

## US Climate Diplomacy and The Paris Agreement

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Master's Thesis  
Development and International Relations  
University of Aalborg, Faculty of Social Sciences  
10<sup>th</sup> semester, Spring 2019  
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Date of submission: 31.05.2019

Keystrokes:123,154 (general text, footnotes and bibliography)

## **Abbreviations**

COP: Conference of the Parties  
EU: European Union  
GDP: Gross Domestic Product  
GNI: Gross National Income  
IPE: International Political Economy  
IR: International Relations  
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization  
NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement  
PPP: Purchase Power Parity  
TPP: Trans Pacific Partnership  
UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  
UN: United Nations  
USCA: United States Climate Alliance  
US: United States of America  
VCLT: Vienna Convention on the Treaties of Laws

## **Abstract:**

Since the Trump administration announced the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement in July 2017 the decision has been discussed by scholars and media. These studies have frequently analyzed the ramifications for the evolvement of US climate diplomacy in relations to international politics. This paper distinguishes from other academic contributions by incorporating IR theory in analyzing the rationale behind the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. The rationale behind US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement can be analyzed on both the international and domestic level, as factors on either can have impacted the decision. Due to the theoretical standpoint of neoclassical realism, this thesis constructs an in-depth analysis of systemic and domestic factors' influence on the US foreign policy decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

More specifically the analysis of the systemic level looks to examine and discuss relative power in terms of economic incentives and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The analysis of the systemic level indicates that relative power was essential to the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, especially is the US sensitive to climate diplomacy in relations with China, which is evident in the official of the US withdrawal. Moreover, the segment of the thesis that deals with the domestic level examines interest groups, decision makers (GOP v. Democrats power struggle), climate change skepticism in the public and Donald Trump and his cabinet members. As neoclassical realism assumes that systemic factors must be interpreted through the perception of national interests, therefore these domestic factors proved to intervene in the process of the formulation US foreign policy.

It was evident that the fossil fuel industry in the US had concerns regarding US participation the Paris Agreement and therefore urged the Trump administration to withdraw. A similar effort was attempted by 20 Republicans senators that likewise claimed the Paris Agreement was burdensome to US economy. Moreover, it was evident that conservative media pundits, who holds top ranking in US TV, were very skeptical of climate change and the Paris Agreement. Finally, it was argued that President Trump and his cabinet members shared climate change skepticism and perceived the Paris Agreement as unfair to American economy.

Therefore, this thesis verifies the applicability of neoclassical realism to the case of the rationale of why the US is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, because it was evident that domestic factors intervened in the process of formulating foreign policy.

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## Introduction

In December 2015, representatives from 195 countries convened for the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties in Paris. The aim was to address climate change, and as an outcome the parties adopted the Paris Agreement. Significantly, the Paris Agreement included handling of issues such as: Temperature increase, forest preservation, damage control, mitigation among others. The Paris Agreement is the first multilateral treaty to address a common concern since the Kyoto Protocol.<sup>1</sup> A central point is that the Paris Agreement determines that the global temperature increase is promised to be kept below 2 degrees Celsius, and recognized that both developed countries and emerging economies could not be required to meet the radical reductions in emissions that the Kyoto Protocol aimed at.<sup>2</sup> The Paris Agreement demands different pledges from the signed parties and states that “[...]parties aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the Paris Agreement envisioned nationally determined pledges to achieving a global response to climate change and to keep temperature rises below 2 degrees Celsius.<sup>4</sup> From a US perspective, the Paris Agreement was negotiated by the Obama administration and entailed an ambitious target of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 26 percent, through regulating access to carbon dioxide emitting resources. Prior to the Paris Agreement the US contributed to total global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 17.9 percent.<sup>5</sup> However, after the inauguration of the Trump administration, there has been a shift in the US climate diplomacy. In June 2017 Donald J. Trump announced the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement by saying: “I am fighting every day for the great people in this country. Therefore, in order to fulfill my solemn duty to protect America and its citizens, the United States will withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord.”<sup>6</sup> The announcement was met with mixed regards and sparked concern towards the US engagement in multilaterally combatting climate change. Conservative pundits and supporters of the Trump administration have celebrated the new

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<sup>1</sup> Han, Victoria. Trump's Promise. “Withdrawing from the Paris Agreement.” *Environmental Claims Journal*. Routledge Vol. 29, No.4. (2017). 29:4 P.338.

<sup>2</sup> Pavone, I.R.”The Paris Agreement and the Trump administration: Road to nowhere? “*Journal of International Studies*, Vol.11.1, (2018) P. 39

<sup>3</sup> Paris Agreement. United Nations. 2015. Accessed February 9 2019. Article 2(a)

<sup>4</sup> Paris Agreement. United Nations. 2015. Accessed February 9 2019. Article 3

<sup>5</sup> Pavone, I.R. ”The Paris Agreement and the Trump administration: Road to nowhere? “*Journal of International Studies*, Vol.11.1, (2018) P. 37

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord>  
Accessed. February 8. 2019.

US climate diplomacy, whereas adversaries have criticized the decisions for not recognizing the immediate concern of climate change and not participating in multilateral agreements to combat it. Nevertheless, the withdrawal from the Paris Agreement is not as unambiguous as it might seem. Even though the US is de facto withdrawn from the Paris Agreement, the legal status of the US withdrawal has been questioned by several scholars. Article 28 of the Paris Agreement allows the engaged parties to announce withdrawal from the Agreement any time after three years from the date the Agreement becomes effective, and the withdrawal will be completed one year after the notification is given. In other words, according to the UNFCCC, the US cannot officially announce withdrawal from the Paris Agreement until 4 November 2019 and will not be able to effectively depart from the Paris Agreement until November 2020. Yet, this did not stop the Trump administration from withdrawing and ceasing all participation in June 2017, as the Trump administration did not consider the Paris Agreement as legally binding.<sup>7</sup> The fact of the matter is that the US is de facto not participating in the Paris Agreement, which have coursed concern from a variety of IR and legal scholars, whose interpretation of the Paris Agreement concludes that the US cannot constitutionally withdraw until November 2020. Others point to the power vested in the executive branch in regards to conducting foreign policy and consider the withdrawal as constitutionally compliant.<sup>8</sup> However, in an attempt to partly restore US commitment to combatting climate change, 23 US states have formed United States Climate Alliance and the members commit to achieving the goals outlined in the Paris Climate Agreement. Of these 23 states, 20 have a Democratic Governor and only three have a Republican. This indicates a difference in opinion on climate change and climate diplomacy between the two major parties in American politics, which is relevant to understanding the rationale behind the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.

Since the withdrawal, questions regarding the rationale for the US discontinued participation in the Paris Agreement have risen. The rationale behind the decision of withdrawing is relevant to analyze and examine, because it counters the previous administration's effort to multilaterally seek resolutions to climate change.

