of effective leadership. As Rost (1991: 102) noticed, "Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes." A similar point is offered by Khang Kijarro Nguyen (Goodreads, 2018), who noticed a selflessness of a real leader when he observed that, "A true leader is not

revered for the height of his or her ego or the grandeur of his or her ambition, but for the boundlessness of his or her generosity and his or her vision for a better world". However, given these assumptions about the successful implementation of vision, this statement must be supplemented by the fact that such a vision must also be, appealing to the public and have the capacity to influence mass populations eventually change the system. *The Oxford Dictionary* describes charisma as, "Compelling attractiveness or charm that can inspire devotion in others". Charismatic and transformational leaders have a convincing power that inspires others to follow them. In this sense, charismatic leaders are magnetic leaders who attract public attention. They are the leaders to whom other people are drawn to more naturally. In order to be successful, such a vision ought to be universally accepted at the individual level and eventually become institutionalised at the systemic level. President Obama was ready to convey his dream of a world without climate change, but did he found enough followers and did the public opinion change?

As a journalist, Sal Marino explained, dreaming impossible things and offering a reliable vision of a future is not a difficult task,

Dreaming things that never were is not a science. It is an art practiced by visionaries who manage by faith instead of by formula. They are driven by an unquestionable belief that the lessons of the past will inevitably invent the successes of the future. They see visions where other see vacuums. They say 'We can' when others say 'We cannot'.

(Sal Marino quoted in Gill, 2011: 116).

This empowering spirit was clear in President Obama's during his 2008 presidential campaign, particularly in his use of slogans such as: "Yes, we can!" and "We want change!" However, it is still subject to discussion whether

the whole world sufficiently understood, trusted, and followed President Obama in adopting in particular new climate norms, and renewable energy solutions. Consensual leadership through persuasive, energetic diplomacy is a promising start for the change in American foreign policy. This includes the way in which it is linked to the role of 'America as the Balancer and Conciliator' (Brzezinski, 2012: 192). President Obama must have relied on some kind of a grand strategy for a more peaceful international order. According to the standards described above and laid out by Kozues and Posner (2012: 17), he was a visionary leader who inspired a possible vision of a future without climate change. In this sense, President Obama imagined exciting possibilities and presented them to the global public. The question is whether he enlisted others to a sufficient degree and persuaded them to adhere to a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations. Did he really manage to 'bend' the system in order to resolve the epochal, man-made problem of climate change? If compared to President George W. Bush's vision of unilateralism and his interpretation of the global war on terrorism as a predominant challenge facing the world, President Obama made progress. As Lindsay (2011: 765) noted, "Obama offered a different vision from his predecessor as he believed that a United States that listened more to others, stressed common interests and favored multinational action would command followers". Arguably, President Obama relied extensively on inspirational motivation by attempting to articulate a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers. President Obama has communicated optimism about his climate goals and provided meaning for solving climate change. His effective communication skills made his vision to be: understandable, precise, powerful and engaging. Therefore, his

followers could felt more energized to follow his vision,

The followers are willing to invest more effort in their tasks, they are encouraged and optimistic about the future and believe in their abilities.

(Bass, 1998: 5).

Therefore, clarity and strength of the vision that President Obama communicated were both transparent and persuasive. Equally, President Obama was respected and trusted on his climate leadership. As Bass and Avolio (2006: 6) noticed,

Followers identify with the leader and want to emulate them; leaders are endowed by their followers as having extraordinary capabilities, persistence, and determination.

### **5.9 Evaluation of President Obama's Normative Influence**

To what extent did President Obama focus on his capacity to influence others to follow actions of American climate diplomacy? Was President Obama able to translate his popularity into tangible policy gains? This section will evaluate if President Obama was acting as an effective climate norm-entrepreneur. This thesis intends to show that President Obama played his part skillfully, effectively, and elegantly. Despite this, it cannot be stated that his mission was accomplished in full. As Nye (2013: 145) observed, "Obama's rhetoric both in 2008 campaign and during the first months of his presidency was both inspirational in style and transformational in objective". Arguably, President Obama was ingenious in the methods he used to achieve his objectives. Nobody can deny that he led by common purpose and with passion, dedication, and commitment. However, as Tolstikov-Mast (2016: 107) noted, the traditional approach to leadership assumes that, "leadership can only occur if there is followership" (Uhl-Bien, et al., 2014: 83). Therefore,

appropriate working of the model of norm-entrepreneurship require emulation process on behalf of followers, “global leaders and global followers are engaged in a partnering process of global leadership...”

Moreover, the findings presented by Hayden (2011: 786) show that, “President Obama’s popularity was not translated into gains because it was not supported, amplified, and extended through the communicative actions of a robust set of public diplomacy institutions and mechanisms”. This suggests that although President Obama performed remarkably well as a climate leader, his creation of climate norms was not sufficiently socialised and institutionalised. There was not enough prompt follow up on behalf of the international community and supportive institutions at the national and global level. Climate norms were not enhanced by the strong and robust body of international law. This further supports the argument presented throughout the thesis which suggests that although President Obama was a successful climate norm entrepreneur his mission is not yet completed. Successful and effective norm entrepreneurs and agents of change are defined as follows,

To be an agent means to be capable of exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree.

(Sewell, 1992: 20).

Successful agents of change are guided by strategic vision, demonstrate passion, display integrity, honesty and trust. They are constantly learning from their mistakes, they are dedicated and charismatic with the result that such leaders have the capability to motivate people to excel, innovate and follow

them. President Obama was attempting to follow this model. However smart, prepared and politically sagacious was President Obama, and however, persuasive and forceful was his climate rhetoric alone he could not have changed the structure. Successful transformation of the structure required resources, innovation and sufficient time. During the short course of Obama's presidency, it proved a difficult task. In addition, the prevailing structure of the international system based on vested interests of fossil fuel industry was deeply embedded. This point is very important because it underpins the latter parts of the argument.

Constructivists maintain that when the structure is firmly entrenched, that is when it is based on "power to reproduce, discipline, and police" it is hard to change it (Hopf, 1998: 180). In other words, "When such power is realized, change in world politics is very hard indeed" (Ibid.: 180). Similar point has been raised by Okereke (et al., 2009: 69), who noted that structure embeddedness varies in different cases but, "the deeper the structure, the more difficult it is not only to trace the human interactions that resulted in these structures but also to bring about change". Deeply embedded structures are the most unlikely ones to change immediately (Bieler and Morton, 2018: 34). An example of a very deep macrostructure are the capitalist social relations of production including the fossil fuel industry. They remain very deep, because organised humanity has internalised them as normal, plus they are rooted materially. Nonetheless, they have been created by human beings acting in the past and are being re-instantiated constantly through human actions. In theory, change of such structures is not impossible because they do not only consist of



material capabilities but also intersubjectively constituted identities and interests within the system. As Bieler and Morton (2001: 27) suggested, “macro level” structures can be changed “only if it is realized that a particular structure is the result of human interaction in the past and not an objective ‘given’”. In order to change the structure, “A first step... is by questioning the objective status of structures” (Bieler and Morton, 2018: 59). Only if structures are sustained as a result of past practices and are not part of an objective reality it is possible to think how to change them through some kind of revolution in the present (Ibid.). With regard to climate change, it would be ‘green revolution’ in clean energy that would spread from America to the rest of the world. Eventually, structure may be transformed by agency over time (Hay, 1995: 201). As Wendt (1992: 406) observed, “it is through reciprocal interaction... that we create and instantiate the relatively enduring social structures in terms of which we define our identities and interests”. In other words, states can change and influence the structure as a result of collective action (Bieler and Morton, 2018: 38).

In order to change the structure, civilisation needed an agent of change, President Obama, who must have had a great capacity to influence, and who had a firm belief in change (Cf. Point 3, page 13). If successful, such a leader would initially influence change in climate regulation in America and then around the world. It required building a climate coalition of likeminded states as constitutive units of the new structure in the form of a collective climate community (Cf. Figure 4.1). Throughout the process of climate diplomacy, the identities and interests of states would change by embracing new climate

norms. Interests would no longer derive from an unchanging, international system based on prevailing class of vested interests of the fossil fuel industry. Consequently, thanks to President Obama's diplomacy, states' interests would be changeable depending on collective agency by states as constituent units. Simultaneously, this new setting would give birth to a new structure based on sensitivity to the needs of the Earth. According to the constructivist model, "If we treat identities and interests as always in process during interaction, then we can see how an evolution of cooperation might lead to an evolution of community (Wendt, 1994: 390). Climate community would become an instrument to effectively solve climate crisis and a source of new global initiatives. At the end and gradually, the collective agency inspired by President Obama's climate diplomacy would become a new structure. Such transformative change can take place mainly as a result of disruptive events (Flockhart, 2012: 89). Such conflict would make existing structures and existing shared meanings seem inadequate for the new situation (Ibid.). For example, structure based on the interests of the fossil fuel industry could no longer make sense while existing rules and norms could no longer be used as a cognitive map for identifying appropriate behaviour. This is because a structure based on exploitation of the planet could no longer be sustainable. In such a situation, new structure of knowledge and identity could be adopted inspired by the agent of change (Ibid.). They could "open up a window of opportunity for intentional policy change through the adoption of new rules and norms followed by changes in practice, identity formations, and the reconstitution of shared knowledge" (Flockhart, 2012: 89). In such cases, there is a possibility of peaceful change based on transformation of embedded

institutions belonging to one culture of anarchy into a new, different, and shared normative structure. This process is possible since, “structure is dynamic, not static; it is the continually evolving outcome and matrix of a process of social interaction” (Sewell, 1992: 27). For this process to take place peacefully and not disruptively based on changes in agent practice there is a need for persuasion and argument (Risse, 2000; Crawford 2002). President Obama thanks to his rhetoric and climate dialogue created a possibility of transforming the culture of anarchy unjust towards the Earth towards a new norm of climate stewardship.

Effective communication based on persuasion and human interactions was essential for this model to be working. President Obama has acted as an authoritative leader stating that he does seek to promote understanding of each other thereby helping to redefine relevant interests (Hopf, 1998: 1999). When the interests change then the identity would change and possibly the structure would change as well. Only structures based on human interaction can be transformed by agency over time. However, it was much easier to prolong the existing status quo rather than break away from it (McKibben, 2018). Consistent with constructivists’ theoretical assumptions, agency capable of changing the structure is located in the structure, but it retains a certain level of flexibility and autonomy, in the sense that the structure does not determine it (Okereke, et al., 2009: 69). In other words, in cases when agency successfully changes the structure “social interaction is structurally conditioned but not structurally determined” (Archer, 1995: 90, quoted in Okereke, et al., 2009: 69). As Hopf (1998: 180) noticed, “Alternative actors

with alternative identities practices and sufficient material resources are theoretically capable of effecting change. So along with a constructivist model, “structures are both enduring and mutable, [thus] change in world politics is considered both difficult and possible” (Hopf, 1998: 199).

This thesis argues that effective change of the structure of the international system only through climate diplomacy was simply not sufficient. Diplomacy should be followed by the implementation of policies, enforcement of climate norms protected by the body of the international law. To illustrate this point, what was needed was a bold action, “an upheaval, a massive change, one that leads to a new collective consciousness... a new collective evolution of the human race, inspired and enabled by a sense of urgency from all of humanity (DiCaprio quoted in the United Nations, 2016). A systemic change of the structure required initiating not only a new energy-industrial revolution but also creating an intersubjective social context based on human interrelations since “meaningful behavior or action is possible only within” such as context (Hopf, 1998: 173).

In reality, the prevailing structure has proved to be deeply entrenched. However powerful, President Obama’s administrations they could not have changed the structure completely. For example, Goodell (2016) noticed that in the long term, American leadership on climate was undermined, “largely because half of Congress is bought off by the fossil-fuel industry and will not let stronger action on climate change through”. While big oil companies such as Exxon, Chevron and Shell profit from the wreckage of the planet. This

shows that the prevailing structure was oriented on defending the existing status quo. This structure was mechanically reproduced, but still quite robust despite the divestment movement. President Obama restored American ideals and reconnected with the American identity in order to convince the public that clean energy is a lucrative business. By setting social and diplomatic practices he tried to change the structure. What he desperately needed were policies that would push away existing structure and make it less embedded.

However, the structure occurred to be deeply embedded. As Archer (1990: 78) noted, “some properties are more resilient or engender more resistance to change than others”. The structure proved to act as a constraint on President Obama’s actions. The ability to control and have autonomy in action is a key assumption of successful agents. Since “the politics of identity is a continual contest for control over the power necessary to produce meaning in a social group” (Hopf, 1998: 180). President Obama failed to control the structure, on many instances it appeared that the structure overwhelmed him. For example, the work by Columbia University and *The Guardian* showed “that President Obama climate record has been badly tarnished by investments made in dirty fuels around the world” (Shalev, et al., 2016). On the one hand, President Obama related his legacy on effective climate action “positioning his administration as the most progressive on climate change in US history” (Ibid.). On the other hand, the report found that “an obscure agency within his own administration has quietly spoiled his record by helping fund a steady outpouring of new overseas fossil fuel emissions – effectively erasing gains expected from his headline clean power plan or fuel efficiency standards”

(Ibid.). Since President Obama moved into the White House in 2009, his administration has approved financial support from the US Export-Import Bank worth 34 billion dollars to coal, oil and gas projects in countries such as Mexico, Ukraine and Australia (Ibid.). By doing so, even though unintentionally, President Obama was acquiescing the existing order rather than trying to build a structure. Had he been committed to transform the unfair structure, he would have attacked the present system with the successful climate norm followed by effective enforcement. President Obama might have worked hard to ban drilling in the Arctic, put new fuel standards on cars and tried to limit greenhouse gas emissions from coal power plants, but during his administration the system did not undergo a sufficiently profound change. In fact, the Obama's administration has provided far more funding for overseas fossil fuel projects than any other past presidency (Ibid.). Simply because President Obama was not decisive enough to break away from the corrupted system. At the initial stages of the presidency, there was no political backing for a radical climate action. Successful transformation of the system's structure would literally require preplanned, resourceful and effective change of the world. However, the public opinion did not follow willingly. Furthermore, instituting effective change would require a determined political player implementing decisive policies internally and globally that would be radically transformational. President Obama did not manage to change the system's structure consistent with the constructivists' model. However, neither did he merely sustain reproduction of the existing structure. This is because as demonstrated in Chapter Four, the innovative side of President Obama's climate diplomacy, inadvertently, was the initiation of the gradual, embryonic

formation of a non-governmental, climate community that might reduce the resilience of old structure and its ability to set rules in the future. This would imply a more effective, decentralised strategy of making climate change more manageable (Cf. Section 4.4).

Climate change is a classic example of a collective action problem. Therefore, “international community must abandon the idea that there is only one solution at the global scale” (Ostrom, 2009). Any change from the current carbon to the future low-carbon clean energy economy will be a long process. Current international efforts to build the climate regime derive from a hierarchical tale implying more global planning (Verweij, 2011: 44). However, as Rayner (2006: 9) observed, “it focuses overwhelmingly on emissions reductions over impacts and yet, actually any emissions reductions that we achieve now are not going to have an effect for about fifty years”. Thus, climate change is a polycentric problem (Ostrom, 2009). For that reason, as Mond (2013: Slide 3) noticed, climate change is a controversial issue for politicians, “Sensible action is likely to involve unpopular decisions” because data and results are uncertain. There are many levels overlapping so it has to be addressed at multiple scales and levels and it can be solved from the bottom-up. This implies that not only must state leaders engage in effective action, but the whole international community. In truth, the pressure to act on climate change is not entirely or even mostly an effort led by national governments. This is because the problem nonpolitical and moves beyond national borders. States, provinces, local communities, representatives from different sectors of the economy, civil society, companies, and visionary leaders must offer a united voice on the

issue. Possibly only then, will the ultimate solution, which is likely to be somebody's brainchild, appear. Was President Obama a person who had a successful vision of a world free from climate disasters? Given the slowness, gridlock and ongoing conflict involved in achieving a comprehensive, international, and political solution, it is worth considering and experimenting with local, regional solutions that work through building steps or blocks that are not necessarily political. This is because, at its root, climate change is a spiritual problem that is a result of our global, addictive consumer mentality. To solve it, might require some kind of systemic, civilisational change more probably at the individual or community level. Nevertheless, it is not unequivocal that politics or even global politics will be the forum for solving it.

President Obama attempted to achieve his ambitious aim from a global perspective by facilitating the 2015 Paris Climate Treaty. His bold efforts found many continuators and followers in America and around the world. President Obama believed that convincing the American public and working against obstructionist Congress constituted serious challenges to the realisation of his diplomatic aims. As Lindsay (2011: 765) noted, "Obama discovered that in a globalized world, where power has been more widely dispersed, many countries are not looking to Washington for direction". As a result, President Obama was placed in difficult situation, which required from him extraordinary levels of persistence in order to exert continuous pressure for climate norms to be fully institutionalised and adopted globally. When norm compliance becomes a habitual practice, eventually it would be enforced by the rule of law. In reality, the capacity of President Obama's diplomacy to influence has been



limited. This was due to a number of challenges confronting second-term presidents (Pika and Maltese, 2014: 480). There is a broad consensus in the literature that “second-term presidents have a relatively small amount of time – a year and a half or less - to accomplish their major legislative goals” (Ibid.: 481). In numerous cases it occurred that midterm elections are followed by the lame-duck status. This meant that President Obama had a narrow window of opportunity, coupled with scrutiny from Congress, led the president to rely more on administrative strategies and executive orders when it comes to climate action.

As a result of these constraints, the opportunity given to him has been unfulfilled and the chance to change the world might have been squandered. However, it is still too early to make a definitive judgment. Therefore, efforts of any diplomatic process need to be fully re-examined and objectively re-evaluated. As Nye (2013: 150-151), observed, “When we cannot be sure how to improve the world, prudence becomes an important virtue, and hubristic visions can pose a grave danger”. However, it could be argued that President Obama’s ambitious plan for tackling climate change deserves a praise. Equally, President Obama succeeded in capturing the hearts of his most fervent supporters as a result of his passionate campaign. However, to change the whole system required something more than discursive rhetoric. First, a thorough knowledge of the international system and mechanisms governing it was needed. Second, there should be a clear understanding of one’s skills, abilities, and responsibilities. Third, efforts should be made to maximise the capacity to influence and transform the system by making

internalised norms extremely powerful so that they cannot be rejected (Cf. page 13). This logic is consistent with the framework of norm emergence, norm cascade, and norm internalisation, offered by constructivists (Cf. Figure 3.1). Consistent with the model of norm-centred constructivism adopted by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 914), “persuasion is central to most of the case studies about normative influence and change”. Persuasion is the primary mission of norm entrepreneurs as “they seek to change the utility functions of other players to reflect some new normative commitment”. President Obama understood this, and his persuasive rhetoric whether at the forum of the United Nations or at climate summits was delivered convincingly. This aimed to initiate the socialisation process that could follow his rhetoric. On the other hand, many old-fashioned leaders measure their influence by the number of followers that they can claim. On the other hand, many effective leaders do not try to sustain high numbers of followers. According to Tom Peters (quoted in Walter 2013), the greatest leaders are those who do not look for followers. Inspiring, transformational leaders empower others to become leaders (Walter, 2013). Leaders of the caliber of Martin Luther King, Jr., Mohandas Gandhi or Nelson Mandela were trying to create more leaders in order to help many others find and create their own destinies. Their higher goal was to leave a lasting legacy, so that when they are not around the principles, values and norms that they had introduced will be upheld. Such leaders fully committed to the vision of their ventures and by showing dedication, they inspired people around the world to show the same kind of commitment and display the same passion and yearning for change. Was President Obama an effective climate norm-entrepreneur? Has he managed to change the prevailing structure with

the result of the internalisation of climate norms?

According to Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 914), persuasion is vital, because it is, “the process by which agent’s action (such as climate diplomacy of President Obama) becomes social structure, ideas become norms, and the subjective becomes the intersubjective”. Nothing great has ever been achieved without hard work and dedication. President Obama achieved this requirement thanks to conveying a huge amount of soft power which is, “the ability to get desired outcomes because others want what you want” (Keohane and Nye, 2012: 216). President Obama’s soft power worked very well by convincing others to follow or agree to norms and institutions that produced the desired behaviour (Ibid.). His soft power enabled him to set the agenda through standards and institutions that have shaped preferences of other states and leaders on climate issue (Ibid.). President Obama’s soft power was dependent largely on the persuasiveness of his climate speeches that he has effectively communicated. As a result of global climate leadership, America has made its power more legitimate in the eyes of others what resulted in establishing institutions that have encouraged other countries to define their interests compatible with American climate policy. However, effective followership takes time and followers might not be ready to sustain efforts to follow. At this point, it may be highly debatable whether some of the ideas of Obama’s administration were actually implemented by the international community and turned into norms protected by international law.

A more precise question may be the one that does not assess the direct effects of President Obama's speeches and diplomacy, but rather examines the actual propensity of the socialisation of climate norms, or in a constructivist parlance, the possibility to change of the international structure. To a certain extent, such a structure would have to be malleable to social change and not just irreversibly entrenched in previously established practices. The routes to normative change may be indirect and evolutionary. For example, if extreme climate events continue to occur, heavy pressure from public opinion would have to ensure leaders embrace procedural changes that create new political processes. This can lead to, "gradual and inadvertent normative, ideational, and political convergence" (Rosenau, 1986). In other words, they may lead to climate norms being internalised more dynamically. In such cases, diplomacy is a non-static activity and a useful tool of forging international agreements that precede efforts of cooperation between countries.

However, it is a tool of a limited value. As scholars from the Brookings Institution observed, "Formal intergovernmental diplomacy has a role to play in shaping energy transitions but its role is limited" (Victor and Jones, 2018: 1). "Diplomacy can nudge behaviour and focus minds", but facts on the ground matter more than climate diplomacy (Ibid: 1). President Obama's was extremely persuasive and convincing, but supporters of his climate diplomacy may have initially thought that this would be enough to bend the arc of the moral universe towards climate justice. Inspired by the voices of the millions calling for change, to some extent, President Obama responded and his rhetoric resonated with the public. Moreover, he almost managed to achieve

his ambitious goal. However, the method he has chosen might have implied that the road to success will be a long one. By seeking consensus, working through the forum of the United Nations, trying to avoid controversy, and being diplomatic, pragmatic, and articulate President Obama was attempting to change the system from the within. He was acting as a very skilled politician who tried to garner international support for his aim. How revolutionary and innovative were his actions? Did he demonstrate enough leadership in science and industry? Has he secured a legally binding international agreement? Did he show enough economic entrepreneurship?

While many scholars stress the need for charismatic leadership in the public sector some forget about entrepreneurship. It is “a particular form of leadership focused primarily on problem solving and putting heterogeneous processes together on complementary and effective ways” to solve collective-action problem such as climate change (Ostrom, 2012: 107). Entrepreneurship whether this theorised by constructivists in the form of institutionalisation of climate norms, or the one researched by Ostrom (2012) assumes moving beyond simply making public speeches and being charismatic as components of effective climate leadership (Ibid.). In the face of ever-growing concern about the effects of climate change, America under leadership of President Obama pushed for implementation of policies to limit emissions of greenhouse gases at home and abroad. Whereas the findings by Tuladhar et al., (2009: S223) demonstrate, “that those policies that combine market-oriented abatement incentives with full flexibility are the most cost-effective” in terms of addressing macroeconomic impacts of climate change.

Therefore, in the real world, solving climate change turned out to be a much more complex and drawn out process than expected. Particularly, given the fact that President Obama has chosen a difficult task of persuading American public that climate change is a market failure and that with the right policies it could be solved. It appears that rhetoric and global speeches, however electrifying and moving, cannot translate into a comprehensive policy and provide immediate lawful results unless they are backed by and regulated by the international law. As Victor and Jones (2018: 5) show, “Stopping climate change is fundamentally about decarbonizing the world’s energy system”. The Economist (2009: 4) agrees with this statement arguing that, “the problem will be solved only if the world economy moves from carbon-intensive to low-carbon – and, in the long term, to zero-carbon products and processes”. At its essence, solving climate change is about businesses changing their investment patterns (Ibid.). Al Gore (2013: 283) seems to agree with this statement arguing that,

In order to move forward with this transition much faster, at a pace that is necessary to begin solving the climate crisis, we must first build a global political consensus – starting with a consensus in the United States – strong enough to support the policy changes that will solve the crisis.

Simply put, to solve climate change, “new facts on the ground are needed such as new technologies, business practices, and incentives for transformation” (Victor and Jones, 2018: 1). If President Obama had have ever imagined solving this problem, it would require him to lead an all-embracing initiative on all fronts, linking governmental and private sectors, plus garnering support from a wide range of international organisations and legal institutions. In theory, such a significant climate campaign would mean the world would

gradually follow intelligent, climate-wise policies, and universal actions while introducing innovative technologies and bracing for change as a result of smart climate adaptation. Diplomacy was a positive start. It was a spark that initiated Obama's ambition to become a climate-pioneer. He was the first global leader to champion the idea of climate resilience and adaptation while trying to convince the world about the urgency of the crisis. However, to change the world required policy change resulting from superior knowledge in both strategic vision and consistent action. It required following the right solution that would emerge from the world of energy policy and technology. From a practical point of view, solving climate change requires introducing innovative energy systems (Ibid.). A similar point of view is presented by Lomborg (2010), who agrees that man-made global warming is real. However, this Danish political scientist has played down the need for emissions reductions in order to solve climate change. Instead, he argues, for example, that there is no need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to any significant extent in the near future. He suggests that the green research and development (R&D) should be increased, "R&D in green energy technologies is really the only viable long-term strategy for reducing fossil-fuel consumption without crippling the world economy" (Lomborg, quoted in Zengelis, 2010: 79).

President Obama saw this opportunity. When speaking in 2014, in a Weekly Address on Reducing Carbon Pollution in Our Power Plants, he pronounced that,

I refuse to condemn our children to a planet that is beyond fixing. The shift to a cleaner energy economy will not happen overnight, and it will require tough choices along the way. But a low-carbon, clean energy economy can be an engine of

growth for decades to come. America will build that engine.  
America will build the future.

(Obama, 2014).

Thus, climate diplomacy was only a catalyst, or only a first step of solving climate change and was preceded by the more comprehensive action of building a low-carbon, clean energy economy in America and the world. President Obama must have realised this goal with the help of the international community, business and investment sectors, alongside with the support from the fellow, global leadership groups and universities to enact change. Sparing all of the criticism that President Obama has been subjected to, the process that he has initiated is though not yet finished. Although President Obama's time in office has finished, it is difficult to subject his actions to evaluation since the momentum could be in reality irreversible. This argument should not be discarded. However implausible, the possibility that the climate crisis will be eventually resolved as a result of the actions of President Obama must be taken into account. This is since President Obama might have inspired actions that may be congruent to finding the actual solution. That is why the scale and character of promises made by President Obama are still difficult to evaluate. Any evaluation should be careful and balanced taking while also taking into account the constructivist-inspired idea that President Obama might have unintentionally initiated a chain reaction of future climate activism. Such activism could eventually and retrospectively lead to internalisation of climate norms leading to the gradual adoption of a successful solution. Although prematurely subjected to criticism, President Obama might have been condemned for lack of decisiveness or consistency. In truth, this is still only in the short-span perspective. Whereas if a successful climate solution is found



soon, given the innovation happening in the renewables sector, the international community may acclaim President Obama as a highly prudent, successful, or even ingenious and forward-thinking climate leader. A leader who managed to lead farsightedly listening to the hearts of his followers. A leader who intuitively recognized and then followed *“the spirit of the times”*. Taken everything into account, it is still too early to make a definitive judgement on the evaluation of President Obama’s climate diplomacy.

### **5.10 Assessment of Political Endurance and Lasting Legacy**

In light of the suggestions made above, President Obama’s legacy as an international leader on climate might seem secure. There are some factors, however, that may undermine its lasting endurance. First, climate change remains an unsolved global problem. Second, President Trump, who represents the Republican party, appears to be intrinsically insensitive to climate issue. President Obama’s response to climate, at least initially, was to use rhetoric to convey his ambitious goals then implement climate diplomacy performed at summits and through speeches. The analysis presented above suggests that President Obama was just “one out of many first climate warriors” (Goodell, ‘Rolling Stone’, 2015). Unfortunately, it seemed that, initially at least, President Obama’s strategy did not bring immediate results. In fact, it soon turned out that “the political system could not process the problem of climate change just based on data and science” (Obama quoted in Goodell, 2015). President Obama predicted that flaw in the established system. The problem of climate change was simply too abstract to people. This is because the truth about climate change had been previously obscured

by politicians and there was lots of controversy surrounding the issue. As President Obama put it,

For us to get to where we need to go on climate, we got to have the American people [and] public opinion on our side. They have got to feel a sense of urgency about it, and that requires us persuading and winning their votes so that we can implement these policies.

(Obama interviewed by Wenner, 2016).

As a result, there was a real demand for President Obama to play an active role in persuading the public through his energetic climate speeches and strong diplomacy. Soon President Obama's role shifted from designing solutions to warning about the catastrophic consequences of unsolved problem of climate change. However, in truth American president began what might become a very long war and a very protracted initiative. President Obama might well be "the first of many presidents that are going to have to deal directly with climate change issue" (Goodell, 2015). According to some observers, the era of the continued discourse of whether climate change is real or not is soon going to pass. This is soon going to become very superficial since deniers will not be able to deny the truth. This may mean that every future American President and global leader "will have to become a climate warrior of some sort because that is going to become the dominant story of our time" (Ibid.). In other words, once climate change is universally accepted, it will no longer depend on public opinion so much.

Despite the overall success of President Obama's climate action there were also several lost opportunities. First, once President Obama had detected that the world might not follow immediately, he chose to act independently. Arguably, this was not the most effective strategy. Instead, he could have

acted within the prevailing system, relying on its followers and capitalising on its passageways in order to avoid the protracted campaign against Congress and attempting to persuade the American society about the consequences of climate change. What might have been necessary, and a perhaps a more prudent strategy, was a bold and decisive push for climate action, at the very beginning ('the so-called entry of the Dragon') of his presidency. What could have followed could have been an attempt to gradually but consequentially trying to change the system from within by the introduction and internalisation of climate norms, as described by constructivists that would enable the international community to follow. This required acting quickly and decisively. It required a clear and focused plan of action centred on not only effective climate solutions and strategies but ways in which the rest of the community may adopt them. It required obtaining support from Congress combined with championing global climate legislation. At the same time, it might have required, attempting to build on the momentum created by climate diplomacy that could gradually shift the direction of public opinion towards sensitivity to climate issues. Unfortunately, the popularity of President Obama's climate cause was not sufficiently translated into political gains at an early stage. This is because it was unsupported, amplified and extended through the communicative actions of the international community (Hayden, 2011: 786).

Some observers of President Obama's climate diplomacy, such as Lavelle (2016), noticed that, "By relying on executive orders and regulations after his legislative majority disappeared, President Obama leaves his climate policies at risk under Donald Trump". According to Lavelle, President Obama might

have “made a mistake by leaving his climate policies without a legal backing” (ibid.). However, it may have been the only possible strategy for garnering larger public support for the issue. Since, as observed by Clark (2018: 118), “when President Obama ratified the Paris Agreement in September 2016, he did not have the support of the Senate” required under Article II of the Constitution. However, “the President has the authority to make ‘executive agreement’ with other countries, requiring no ratification by the Senate or approval by Congress”.<sup>2</sup> President Obama’s ratification met constitutional muster through the customary international law. Since the official withdrawal, President Trump has been internationally and domestically condemned (Clark, 2018: 127). This is because President Obama’s successor set his policies against the harmonic goal of America becoming resilient against global challenges with the main threat of all times: the destruction of the planet as a result of catastrophic climate change.

In addition, some climate activists, despite the impressive statistics presented by President Obama’s White House, express the disappointing but objective truth that progress in climate policies under President Obama was slow. As McKibben (2013) suggested the Obama administration was slow to act while climate change has been spiralling out of control,

By the time Obama leaves office, the U.S. will pass Saudi Arabia  
as the planet’s biggest oil producer and Russia as the world’s

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<sup>2</sup> The Supreme Court held in *American Insurance Association v. Garamendi* that “the president has the authority to make ‘executive agreements’ with other countries, requiring no ratification by the Senate or approval by Congress, this power having been exercised since the early years of the Republic.” *American Insurance Association v. Garamendi*, 539 U.S. 396, 415 (2003), quoted in: (Clark, 2018: 119).

biggest producer of oil and gas combined... We are, despite slight declines in our domestic emissions, a global-warming machine...

President Obama had far more opportunity to demonstrate climate leadership than he actually did. Arguably, he should have applied the muscle of his climate diplomacy to ease the climate crisis in real terms (Ibid.). According to McKibben (2015a), "In his first term, President Obama mostly ignored climate change, and he ran for re-election barely mentioning the subject until Hurricane Sandy made it unavoidable in the closing days of the campaign". In light of this, President Obama's legacy may be remembered less for economic revival and the health care reform and instead more for the way in which "the most powerful government on Earth reacted to the sudden, clear onset of climate change" (McKibben, 2013).

However, supporters of President Obama policies could justifiably claim that the momentum created in implementing a low-carbon, clean energy economy initiated by President Obama is like a 'rolling stone' in that its effects are irreversible. This momentum, which gained pace during the final years of President Obama's second term, is now unstoppable and it will continue in the future (Obama, 2016: 126). Although President Obama might not have met all of his ambitious targets, his presidency did provide a starting point. As Lavelle (2016) noticed, the most sweeping and historic achievements on climate change in terms of policies came late in "a last rush of momentum in the final years of his second term". However, assuming that if the disastrous climate change follows in the near future, which is very likely, then the American public could demand far more decisive climate action from future American

presidents. Therefore, the momentum created under Obama could continue and eventually lead to a successful solution. The solution rather than being a single diplomatic event or policy might comprise of a series of consecutive steps and actions connected with the cycle of climate norms. Such norms could be gradually strengthened, mutually reinforced and exert an impact on the business sector. At the same time, it could encourage a shift to a clean energy economy at national and global levels, supported by a robust framework of international law. If the model described above is correct, then it confirms the observation that reformulating global economy around decarbonisation and clean energy solutions might turn out to be a long process. In other words, it is something that could not have happened entirely during President Obama's administration. Nevertheless, the real success of President Obama's climate diplomacy can be found in "setting the vector and setting the commitment to get a low-carbon, clean energy economy revolution going" (Arendt quoted in Nicola, 2009: 17).

In light of the arguments presented above, and despite confronting a strong resistance in Congress about the use of fossil fuel, President Obama could be considered a successful climate leader. Although nothing can be predetermined, at the end of the process of the clash of different worldviews on how to address climate change, President Obama may emerge as having been a successful norm entrepreneur. This is despite the fact that according to some climate activists, he may have appeared to be a relatively weak norm entrepreneur. In addition, President Obama might be, in the future, portrayed as a social, transformational, and heroic leader whose actions initiated a green

economy movement. The process of internalising climate norms may be a slow one, however, it may come to be appreciated and eventually adopted by a global climate community.

In conclusion, President Obama “enacted numerous new regulations governing pollution from coal-fired power plants and limiting coal mining and oil and gas drilling both on federal lands and in coastal waters” (Zurcher, 2017). As a result he appointed himself as the first national and global climate leader. “More than any other president in history President Obama used his executive authority to designate five hundred and forty-eight million acres of territory as protected habitat” (Zurcher, 2017). For example, he banned drilling for oil in Alaska, withdrawn authorisation to build the Keystone XL pipeline from Canada, and he placed restrictions on shale gas extraction and the use of fracking technology (Palea, 2016: 51).