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<sup>7</sup> Rhodes, Christopher: "US withdrawal from the COP21 Paris Climate Change Agreement, and its possible implications." *Science Progress*. Vol.104. N.4 (2017). P. 412

<sup>8</sup> Bodansky, Daniel & O'Connor, Sandra Day. "Could a Future President Reverse U.S. Approval of the Paris Agreement?" *Center for Climate and Energy Solutions*. October 2016. P.1



Unfortunately, the rationale behind the decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement has not been covered as extensively as the possible ramifications and legal implications of the withdrawal have been. Whereas many contributing voices on the matter have tried to depict how the withdrawal will affect the US and the international society, the scope of this thesis is to examine the rationale behind the decision to withdraw. In his withdrawal speech, President Trump cited international economic aspects as explanatory for the decision and thereby systemic factors. However, there is indications that systemic factors cannot alone explain the decision of the withdrawal. As will be examined and discussed at a later point, there is evidence to suggest that domestic factors intervened in the process of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. Therefore, it is assumed that the most accurate answer to problem formulation of *Why the US is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement?* can be found in a combination of analyzing factors in the systemic and the domestic level.

## Literature Review

The US's intentions to withdraw from the Paris Agreement is a fairly contested topic. Some scholars have carried research that primarily focused on the consequences and ramifications of the Trump administration's decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. However, even though the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement is a significant development to international climate diplomacy, the amount of research on the matter relevant to this thesis is still somewhat scarce. Because, even though there are multiple academic sources discussing the implications of the US withdrawal of the Paris Agreement, very few examine and debate the rationale behind the decisions by the Trump administration to announce its intentions to withdraw. Nonetheless, some scholars have carried academic research on the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and the following section will discuss some of the relevant literature. One of these are Ilja Richard Pavone, who in *The Paris Agreement and the Trump administration: Road to Nowhere?* examines the ramifications Trump administration's decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement and what options the US have in terms of completing the withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.<sup>9</sup> Pavone delivers an in-depth analysis and discussion of the implications

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<sup>9</sup> Pavone, I.R. "The Paris Agreement and the Trump administration: Road to nowhere?" *Journal of International Studies*, Vol.11.1, (2018) P.41

of a US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, while comparing the decision to the Kyoto Protocol.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, Zhang et. al. in *U.S. Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement: Reasons, impacts, and China's response* tries to explain the rationale and impact related to the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. Zhang et. al.'s examination is relevant, because it discusses domestic factors related to the topic and also considers what economic incentives could have driven the decision. Because this thesis is interested in looking to systemic and domestic factors to explain why the US is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, Zhang et. al. delivers a valuable take on the matter. Moreover, as it can be argued that the US withdrawal from the Paris agreement could be result of consideration of China's relative economic power and the CO<sub>2</sub> targets, it is relevant to include quantitative data examining economics measures and how the CO<sub>2</sub> targets of US and e.g. China affects their respective economies.<sup>11</sup>

When examining and analyzing rationale behind the US withdrawal from the Paris agreement, one could look to Christopher Rhodes who primarily discuss the implications of the withdrawal, but also briefly imply what systemic factors that could have influenced the decision.<sup>12</sup> Rhodes points out, that one of the consequences the US withdrawal has created, is the fact the state of California "[...] has signed a climate agreement with China."<sup>13</sup> It is important to emphasize, that since the release of Rhodes' thesis, 20 states have formed the United States Climate Alliance<sup>14</sup>. In order to answer this thesis' problem formulation Why the US is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, a variety of different academic sources will be used to analyze the rationale behind the US decision to withdraw from the Paris agreement. As will be analyzed and discussed further in this thesis, there is a vast amount of different aspects that could be indicative for the US objective of withdrawing from the Paris agreement. When Trump announced his intentions of pulling out of the COP21 Paris agreement, he did so by saying "[...] It is time to put Youngstown, Ohio,

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<sup>10</sup> Pavone, I.R. "The Paris Agreement and the Trump administration: Road to nowhere?" *Journal of International Studies*, Vol.11. No.1, (2018) P. 38

<sup>11</sup> Zhang, Hai-Bin. Dai, Han-Cheng. Lai, Hua-Xia and Wang, Wen-Tao. "U.S. Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement: Reasons, impacts, and China's Response." *Advances in Climate Change Research* 8 (2017) P. 222

<sup>12</sup> Rhodes, Christopher. "US withdrawal from the COP21 Paris Climate Change Agreement, and its possible implications." *Science Progress*. Vol.104. N.4 (2017). P. 418

<sup>13</sup> Rhodes, Christopher. "US withdrawal from the COP21 Paris Climate Change Agreement, and its possible implications." *Science Progress*. Vol.104. N.4 (2017). P.414

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-new-york-governor-cuomo-and-california-governor-brown-announce-formation-united>

Accessed February 18<sup>th</sup> 2019.

Detroit, Michigan, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania — along with many, many other locations within our great country — before Paris, France. It is time to make America great again.”<sup>15</sup> Trump continued the announcement by stating that his priorities in foreign policy, was to promote American interests and implied that systemic and domestic factors were decisive for the Trump administration's decision to depart from the agreement.

Another significant source to consider is Mark Purdon's '*Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance*' because the article discusses how neoclassical realism “[...]recognizes systemic constraints on climate change cooperation — relative-gains concerns associated with international resource transfers implicit in climate change policy — while also identifying political factors that help explain variation in individual state behavior.”<sup>16</sup> Although Purdon's article was released almost three years before the US announced its intentions to withdraw from the Paris agreement, his analysis is still relevant to the research of this thesis, because his utilization of neoclassical realism in explaining climate policy can deliver a relevant argument in understanding why the US is withdrawing from the Paris agreement. Purdon provides a valid analysis on how neoclassical realism explains international climate policy and therefore it is relevant to draw on his analysis to explain how the US intends to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. Purdon sees relative gains as fundamental to the understanding of climate policy and argues that [...] climate policy anticipates the redistribution of resources from the developed countries.”<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, because the objective of this thesis is to explain the rationale behind the foreign policy decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, and the assumption that this is most accurately reached through the analysis of the systemic and domestic level, it has been deemed relevant to utilize neoclassical realism as the theoretical standpoint. This means, that a vast amount of the sources used will discuss and explain neoclassical realism, that will be utilized in the analysis. Therefore, the traits of neoclassical realism will be clarified in detail at a later point.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord/>  
Accessed February 20<sup>th</sup> 2019

<sup>16</sup> Purdon, Michael., “Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance.” *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Vol.7, No.3. (2014) P.309

<sup>17</sup> Purdon, Michael., “Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance.” *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Vol.7, No.3. (2014) P.309