Furthermore, President Obama’s mixed climate legacy is reflected in statistics. For example, “carbon dioxide emissions from energy fell by 9.5 percent from 2008-2015, and in the first six months of 2016, were at their lowest level in 25 years, according to a report by the White House Council of Economic Advisors” (Lavelle, 2016). During this period, the economy also grew by 10 percent (Cushman, 2017). Moreover, under the leadership of President Obama, America “tripled its wind-generated electricity and gets 30 times as much from solar as it did in 2008” (Lavelle, 2016).

However, the central achievements of President Obama, American participation in the Paris accord is still uncertain, “given that the president-elect promised to abandon it” (Zurcher, 2017). Despite this it could be argued that, “some of President Obama’s executive accomplishments, however, will have a lasting impact and will be difficult to roll back” (Ibid.). This suggests that President Obama secured a lasting legacy as a result of his climate diplomacy. This is especially the case when considering that, “proposed regulatory changes will require an extended approval process and are sure to face a flurry of lawsuits from environmental groups” (Ibid.). As Zurcher (2017) noticed, “Congress could speed things up, but Democrats in the Senate have enough votes to block their efforts if they stick together”. Therefore, much of President Obama’s legislative climate legacy will depend on domestic politics in America.

### **5.11 What Else Could Have Been Done?**

A careful analysis of President Obama’s climate diplomacy suggests that President Obama’s could have pursued alternative strategies to effectively address climate change. President Obama acted predominantly by adopting environmental incrementalism, an approach which is ineffective and has its perils. (Coglianese and D’Ambrosio, 2008: 1418-1425). Had his administrations pursued some policies that were not considered, a more comprehensive success could have been accomplished. In order to address the problem of climate change realistically, humanity needs: 1) policies, 2) constructive ideas, 3) campaigns and 4) technologies. Above all, the ability to influence required that much larger numbers of people are needed to address the threat posed by climate change. If organised civilisation could mobilise a significant amount of



human intelligence, intellect, and innovation it could tackle climate change more effectively. Innovations that seemed distant implying decades of searching into the future may prove to be more accessible than ever (Berners-Lee and Clark, 2013: 167). President Obama recognised that opportunity. If humanity pushes for such innovations at the present time as hard as it has pushed for the radar, nuclear bombs and decoding techniques during the times of war we may achieve a reasonable success (Ibid.).

President Obama as a global, transformational leader attempted to sound an alarm bell. On numerous occasions, he warned that different parts of the world especially coastal regions including much of the eastern seaboard could be flooded if civilisation fails to enact drastic changes (Obama, 2007: 13). At the same time, President Obama attempted to drive a revolution in a clean energy economy. President Obama attempted to change the system's structure by acting as a powerful norm innovator. He was one of the few among American, climate leaders who broke the silence on the issue of climate change. Arguably, President Obama did not manage to change the structure, but he weakened the system of domestic, vested interests within the coal industry and big oil corporations insofar as the irreversible momentum of clean energy has been achieved (Obama, 2017b: 129). Nevertheless, he did not stop climate change and did not prevent natural disasters and extreme weather events.

This thesis found out that the more significant actions were only embraced during the second term. This is because the Obama administration was reacting to unexpected events at home such as natural disasters like Hurricane Sandy in

2012. The main criticism of the Obama administration stems from the idea that his actions were mostly embraced to protect American national interests and not global civilisation. Climate change remains neglected in many countries around the world. Despite President Obama's rhetoric and diplomatic actions, many best-informed political and business leaders remain complacent about the risks connected with climate change. This is despite the fact that organised civilisation may exceed the benchmark of 2°C set by the scientific community and actually be on the 4°C trajectory (Dryzek and Stevenson, 2014: 209). According to some experts, "Current trends are setting the world on a path to 3-4°C warming by 2050 (Climate Action Tracker 2012, quoted in Dryzek and Stevenson, 2014: 209). If true, then this may have huge consequences for the world,

At the upper end of the scale this is likely to lead to extreme flooding in coastal cities, more intense heatwaves, greater water scarcity in many regions, large-scale loss of biodiversity, reductions in crop yields. All this translates into considerable suffering for many people, especially vulnerable groups in developing countries.

(World Bank, 2012, quoted in Dryzek and Stevenson, 2014: 209).

In light of the above, President Obama (2017a) rightly noticed that time may be the most critical factor in the combat against climate change, "There is such a thing as being too late on climate". Similar point has been made by Gates and Gates (2016), who observed that in case of climate change "time is not on our side",

Every day we are releasing more and more CO<sub>2</sub> into our atmosphere and making our climate change problem even worse. We need a massive amount of research into thousands of new ideas - even ones that might sound a little crazy - if we want to get to zero emissions by the end of this century.

Therefore, institutions, leaders and individuals concerned about climate change need to increase the speed of the implementation of effective climate norms that

could lead to tangible policies embracing the whole world. One such political endeavour was the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement that united the world and generated unprecedented levels of global solidarity. As a global civilisation, humanity needs to continue to implement climate policies. The Paris Agreement is just a start and there is much more climate community can do. Everyone has to do their part and collectively humanity can overcome the social ignorance and complacency about climate change as a novel, global challenge.

Part of the answer might have been in having a successful, inspirational leader motivating people at all levels of society to address issue of climate change in order to get something meaningful done. Similarly, this could serve in showing that civilisation as a whole really cares about solving this problem. The job is to convey the true nature of the problem, adopt an adequate strategy and ultimately solve it. This may sound obvious, but many of those who would like to solve the problem have sidestepped the core issues at the heart of climate change and tried to sell the idea that green energy choices will solve it (Berners-Lee and Clark, 2013: 168). Politicians sent a message that such approach will save money, solve fuel poverty and result in economic growth. Such an approach might be to an extent understandable, but it is deeply idealistic. This is because climate change is a political liability than a winning political trump. Politicians tend to ignore it since it is difficult to mobilise effective action. President Obama knew that raising the issue would leave him open to attack from industry and conservative groups opposed to economic intervention (Goldenberg, 2012). Since the economy has seen considerable decline, the White House, after studying polling and conducting focus groups, concluded it was best to frame

climate change as an economic opportunity rather than an urgent environmental problem (ibid.). Thus, the Obama administration made a conscious decision to talk about climate change solely in terms of innovation, energy independence and economic progress (ibid.). Many companies and the majority of non-governmental organisations have taken a similar line by organising their campaigns around the ideas of renewable energy's potential to reduce domestic energy bills (Berners-Lee and Clark, 2013: 168). Such an approach is understandable and politically reasonable. It is an effort to make things more politically attractive and palatable by creating a positive vision. Hence, President Obama attempted to follow Martin Luther King's example (ibid.). He conveyed to the American people and global public a vision based on a dream. Such a strategic move was much more politically attractive rather than scaremongering about the negative effects of environmental change. However, there was one major difference between Martin Luther King's times and President Obama's times (ibid.). King's audience was already aroused and demanding change. In contrast, during President Obama's time in office, it seemed that most people did not feel concerned or passionate about solving climate change. A vision based on economic miracles resulting from that solution seemed unlikely to change that (Berners-Lee and Clark, 2013: 168). It seems that even extreme weather was not enough to trigger citizens and politicians to change their perception of climate change. Given this reality, it is important for the media to make climate change as visible as possible. Namely, that climate change presents huge risk to civilisation and that civilisation's efforts to solve it have so far been unsuccessful. As a result, there is a moral imperative to constrain unabated fossil fuel use to save the planet (ibid.: 170).

Despite this, there may be however a successful solution. As Goodell (2017: 11) noticed, “The best way to save coastal cities is to quit burning fossil fuels”. Humanity could prevent climate change by generating electricity from renewable sources of energy, using electric vehicles and encouraging recycling alongside with implementation of sustainable development strategies. Former National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s (NASA) scientist, James Hansen (2009) in 2008 issued five priorities that President Obama should adopt “for solving the climate and energy problems, while stimulating the economy”: 1) efficient energy use, 2) renewable energy 3) a smart grid 4) generation IV nuclear reactors and 5) carbon capture and storage (Hansen, 2009). President Obama attempted to fulfill these goals with some positive and negative results.

At the same time, humanity needs “a revenue-neutral fee and dividend system to impose a price on carbon that returns the money collected from the fossil fuel industry equally to all legal residents of the United States” (Hansen, 2009). Climate scientists suggested a possible solution to climate change based on a prize on carbon in way that is supported by the public,

The required policy is to put a gradually rising fee on carbon collected from fossil fuel companies at the first domestic sale at the domestic mine or port of entry. And one hundred percent of the money should be distributed to the public, equal amount to all living residents. That would begin to make the prices honest. This would provide huge incentives for individuals and huge incentives for business people... This is the way to solve the climate and the energy problems...

(Hansen, 2014 quoted in C-SPAN).

In addition, civil society groups need to insist that the media keep the public properly informed. As Hymas (2017) observed, “the media has a responsibility to report the big story, and to help the public understand the immediacy of the

threat". Politicians and businesses must take coherent actions that match their rhetoric. Rapid change or a revolutionary change in society, for which President Obama aimed, required a large number of people demanding it. This applies to the global followership models because nothing can stop millions of voices calling for change. Therefore, although President Obama might have been a successful climate pioneer, the real question is whether citizens will respond to his message, emerge from collective inaction and become motivated to make change happen (Berners-Lee and Clark 2013: 170). Some authors postulate that an effective climate change strategy should be based on three key areas: "1) Minimising the influence of the fossil fuel sector on politics and public opinion in carbon-rich countries; 2) Maximising the positive global influence of nations which are ready to participate in an ambitious deal; 3) Stemming the flow of money into fossil fuel reserves and infrastructure" (Berners-Lee and Clark, 2013: 171).

This thesis argued that a crisis of global leadership without America's leading role could result in planetary catastrophe. This is because, as Forzieri et al., (2018: 97) noted, extreme climatic events are more likely to become frequent, "damages could triple by the 2020s, multiply six-fold by mid-century, and amount to more than 10 times present damage of € 3.4 billion per year by the end of the century due only to climate change". The hope that human imagination can solve important problems however, implies a belief that an idea will be found. The hope is that "every system of domination including our twenty-first-century globalisation generates its own distinctive set of opportunities for a challenge, response and finally transformation" (Christoff and Eckersly, 2013: 164). Given

the diminishing amount of time our civilisation has to avert the ecological crisis, “we must find a way of working more creatively with, around, above, and below this system rather than entertain the political fantasy that we can design and build new global governance institutions from scratch” (Ibid.). A possible solution would provide new forms of collective leadership among various peoples in a post-hegemonic world. As Thunberg (2018) brilliantly noticed, “If solutions within the system are so impossible to find, then maybe we should change the system itself.” If our governments and institutions continue to fail to protect us against climate change, it is up to peoples to take matters into their own hands with a new approach that could actually work. The real power belongs to the people, but as for global leaders, time is running out and they must not ignore science. As the Climate Mobilization (2018) claimed, “There is no more time for multi-decade solutions.” To have a real chance of survival as a civilisation, humanity needs to reach zero emissions and drawdown in a decade or faster. This will take massive, sustained reductions in carbon emissions, and concerted collaborative action on a speed and scale humanity has not seen since the home front mobilization during World War II. Global leadership is necessary, but leaders cannot solve a problem they refuse to look at. Climate change is outpacing official predictions and accelerating due to feedback loops. Previous accepted targets and timelines for climate action are based on data displayed to the public by politicians. The scary truth is that if humanity does not dramatically change course, Earth could become uninhabitable in a matter of decades (The Climate Mobilization, 2018). “A true solution to the climate and ecological emergency must account for all sources of greenhouse gases and overshoot.” (Ibid.). This means a comprehensive whole-society initiative, “an all-hands-on-

deck massive transformation of all sectors of our economy and society.” (Ibid.). Throughout this process, humanity could build more resilient, compassionate, and just local communities that work for everyone. For this idea to work in practice, at least initially, high levels of international agreement for its implementation in key world capitals are essential. This would require reconciling existing multilateral regimes with shifts in the global power balance. In other words, away from governments and towards nongovernmental actors, to local communities. Initially, this would be met with resistance among the fossil fuel industry. However, honestly putting into work this comprehensive solution would require: 1) Holding those in power to be responsible for climatic degradation, 2) Harder global politics, 3) Smarter use of technology, 4) Persuasive diplomacy and passionate campaigning to overcome the ignorance – “each of which needs to support the others” (Berners-Lee and Clark, 2013: 28). Moreover, such a solution would finally ameliorate global arguments, lead to abandoning of disputes and rejection of selfish ambition, so that deniers could not maintain their position. Civilisation needs to accelerate progress in the generation of climate solutions.

Therefore, the international community must build on the political momentum created by the 2015 Paris Agreement. What is required is a decisive and united move towards adaptation measures and implementation of accelerated, climate-resilient development strategies (Carter, et al., 2018). It is not enough to participate in prolonged diplomatic efforts that limit global warming since global civilisation has to embrace strategies of transformative adaptation inspired by transformational leaders. Civilisation could abort what is not working and focus



on what is practical and verifiable. Increasingly, severe climate impacts are beginning to test the limits of the survival of civilisation. Humanity can adapt “by incrementally adjusting our agriculture, water management, and other key economic or social systems” (Ibid.). In some locations, climate impacts will require fundamentally changing the habits and mechanisms of agriculture, management of land, and reduction of the risk of climate migrants in order to safeguard development gains and reduce the escalating risk of conflict (Ibid.). Many communities are already adapting to the impacts of climate change. However, their stories are not always focused on within the media. As Gunderson and Holling (2002: 15) showed, “change and extreme transformations have been part of humanity's evolutionary history”. People, societies and whole civilisations have adaptive capabilities that make it possible not only to persist passively, but also to dynamically innovate at critical moments when limits are reached. Civilisations can develop successful, remedial policies incrementally once the need is apparent that are possible thanks to human creativity and novelty. These qualities could help to find a solution to climate change. The key to regeneration may be reestablishing the indigenous, flexible network of cooperation among societies who naturally cooperate with the planet, who put planet Earth first, and who invest in smart, technological innovations (McIntosh, Tainter and McIntosh, 2000). For example, some indigenous communities have learned how to establish a delicate bond with nature. This has been part of their spiritual and historical heritage.

Epistemic communities could explore that knowledge and invest in self-sufficient solutions. According to Alberti (2016), “if our cities are to be resilient on a

planetary time scale we must expand our horizons of time and space, as well as our ability to embrace change”. Evidence from ecological and social systems indicates that, when systems (for example, global climate community composed of cities which are hybrid ecosystems: the product of co-evolving human and natural systems) are heterogeneous and modular, then “they tend to be better able to adapt than those whose elements are homogenous and highly connected” (Scheffer, et al., 2012: 344). This thesis confirmed that the success of climate community depends on whether it will coexist symbiotically with natural ecosystems. As Alberti (2016) noted, “in hybrid ecosystems, resilience – their ability to adapt to changes – depends on the diversity of biological organisms and on social groups and the economic activities that coexist within them”. Climate community could become such an experimental, ecosystem that entails a diversity of cultures and human values due to it being global and operating beyond national level. It would be based on modularity – loose connectivity among components and network nodes that ensures autonomous functionality (Ibid.). Diversity could support the community’s self-organisation and provide the flexibility necessary to bring about change. Resilience of the community can increase by cross-scale interactions and discontinuities that would provide opportunities for innovation and point to ways that it can change and evolve (Holling and Gunderson, 2002: 18). As the Rockefeller Foundation (2018) noted,

Building urban resilience requires looking at a city holistically: understanding the systems that make up the city and the interdependencies and risks they may face. By strengthening the underlying fabric of a city and better understanding the potential shocks and stresses it may face, a city can improve its development trajectory and the well-being of its citizens.

As for smarter use of technology, innovation could be based on a green village managed by Artificial Intelligence that could grow organic vegetables on vertical

farms and recycle waste into fertiliser and animal food. Green villages based on a global village construction could produce its own solar and biomass power and its infrastructure could be planned and managed by computers. Solar energy is valuable because the sun provides a virtually unlimited, clean, and free fuel at a price that never changes. Solar farms take advantage of that resource, with large-scale arrays of hundreds, thousands, or in some cases millions of photovoltaic panels. They operate at a utility scale like conventional power plants in the amount of electricity they produce, but dramatically differ in their emissions. In many parts of the world, solar energy cost is competitive with or less costly than conventional power generation. In tandem with other renewables and enabled by better grids and energy storage, solar farms could usher in the clean energy revolution that President Obama envisioned. Alongside with solar energy a wise decarbonisation could also be part of the solution. In addition, resilience could be ensured by elevating the political visibility of adaptation. Making a global, collaborative effort and a firm commitment to climate solidarity had been already achieved by President Obama. The success of this ongoing process will require greater resilience in global implementation of ideas that already exists and are in the interest of all countries. President Obama will not be remembered because of the style of his personal rhetoric, but rather he will be assessed in terms of effective realisation of his policies, which implied moving beyond stated goals towards comprehensive climate change policy.

Arguably, President Obama's administrations would accomplish the goal of solving climate change equipped with a strategic vision and technological innovations based on actionable climate optimisation instrument that would be

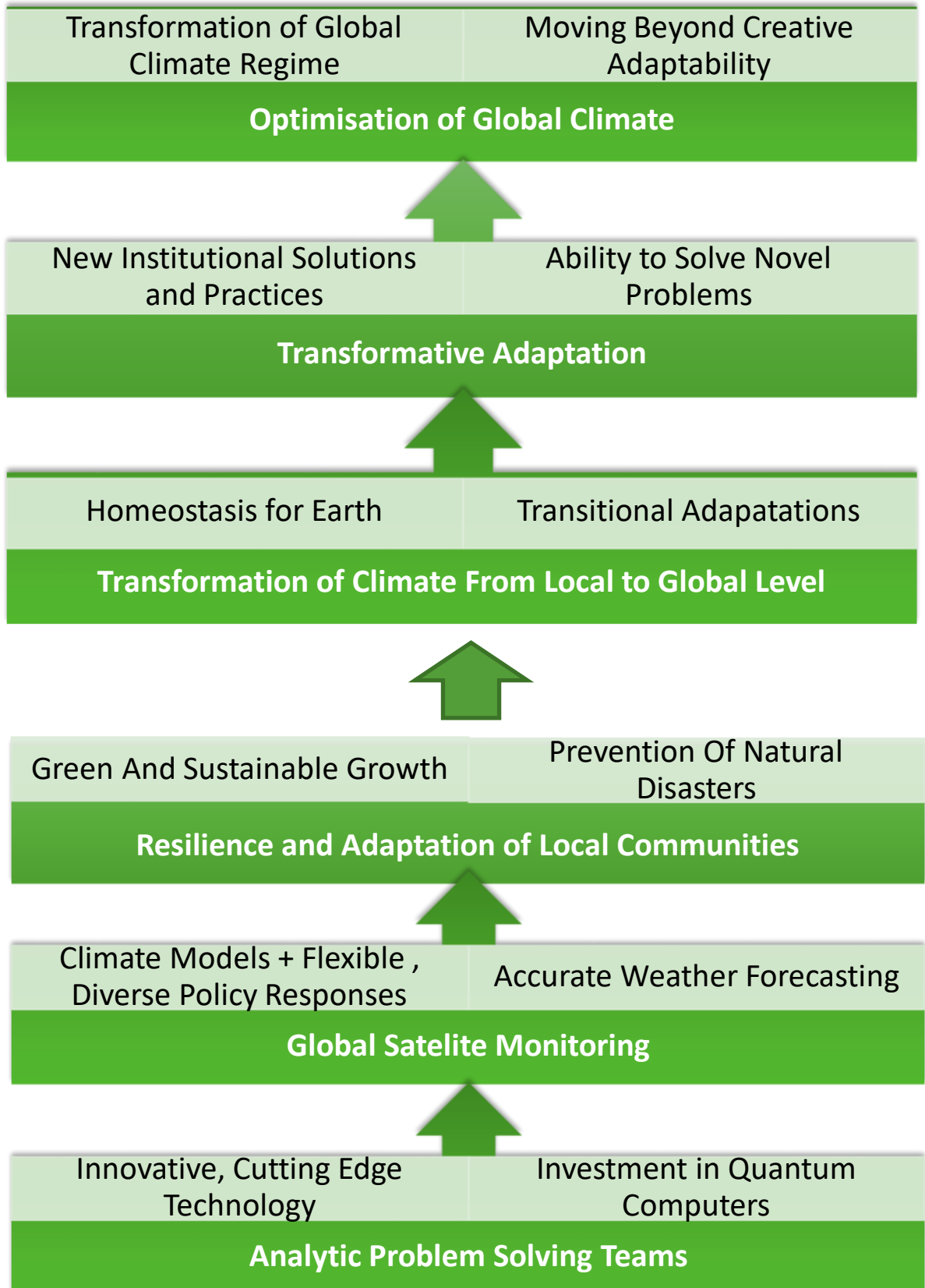
able to effectively disarm the forces of nature or work in symbiosis with them as illustrated in Figure 5.1 on the next page. The perils of environmental incrementalism stem from limited information about the challenge. As evidenced in Section 4.6, point 2 on page 159, the problem was that President Obama, initially, did not possess a full information about the challenge. The only effective and comprehensive climate change response will take time and will be based on gathering more information and conducting more careful analyses (Coglianese and D'Ambrosio, 2008 1426). As some notable professors of law and climate analysts state,

Rather than adopting a series of ad hoc, piecemeal policies and trying something through trial and error, the better way in this context is to invest additional time and resources up front in policy analysis and robust deliberation, so as to increase the probability of maximizing policy effectiveness and minimizing side effects and policy failures.

(Coglianese and D' Ambrosio, 2008: 1426).

President Obama could not have waited forever for the emergence of an optimal climate strategy. The fact that he was a pioneer implied that he was learning from previous failed policies. However, a comprehensive climate policy response that is both manageable and does not demand absolute omniscience is possible. Arguably, both Obama's administrations needed forward-thinking, media neutral, non-biased, predictive global climate observatory teams of talented, gifted individuals supported by the latest, innovative, satellite technology. Such teams acting as effective, epistemic communities could, at first, efficiently gather information, and then, feedback to leaders being specialised in calculus, foresight intelligence, advanced Mathematics, Earth Science, insight analytics and global oversight of the planet. Of considerable help would be also the fastest computers on the planet as demonstrated in Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1



Quantum computing when finally discovered could analyse large chunks of data at once and give humans a better idea of when and where bad weather will strike. Of course, some would say that idea is completely unreasonable, impossible and flowing from the fantasy world. However, every idea, even the most imaginary one deserves a fair trial as a result of experimenting process. Because what in the past was impossible has now become a reality. With such advanced, cosmic technology, arguably, inhabitants of the planet Earth would receive advanced notice of major storms like hurricanes and the extra preparation time could help save lives in case international community would not reach sufficient consensus on emissions targets. Equipped with such an advanced prognostic, forecasting technology humans would eventually help to promote stability on the planet while making the climate at least to a degree predictable and friendly, as demonstrated in Figure 5.1.

The ability to affect weather has already been tried before, for example, Indians who were producing smokes to create rain clouds. Arguably, weather control would have enormous benefit to many fields, not to mention more time to take cover from disasters. So super-intelligent, analytic teams of analysts examining climate thanks to super-fast computers and innovative, cutting-edge technology could give humans more time for preparation and avoid great suffering. Producing climate-friendly conditions on Earth would give humanity more insight into how our actions are influencing the environment on Earth on a global scale.

These models are what we build our estimates of future warming on, and help us determine what steps need to be taken now to prevent disasters. As

Dickerson (2015) observed, knowing more about how climate scenario will develop can only help us in the designing a long-term solution. By analysing climate, we can discover more accurate forecasting mechanisms although it might be just one component of a more comprehensive and all-encompassing strategy. A small step in the direction in the search for a comprehensive breakthrough. In other words, a short-term, small step that could be a tip of an iceberg revealing the ultimate, long-term climate prophylactic based on previously not revealed knowledge. In other words, this would lead to more practical and economical solutions. Thanks to their intelligence, such teams could oversee the planet from Cosmos while becoming meticulous intelligence gatherers, idea generators and effective solutions searchers.<sup>3</sup>

Such teams would surpass facts announced in the media. Equipped with the altered, higher state of consciousness, and the latest, innovative technology such individuals could possibly act as similar to oracles with conscious minds trained to predict with a relatively high level of accuracy where the natural disaster may strike at the same time feed backing decision makers (Wheal, 2017). Their minds would be able to report on the reality of climate disasters and make them explicit to the public. Such teams would be super-intelligent analysts and super-skilled experts, who believe that America will develop a capacity to effectively optimise climate when climate analysts understand its nature.

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<sup>3</sup> When scientists predict that catastrophic effects of climate change loom over the horizon there is little time left for decision makers to learn and adjust in order to respond effectively to the calamity. "One interim step that can always be taken-and probably should have been taken years ago for climate change-would be to adopt information collection policies that would generate data helpful to policymakers, both in selecting a comprehensive policy and later in providing a basis for evaluation of subsequently adopted substantive policies." (Coglianese and D'Ambrosio, 2008: 1428).

Thereby, transforming the whole world into a truly sustainable and advanced climate community would be possible. That would signify a historical precedent that is not disappointing, but enduring, long-term and long-lasting. This is because, despite the spectacular successes of climate diplomacy such as important, international treaties and global summits (attended by prominent leaders and announced by the media) environmental incrementalism might be pointless when discovering an effective solution (Lane, 2016). In reality, humanity needs practical solutions or energy breakthroughs that are reliable. One solution may be hidden in the following elegant, mathematical formula:

$$P \times S \times E \times C = \text{CO}_2 \text{ (carbon dioxide output).}^4$$

Maths suggests that “the only way to get to zero carbon dioxide output is to drop one of those inputs to zero” (Gates, 2010). The world’s population (P) is currently seven billion and expected to increase to nine billion by 2050. As for the services (S), there is no chance it will be zero even if humanity manages well introduction of new vaccines and reproductive health services (Ibid.). As for the energy needed per service (E), electric cars, LED light bulbs, and other inventions will enable to use energy more efficiently. More people use recycling and adopt sustainable lifestyles. However, widespread these efforts unfortunately they will not result in zero energy output. “Gates points out that scientists are calling for an eighty percent drop in carbon emissions by 2050 (and a total end by 2100) to stave off the most dramatic effects of climate change” (Lane, 2016). However, even with more efficiency, the growth in population and services means that by

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<sup>4</sup> In the equation, P = population; S = services used by people; E= the energy needed to power those services; and C equals the carbon dioxide created by that energy. The equation was announced in the annual letter from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in February 2016.



2050 “humanity will be using 50 percent more energy than we do today” (Gates 2016). Therefore, the only successful solution will deal with the final factor. Most probably it will be based on introducing miraculous sources of energy that will emit no carbon dioxide, and this, in consequence, may help humanity avoid catastrophic climate change (Gates, 2010). To accomplish that and “to stop the planet from getting substantially warmer,” humanity “needs breakthroughs in how we make things, grow food, and move people and goods—not just how we power our homes and cars (Gates, 2018).

### **5.12 Summary**

The aim of this research was to discuss and analyse the achievements and lost opportunities of President Obama’s climate diplomacy. Based on the evidence presented above and answering questions outlined at pages 191-192 it is argued that:

- Climate policies changed radically under President Obama. However, critics have suggested that President Obama could have utilised several other channels of leadership.
- President Obama’s climate goals were extremely ambitious. However, this was proportionate to the scale of climate crisis. Despite his ambitious goals, however, climate action has so far been not sufficient to prevent climate change.
- Climate action pursued by President Obama was sufficiently decisive and comprehensive. However, climate action could have been taken more swiftly, especially during the first term, when President Obama could have focused on an all-out, pivotal political campaign.

- President Obama moved from rhetoric to action by adopting a distinctive, new club diplomacy based on which America was, “more likely to find it more effective to work with countries individually and in small groups than to focus on large global forums” (Victor, 2013).
- President Obama’s second term was more consequential. The president stepped-up his climate rhetoric globally, and demonstrated an increased willingness to seriously pursue the reduction of domestic greenhouse gas emissions (McKibben, 2015a). For example, President Obama’s introduction of regulations on coal-fired power plants were particularly helpful. In addition, his 2012 rules on fuel efficiency for cars and trucks were effective (Ibid.). A nonbinding pledge that America would cut emissions in future decades has enabled climate talks in Paris that ended with the successful signing of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement (ibid.).
- The policy mechanisms selected to address the climate crisis can be considered adequate. However, the Obama administration could have relied more on the constructivist model of the life-cycle of climate norms in order to shift the pressure from the president himself to the international community. This may have implemented climate norms more naturally as a result of the spiral model.
- The actions of President Obama’s Administration on renewable energy were performed at the scale necessary to confront the climate crisis. However, after their initial announcements it was believed that was that the speed and scale of ‘the green revolution’ would be far more intense.
- The change seemed to happen at the right time and pace. For instance, Clark noted that under President Obama (2018: 114), “domestic investment in

renewable energies has led the prices of renewable energy to fall considerably - widening the market for American businesses to realistically participate in sustainable development”. However, this strategy failed to prevent the climate crisis from escalating. Although it should be noted that President Obama sought to create a normative and investment momentum and did not aim to become a transformational and heroic global leader.

- President Obama’s climate programs were mainly designed as a strategy for improving the American economy. Once President Obama “put the house in order”, he could have redirected his climate policies towards global climate engagement. Moreover, on numerous occasions, he spoke about the need to save the planet.
- The Obama administration applied climate diplomacy powerfully and built robust, international bridges and diplomatic partnerships with many countries around the world to ensure that the effort to combat climate change was a global initiative.
- President Obama’s administration took on an active leadership role to engage the world’s major economies to advance key climate priorities and galvanised global action through international climate negotiations.
- Global followership may be spurred from the actions of an effective norm-entrepreneur acting as an exemplary transformational leader who introduces climate norms. President Obama acted as a climate norm-entrepreneur who introduced the norm of environmental stewardship but he did not manage to change the structure more profoundly.
- President Obama managed to secure many important climate policies. However, he did so by working against an obstructionist Congress and the

widespread climate denial. The key achievement of President Obama, the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, could be rolled back by the Administration of Donald Trump (Bailey, 2017).

- There were many alternative climate policies that President Obama's administrations could have pursued, but these were not considered.

In sum, President Obama believed that “there is such thing as being too late” in positively responding to address the challenge of climate change. However, the number of more pressing priorities to be addressed meant that he could not have acted more promptly or more powerfully on the issue. When President Obama took office, he intended to demonstrate clear leadership on climate change. This is evidence in his statement in which he said, “Too often, Washington has failed to show leadership. That will change when I take office” (Obama, 2008). His chosen approach was to strengthen institutions and invigorate alliances and partnerships to combat epochal problem of climate change. Therefore, diplomacy enabled the initiation of a broader global action. Consequently, President Obama's diplomacy has been successful in addressing the problem of climate change insofar as the President initiated the momentum of climate action with 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. President Obama achieved this goal mainly as a result of his speeches, foreign visits and addresses to global institutions. He maintained this goal until the end of his time as President. In his approach to the international politics of climate change, the President chose to rely predominantly on a liberal intuitionist approach of uniting the world through cooperative incentives, but also largely on a constructivist approach to International Relations. In light of

this, it could be argued that President Obama was a true 'climate champion', who despite facing an obstructionist Congress, successfully worked with various peoples at a grassroots level and enabled change to happen. Emblematic at this stage are numerous examples when President Obama engaged educational institutions and universities. His diplomatic efforts and accomplishments, such as doubling clean-energy production and cutting auto emissions in half (Obama interviewed by Wenner, 2016) were impressive. President Obama was also aware of his limitations in his ability to prevent global warming. Nevertheless, he attempted to address the problem seriously and consistently (McKibben, 2014). Overall, it can be argued that President Obama "has done more on climate change than his three predecessors combined" (McKibben, 2009). But this does not mean that he could not have done more. Finally, many changes occurred during Obama's two terms in office. This had cumulative effects that presented President Obama with difficulties and opportunities alike. He capitalised on opportunities, but was also slowed down by setbacks and opposition from vested interests in the fossil fuel industry and oil corporations, who aimed to maintain the status quo. Acting against President Obama's diplomatic actions they decided to hold on the power and defend the prevailing structure of the system. As McKibben (2014) noticed, "The fossil-fuel industry, by virtue of being perhaps the richest enterprise in human history, has been able to delay effective action, almost to the point where it's too late". Similarly, as Berners-Lee and Clark (2013: 126) noted,

For decades institutions that invested in ongoing oil, coal and gas use have pumped money into lobby groups, think tanks and PR agencies with the express purpose of persuading people and politicians - especially in America - that climate

change either does not exist, does not matter or will be impossibly expensive to solve.

President Obama tried to undermine this system through his speeches and climate diplomacy. Critics have argued that President Obama scored highly in terms of patience, pragmatism and remaining cool. However, they also suggest that despite convincing and powerful rhetoric, little effective action followed. They would point out that President Obama was good at pronouncing lofty principles rather than implementing words into action. In reality, President Obama admitted himself that he faced hard choices, stating that, “At the end of the day, we are part of a long-running story. We just try to get our paragraph right”. He went on to say, “I think we are fortunate at the moment that we do not face a crisis of the scale and scope that Lincoln or Franklin Delano Roosevelt faced” (Obama, quoted in McKibben, 2014). Thus, President Obama demonstrated that he did not want the carbon bubble, worth 27 trillion dollars, to explode in his administration what would most probably lead to a crisis (McKibben quoted in Berners-Lee and Clark, 2013: xvi).

Consequently, was President Obama a consequential and accountable leader of climate change? This thesis argues that being a successful transformational leader might have helped him, as described in the model laid out by Burns (2003: 168-169) and explained in Section 5.2 of this thesis. This would have required matching President Obama’s ambitious goals with a clear action plan of how to fulfil them. In other words, translating political vision into action. In line with this model, President Obama could have become a leader of a greater, social movement with the aim of saving civilisation. However, this would have required that his agenda to be radically global from the very

beginning. In truth, he could have predicted that his actions would be met with strong opposition. This is because both America and the international community were unprepared to successfully follow his ideas and plans. Therefore, this thesis argues that President Obama could have relied more on a constructivist model of internalisation of climate norms (Cf. Section 3.6). Equally as President Obama invested in liberal institutionalism (Rojas, 2010), he could have achieved more decisive victory by following precepts from norm-centred constructivism.

Arguably, President Obama intuitively chose to address the prevailing “*spirit of the times*”. This demanded solving climate change thereby healing the planet by transforming the structure of the international system based on vested interests of the fossil fuel industry and big oil corporations. To accomplish his goal, he needed mostly the third constituent of power, namely norms and ideas. This is because he must have placed America as a leader in the battle of ideas in the twenty-first century. What was crucial to achieve his political aim was the ability to shape, through the spread of norms, ideas and diplomacy. Indeed, political scientists have long argued that norms have important effects on outcomes in international politics (Ruggie, 1982: 379). As explained earlier, “norms have influence independent of the distribution of state power; they shape behaviour by providing states and nonstate actors with information about interests, and they carry social content” (Finnemore, 1993, quoted in Hafner-Burton, et al., 2012: 54). As a result of the active promotion of climate norms enabled by diplomacy, President Obama was able to influence states’ behaviour not only by setting standards but also by creating

expectations and social pressures that encouraged compliance (Hafner-Burton, et al., 2012: 54). Doing so could have allowed, President Obama to not only become more effective, but also to gain the opportunity to transform the prevailing international structure. By building on the progress of climate diplomacy, President Obama could have initiated 'a domino effect' or 'a chain reaction' for gradually reconfiguring global energy systems away from planetary reliance on fossil fuels and towards initiating a green revolution. It was the first step for building the foundations for fossil fuel free world while also preventing or at least to some extent, mitigating and slowing down the negative impacts of climate change. The last argument is magnified by the fact that given the wave of the most recent disastrous climate events, climate change has become a political issue of the outmost importance. It is now considered an undeniable truth, and a civilisational threat that demands an urgent, global action. As such, climate change requires energetic American leadership alongside concerted action from the international community.