Mark Cooper suggests that withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, was expected prior to President Trump's inauguration and points to internal pressures from the fossil fuel industry as intervening in the process of foreign policy formulation. Moreover, Cooper discusses the economic principles regarding the Paris Agreement, and interprets possible consequences of the US withdrawal.<sup>18</sup> Because this thesis is interested in domestic factors as well as systemic factors, Cooper's depiction of the influence of internal US dynamics such as the fossil fuel industry's effort to lobby US decision makers, will be relevant in the analysis of the rationale behind the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, because, as will be elaborated further, interest groups can intervene in the process of formulating foreign policy. This notion is shared by Yu Hongyuan who have argued that the Trump administration have changed its focus to revitalizing fossil fuels instead of concentrating on climate diplomacy in regards to the Paris Agreement.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Hongyuan suggest that the decision by the US to withdraw from the Paris Agreement are influenced by "[...]diplomatic strategies, domestic politics, industrial interest groups, think tanks, public opinion and so forth."<sup>20</sup>

Contributing to the analysis of domestic factors will be a Schmid-Petri study on media and climate change.<sup>21</sup> The study partly investigates how media in the US discuss climate change and how climate change skepticism in can be influential. In summary, the topic of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement is a contested topic, that has been discussed by scholars, politicians and media. The sources used in this thesis will be limited to examine the rationale behind the US foreign policy decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. However, neither of the scholars have used IR theory in their examination of the US withdrawal of the Paris Agreement. This thesis will contribute to the topic, by applying IR theory and testing the applicability of neoclassical realism, while analyzing and discussing the beforementioned three perspectives of the US withdrawal of the Paris Agreement.

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<sup>18</sup> Cooper, Mark. "Governing the global climate commons: The political economic of state and local action, after the U.S. flip-flop on the Paris Agreement." *Energy Policy*. (2018) 117. P. 448

<sup>19</sup> Hongyuan, Yu. "The U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities for China." *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* no.4 (February 2018): P. 296

<sup>20</sup> Hongyuan, Yu. "The U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities for China." *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* no.4 (February 2018): P. 297

<sup>21</sup> Schmid-Petri, Hannah, Silke Adam, Ivo Schmucki, and Thomas Häussler, "A Changing Climate of Skepticism: The Factors Shaping Climate Change Coverage in the US Press." *Public Understanding of Science* Vol.26, no. 4 (May 2017) P. 507

## Methodology

The following section will entail a detailed overview of the methodology applied to conduct an analysis of the problem formulation of why the US is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. In order to do so, this thesis will be approached as a case study. The advantage of a case study is that it creates the possibility of applying an in-depth analysis and examination within the parameters of the chosen focal point. Moreover, case study methods have the ability to include the identification of new variables and hypotheses and analyzing intervening variables in cases “[...] to make inferences on which causal mechanisms may have been at work.”<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, case study method can be useful in reaching validity and explaining the historical background of particular cases. Moreover, this thesis will seek to answer the problem formulation from a deductive approach. The deductive method allows the research to be examined from a theoretical framework, that can explain and predict intervening variables and then test the predictions.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, deductive method can help elucidate the dynamics of causal mechanisms and achieve a deep comprehension of the case.<sup>24</sup>

## Research design and Objective

This thesis will aim to analyze the rationale behind the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement through a comprehensive research, while using the theoretical framework and academic content to create in-depth analysis. The problem formulation will be approached as a case study and will utilize qualitative and quantitative data. It is deemed an advantage for this thesis to approach the analysis from a mixed-method research, because it allows for the research to be more comprehensive and detailed.<sup>25</sup> As beforementioned, the topic of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement has been discussed and contested by several scholars, some of which will be used for the basis of the analysis and discussion for the

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<sup>22</sup> Sprinz, Detlef, and Sprinz. *Models, numbers, and cases: methods for studying international relations*. The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 2004.P.19

<sup>23</sup> Sprinz, Detlef, and Sprinz. *Models, numbers, and cases: methods for studying international relations*. The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 2004P.23

<sup>24</sup> Sprinz, Detlef, and Sprinz. *Models, numbers, and cases: methods for studying international relations*. The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 2004.P.45

<sup>25</sup> Sprinz, Detlef, and Sprinz. *Models, numbers, and cases: methods for studying international relations*. The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 2004.P.19

research of this thesis. However, this thesis distinguishes itself from other academic studies by its attempt to apply IR theory in its research in order to answer the problem formulation of why the US is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. As will be elaborated further at a later point, this thesis will utilize neoclassical realism in its examination behind the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. This means that this thesis will analyze systemic factors and domestic factors in the US foreign policy decision behind the withdrawal. The systemic factor level will establish a framework for analyzing if the US' relative power is in decline and how the systemic constraints such as US e.g. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions compare to those of China and India. The domestic factors will look to analyze the decision through a variety of intervening variables. These are 1. Interests groups 2. Decisions makers (GOP and Democratic Power Struggle) 3. Climate change skepticism in the US. 4. President Trump and Cabinet Members, all of which arguably plays a role in the rationale behind the decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. The systemic and domestic factors will be discussed and analyzed by incorporating academic sources, whose relevance for the examination this thesis is judged either through their theoretical contribution or expertise on US climate diplomacy and the Paris Agreement.

### Choice of theory

The reason behind the choice of theory for this thesis is found in the aforementioned acknowledgement of the incorporation of systemic and domestic factors in order to examine the research question of *Why the US has withdrawing from the Paris Agreement*. Because, this thesis aims to look at aspects such as US political issues regarding the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, the influence of interest groups and the apparent power struggle between GOP and the Democratic Party, it was deemed necessary to use a theory that would combine these domestic factors with systemic factors in order to give the most profound and accurate answer to the problem formulation. Therefore, it was obvious from the get-go, that because neoclassical realism, unlike other branches of realism, emphasizes the importance of domestic factors in the explanation of a state's foreign policy formulation, would arguably generate the best fundament for the analysis of the research questions and is therefore most advantageous. This evidently disclaimed classical realism and neorealism as the theoretical perspective because of classical realism and neorealism's disregard for domestic factors in state's foreign policy formulation. This is necessary

because one could argue that domestic factors play a significant role in the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and therefore in US foreign policy. Offensive realists consider the internal differences between states not considerable, because the gravities of the international system are “[...] assumed to be strong and straightforward enough to make similarly situated states behave alike, regardless of their internal characteristics.”<sup>26</sup> Critiques of offensive realism would indicate offensive realism’s obvious restraints are signified in offensive realism’s disregard for domestic factors because “[...] a theory of foreign policy is limited to systemic factors alone is bound to be inaccurate much of the time.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, offensive realism and classical realism rejects internal factors as partly causative for the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. This underlines the shortcomings of offensive realism and classical realism for this thesis, because it is assumed that internal factors are relevant to examine in order to answer why the US is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. Offensive realism identifies the only road to security for states, is the pursue hegemony. Whereas defensive realists assume the view that states are disposed to preserve their current level of security and they adopt a moderate and defensive strategy.<sup>28</sup>