This chapter investigated whether America, during the eight-year period of President Obama in office, as the world's largest and the most influential economy took on a leadership role in engaging the world's major economies to advance key climate priorities and in galvanising global action through international negotiations and by championing climate norms. By directing America's diplomacy towards a cause larger than America's own security, President Obama discerned the opportunity for American interest to coincide with the global interest because climate is a global public good. President Obama (2007: 304) himself admitted, "No other nation on earth has a greater



capacity to shape a global system, or to build consensus on the preservation of global public goods such as climate than America”.

However, having considered all evidence and on balance, it might be stated that the shift of recalibrating American diplomatic tools and foreign policy instruments on preventing climate change disasters could have been made much earlier and much more decisively, in President Obama’s first term. Arguably, if such a comprehensive initiative had been embraced, while President Obama more decisively slashing his opposition at home and leading as a global, creative leader internationally he would have achieved progress more quickly. However, President Obama chose to act within the established climate regime what arguably was not an effective strategy. Offering a consequential leadership would require that equally as he has demonstrated his willingness to use executive authority at home to reduce climate pollution he should continue to extend that strategy to the international realm (Purvis et al., 2015: 16). The Executive Office of the President “has several tools to forge large-scale international climate partnerships without having to secure increased appropriations or statutory authorities from Congress (Ibid.).

This chapter has outlined the results obtained through researching official, White House documents, President Obama’s speeches and other documentary sources cited in the Literature Review related to the way in which President Obama’s diplomacy has addressed the problem of climate change. Equally, this chapter has put forward a discussion of the enduring achievements and lost opportunities of President’s Obama’s climate efforts. In

addition, this chapter has presented a balanced assessment of President Obama's climate diplomacy and assessment of clarity and strength in strategic vision and climate action. The core analysis evaluating President Obama's normative influence and his lasting endurance have been presented. This chapter has therefore provided the foundations for the next chapter where conclusions from the previous chapters will be made.

# CHAPTER SIX

## Conclusions

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter will first summarise the conclusions drawn from this thesis about how successful President Obama efforts in climate diplomacy were. Second, the implications of these findings are addressed. Third, policy implications and areas for further research are discussed. Finally, future prospects for the application of the thesis are explored and possible solutions are suggested.

### 6.2 Summary of the Thesis

The aim of this thesis was to examine President Obama's efforts in climate diplomacy. In order to effectively proceed with evaluation, Section 1.1.2 in Chapter One has identified the core research question: 1) To what extent was President Obama's diplomacy successful in addressing the problem of climate change? And two sub-questions: 2) What are some of the innovative and creative forms of diplomacy employed by President Obama? 3) What were the major successes and failures of President Obama's climate diplomacy?

Chapter One (Introduction) explained the idea behind the thesis, defined key concepts such as climate diplomacy and established what are President Obama's views on environment and climate change. It explained the successful practice of climate diplomacy would require diplomacy to be creative and innovative act based on a consensual process. This chapter elucidated on the concepts of creative and consensual leadership and international legitimacy in

the context of President Obama's climate actions.

Chapter Two (Literature Review) recognised a gap in the literature. It stated that apart from Mahar's (2017) work, the literature is deficient in terms of a comprehensive, academic evaluation of President Obama's climate diplomacy from a perspective of a specific, theoretical tradition of International Relations Theory. It offered a preliminary overview of a norm-centred constructivism and agency of President Obama. It argued that transformational, creative leaders can activate the world by inspiring a positive change and promoting environmental norms thereby exerting normative influence on the international community. Equally, President Obama acted as 'a climate policy entrepreneur'.

Chapter Three (Research Methodology) stated the chosen method to analyse President Obama's climate diplomacy will be norm-centred constructivism. This methodology and framework was justified through a process of elimination of the alternative theoretical approaches. Realism, for example, was dismissed because its developmental logic of perpetual material growth which merely replicates the established structure. Liberal institutionalism, although helpful, promises structural change as a result of a long, painstaking process of building incentives for cooperation. It was argued that the planet will not wait until humanity reaches a global consensus based on this approach. In addition, both approaches have so far failed to predict a chance for success moving beyond the construction of a climate regime towards climate community. Consequently, norm-centred constructivism was selected. This is because it is the only theoretical approach that pragmatically conjectures the possibility of a bold, structural change. This is

in large part thanks to the theoretical model of norm-entrepreneurship that was explained. Chapter Three provided for a theoretical framework arguing that due to the gridlock of previous twenty-three years of climate diplomacy at the global level a degree of success to overcome the impasse required a powerful, determined international agent or 'a climate policy norm-entrepreneur' to decisively step in and change the prevailing, ineffective structure by introducing climate or environmental norms. The international community could further adopt such norms. Although this may sound simple, the task was enormous. Equally difficult is the task of evaluating President Obama's efforts in climate diplomacy through this chosen method. This is because as Bhatasara (2015: 224) noted, "researchers undertaking investigations of the transformative effects of actors' activities on the society in which they are embedded" face a large methodological challenge". Despite this, Chapter Three demonstrated that norm-centred constructivism provides a powerful lens through which to understand American climate diplomacy during the Obama's administration. To reiterate, this specific type of constructivism is an approach to social analysis that deals with the role of agency and human consciousness in social life. According to constructivists, who offer a middle way approach between realism and idealism, America and the whole world need leadership with a positive outlook, with a significant amount of agency, in order to refrain from the disastrous foreign policy-making. In essence, "Human beings are born into certain social structures, however; they have the ability of agency to change and transform the social structure" (Ishihara and Pascual, 2012: 209). Consequently, anarchy between states is socially constructed. Therefore, it can be transformed by transformational leaders. Going beyond President Obama's goals towards the final solving the climate change

crisis required President Obama initiating structural transformation of the system. This could happen initially as a result of climate diplomacy and then through climate norm internalisation. Such transformation implied a break away from the dominant structure based on vested interests of the fossil fuel industry and big oil corporations towards a clean energy revolution and creation of the low-carbon economy. Structural transformation would have succeeded if the international community had followed adoption of climate norms introduced by President Obama. This would lead to a subsequent creation of a global climate community.

Throughout this research, it was extremely difficult to indisputably delineate the criteria of success of President Obama's actions in climate. This thesis applied the following criteria of successful climate diplomacy: 1) The degree to which President Obama's climate diplomacy was innovative and creative. 2) The extent to which the rest of the world followed President Obama's climate norms. 3) The selection of method by President Obama and extent to which his climate norms managed to address the problem of climate change efficiently. 4) The extent to which President Obama managed to persuade public opinion. 5) Effectiveness of President Obama in strengthening global institutions and invigorating alliances to advance his political aims of combating climate change.

In light of this, President Obama had little chance of successfully confronting the challenge alone. Therefore, President Obama adopted a strategy of working through "strengthened institutions and invigorated alliances and partnerships" (Obama, 2007: 13). Chapter Four (How Innovative and Creative was President Obama's Climate Diplomacy?) tested effectiveness of President Obama's role as

a norm entrepreneur in combating climate change. Results showed that President Obama managed to secure important agreements with other states on limitations of environmental damage. President Obama's climate diplomacy was successful because it managed to persuade developing states to join such agreements. The evidence suggested that they remain committed to this new, normative international framework which is resilient and strong. President Obama chose the right method and acted as a leader protecting liberal order. He sought support from fellow global leaders, liberal institutions, global coalitions, diplomatic partnerships, and international organisations. Results showed that President Obama was aware that he had to embrace collective action in order to be effective. Success required a creation of a global climate community which has emerged. For that reason, Chapter Four argued that President Obama's agency and climate leadership were successful. However, the impact of his climate diplomacy was restricted due to a number of constraints. Chapter Four argued that although President Obama acted as a transformational leader, it cannot be proved that his climate diplomacy prevented extreme weather events. However, because his climate diplomacy was creative and innovative, it could have provided for the first step towards the creation of a long-term climate solution.

Although presidential terms are now finished, Chapter Five (The Achievements and Failures of President Obama in Climate Diplomacy) argued that it may be difficult to evaluate President Obama normative influence. Examination of President Obama's climate diplomacy is a typical example of a knife-edge situation. Evaluation holds in balance because it is difficult to objectively establish if President Obama succeeded or failed. He may have succeeded because he

led to the creation of global climate community. He might have failed since climate change is still an unresolved global challenge. What might be objectively discerned is that the momentum President Obama initiated in clean energy may be unstoppable. Furthermore, the creation of a global, climate community is a process that is not completed. As a result, President Obama's efforts in climate diplomacy were successful from the perspective of time. This is despite the fact that at the moment, there seems to be no long-term solution. Emissions reductions and development in low-carbon energy promoted by President Obama, in partnership with China are historic. Eventually, they may lead to a significant reduction of global emissions in the long-term. Although the ability of President Obama's action in climate diplomacy to prevent cases of extreme weather are impossible to measure with accuracy. Reductions in such events could tangibly be linked to his efforts should the international community unite to solve the challenge.

Chapter Five discussed the two major successes of President Obama climate diplomacy: the Paris Agreement and the US-China deal on climate. As Sussman (2015) noticed, "By shrewdly leveraging declining U.S. emissions, finding common ground with China, and advocating a system of reciprocal but non-binding national commitments, President Obama has played his cards well". However, leadership is defined in this thesis as the ability to develop a vision that motivates others to work with a passion toward a common goal. In light of this, it could be argued that President Obama has been successful in terms of addressing the problem of climate change. This is because he did everything within his power in order to fulfil policy objectives. In this sense, President Obama



realised his climate policy goals. This is despite some missed opportunities preventing a more comprehensive success.

However, if President Obama were to have succeeded in stopping climate change, it would have required transformation of the system on some kind of global basis. Realising governmental, climate policy goals is insufficient to successfully addressing climate change. Climate change was never a top priority due to the importance of other policy areas. If President Obama had set more ambitious goals he would have risked never realising them. Setting achievable goals is often the mark an effective leader. However, acting pragmatically means that President Obama, to some extent, inadvertently prolonged the existing structure. At the same time, however, he acted as a climate norm entrepreneur. His actions were ambitious, global in scope and far-sighted. In addition, his rhetoric was convincing and inspiring. President Obama was an authoritative climate norm-entrepreneur committed to the task of implementing and internalising climate norms. Success will be determined by the effectiveness and political leverage of the climate community that emerged in the aftermath of President Obama's presidency. This thesis established that the dice are not thrown yet and creative forces are in flux. This is because clearly not all President Obama's projects and ideas were failures. As noted by Coyle and Simmons (2014: 38), "Amidst failures, other successful projects continue to achieve stated objectives". Although climate change was not given the same level of priority as the Kennedy's commitment to the exploration of space pronounced in his 1962 Moon Speech, President Obama instinctively chose to address this global problem. He chose to do it by instilling

a dream of a climate free world, informing that this shared dream is achievable and invoking the spirit of global community that would represent all the peoples of the world who would benefit from solving it. At the same time, President Obama was serious about his goal. Why he still can achieve a success retrospectively? Because as noted by Coyle (2014: 39), “though the intent to stimulate the energy economy was genuine, even the most successful projects may progress at a deliberate pace and achieving ‘positive’ outcomes may be challenging in the short term”. However, whether President Obama’s efforts “will lead to long-term climate solution is unknowable. However, the truth is that the odds are better now than before” he came to office as a result of his climate diplomacy (Sussman, 2015). Therefore, a situation could be envisaged in which President Obama’s climate efforts, in the future, could be considered as an example of an initiator or a catalyst for global climate movement that cumulatively will lead to a collective action on climate.

What prevented the implementation of a climate change solution and full, comprehensive success? The entrenched hegemony favouring special interests obstructed President Obama’s fulfilment of his climate plan. Successful internalisation of climate norms, reform of the existing climate regime, and formation of an effective climate community were held off mainly due to structural obstacles. However, the efforts of the emerging climate community should not be wholly dismissed. Despite critics suggesting that President Obama’s efforts in climate diplomacy were a failure, this failure was not based on the leadership style of President Obama or his attitude toward cooperation. President Obama passed the leadership test despite the difficulty of circumstances. However, as Parker and

Karlsson (2018: 536) noticed, robust leadership on climate depends not only on energetic climate diplomacy but also on domestic support. According to these researchers, “Leadership is not simply a function of structural power, and US leadership recognition is closely tied to active US climate diplomacy and meaningful domestic action.” Consequently, the failure was based in the inability to implement preferred policies in the face of domestic political constraints, especially from Congress, that did not reflect the values of the majority of American society. The unreformed governmental system of checks and balances prevented redesign of a climate regime. As evidenced by Rudolf (2016: 4), “The US Congress, concerned about the costs, was opposed to any comprehensive climate change bill and any binding international agreement on reducing greenhouse gases”. Most notably, as described in Chapter Five, the American Clean Energy and Security Act passed in 2009 through the US House of Representatives (Congress). This included cap and trade policy (Bradshaw, 2014: 72). But it was rejected by the US Senate. This constitutes a major missed opportunity for President Obama’s climate diplomacy. As a result, President Obama resorted to politically controversial executive action (Ibid.). The President was determined to act, “Especially the new regulations based upon the Clean Air Act, Obama circumvented domestic opposition and proved that he was serious about changing the US position from blocking to leading” (Rudolf, 2016: 4). A significant achievement was successfully persuading China to agree to reduce its emissions. This then paved the way for the Paris Climate Agreement in December 2015. As Rudolf (2016: 4) stated, “The agreement may fall short of the actions needed to effectively tackle climate change, but it represents the culmination of a long evolution in the US role in climate policy: a transformation from spoiler to

leader". Therefore, President Obama's administration did not lose momentum in pursuing its climate agenda, and their greatest achievements appeared late in the second term.

In light of the evidence presented above, President Obama realised his objectives. Therefore, it could be argued that his leadership was reasonably successful. However, he did not use his moment to offer a decisive and comprehensive ("Samurai style") climate victory. Evidence suggests however, that by persevering with the previously stated objectives a leader may narrow horizons and limit the freedom to solve global challenges effectively. Freedom does not mean the absence of all restrictions. Instead, it means possessing unshakable conviction in the face of obstacles thereby solving the problem completely. Given that, a much more decisive, prompt and comprehensive climate campaign was expected. As Ikeda observed, "The key to solving all our problems is to cast off apathy and preconceived notions that lead us to view a situation as unsolvable or unavoidable. Problems caused by human beings can be solved by human beings" (Ikeda, quoted in Bogden, 2018). It can be argued that President Obama understood this instruction.

Despite criticism, the laws of politics may work in favour of President Obama. This is because, as Keohane (1984: 181) noted, "a decline of hegemony may increase the demand for international regimes". President Obama might have become a President during a time of a relative American decline, which could be interpreted not as his weakness or failure, but as a grand strategic and planetary move in the politically constraining times. This is because, at the same time, President Obama

initiated a very powerful non-federal climate movement, which showed signs of an evolving global, climate community. As Keohane (1984: 181) noticed, “After hegemony, regimes and climate norms may become potentially more important as a means of limiting uncertainty and promoting mutually beneficial agreements”. Under the conditions of relative American decline, an effective climate community may become more influential in championing its climate goals. However, there is no guarantee that this assumption is true and possible risks of American decline might be enormous and detrimental to the international order.

### **6.3 Implications of the Findings for Research Questions**

This thesis argues that norm-centred constructivism can help to explain President Obama’s actions on climate change. More specifically, it may be of value for elucidating on the processes of legitimacy or the role of agency. This is because it can explain a redefined American global leadership under President Obama, who pledged to transform existing regional alliances into new partnerships united in the face of a common global challenge. This thesis argues that a norm-entrepreneur identifies an area where norms can be changed and applies his innovative methods and skills such as: 1) Knowing himself; 2) Knowing the challenge of climate change 3) Capacity to influence - in order to decisively undermine the prevailing structure of the system unfair towards Earth thereby successfully addressing the climate crisis. In addition, norm-centred constructivism could be applied alongside a rational liberal institutionalist approach to multilateral institutions in order to explain why President Obama built alliances and partnerships through his diplomacy.

Within his climate speeches, President Obama demonstrated preference for idealism and pragmatism. A sense of change was evident in his rhetoric, however, his policies may be explained more accurately by applying a liberal institutionalist approach. Certainly, policies implemented during his second-term were constrained by domestic and international factors, although momentum has been sustained and the political enterprise he initiated is not complete. Future American presidents need to carefully consider their climate agenda.

Had President Obama matched his vision with a corresponding firmness and principled, consequential climate action, he would have effectively changed the world. This would be possible as a result of his persistent climate and normative influence. Chapter Five showed that he was constrained in this task because the world did not follow to a sufficient degree. In other words, President Obama would have succeeded had he treated his climate diplomacy as double-edged sword and followed rhetoric with a more decisive implementation policy. This could resemble a 'Samurai sword cut' through the gridlocked system. Domestically, the President was constrained due to party politics. Internationally, he attempted to bend the rule-based international order by working through institutions and partnerships. That strategy proved more successful. Evidently, what was required was not just a gentle moulding of the existing regime (Keohane and Victor, 2011), but rather a shakeup of "the established institutions out of their current ineffective path (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014: 216).