Defensive realism defines states behavior as self-help where states aim to balance power be seeking security. Therefore, defensive realists argue that states do not necessarily pursue power maximization, but rather seek to maintain their position within the international system and defensive realists view the pursuit of hegemony as strategically foolish.<sup>29</sup> This is the primary distinction between defensive realism and offensive realism, because offensive realists depict hegemony is the only way for states to ensure their survival. Furthermore, offensive realism is limited in its explanation of states’ behavior, because it neglects domestic factors and accounts solely for systemics factors in states’ foreign policy formulations.<sup>30</sup> Unlike offensive realism, defensive realism integrates both domestic and systemic factors in explaining states’ foreign policy.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, even though defensive realism incorporates systemic and domestic factors in explain a state’s

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<sup>26</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.148

<sup>27</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.142

<sup>28</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.143

<sup>29</sup> Elman, Colin Elman, and Jensen, Michael., *The Realism Reader*. 1 Routledge, (2014). P. 106

<sup>30</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.154

<sup>31</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998). P.150

foreign policy behavior, defensive realism neglects the concept that threats are created by a state's relative material power and "[...] does not account for much actual behavior, thus forcing its adherents to contract out the bulk of their explanatory work to domestic-level variables introduced on an ad hoc basis."<sup>32</sup>

One could have considered making use of neoliberal institutionalism. Neoliberal institutionalism, like realists, recognizes the state of the international as anarchic.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, neoliberal institutionalism "[...] accepts realist argument that states are the major actors in world affairs and are unitary-rational agents."<sup>34</sup> However, neoliberal institutionalism rejects realism's disregard for cooperation between states and neglect for international institutions, because neoliberal institutionalist would argue that states generally benefit from cooperation and that international institutions can facilitate this in the anarchic international system.<sup>35</sup> However, realists would argue that neoliberal institutionalists are limited in their depiction of cooperation, because states are ultimately self-interested and only concerned with maximizing its gains and ensure survival.<sup>36</sup> One could make an argument, that the Trump administration is concerned with the relative gains of the other parties of the Paris Agreement, which could be substantial to the withdrawal. Which therefore disproves the impact institutions have on states behavior in the case of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. However, because this thesis is not concerned with explaining the role of institutions in the international system, but merely interested in the analyzing the rationale behind US decision of withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, neoliberal institutionalism will not be considered as the theory of choice of this thesis. Therefore, to summarize, neoclassical realism has been deemed the best fit for choice of theory because it incorporates the combination of systemic and domestic factors in its analysis.

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<sup>32</sup> Rose, Gideon. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998). P.151

<sup>33</sup> Grieco, Joseph "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* Vol.42, No. 3 (1988): 497.

<sup>34</sup> Grieco, Joseph "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* Vol.42, No. 3 (1988): 493

<sup>35</sup> Grieco, Joseph "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* Vol.42, No. 3 (1988): 496.

<sup>36</sup> Grieco, Joseph "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* Vol.42, No. 3 (1988): 498



## Empirical Data

The empirical data found in this thesis has been chosen based on its ability to reach the objective of the thesis and answer the problem formulation. As this thesis analyzes rationale behind the US decisions to withdraw from the Paris Agreement it has been deemed necessary to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The reason for this is that based on the theoretical standpoint of neoclassical realism, this thesis will as aforementioned analyze the rationale behind the decisions through domestic and systemic factors. These factors will include qualitative data consisting of primarily academic sources such as scholarly journal but will also include official government whitepapers and documents, and legislative and legal records. Moreover, the qualitative data will include official statements by the Trump administration such as speeches and Tweets regarding the US withdrawal and content relevant to the analysis of this thesis.

Additionally, the quantitative data will entail content of US CO<sub>2</sub> emissions e.g. compared to China. Additionally, since it has been outlined that this thesis will examine the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement by applying IR theory, some data of this thesis will consist of primary and secondary sources discussing IR theory and its relevance in foreign policy and climate diplomacy. Most quantitative data, such as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and economic comparisons are before 2017, because it is assessed that this is more relevant for the decision. However, some of the data is based on forecasts in terms of future emissions and economic growth. The reason for this is, that the US has pointed to forecasts as explanatory and decisive in the withdrawal.

## Limitations

This thesis will be limited to examine the rationale of why the US is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement and the rationale behind the decisions. This thesis will rely on academic sources such as scholarly journals etc. This means that a vast amount of the data collected and used for this thesis, is based on secondary sources. It would of course have been advantage for the research of the project to interview decisions makers in American foreign policy, who could explain the rationale behind the decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. However, this has not been possible, therefore this thesis is limited to analyzing government documents and secondary sources in order to answer the problem formulation.

Moreover, an immediate limitation of this thesis is that the research question of this thesis is constructed around a very recent phenomenon. This obviously limits the available data that can be included in the analysis. Besides, as we have still yet to see the full extent of the circumstances surrounding the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, it can be difficult to explore the total rationale behind the decision. It is important to emphasize, that there is a very limited amount of official documentation regarding the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. As all methods, case study is not without limitations. Case study methods are limited in their inability to “[...] render judgment on the frequency or representativeness of particular cases and their weak capability for estimating average causal weight of variables.”<sup>37</sup> Case study methods also have apparent limitations in the selections of cases and the risk of bias. Moreover, case studies can be argued to have generalized the findings within the case research. This can happen if a case study “[...] shows that a variable is not a necessary condition or a sufficient condition for an outcome, or when a theory fails to fit a case it appeared most likely to explain.”<sup>38</sup> Therefore, it is important to be aware of these limitations and approach all data from a critical standpoint, in order to minimize the risk of generalizing findings within the case study research and. Additionally, as this thesis is centered around the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism, it requires the data incorporated to account for and explain both domestic and systemic variables.

## Theory

As beforementioned, the uniqueness of this thesis examination of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, is based on its incorporation and applicability of IR theory. The following section will discuss the historical background of the theoretical standpoint of realism, briefly outline the basic assumptions of realist tradition and the evolution of realism. Secondly, it will discuss and explain the fundamental considerations of neoclassical realism. Finally, it will examine the limitations and challenges of neoclassical realism.

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<sup>37</sup> Sprinz, Detlef, and Sprinz. *Models, numbers, and cases: methods for studying international relations*. The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 2004. P.21

<sup>38</sup> Sprinz, Detlef, and Sprinz. *Models, numbers, and cases: methods for studying international relations*. The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 2004. P.19

## Realist tradition

International relations studies are often directed by theories that look to explain the behavior of units in the international system. Traditionally, realism and liberalism have been perceived as the pioneering theories of IR. The most profound difference between liberalism and realism is the observations of relative gains and absolute gains.<sup>39</sup> Realist tradition, who favor relative gains, would argue that state A fear cooperation with state B will lead to state B gaining more than state A. Realism would depict states' behavior as concerned with maximizing its own gains, while being deeply concerned with the gains of other states. Whereas liberalism would perceive this as mutually beneficial and would argue that states are mostly concerned its own gains and does not consider the gains of other states important as long as it gains as well. Compared to liberalist tradition, realists identify greater uncertainty for cooperation for states. Thus, realists emphasize the barriers to cooperation in the fear of relative gains.<sup>40</sup>