Evaluation of President Obama's climate diplomacy suggests that it is possible to modernise the practice of diplomacy and bring innovative approaches to

effectively address climate change. One of the main achievements of the Obama Administration's innovations in climate change is that it has become a national policy concern. President Obama understood that "effective climate diplomacy means granting climate change the same level of concern in foreign policy as other security issues" (Holland and Rossetti, 2015: 7). This thesis agrees with the statement,

Climate change poses too great a risk for America and the world to treat it as a secondary issue, and America should begin connecting it to other areas of foreign policy, similar to how human rights, nuclear proliferation, counterterrorism, and other global policy issues are addressed.

(Holland and Rossetti, 2015: 7).

President Obama's initial pledge to the system of international law was promising. President Obama acknowledged that America should combat climate change through enforcement of international law and by modernising international institutions,

This modernization of institutions, strengthening of international norms, and enforcement of international law is not a task for the United States alone—but together with like-minded nations, it is a task we can lead.

(Obama, 2010: 3).

Failure to integrate climate change into the complex policy nexus and into the international law of interlocking institutions, rules and norms will result in a continuously warming world, increased global threats and America, which is isolated from the real solutions rather than a global leader (Ibid.). However, "a key source of American leadership throughout our history has been enlightened self-interest" (Ibid.). In order for success to be completed in orchestrating President Obama's climate diplomacy, short-sighted, but less effective policy impulses by

his successor should be channelled into a broader vision of building on the past actions with a long-term view of delivering even more comprehensive climate accomplishments by the President and his followers. How can this be achieved when President Obama's term in office is now finished?

For success to be possible, the 2015 Paris Agreement must be the beginning, and not the end, of global climate diplomacy (Purivs, et al., 2015: 19). Therefore, "climate diplomacy after Paris should focus not just on ensuring that nations deliver on what they have promised in 2015 but also on raising global climate ambition through collaborative actions" and by participating in common projects thereby increasing cooperation (Ibid.). Climate diplomacy could be seen as a result driven strategy. In this sense, it becomes an essential tool for the turbulent world. But diplomacy must work as the way of inspiring, motivating, mobilising and setting the direction. It can work by going further than just getting to agreements. It can do more than just maintaining a continuous status of keeping good international relations. It can work as an agent of change and generator of tangible results. The 2015 Paris Agreement is the best proof that global climate diplomacy is not only the way to face the crisis but to be sustainable and successful in the long term. Indeed, joint action towards a common goal of resilience is the path to get to results. In the current, international political stage what can be observed is a lack of global leadership, uncertainty and lack of strategic vision. In particular, the most powerful countries in the world, such as America and the United Kingdom tend to isolate themselves from the active leadership role in the European context. Bilateralism, anti-globalism and reducing diplomacy to specific agreements is what remains the predominant strategy of



global players. Under these circumstances 2015 Paris Agreement represents an impressive and unexpected move with challenging results. Paris Agreement means climate diplomacy in action in a challenging historical momentum, in the world where there is a climate crisis and crisis of leadership and procedures. Indeed, a joint action at global level, when political, financial and economic facts are pushing to bilateralism is a real achievement and remarkable work for global leaders. A sign of global solidarity. In this context, climate diplomacy is a matter of individual initiative from leaders within a framework of strong political will backed up by joint action and citizenship engagement. When faced with the devastating reality of international conflicts, for example, the one in the Middle East (Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan etc.), there is a clear incapacity of diplomacy. Therefore, a reshape of the system is urgently needed. Including a s stronger role on behalf of intelligent public opinion, trustworthy media and empowered ordinary citizens to the cause of climate change that would help climate diplomacy lead to a more committed action and involvement. But to achieve this revolutionary shift of mindsets in politics, humanity needs to choose wisely leaders so that they are driven by citizenship and not by populism. Their empowerment is directly connected to transparent and accountable political systems. Leaders must be elected according to their performance and being replaced immediately if they do not achieve effective results. They must be on a constant, steady supervision if they continue to deliver what they have promised in their political campaigns. Strong leadership, solid institutions and renewed global spirit would work as a counterbalance against the inaction, impasse and lack of international progress. The “water” of diplomacy for a thirsty world that needs a splash of creative spirit.

Given the above, even after President Obama's term in office, the President has to become more active. Now acting as an experienced global diplomat in service of the global common good. Thus, "Outlining an ambitious, urgent and achievable post-Paris climate agenda would cement President Obama's place in history as an unrivalled global climate leader" (Purvis, 2015: 19). President Obama was the first American president to reduce America's climate pollution and convince developing nations to act (Ibid.). This confirms the working of the norm entrepreneurship spiral model (Cf. Figure 3.3). How his climate legacy will be remembered will depend on whether his followers will find a solution and put his vision into reality.

President Obama had the opportunity to become the first world leader with a strategic vision accompanied by a concrete plan to move global climate action in line with scientific realities and avert a global climate catastrophe by meeting the 2°C goal (Purvis, et al., 2015: 19). The majority of scientists maintain that limiting global warming to below 2°C remains technically and economically feasible,

But only with political ambition backed by rapid action starting now. If nothing more is done except the current pledges, costs would be much higher to reach deeper reductions necessary later, and/or the damage from climate impacts would be far greater.

(Vieweg et al., 2012: 1).

At the moment, "it does not look politically feasible given the present condition of global climate governance" (Dryzek and Stevenson, 2014: 209). The Obama administration maintained a global leadership profile as a result of persistence of President Obama. Strategies that can ease climate crisis and increase resilience across a range of possible futures include: helping to improve human health,

livelihoods, social and economic well-being, and environmental equality (IPPC, 2014: 25).

#### **6.4 Policy Implications**

Throughout American history, foreign policy has often diverged from national interest. This could be considered a failure of foreign policy which often led to misguided interventions. However, climate change opened new avenues of innovation and creativity to the conduct of American climate diplomacy. Simultaneously, it was inspired by the hope of building a better world thanks to a revolution in clean energy. President Obama attempted to utilise this opportunity by ensuring American national interest coincided with the global interest. Evidence suggests that President Obama not only sought a politically attractive version to convey to the American people, but attempted to address climate change effectively. Perhaps, one way of solving climate change was having a leader of the most powerful country in the world to exercise a wise foreign policy often through constructive and creative, climate diplomacy to accommodate more countries not only to preserve liberal order but also to try and heal the Earth. Therefore, redirecting American foreign policy instruments on climatic issues initiated by President Obama was a promising start. It was also prudent, far-sighted and provided a long-term strategy for not only America but also for global, civilisational preservation. This would require a much more ambitious set of policy goals. Living in harmony with our planet is a worthy goal for American diplomacy that could simultaneously prove to solve many international problems and ongoing disputes. Moreover, if the humanity under America's active leadership could solve global challenges then perhaps, new possibilities would present

themselves and humanity as a whole would have achieved much more in terms of a conquest of space or of opening new technological avenues for civilisational advancement. What America and the world need is “a new burst of American, pioneering spirit”, innovative policy and climate action – “and this time not just within the confines of a single continent but all around the globe” (Toynbee, 1962: 9). Many individuals feel that their actions are insignificant to make a difference. However, global citizens should not discard the social and political effects of their efforts (Berners-Lee and Clark, 2013: 197).

The justification for advancing this topic is that much of our collective failure to tackle climate change results from a lack of leadership. President Obama corrected this reality by offering excellent leadership. Indeed, the true test of diplomacy is in the quality of its leadership. Diplomatic leadership involves negotiating, representing interests and policies, speaking publicly, and resolving global challenges. Such leadership should be focused on global initiatives. The planet requires spiritual, moral and political renewal. Prudent, global leaders invest significant effort and demonstrate political sagacity in doing the right thing at the right time. They choose almost instinctively the right solution. They fulfil their stated political aims decisively, not wavering when confronted with serious challenges, and without deliberation. They are prepared for every eventuality including the one of diverting the ineffective political system. Because the paradox is that the the most politically urgent issue of modern times - inequality and opportunity for advancement (with the focal point at climate paradox) might not at all be solved by pure politics. As Ladislav (2018) noticed, “the trouble is that visions and platforms are great for catalyzing speeches and hearings, but policy

design, passing legislation, and implementation are hard.” When through politics politicians cannot reach a quick progress, there emerges space for an alternative, out-of-the-system breakthrough by a prepared change maker. Such a person or a team of individuals would be consequential. In the sense that they would not only promise change but also deliver it to leave a better and safer world for future generations. In line with this argument, some climate scientists argued that the Earth requires much faster policy reaction than that offered by president Obama. This would be to prevent handing to future generations a climate system which would be out of their control, “Former president failed miserably on climate change and oversaw policies that were late, ineffectual and partisan” (Hansen quoted in Milman, 2018c). Certainly, finding a solution to climate change is an unfinished project that requires rejecting flawed solutions and choosing the simplest, the most valid and the most practical one.

Moreover, while it is not certain whether any of these individual efforts will make a difference one thing that is certain is the hope that eventually climate change can be solved. To borrow Bobby Kennedy’s phrase, “these tiny ripples of hope” will “build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls” (Kennedy quoted in Berners-Lee and Clark, 2013: 264). President Obama spread hope and radiated promise. Civilisation is close to reaching a physical ‘tipping point’ because human activities could cause sudden and irreversible changes in relatively stable conditions that have allowed civilisation to flourish. Equally, from time to time, a leader advances who is committed to distinguishing the truth from falsehood and giving people the strength to carry on. The secret of the ripple effect is that just one small act of change can have an enormous impact, leading to the

dynamics of the norm entrepreneurship. Therefore, each positive individual action pushes the human global society closer to a tipping point in our collective response to a problem,

And while feedback loops are working against us in the climate, they can work for us in society. Culture change and campaigning creates political space to change laws, which can build markets, which can scale technologies, which can feed back into culture change, enabling better laws, bigger markets, and so on.

(Berners-Lee and Clark: 264).

Analogously, the ripple effect could continue until the right solutions is found. Hope could lead to envision success so that to enlist support from followers. This is possible thanks to climate diplomacy to enable progress and achievement inspiring more dreams, more hope and more climate leaders hopefully working on successful solutions. As Jared Diamond (2005) reminds us, “one basis for hope is that, realistically, we are not beset by insoluble problems”. Climate change is an example of the global challenge that can be solved, it is not beyond our control. As Diamond (2005) noted,

Because we are the cause of our environmental problems, we are the ones in control of them, and we can choose or not choose to stop causing them and start solving them. The future is up for grabs. ...We just need the political will to apply solutions already available.

Leaders in particular, but each of us, as well, have to make tough choices if we are to succeed in this search for the right climate solution. One of those choices, according to Diamond (2005), is “dependent on the courage to practise long term thinking, and to make bold, courageous, anticipatory decisions at a time when problems have become perceptible but before they have reached crisis proportions”. This type of decision making based on planting more trees and investing in solar energy solutions could be applied to

prevent the environmental crisis. It is the opposite of the short term, reactive decision making that is superficial and not comprehensive and that often characterises our elected politicians (Ibid.). Too often leaders remain in inaction neglecting *'the cry of the Earth.'* They lack humility when confronted with Mother Earth and humility is crucial. This is because only from a healed and peaceful heart humility is born. Humility leads to willingness to listen to others that leads to a mutual understanding that leads to a peaceful and innovative society. Combined with the chance that our civilisation has “the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of distant peoples and past peoples” the grim prospects of a collapse of civilisation does not have to come true. (Diamond, 2005). There are many encouraging examples of courageous long term thinking in the character traits of previous leaders. “Among past societies faced with the prospect of ruinous deforestation, Easter Island and Mangareva chiefs succumbed to their immediate concerns”. (Diamond, 2005). However, Tokugawa shoguns, Inca emperors, New Guinea highlanders and 16th century German landowners adopted a long view and reafforested (Ibid.). Similarly, China’s leaders promoted reforestation in recent decades and banned logging of native forests in 1998 (Ibid.). Many countries in Europe, and the United States, have dramatically reduced their air pollution meanwhile learning that cutting trees further undermines the very basis of human existence. As noticed by Alberti (2013), “Humans have the intellectual and moral capacity to do even more when tuned into challenging problems and engaged in solving them”. Therefore, courageous, successful, long term planning should characterise global governments and leaders most of the time.

However, this thesis is not a prescriptive policy analysis. It is an example of assessing policy and problem-solving efforts through experimentation with a specific theory of International Relations in order to test policy effectiveness and generate original insights. The method was to combine experience and intelligence in creative ways to come up with constructive solutions. Rational problem solving is more than creative thinking and is not a substitute for rational adaptation of means to ends of foreign affairs strategy. The results of this thesis test how varied reserves of knowledge available in a specific tradition of International Relations can be adapted and integrated with new knowledge in order to shed more light on an unresolved problem. The thesis, however, also has a practical aspect. Within contemporary American political culture, a growing consciousness of the interdependence of the emerging climate community could be developed. This may comprise some kind of ideational basis for a radically different future American policy focused on effective solving of climate change.

This thesis argued that norm-centred constructivism may prove a valuable, theoretical foundation and an insightful framework for ethics-driven leaders. Constructivists focus on the role of ideas, norms, knowledge, culture, and discourse in politics. In particular, they emphasise the role of collectively held or inter-subjective ideas and shared understandings of social life. In contrast to the liberal and realist explanations, constructivism downplays the importance of material factors and elevates ideas, self-knowledge and conceptions of appropriate conduct (Jervis, 2005: 16). As Jervis (*ibid.*: 16) observed, constructivism points to the norm of non-violence and the shared identities that have led the advanced democracies to assume the role of each other's friend



through the interaction of behaviour and expectations. In this way, people become socialised into attitudes, beliefs, and values that are conducive to world peace. Constructivists share a commitment to the global improvement of mankind. They focus on the possibility of change as and when individuals choose to act differently in order to exercise collective agency and change social structures. Transformational and ethical leaders can bring about such change based on courage, conviction and persistence. This implies taking long-term decisions, doing right things and doing things right, even when such decision might seem unpopular. At the end, actions speak louder than words. Therefore, the phenomenon of the spirit changing history will bring success only when it inspires social capital: enough followers to persist. For any successor of President Obama, it would be irresponsible to pursue policies that perpetrate destructive orders, especially if leaders care about the wellbeing of future generations (Wendt, 1995: 80).

## **6.5 Areas for Further Research**

To reassume, President Obama was a successful climate leader because he has realised his stated climate policy goals. Success was enabled thanks to creative and innovative climate diplomacy based on building global partnerships, coalitions and diplomatic bridges. President Obama's efforts in climate diplomacy were promising. However, President Obama did manage to stop climate change, for that would require an effective, structural reorganisation of the system. Such reorganisation does not need to lead to conflict when it is enhanced by technological innovation. President Obama himself resembled many traits of a transformational leader as evidenced by this thesis. To make a significant

contribution to the human spirit and substantially alter the course of human history implied that President Obama was building a vision based on some ideal. For some authors, President Obama might have “indulged the West with fantasies about ‘green energy’” (Ferguson, 2012: 144). Perhaps, such demanding idealism was necessary to convince followers. If enough people believe in something deeply, and are full of hope then certainly something remarkable could happen. Change arises as agents respond to novel ideas or problems (Bevir and Rhodes, 2006: 5). Therefore, President Obama’s project of building of tiny ripples of hope and inspiring climate action worldwide is not finished yet. The evidence suggests that President Obama has not been naïve about solving climate change, as he observed, “Even if every country somehow puts the brakes on emissions, climate change would still have an impact on our world for years to come” (Obama, 2017a).

President Obama did not manage to transform the existing structure, however, evidence suggests that he was not merely reproducing it. Reduced global followership was a sign that structure based on vested interests acted as a constraint of President Obama’s actions. He could not have overcome it, but wisdom suggests that no structure is everlasting. For that reason, President Obama’s climate mission is not finished. President Obama attempted to re-legitimise American leadership (Buzan, 2008). This thesis proved that while President Obama was trying to change the structure unfair towards the planet, his diplomacy exerted only changes of the microstructural properties, which had a minor impact on the framework or the core of the resilience of the structure. This confirms the argument made by Hurd (2008: 309) that, “a conventional view

allows that the *content* of anarchy might change” as a result of creation of coordinating institutions, shared climate culture or environmental norms. However, “the basic structural *condition* of anarchy as the foundation of the international system” is very difficult to change (Ibid.). Changes that are macrostructural could, however, arise in the future (retrospectively), depending on the momentum upheld by the followers. This would be possible, once a more inclusive climate community emerges gradually superseding the existing structure. This constitutes a challenge for further research.

This thesis argues that it is within the scope of capable, transformational leaders to transform the structure of the system, consistent with the model of norm-centred constructivism. This may also constitute an area of interest for future theoretical investigations. By their very nature, structures tend to remain stable and fixed and it might be very difficult for political leaders to change them, however, it is not impossible. Structures can be modified, if political agents reinterpret their own interests and those of the opponents as well as understand what counts as “appropriate behaviour”. As Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 896) noted, “Norms do not appear out of thin air; they are actively built by agents having strong notions about appropriate or desirable behaviour in their community”. The logic of appropriate behaviour may be extended to embrace all actions of humans that are imposed on the Earth. Beaver and Rhodes (2006: 5) suggest that the capacity for innovation is likely to be triggered when actors are confronted with new ideas or problems that cannot easily be accommodated within their existing cognitive, ideational, or instrumental toolkits. When leaders experience unusual circumstances, they are more likely to reframe their mind-sets to change the tools

that they extend their leadership functions. “In seeking to accommodate a new idea or solve a new problem, actors [international agents] may be forced to interrogate their existing assumptions in such a way that produces a structural transformation” (Stevenson, 2012: 48).