Realism is often referred to as the oldest school and most frequent used school of IR and realism generally depicts the Hobbesian anarchic state of the international system as a direct causation of human nature. In 1948 Morgenthau constructed a modified version of classical realism and according to Morgenthau the events of the international system is based upon the "[...]unchanging human nature, which is basically self-centered, self-regarding, and self-interested."<sup>41</sup> Deriving from that thought, generally classical realists depict a pessimistic picture of the international system and consider that because human nature is self-interested, so will states be. This will ultimately result in conflicts and war, which will justify the use of force in protecting self-interests and ensuring survival. Classical realism is constructed on three core assumptions: State are the main actors in the international system, states are unitary and rational actors that pursue their own national interest. These profound assumptions establish the argument for realist tradition that states pursue their own interests and take care of themselves in order to survive the anarchy of the international system. The assurance of survival is directly related to struggle for power

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<sup>39</sup> Jervis, Robert. "Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate," *International Security* Vol.24, No. 1 (summer 1999) P. 47

<sup>40</sup> Grieco, Joseph "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* Vol.42, no. 3 (1988): 503

<sup>41</sup> Jackson, Robert & Sørensen, Georg. *Introduction to International Relations*. Fifth Edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013. P. 75

achievement, characterized as the ability to somewhat control outcomes in dealings with other states of the system. Thus, realists argue that IR are predominantly formed by the Great Powers of the system and the decisions they implement.<sup>42</sup> Human nature is egoistic and follows a historical repetition of patterns that are outlined in the human nature's aspiration for power.

The limitations of classical realism are demonstrated by the emergence of neorealism and neoclassical realism. Neorealism was introduced in 1979 by Waltz and departed from classical realism by focusing on the structure of the international system as explanatory for states' behavior, instead of human nature.<sup>43</sup> Another assumption of Waltz was based on the argument that uncertainty in the anarchic structures affected the balance of power between states and that states are basically alike.<sup>44</sup> Neorealism assumes that cooperation in the international system is infrequent and challenging, because states are inclined to increase their relative power compared to other states.<sup>45</sup> Neorealism is commonly divided into two views: defensive realism and offensive realism. Both of which recognize the international system as anarchic. There is a set of three assumptions projecting the outline of defensive realism: Firstly, as aforementioned, the international system is anarchic and without a ruling body, meaning that states are autonomous.<sup>46</sup> Secondly, Waltz argues that states are similar in the tasks and challenges they face, but they are not similar in their abilities and capabilities to complete these tasks and face these challenges.<sup>47</sup> Thirdly, the capabilities of states are primarily what distinguish them and according to Waltz, the systems structures change when the distribution of capabilities of the units of the system change. Thus, the structural changes affect the behavior of states and the outcome of state interactions.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, defensive realists argue that the behavior of states is defined by the aim to seek security through self-help where states will balance power and that states seek to maintain their position in the international system and "[...]

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<sup>42</sup> Elman, Colin Elman, and Jensen, Michael., *The Realism Reader*. 1 Routledge, (2014). P.11

<sup>43</sup> Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. "Security Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited. *International Security*, Vol.25, No.3. (Winter 2000-2001). P.135

<sup>44</sup> Elman, Colin Elman, and Jensen, Michael., *The Realism Reader*. 1 Routledge, (2014). P. 92

<sup>45</sup> Elman, Colin & Jensen, Michael A. eds. *Realism Reader*. Routledge, London and New York. 2014. P.106

<sup>46</sup> Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. "Security Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited. *International Security*, Vol.25, No.3. (Winter 2000-2001). P.141

<sup>47</sup> Elman, Colin Elman, and Jensen, Michael., *The Realism Reader*. 1 Routledge, (2014). P.81

<sup>48</sup> Elman, Colin Elman, and Jensen, Michael., *The Realism Reader*. 1 Routledge, (2014). P.81

that it is strategically foolish to pursue hegemony.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, it is signified that states do not seek to expand their relative power, while simultaneously avoid losing their position in the system.

Countering the notion that states will seek to maintain their position in the international system, offensive realists argue that the ultimate goal for states is to pursue hegemony in order to secure survival. Offensive realism is coined by Mearsheimer as a critique of defensive realism and delineated by five assumption, which can elucidate power struggle: Anarchy, uncertainty, capabilities, survival and rationality. Offensive realists argue that states generally behave in accordance with rationality and power maximization, meaning they would seize the opportunity to expand power but only if it is rational, because survival is ensured through power maximization.<sup>50</sup> Thus, offensive realism assumes that security is difficult to achieve, because states ensure survival through power maximization of other states, which increases the chances of war, therefore achieving hegemony is the ultimate security goal for states.

### Theoretical Assumptions of Neoclassical Realism

Like classical realists and neorealists, neoclassical realists also outline the international system as anarchic. However, in contrast to other branches of realist tradition, neoclassical realists define anarchy as murky and challenging to navigate because threats and opportunities are “[...] not easily identifiable, and there is a wide range of possible policies open to statesmen for meeting strategic goals. Therefore, neoclassical realists argue that domestic factors intervene for states in their foreign policy behavior.”<sup>51</sup> Thus illustrating, neoclassical realisms separation from classical realism and neorealism.

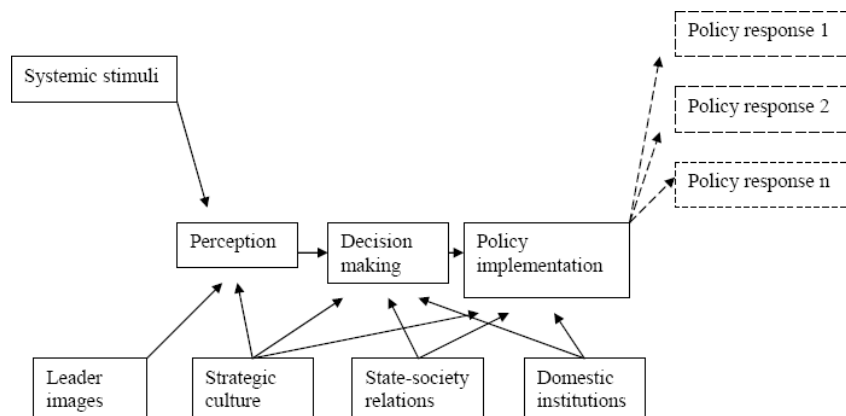
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<sup>49</sup> Elman, Colin Elman, and Jensen, Michael., *The Realism Reader*. 1 Routledge, (2014). P.75

<sup>50</sup> Elman, Colin Elman, and Jensen, Michael., *The Realism Reader*. 1 Routledge, (2014). P.35

<sup>51</sup> Elman, Colin Elman, and Jensen, Michael., *The Realism Reader*. 1 Routledge, (2014). P.11

**Table 1**



**Source:** Norrin Ripsman. The neoclassical realist model of foreign policy. “Neoclassical Realism.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*