Dryzek and Stevenson (2014: 215) further describe this model based on an effective action of norm entrepreneurs, in other words, powerful political players who have the determination to disrupt the status quo. Effective diplomacy by what constructivist International Relations scholars call “norm entrepreneurs” can use persuasion, moral protest, and ethical argument to get the international system to adopt new norms (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). According to this thesis, President Obama used persuasion and soft power to convince the international community to adopt climate norms. Other “historical case studies include norms prohibiting chemical and biological weapons, and landmines” (Dryzek and Stevenson, 2014: 215). Norm entrepreneurs can also be skilled rhetoricians. However, Payne (2001) warned that it is much easier to get states and corporations to “rhetorically embrace” a new framing than it is “to translate normative persuasion into structural change”. In this sense, President Obama has met the requirements of successful climate diplomacy: point 1 and point 2 (Cf. page 13). Therefore, President Obama met the criteria of the first point. As for point 2, he encountered a considerable challenge of gathering information about climate change. However, the most critical in his case was point 3: “The capacity to influence.” This did not depend solely on President Obama, but required also an active role of the followers. President Obama was trying to overcome climate ignorance among the public but the reaction was slow. Global public opinion on

climate change was marked by a considerable degree of indifference. As a result, there was an accelerating suicidal tendency worldwide mainly due to a lack of consideration of climate change as a reality (Milman, 2018a). President Obama tried to shape public opinion as a result of his climate diplomacy. First, the President made a commitment to combat climate change, which obliged him to enact change. Second, he found effective channels to speak to the public and to change its perception. According to DeLisle (quoted in Idokoko, 2016: 8), “leadership is the ability to influence others, with or without authority”. Leader such as President Obama rely on authority and have a strong interest in learning transforming this skill into a collaborative effort to move forward (Ibid). Governmental power works when people vote and are committed to change. Third, President Obama was aware that, “effective leaders have the ability to inspire and motivate their followers. At this stage, the capacity to influence was the most critical for the Obama’s administration to mobilise the masses and collectively change the structure of the existing system. As Dryzek and Stevenson (2014: 215) noticed, “Norm entrepreneurs may be most effective in prizing open particular features of the global climate governance system for debate, rather than triggering reflexivity about the system as a whole”. President Obama was the only leader, who attempted not only to change the system but also to inspire vision, promote dialogue and sound an alarming bell. However, in the moments of the climate crisis, he should have shown the ability to shoulder responsibility for difficult, more long-term decisions in the interest of the planet even without the support from the public. He could have steadfastly insisted on the overthrow of the ineffective climate regime to enable generation of experimental problem-solving solutions. However, he was not all-powerful. President Obama achieved

a success given the fact that previous reform proposals “have to date failed to achieve much impact in either the multilateral negotiations (top-down approach) or the multiple emerging centers of networked governance (bottom-up approach)” (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014: 210). For being determined, and principally, acting as a pioneer in new climate narrative he deserves a credit. He left an everlasting remembrance showing the way for his followers and future leaders. President Obama’s normative influence was dynamic and he has done what his predecessors could not or would not do (Sussman, 2015). President Obama turned America into a global leader as opposed to an obstacle to progress in climate negotiations. No system devised is perfect, but the United States of America as the largest economy has the responsibility to contribute constructively to global progress in the search for climate miracles (Simmons and Coyle, 2014: 42). On balance, therefore, President Obama’s tireless diplomatic efforts deserve to be considered as reasonably successful.

Consequently, this thesis could be qualified as an attempt to confirm the assumptions of post-positivist and poststructuralist traditions in the International Relations Theory because norm-centred constructivism belongs to these new traditions. Its core argument is that there is room for agency to change the structure of the international system. Transformational leaders are capable of eventually changing the structure over time (Hay, 1995: 201). Following the argument introduced by Stern (2015: 31), “If international community conducts structural transformation well then much of what is necessary for low-carbon transition will be achieved”. Thus, consistent with this argument, it was possible to solve climate change thanks to systemic transformation. President Obama

understood this truth in ripe time and attempted to persuade the public, “A committed and strong low-carbon transition could trigger a new wave of economic and technological transformation and investment and a new era of global and sustainable prosperity” (Ibid: 32).

Why the international community is waiting? Why President Obama did not solve the problem more immediately? This is due to a number of issues that reduced President Obama’s actions. First, the public has reacted very slowly to the issue. As Stern (2015: 29) observed, “People’s support for climate change mitigation policies have complex and not necessarily rational foundations”. People tend to discount future costs and benefits of policies. The main reason for that appears to be “perceived uncertainty about whether these events will eventuate.” (Ibid.). Most costs associated with climate policy are more immediate and less uncertain; climate benefits are long-term, and co- benefits are medium-long term and less certain and less directly “individual”. (Ibid.). Thus, there was a “low willingness to accept perceived short-term costs of policy for larger, medium or long-term climate benefits and co-benefits (Stern, 2015: 29). More importantly, structural issues, namely: on numerous occasions in this thesis it was stressed that although President Obama was in principle an effective policy innovator and a capable climate norm entrepreneur he did not manage to overcome the structure based on powerful vested interests of the fossil fuel industry and big oil corporations blocking change. This is mainly because “political incentive structures are biased toward short-term electoral cycles or terms of government” (Ibid.: 30). Such circumstances were not conducive to a politics of structural change with short-term costs for very large, medium and long-term benefits

(Ibid.). Third, structural issues within the political economy prevailed, namely: “vested interests and their lobbies were too powerful” (Ibid.). To assess President Obama and Democrats fairly, the political context in which they acted must be understood. President Obama acted against the organised network that put forward a message of climate denial, confusion and doubt. They created a mechanic, cynical system deeply rooted in prolonging the status quo for their personal gain. Short-term incentive structures in business and finance direct capital away from long-term value creation so people do not focus on long-term goals such as keeping the planet safe. Moreover, the problem of extension of the existing structure. Namely, the operation of the media is often poorly serving the polity and well-informed civil society. For example, “mainstream media political coverage is devoted to gossip and issues of personality, and less and less to the major problems facing our country and the world” (Sanders, 2018). During the 2016 presidential campaign hardly any leader discussed the issue of climate change. Existing inequalities within society make it harder to tackle collective challenges like climate change (Ibid.). Unfortunately, within America and around the world there is a lot of inequality while it has been well documented that societies that are more equal tend to be more socially cohesive and have higher environmental consciousness. Stable international regimes depend on the joint contribution of countries to the provision of public goods while existing inequalities prevent reaching a successful agreement (Groom, et al., 2012: 128).

Finally, a better understanding of national interest could help to integrate climate issues into the top priority set of security policies. Effective transformation of the system’s structure would require the creation of new institutions beyond existing



regime that could help internalisation and enforcement of climate norms. Other important areas such as nuclear proliferation, human rights and free trade all have strong institutions, NGOs and watchdogs that serve as a part of the international community (Holland and Rossetti, 2015: 6). Strong institutions create the basis of law, commonality of understanding and transparency that are needed for the accepted climate norms to be effectively institutionalised by the international community (Ibid.). In addition to the legal requirement, there is a need for a monitoring body that would penalise or ostracise non-followers in cases when climate norms are violated (Ibid.).

Perhaps, President Obama was acting as ‘the last man standing’ among the leaders of the Western world trying to protect and preserve the rule-based, institutionalist order. Since the world is a competitive arena, America has always looked for alliances and partnerships grounded not only in common interests, but common values and commitments. The approach to climate diplomacy adopted by the President was conducive to solving climate change. President Obama recognised that even as the most powerful nation on Earth, mainly because of its global reach has an interest in a rules-based system (Baer, et al., 2017). Solving climate change is critical to sustaining the liberal, institutionalist order. As Ikenberry (2014) noted, President Obama has been “manifestly more internationalist in his embrace of the wider spectrum of partnerships, institutions, and diplomatic engagements that make up the American-led order.” Thanks to deals with China and India, President Obama has succeeded in convincing the East, revitalising the West and uniting the world around his climate diplomacy.

In addition, President Obama detected a great injustice because of climate change. More specifically, with respect to intergenerational justice, the idea that present generations have certain duties towards future generations. Climate change raises particularly pressing issues, such as the risks those living today are allowed to impose on future generations, and how available natural resources can be used without threatening the sustainable functioning of the planet's ecosystems. Consequently, President Obama decided to act through his climate diplomacy to leave a better world for future generations. When America exercises a wise foreign policy, it can accommodate more countries not only to preserve liberal order but also to try to heal the Earth. Prudent global leaders invest great effort and demonstrate political sagacity to do the right thing at the right time. They do not only promise change but also deliver it to leave a better and safer world for future generations. If so, then President Obama was a very successful climate leader. It is very important to be willing to put pressure both on governments and global leaders to act on climate, but it is also important to suggest pragmatic solutions (Obama, 2017a).

The emergence of an informal climate community, suggests that President Obama's climate efforts are not yet finished. Therefore, it is probably impossible to measure objectively to what extent President Obama changed the structure and whether he has altered the course of history. It is true, however, that many of the world's greatest movements, of thought and action, have flowed from the work of a single man who led the way. For example, it was a young Italian explorer, Christopher Columbus, who discovered the New World, and the young Thomas Jefferson, who proclaimed that all men are created equal. Whether through

persistence or the stimulus of character these men managed to change the world and so can each of us. Because the most important throughout this process is that “*the spirit of times*” is unyielding and finds enough followers. Equally, President Obama may have succeeded as a transformational leader,

Transformational leadership involves inspiring followers to commit to a shared vision and goals for an organization or unit, challenging them to be innovative problem solvers.

(Bass and Riggio, 2006: 4).

Indeed, in his ‘Great Man Theory’, Thomas Carlyle (1841) interpreted that heroic leaders can shape history as a result of taking critical decisions and inspiration from the divine source. Great leaders can work as light-fountains often providing not only political and strategic decisions but more importantly intuitive solutions. As observed by this author,

The light which enlightens, which has enlightened the darkness of the world: and this is not as a kindled lamp only, but rather as a natural luminary shining by the gift of Heaven. A flowing-light fountain... of manhood and heroic nobleness.

(Carlyle, 1841: 2).

Similar argument is offered by Covey (1999: 172), who noticed, that “problems are curable and enlightened leaders can cure them, not just treat the symptoms, they can create better societies.” To achieve this goal, “they have go to change hearts, build trust, revise structure and systems.” (Ibid.). As Robert Kennedy (1966) noticed, “Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation”. In this context, it may be asked to what extent President Obama in his climate diplomacy followed his intuition and the voice of his heart as there is nothing more powerful, steadfast and ennobling than that. Since nothing is impossible, if we focus mind, maintain a positive attitude

and apply creative, positive thinking. Even a standard, scholarly project with little chance of success can spontaneously become a problem-solving venture. As long as there are novel, global challenges to be solved, capable inventors, persevering scientists and tireless pioneers will not cease until they are solved. Since no matter how hopeless things may appear, the moment always arises when suddenly “*the spirit of the times*” is revived and hope is reborn (Ikeda, 2018). For that reason, the international community must never give up. When climate change will be solved, it will be solved not because it is easy, but because it is hard. It is thanks to the collective effort and consequential action that a breakthrough solution will succeed in the end.

## **6.6 Future Prospects for Application of the Thesis**

Effective policy evaluation depends on good theory. However, the aim of the thesis is not to build a grand theory in such a way that in practice it will have little to do with reality. According to this thesis, the possibility of reshaping American foreign policy around a conception of restored American identity more closely linked with the constructivists’ idea of an emerging, international, cosmopolitan community is reasonably feasible. In a pragmatic sense, this concept reflects “...the security community among the most developed great powers” (Jervis, 2005: 12). Community tasked with resolving new and emerging, global challenges such as climate change through international organisations and working with other partners in order to build a more secure and peaceful world. The possibility of global cooperation could be realised thanks to multilateral coordination.

As Keohane and Victor (2016: 5) perceptively noticed, experimentalist approach to global governance rooted in the philosophy of American pragmatism based in decomposing climate change into discrete problem-solving elements, plus based on building institutions that would reduce uncertainty can solve climate change. This could happen, through more skilful and productive diplomatic intercourse. If true, then America as a nation and a great power has the capacity and the cultural capital to reinvent itself by undergoing an evolutionary process of change and redefinition of its foreign policy's most basic assumptions. Indeed, there are many respects in which America, if it can bring itself to act with the magnanimity and the empathy appropriate to its size and power, can set an intelligent example to the world and reintroduce itself in the following decades (Fulbright, 1966). As many scholars maintain, however, President Obama efforts were noteworthy and the fact that he struggled could be justified. As Ikenberry (2010) observed, "President Obama inherited the most daunting and intractable tangle of foreign policy challenges of any American leader since the early years of the Cold War". Therefore, the scale of difficulty facing both administrations must have been very high. The overall climate strategy that President Obama has introduced has not escaped criticism from private institutions, climate analysts and academics. Because of the scale of climate change the administration faced, some argued that President Obama has transformed American climate policy much less than might have been expected (Singh, 2012: 1).

## **6.7 Limitations and Final Conclusions**

As previously stated, limitations of this study are due primarily to time and financial constraints it was beyond the working capacity of the researcher to

conduct in-person interviews with policymakers or to analyse congressional documentation that was not available online.

An examination of President Obama's climate diplomacy through a norm-based constructivism suggests that President Obama accomplished his climate goals. Although the ends of climate policy have been mostly achieved, some critics were left unsatisfied by signalling that climate change has not been stopped. For example, Wayne (2010: 14) noticed, "Thus far, President's list of accomplishments is relatively small given the hopes he raised, promises he made, and money he spent". The analysis suggests that there was no comprehensive, systemic climate victory thus far although environmental norms are protected by the international law. Furthermore, as Somander (2016) noticed, diplomacy can be a difficult process and progress on the world stage is not guaranteed. However, if the idea of the climate community is realised then President Obama's would have realised hopes for a possible and long-term success. For his administrations would show that together important global problems can be solved. Even though some critics maintain that President Obama failed in his climate action, he cannot be blamed for that since the circumstances were set against him.

Structural transformation would require overriding existing international institutions and relying more on the power of the executive. Possibly, it would entail President to act as a radically transformational leader, winning the hearts and minds of the public thereby slashing the opposition. Even then, it would probably take longer than two terms. Progress on climate change during both

Obama's administrations developed gradually through introducing systematic policies mainly in response to natural disasters whereas it appeared that sometimes a more decisive action was required. As noted by Brzezinski (2012), "Historically and politically, in America's system of separation of powers, it is the president who has the greatest leeway for decisive action". However, the system reduced the possibility of him acting as a ruler with an omnipotent power. Equally, Congress has voice and policy is constrained by vested interests and lobbies. Therefore, not so many American leaders managed to significantly alter the course of history. Despite this, President Obama did have a chance to become the true statesman and reshape the reality. Such a statesman should have possessed charisma, perseverance, the capacity for sober analysis as well as intuitive understanding of *'the spirit of the times'* and the forces at work within the given political reality. Intuition is of particular importance since the statesman needs to "peer into darkness" while acting in "a margin between necessity and accident." (Kissinger quoted in Berridge, et al., 2001: 187). Kissinger echoing Max Weber's ideal type of leadership concluded that "the mark of true statesmanship is strategic vision, the ability to recognize the real relationship of forces and to make this knowledge serve some kind of global ideal." (Ibid.). If a political leader possesses such a vital political insight into the trend of the main historical currents, and if he is equipped with a shrewd sense of timing, "history will not overwhelm him but will be amenable to his creativity." (Ibid.: 187).

At the level of diplomacy, President Obama has met his aims, but transferring the weight of strategy on the grand climate strategy required a higher order of complexity. The Obama administration was probably not prepared for such a bold

move, at least, at the initial stages of the presidency. The evidence presented in the thesis confirms that as a result of President Obama's active, co-operative diplomatic engagement America demonstrated robust international leadership on climate. However, there is no available evidence that would indicate that the Obama team has yet figured out successful responses to civilisational challenges. In fact, humanity needs a realistic prognosis of what the future might bring in order to make sound political decisions. As Bostrom (2013) noted, "Increasingly, we need realistic pictures not only of our personal or local near-term futures, but also of remoter global futures".

There are many opportunities for the reform of global governance to effectively address climate change. This could happen through the creation of inclusive, resilient and sustainable institutions, which in the future should consider, or ought to consider, possible long-term global impacts on the planet. According to Bostrom (2013), "climate change, national and international security, economic development, nuclear waste disposal, biodiversity, natural resource conservation, population policy, and scientific and technological research funding are examples of policy areas that involve long time-horizons" (Ibid.). Arguments in these areas often rely on implicit assumptions about the future of humanity on the planet. By discussing these assumptions explicitly and subjecting them to critical analysis, it might be possible to address some of the biggest challenges for humanity in a more well-considered, careful and thoughtful manner (Ibid.).

The present human condition can be compared to a transitional state, civilisation is suspended somewhere in-between the journey of finding the right solution.



Humanity needs to pursue a sustainable, optimal and safe growth trajectory, one that will minimise the risk of existential catastrophe by resolving novel, global challenges facing global civilisation. In order to come up with effective responses to climate change, transformational leaders must be collaborative and resourceful. The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement fulfilled such hope building huge levels of global solidarity. In addition, global leaders need to see and tackle problems from a global perspective. Realist diplomacy applied in the methodical and persistent manner must move beyond the contemporary ineffectiveness. To be successful, it should be energetic and dynamic because if the leader is hundred percent certain of the envisaged success of a possible solution, the decision should be given a full authorisation. Climate diplomacy must not only offer hope but also embrace a balance of expertise, proficiency and skill leading to a substantial and comprehensive breakthrough. If humanity figures out the method there is no such thing as impossible. Climate diplomacy has to rest on the will of the people, protect the most vulnerable, aim to work with allies and strengthen multilateral cooperation to preserve global public goods (Kennedy-Pipe, 2008: 418). Principled diplomacy may serve as *a sine qua non* condition for successful climate policy what in consequence may impact grand strategy of planetary preservation.