Neoclassical realism is coined by Gideon Rose, who have pointed to the inability of neorealism to account for minor events.<sup>52</sup> A central assumption of neoclassical realism is correlation between a state’s relative material power capabilities and its foreign policy, because material power creates the foundation for foreign policy.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, in Rose’s argumentation, it is apparent that the critique of neorealism is the notion that neorealism does not put emphasis on foreign policy. Rose recognizes that theories of international politics generally wish to explain the outcome of interactions between states. In contrast, theories of foreign policy aim to explain the behavior of states.<sup>54</sup> In terms of foreign policy, Rose points to four theories: Innenpolitik theories, offensive realism, defensive realism and neoclassical realism. Now, the basic assumptions and outlines of offensive and defensive realism has been covered previously in this thesis. However, it is necessary to provide a brief definition of Innenpolitik theories. Innenpolitik theories exclusively account for domestic factors to explain the foreign policy behavior of states in the international

<sup>52</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.145

<sup>53</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.146

Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.145

system.<sup>55</sup> Innenpolitik theories are limited in their explanation of why “[...] states with similar domestic systems often act differently in the foreign policy sphere and why dissimilar situations often act alike.”<sup>56</sup> Rose argues that neoclassical realism is defined by its incorporation of systemic and domestic variables, and that the main independent variable is relative power.<sup>57</sup>

The concept of relative power is defined by Rose as [...] the capabilities and resources with which states can influence each other.”<sup>58</sup> Rose points to the systemic dimension as the central variable. However, the conduct of a state's foreign policy is depicted as a reaction to the dynamics and gravities of the international system and that the reaction is stimulated by domestic factors e.g. domestic political regime, influence by elites and state-society relations.<sup>59</sup> Neoclassical realism aims to analyze events in the international system from the top down and favor approaching the analysis by examining systemic level and then proceeding by tracing how relative power is operationalized into the “[...] behavior of state actors.”<sup>60</sup> This is central to understanding the concept of variables in neoclassical realism. In short, external behavior is driven by systemic forces. Thus, neoclassical realism perceives “[...] the states as epitomized by a national security executive, comprised of the head of government and the ministers and officials[...]” who a central for formulating foreign policy.<sup>61</sup> Due to access to privileged information, the executive is considered best fit to perceive systemic constraints and determine national interests.<sup>62</sup> Thus, neoclassical realists assume that firstly, state leaders determine what is national interests and base their evaluation of relative power and secondly always are

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<sup>55</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.149

<sup>56</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.148

<sup>57</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.152

<sup>58</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.151

<sup>59</sup> Purdon, Michael., Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance. *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Vol.7, No.3. (2014) P.306

<sup>60</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.166

<sup>61</sup> Ripsman, Norrin M. “Neoclassical Realism.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. November (2017). P. 14

<sup>62</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. P.25.

subjected to domestic constraints, which illustrates that domestic factors are directly linked to strategic adjustments to a state's foreign policy implementation.<sup>63</sup>

To summarize, the underlying principles of neoclassical realism is based on the assumption that the foreign policy outcome (dependent variable) of a state is molded by systemic factors (independent variable), while domestic factors (intervening variable) are intervenin in the process of formulation and conduction foreign policy.<sup>64</sup> Like other branches of realism, neoclassical realism accepts that states are the main actors in the international system. However, neoclassical realism accepts, that not all states act in consensus.<sup>65</sup> Internal disagreements regarding the "[...] extent of international threats, persistent internal divisions with the leadership, social cohesions, and the regime's vulnerability to violent overthrow all inhibit the state's ability to respond to systemic pressures."<sup>66</sup> Moreover, neoclassical realists assume that states do not seek security, but react to the uncertainties of the anarchic international system by looking to "[...] control and shape their external environment."<sup>67</sup> Even though states will seek to outline and pursue their interests in various ways, states will pursue external influence in the capacity they are able to.<sup>68</sup> Thus signifying the paramount of a state's relative material power in its foreign policy behavior. What Rose defines as the central empirical prediction of neoclassical realism, is that in the long run, the volume of relative material power that states possess will define the extent and ambitions of states foreign policy. Furthermore, the hypothetical increase of relative power for a state will result in the pursuit of added external influence and vise-versa.<sup>69</sup> Thus, the system the states are inhabiting is partly of their own making and therefore it can be assumed that neoclassical realism expects that increasing relative power will result in an expansion of the ambitions and extent of a state's foreign policy

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<sup>63</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 181

<sup>64</sup> Rose, Gideon. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.161

<sup>65</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 28

<sup>66</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 28

<sup>67</sup> Rose, Gideon. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.152

<sup>68</sup> Rose, Gideon. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.152

<sup>69</sup> Rose, Gideon. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.159



activity. However, it is important to clarify that power-related factors will not drive “[...] all aspects of a state’s foreign policy, only that they will affect its broad contours.”<sup>70</sup> Another significant trait of neoclassical realism is the emphasis on the role of independent, dependent and intervening variables. First an intervening variable can be decision makers perception, where systemic factors are filtered.<sup>71</sup> To clarify further, the systemic incentives and constraints, imposed by their environments, will affect the translation of independent to intervening variables and the translation is not necessarily smooth, because “[...] the functioning mechanical transmission belt is inaccurate and misleading.”<sup>72</sup> Thus, neoclassical realists highlight that the road is often unpredictable and murky when translating capabilities into national behavior. Rose continues by arguing that another intervening variable can be what Rose calls the “[...]strength of a country’s state apparatus and its relation to the surrounding society.”<sup>73</sup> It is emphasized, that the depiction of a state’s international distribution of power are inadequate, because leaders do not inevitably have access the combined material power resources of a state.

**Table 2**

<i>Theory</i>	<i>View of International System</i>	<i>View of Units</i>	<i>Causal Logic</i>
<i>Innenpolitik theories</i>	unimportant	highly differentiated	internal factors → foreign policy
<b>Defensive realism</b>	occasionally important; anarchy’s implications variable	highly differentiated	systemic incentives <i>or</i> internal factors → foreign policy (two sets of independent variables in practice, driving “natural” and “unnatural” behavior respectively)
<b>Neoclassical realism</b>	<b>important; anarchy is murky</b>	<b>differentiated</b>	<b>systemic incentives (independent variable) → internal factors (intervening variables) → foreign policy</b>
<b>Offensive realism</b>	<b>very important; anarchy is Hobbesian</b>	<b>undifferentiated</b>	systemic incentives → foreign policy

Source: Gideon Rose: Outlines the differences between the four theories of foreign policy according to Rose.

<sup>70</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.168

<sup>71</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.157

<sup>72</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.158

<sup>73</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.161

Neoclassical realism depicts that systemic incentives and domestic factors shape the foreign policy of a state.  
“Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.”

### Theoretical limitations and challenges for neoclassical realism:

It is important to note that neoclassical realism is not without critique and limitations. One of the criticisms has been the combination of domestic and systemic factors, because some critiques of neoclassical realism would dispute that these can be separated.<sup>74</sup> Contrasting many other theoretical standpoints that a formal, universalist approach is favored, Neoclassical realism maintains the significance of understanding details of state's foreign policy behavior. E.g. to investigate and understand the perceptions of decision makers, requires language capabilities.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, if one is analyzing intervening variables, one is required to have a decent empirical understanding of the political institutions in the state one examines, which is rare and therefore proposes a limitation.