To conclude, in order to overcome the challenge of climate change civilisation needs transformational leadership to inspire a social movement creating a new frame around the necessity to heal the Earth and replace collective ignorance with collective community built through consequential action. The ancient belief that the world was flat was based on an ignorance of scientific facts and common

observation. However, the astronomer and pioneer, Nicolaus Copernicus, was brave and determined to undermine the prevailing dogma and initiated a revolution in thinking. Indeed, some of the most pivotal moments in the history of the world (Watson's historical pendulum model) occur when a new, creative spirit sweeps through the international society supplanting an established system of beliefs in a rapid revolution of thought bringing about new ideas and new experiments (Marvel, et al., 2012: 118702-1). Often such a creative spirit sheds light on solutions to perplexing problems facing humanity. A history of civilisations could be presented as the cycle of responses to global challenges. Such a cycle of revolutions and change occurs because international community operates in the world of extremes, where being fervently for or against an issue often becomes the dominant social ideology - until an opposing belief that is equally extreme emerges to challenge the first one, eventually becoming the new social paradigm. Climate change is an example of the issue that has polarised societies and a new revolution is imminent. And so the cycle repeats, with one ideological extreme replacing another, and neither delivering a sustainable solution until an avatar emerges who is ready to decisively challenge the status quo. As observed by some notable mathematicians and physicists,

The social history of ideas involves the frequent replay of a single story: there is a widely accepted and deeply ingrained dogma in the community. This dogma helps to justify the community's institutions and shape its common practices. Then, in the midst of this stable milieu, a new doctrine emerges. Backed by a small group of unwavering advocates, it challenges the status quo and steadily wins converts, eventually replacing the previous system to become the dominant ideology of the group.

(Marvel, et al., 2012: 118702-1).

Political revolutions, economic bubbles, booms and busts in consumer confidence, and short-lived reforms follow this kind of cycle. However, as observed by Coyle and Simmons (2014: 42), “throughout its history, the United States has pioneered significant technical, commercial, and even political energy innovations.” If climate change consciousness and sensitivity to the Earth is going to become a new social paradigm, then the history can repeat itself this time as well. A revolution in human thinking could spur a positive ripple effect of the search for successful solutions. This can be possible when committed individuals unite, believe in noble idea serving a common good. Human civilisation has to abandon narrow mindsets of thinking that we are the victims of a fate that was determined by actions that precede us. Capable leaders can change the course of history if they believe in the sense of their mission. Because, as the American anthropologist Margaret Mead noticed, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has” (quoted in Otto and Lupton, 2009: 103). There is no such thing as a small solution, a system that causes climate change will be the one that is prolonging it. A system that dismantles it comprehensively and consequentially through a use of an adequate application will be the system that will heal the Earth. Climate change could encourage humanity to learn from scientific feedback. It could inspire us to change and reimagine our lifestyles so that gradually we find ourselves living in a different world (Hawken, 2017). When we accept that it is happening at this stage of the development of civilisation (Watson’s historical pendulum) we begin to take responsibility for our actions and then we can experience a challenge as a creative opportunity. We start to approach climate change not

as an inevitability but as an invitation to get to the root of the problem, to build societies based on fair agricultural methods, to innovate solutions that are inclusive and to lead to a positive change. Educating girls to wisely plan families, reducing food waste, protecting tropical rain forests and planting more trees. Humanity can solve climate change collectively, but not by merely repetition of the problem, unconvincing diplomacy or political rhetoric. We can solve climate change by looking at the possibilities that are inherent in this problem, the ones that cause it (Ibid.). Diplomacy is good for convincing the public opinion. However, humanity should abandon strategies that are not working and not bringing tangible results. Sometimes, diplomacy is the only hope although a weak tool in the hand of unprepared leaders that is not showing their potential and real power to make a change.

Global change is required because humanity has reached a stage of civilisational advancement and the level of technological innovation that enables humans to sensibly manage global commons. However, if humanity does not appreciate and protect natural ecosystems of the Earth (her numerous messages signaling her ailing) and if mankind does not accept the responsibility for the just stewardship of Earth's resources then these special and precious powers stemming from the status of being just stewards could be easily withdrawn. If humanity chooses destruction, stagnation or costly conflicts instead of creative responses to the new and emerging global challenges such as climate change then civilisational development could be held back. In such circumstances, humanity will have to start again with stone and axe and build from scratch what has been annihilated in an instant.

For this reason, in the twenty-first century, global civilisation needs decisive leaders who show the way. American leadership is essential. The alternative would be an international turmoil, as it was discovered the last time America tried to withdraw from its global responsibilities. But to what end leadership should be tailored at? This thesis argued that consensual and creative leadership could be aimed at responsible management of the global commons leading to a fair stewardship of the planet. Such management could first be initiated by the creation of a spontaneous climate community. When peoples join forces in community building project they have the power to change history - by building and empowering a new generation of leaders. Only by acting in unity, humanity can fuel positive change, ensuring that we all have the opportunity to live our fullest lives - and that even more leaders are empowered to change their own communities from within.

The original contribution is the application of a norm-centred constructivism as a method for the assessment to the question of whether President Obama has met his climate policy objectives. This thesis stated that there is a possibility of solving climate change successfully as a result of collective efforts. Solution could be dependent on having a norm-entrepreneur and transformational leader in one person overcoming the system's structure while inspiring creation of a collective, climate community. The ability to mobilise, inspire, show a common direction, and thus, shape and shift the weight of political action in the world is critical for being a successful leader. President Obama has chosen a peaceful change rather a disruptive one. What made his climate leadership successful was a steadfast purpose and a recognition of "*the spirit of the times*". Overall, President Obama

demonstrated “genuine sense of strategic direction, a solid grasp of what today’s world is all about, and an understanding of what the United States ought to be doing in it.” (Brzezinski, 2010: 1). A successful leader should not stand against the collective will or “*the spirit of the times*”. Thus, any global leader must be responsive and innovative remembering a ceaseless credo: “the strength of a great power is diminished if it ceases to serve an idea whose time has come.” (Brzezinski, 2007: 152).

Consequently, President Obama succeeded because he invested in concerted effort to win progress. In particular, he succeeded in encouraging cooperation, building coalitions, promoting dialogue and understanding among the peoples inspiring them to form a more inclusive global, climate community (Cf. Figure 4.1). This thesis showed that the idea of a climate community representing various peoples of the world is very promising. The need for bold and ambitious climate leadership that responds to the voiced of the millions calling for change has never been clearer. The 2015 Paris Agreement succeeded not because it delivered a treaty but because it generated solidarity and a sense of accomplishment. To live up to the goals set forth by the 2015 Paris Agreement and to safeguard the Earth’s climate for future generations, fossil fuel production must enter a managed decline immediately. Renewable energy must be advanced to swiftly take its place in the context of a just transition. Therefore, an informal, climate community of civil society organisations from all countries in the world, representing millions of people have justifiably called on world leaders to put an immediate halt to new fossil fuel development and pursue a just transition to renewable energy with a managed decline of the fossil fuel industry. This would ensure a smooth and just

transition to a safer energy economy. It would mean that countries can protect workers, protect communities, bring energy access to the poor, and ramp up renewable energy. Since rich countries have a greater historic responsibility to act, they should provide support to poorer countries to help expand non-carbon energy and drive economic development as part of their fair share of global action, with a focus on meeting the urgent priority of providing universal access to clean energy. Renewable energy can fill in the gap and power a clean energy future. The world can either start now in pursuing a managed decline of the fossil fuel industry and a just transition to renewable energy, or it can delay action and bring about economic upheaval, or even worst a climate chaos.

The idea of a climate community is inspiring because it helps to bridge the divides: those internal and international. Climate change is an issue which if handled correctly could help to unite humanity and prevent pursuing extreme and imbalanced strategies. Thereby, climate action could lead to international compromises and internal cooperation in the context of global climate community. The idea of a community developed as a result of President Obama's education at the University of Chicago Law School, where he learned about the importance of building community bound by international norms. President Obama has achieved success mainly as a result of his authority. To recap, "constructivism opens the possibility that changes in the social relations among states could transform the anarchical system into something that is not anarchic" (Wendt 1999, 307-8 quoted in Hurd, 2008: 308). He succeeded because he created a frame around a critical global issue making other states and their leaders feel an obligation to follow the directive of the authoritative voice. He might have failed

since he was not prepared to drive this process to the grand strategic level. However, this is because he could not have led a decisive campaign without public support. In addition, he might have failed since he was not consequential to “hit the fossil fuel industry when it hurts most” (McKibben, 2018). Results show that in order to enact a decisive policy change on climate a leader must have a support from the public. Such support was soaring at the first one hundred days in which President Obama could shift focus from local to global. Solving climate change in the second term proved too difficult. The challenges facing any second-term president suggest that “even the most charismatic leader could not govern singlehandedly” (Pika and Maltese, 2014: 502). Therefore, some climate activists may feel disappointed since President Obama’s climate diplomacy generated more expectations than strategic breakthroughs.

Despite this President Obama achieved a reasonable success. His climate policies promoted building partnerships as a result of climate diplomacy. The President pioneered the norm of environmental stewardship. This is a solidarist primary institution that shifts “global international society away from realist concerns of war and balance of power towards an expanding agenda of shared fate issues such as climate” (Falkner and Buzan, 2017: 31). The hope is that likeminded states forming an inclusive, climate community can agree to limit greenhouse gas emissions. The spiral model will cause the norm of environmental stewardship to cascade to other states. As Dyke (2016) noticed, “regional agreements can help scaffold international agreements”. These could be protected by the international law provided that the majority of states abide by it. If the incentives for the free-riding could be eliminated, this mechanism working



from the bottom towards upper layers of the international community could bring success. Finally, a tipping point is reached when the community internalises climate norm and the norm becomes widely recognised (Ibid.). As Ishihara and Pascual (2012: 209) noted, “once self-reinforcing incentive mechanisms are built, agents automatically follow the commonly agreed norms”. It is not inconceivable that the ultimate climate solution will be based on a degree of international consensus generated as a result of a Nash equilibrium. The essence of which is that differences between states will be part of the ultimate solution in the form of a long-run cooperative equilibrium that will be fair and that will enable “resolving the bargaining game with finality” (Ostrom 2012: 155). Throughout the process of diplomatic bridge building common climate consciousness could be developed between developed and developing countries which could be further enhanced by a degree of great power management. It is in the vested interest of all great powers to initiate fair planetary stewardship focusing on preservation of global public goods. Climate belongs to all citizens of the planet. As observed by Richter (2014: 333), “All the nations of the world share one atmosphere. What goes into it affects all, and the consequences of climate change will fall on all.” For that reason, the whole world needs a comprehensive policy strategy for solving it. As Brzezinski (2017) noticed, climate change “is the survival challenge for our children and grandchildren”. Humanity must engineer a collective response to the problem that affect all of humanity. A successful strategy to solve it could be based on strong leadership by qualified, insightful council representing the global interest of the planet. It will not be based on political polarization and increasing ideological differences on energy policy between the two largest political parties in America. The nation that is the richest in the world and has the second highest

amount of greenhouse gas emission took up the mantle of responsibility under President Obama and together with one hundred ninety-five other nations delivered the breakthrough Agreement in Paris 2015. But apart from a few climate activists, and the U.S. nonfederal climate movement led by cities, regions and the former Mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, at the federal level, America has produced a partisan, unconstructive divide, with the Democrats for action and the Republicans against. Such a situation leads only to a slow progress, unnecessary lack of unity, high levels of uncertainty and tension further dividing society which is clearly a victim of party politics (Coyle and Simmons, 2014: 41). As noticed by Jaffe (2018: 457), “on a list of our nation’s most intractable political problems, climate change is among the most challenging”. This is because there is no agreement about the basic facts that should form the ground rules of political debate.

Despite these divisions, the planet needs urgently building of a collective climate consensus, that is why the spirit of Paris must be upheld. Although climate is a global good, the political responses surrounding the extraction of oil, natural gas and unconventional fossil fuels have sharply divided American national interest. The world needs wise climate strategies to reduce the global carbon footprint, introduce thinking in terms of Earth’s climate-energy-security nexus and apply appropriate consideration and integration into the national energy dialogue in order to educate the public. Therefore, “common-ground outcomes and bipartisanship must be agreed upon and pursued, despite traditional polarization of certain issues” (Coyle and Simmons, 2014: 42). Once there is a political consensus on “*the spirit of the times*” in America, such a creative spirit focused

on constructive climate solutions could spread further and embrace the whole planet. Multiplying tiny ripples of hope could inspire global climate community to stretch itself and deliver constructive results and climate solutions that surpass expectations. It is argued that an ideal geopolitical response to climate change is a trilateral connection between America, China and Russia (Brzezinski, 2016). These three countries must accept the reality of a constructive and more inclusive, global partnership extending eventually to the developing world. To fulfil this grand strategic vision, America could attempt to use its current preponderance of power responsibly and strategically (while it still lasts) to promote the gradual sharing of global responsibilities with willing regional powers, preferably ones that share America's democratic vocation" such as China and Russia but not exclusively to them (Brzezinski, 2000: 172). However, "the effective pursuit of this task requires an America that has the ability both to employ skillful diplomacy and to impose – if necessary – decisive dominance (Ibid.). First of all, however, and more crucially to the completeness of the global climate success would be the fundamental promise placed in the formation of a spontaneous, bottom-up movement of cities, states and regions representing peoples not only in America but also worldwide. This would form a collective, inclusive and global climate community united in its shared goal of building a better future for next generations of mankind that at later stages could extend to the level of great power management.

The above described, theoretical model offers a hopeful chance to prevent the tragic emergence of the ideological conflict over environment among competing great power blocks. It should be remembered that extreme times which could

ensue as a result of an unsolved climate problem could produce radical ideologies. People under high level of stress are more inclined towards pursuing them (Mock and Homer-Dixon, 2015: 30). The fact of the matter is that humanity entered into a new era of geological proportions, in which human activity has become the most significant force for planetary change (Ibid.). The question is whether civilisation can mobilize against the unpredictable challenge of climate change. As Mock and Homer-Dixon (2015: 30) noted,

Throughout human history, periods of rapid social change have been marked by episodes of arbitrary violence, dislocation and suffering, as people responded to the insecurity of change either by entrenching themselves in familiar but outdated and unworkable ideologies, or by embracing and aggressively chasing the utopian promises of new and extreme ones.

In the aftermath of the worst episodes of mass violence and devastation of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century, international politics in the developed world today again reflects an increasingly polarized contest between various forms of conservatism and liberalism, while on a global scale these stand challenged by resurgent movements of anarchism and religious fundamentalism (Ibid.: 31). These extreme beliefs and ideological positions are increasingly bundled into mutually antagonistic clusters under ideological labels that become ingrained in people's identities leading to mass populism. This rather than rational political analysis often determines peoples' political choices and behaviour, causing political paralysis that hinders the development and implementation of ambitious and creative responses to the challenges of a changing world (Mock and Homer-Dixon, 2015: 31). America and the world need a bipartisan agreement, (perhaps emerging as a result of a social rather than political movement) on the prerequisite to address climate change in way that moves beyond the seemingly intractable polarization fueled by the current

anti-diplomacy of heated debates and political campaigns. In the event of a lack of constructive and consensual solution, the worst case scenario for the world would be an ideological polarisation on the issue of climate change, especially among leaders of great powers. As Kane (2007: 533) noted, “climate change threatens to revive ideological disputes among armed, organised economically-developed societies”. In the worst case scenario, this could lead to costly, time-consuming political deadlock and resultant global inaction while the intensity of climate catastrophes would probably only increase. Who benefits in such a situation? What is clear is that “Right now we are facing a manmade disaster of global scale, our greatest threat in thousands of years: climate change” (Attenborough quoted in Carrington, 2018). Evidently, if humanity “does not take action the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon” (Ibid.). In such case, historical record suggests that “the breakdown of old systems is a cause for insecurity and upheaval” (Mock and Homer-Dixon, 2015: 31). Therefore, the short-term benefits of ruling elites who protect vested interests may turn out to be a long-term catastrophe for their kingdoms and for the Earth. But the future does not have to be catastrophic. As long as policymakers include climate policies in the national interest more decisively and more seriously than they appear to have done in the past there is a hope for a step-by-step learning effort that will eventually intuit the right solution (Kane, 2007: 533).

However, the challenge of the scale of climate change is also an opportunity for the production of newer and more resilient systems (for example,

agricultural adaptation through technological innovation or reforestation) in the interest of long-term renewal. Consequently, “a deeper understanding of ideological systems is needed to better understand the dynamics of current political crises and to confront global problems in a manner consistent with the goal of preserving a civilisation built on the legacy of the Enlightenment” (Ibid.: 31). Enlightenment’s values included: “open-mindedness, popular sovereignty, the pursuit of knowledge through reason and empiricism, the dignity and sanctity of individual human life and the maximization of human autonomy further to the individual pursuit of happiness” (Ibid: 31). Our understandings of complex, novel global challenges: of how climate changes, how diseases spread, how economies collapse, populations peak, energy regimes transform and societies fail will remain strictly academic theorising unless humanity can devise plausible, pragmatic and constructive means to mobilise people around solutions to these deep, new and emerging, global challenges (Mock and Homer-Dixon, 2015: 31). The idea introduced in this thesis holds that humans ought to be kind to the environment, cooperate to collectively tackle climate change and protect the planet for the sake of human survival. A new civilisation will be born only when humanity faced with a difficulty whether natural or historical will be determined to overcome it.

## **6.8 Summary**

This chapter has covered the various aspects of the research study justifying the choice of topic and the chosen methodology related to the examination of President Obama’s climate diplomacy through norm-centred constructivism. The implications of the findings from the research questions were addressed in the

hope of informing areas for further research after the initial brief summary of the research. After future prospects for the application of the thesis final conclusions were drawn. As with any research, once it has been developed and executed limitations within the research were identified and possible ways forward were suggested should this thesis be considered for approval.

***“The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world’s problems.”*** Mahatma Gandhi  
Quoted by Maxwell (2011: 16).

***“Dripping water hollows out stone, not through force but through persistence.”*** This quote was written by Publius Ovidius Naso, a Roman Poet circa 33B.C.

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## **Chapter Four**

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