One could therefore make the case that the problem for neoclassical realism, is that the independent variable “[...] needs to be studied in conjunction with a variety of messy contextual factors in order to say much of interest about their subject of matter.”<sup>76</sup> One could use Waltz in establishing critique of neoclassical realism, as Waltz argues that foreign policy outcome cannot be explained with unit-level considerations, but also indicates that the use of IR theory to explain foreign policy outcome is a mistake.<sup>77</sup>

A critic of neoclassical realism, Benjamin Fordham, who have argued that a major limitation of neoclassical realism is what he labels as the ‘additive approach’.<sup>78</sup> His critique is based upon the notion that what neoclassical realists define as domestic factors, produce limited significance to actual foreign policy behavior, because “[...]many of the concepts and arguments commonly deployed in everyday discourse about foreign policy choices also

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<sup>74</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. P.258

<sup>75</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.166

<sup>76</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.166

<sup>77</sup> Waltz, Kenneth H. *Theory of International Politics* New York: McGraw Hill, (1979), p. 122  
Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. P.279

make little sense in light of an interactive understanding of foreign policy.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, Fordham bases his argument on an analysis where he claims that e.g. national interests only make sense, if it explained in details what these interests are, where they come from and what the outcome of a foreign policy strategy pursuing these national interests will be. In addition to this, Fordham concludes the necessity of disconnecting domestic and systemic factors in order to theorize about when which one will be decisive in foreign policy formulation.<sup>80</sup>

Thus, one could summarize, that critiques of neoclassical realism are disputing that a distinction from neorealism and classical realism is ultimately neoclassical realisms flaw, because “[...]much of the neoclassical realists agenda, which seeks to explain foreign policy choices that diverge from neorealists prescriptions, blames distinct domestic political pressures that prevent ‘appropriate’ responses to objective external circumstances.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, critiques of neoclassical realism would argue that linking causality between different levels of analysis in one theory of foreign policy creates obvious limitations and fundamental problems for an IR theory.<sup>82</sup>

## Analysis of Systemic Factors

It is important to emphasize, that this is not a thesis that seeks to discuss climate change in general, nor does it aim to determine whether climate change is real or not. This thesis is merely interested in analyzing the factors driving the rationale behind the foreign policy decision to withdraw and to discuss how these factors influence US foreign policy, by utilizing the theoretical assumption of neoclassical realism. However, some of the sources and data used for the analysis, will undoubtedly have an opinion on whether climate change is myth or reality, but this thesis will not seek to dispute either.

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Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 279

<sup>80</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 253

<sup>81</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 253

<sup>82</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 254

## External Variables and Systemic Factors

To answer the problem formulation of Why the US is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, it could initially be argued that limiting the analysis to systemic factors only, would be inadequate. Moreover, the assumptions are that there is no single explanatory factor for the foreign policy decision. Instead, the decision will be analyzed through a variety of factors and as beforementioned, the foundation of neoclassical realism, as the theoretical standpoint of this thesis, allows for incorporation and combination of systemic factors and domestic factors. Now, according to neoclassical realism systemic factors serve as the independent variable, therefore it makes sense to start the analysis with systemic factors. Unfortunately, it has only been possible to find a few academic sources discussing the rationale behind the decisions, therefore the assessment of the systemic factors will be limited to analyzing primarily quantitative data such as GDP growth and CO<sub>2</sub>, because an argument can be established that these measures are significant to systemic incentives driving the US decision to announce withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. To analyze the systemic factors, indeed one have to take a step back and look at the dynamics of the international system, because as Rose argues: “[...]the influence of systemic factors may often be more apparent from a distance than from up close.”<sup>83</sup>

The systemic factors chosen for this part of the analysis will be: Economic incentives and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions related to the Paris Agreement. There is indication to support, that these are somewhat intertwined in the rationale behind the withdrawal and therefore the analysis put equal emphasis on the analysis of these two systemic factors. In both cases, as will be illustrated later, the concept of relative power is vital to understanding how the US is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement.

## Economic incentives

Economic incentives can arguably be a driving force for states navigation within the anarchic international system, and one could make an argument that the US the strongest economic power within the international system and as a rational actor and therefore their relative material power vis-à-vis other actors in the international is pivotal for their foreign

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<sup>83</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.147

policy activity.<sup>84</sup> Considering this neoclassical realist viewpoint and looking at economic growth in developing powers e.g. China and India, as indicated in table 3, it is no surprise that the US is cautious in international affairs. As observed in table 3, both China and India outscored the US in annual GDP growth between 2012-2017 and as visible in table 4 according to the World Bank, China has overtaken the US measured in GNI, PPP USD. In 2014 China surpassed the US PPP at \$18,4 trillion compared to the US at \$17,9 trillion, that gap increased further and in 2017, where the Trump administration made its decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, the gap was more than \$3.5 trillions. Moreover, the economic aspects are important to consider as the proposed economic impact of the Paris agreement is examined, because neoclassical realism would argue that states, who navigate in the anarchic international system, react to uncertainties by trying to form their external environment.<sup>85</sup> According to analyses of the economic impact of the Paris Agreement, the US pledge under the Paris Agreement, would have significantly negative ramifications on the US, and compared to developing countries such as China and India and “[...]the first years with commitments under the Paris Agreement, the economic burden would be much larger for the U.S. compared to China, India and the EU.”<sup>86</sup> The data put forth in table 5 and table 6 suggest that participation in the Paris Agreement would cost the US \$121 billion until 2030. That number is undeniably much larger than the China, India and the EU. However, as table 5 suggest, the long-term economic impact of the Paris Agreement to the US is not as significant compared to China and India. Nevertheless, the more immediate economic implications the Paris Agreement has on the US serves as an indicatory systemic factor in the US decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, it is maintained that “[...] President Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement out of economic considerations[...]”<sup>88</sup> and therefore, one could make an argument of the US decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, was partly influenced by the correlation between economic incentives e.g. continued and economic cost of participating in the Paris Agreement, because as examined, the US's GDP growth

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<sup>84</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.150

<sup>85</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.152

<sup>86</sup> Lunsford, David. Et al. *Carbon Delta AG*, Zurich. June 2017.

<sup>87</sup> Hongyuan, Yu. “The U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities for China.” *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* no.4 (February 2018): 281-300.

<sup>88</sup> Hongyuan, Yu. “The U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities for China.” *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* no.4 (February 2018): 281-300.

was arguable in decline compared to that of China and India, while at the same time, the US committed to stronger procedures to the Paris Agreement than China and India. Thus, based on the theoretical standpoint of neoclassical realism that assumes that the US is a rational actor within the anarchic international system, these indications makes it irrational for the US to remain in the Paris Agreement, because the influence of systemic factors such as relative power is crucial to the US withdrawal.

**Table 3**

GDP growth (annual %)							
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
China	7.9	7.8	7.3	6.9	6.7	6.9	..
United States	2.2	1.7	2.6	2.9	1.5	2.3	..
India	5.5	6.4	7.4	8.2	7.1	6.7	..

Source: World Development Indicators. Click on a metadata icon for original source information to be used for citation.

Source: World Bank

<https://databank.worldbank.org/data/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG/1ff4a498/Popular-Indicators>.

Illustrates annually GDP grow in between 2012-2017 in China, US an India.

**Table 4**



Source: World Bank

<https://databank.worldbank.org/data/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG/1ff4a498/Popular-Indicators>

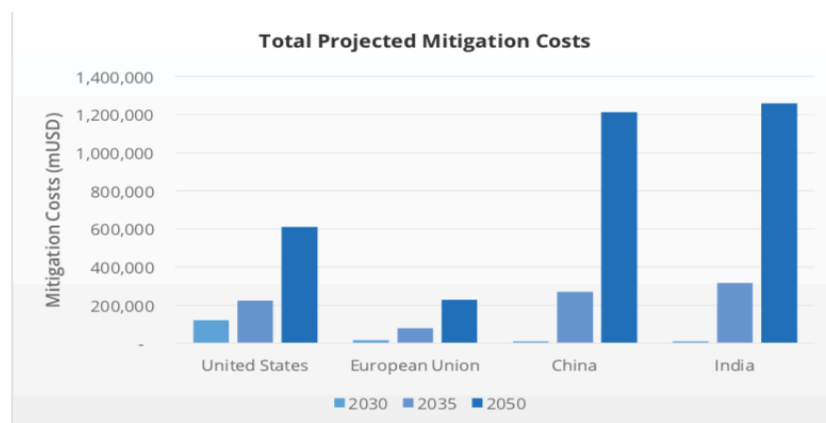
Illustrates Gross National Income measured in USD between 2004-2017 in China, India and US.

**Table 5**

	2030	2035	2050
<b>United States</b>	121'293	222'923	611'116
<b>European Union</b>	15'927	78'912	228'249
<b>China</b>	2'400	270'614	1'214'012
<b>India</b>	3'154	315'573	1'258'962

Source: Carbon Delta AG. (Million USD). Total Mitigation Costs by country.

**Table 6**



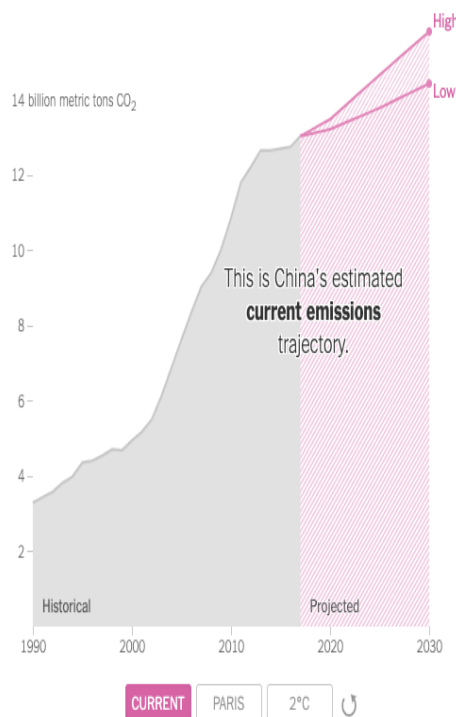
Source: Carbon Delta AG. Focused on two metrics. Total mitigation costs to achieve the long term 2 degree Celsius target, and the per capita contribution for emission reductions in GDP. (Million USD)

## CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Targets for the Paris Agreement

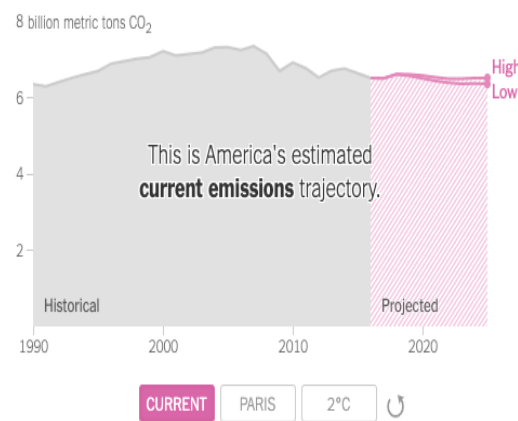
As beforementioned, other systemic incentives could be understood by looking at the actual climate targets of the US, China and India in the Paris Agreement. The New York Times analyzed the climate goals of the Paris Agreement and based on calculations made by Climate Action Tracker a few things seem apparent. The US pledged in the Paris Agreement to reduce MtCO<sub>2</sub>e by 26-28 percent below 2005 by 2025 before its withdrawal. Compared to China whose targets are “[...]relatively easy to meet: overall emissions would peak around 2030 and the country would get 20 percent of its energy from non-fossil

sources.”<sup>89</sup> However, analysts suggest that China would have to considerably reduce its emissions in order to keep the temperatures rising below 2 degrees Celsius, which is not specified in the Paris Agreement. In this instance, some neoclassical realists would suggest there is clear implications between relative power and states climate policy and that it is “[...]reconceptualized to highlight linkages between power and resiliency.”<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, the Trump administration considered the ramifications of the Paris Agreement unfair, since the US already had a decrease in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, whereas China and India both increased their relative emissions. Thus, based on the theoretical standpoint of neoclassical realism that assumes that the US is a rational actor within the anarchic international system, these indications makes it irrational for the US to remain in the Paris Agreement, because the influence of systemic factors such as relative power is crucial to the US withdrawal.

**Table 7**



**Table 8**



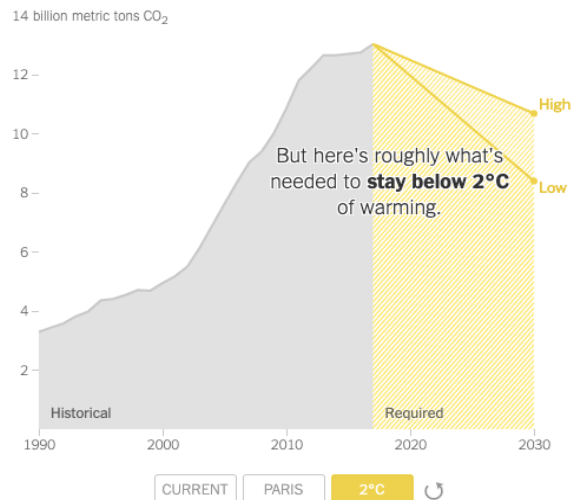
Source: New York Times. China and the US current emissions trajectory. China is projected until 2030. US until 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/12/07/climate/world-emissions-paris-goals-not-on-track.html>

<sup>89</sup> Plumer, Brad and Popovich, Nadja. “The World Still Isn’t Meeting Its Climate Goals” *The New York Times*. (December 2018) <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/12/07/climate/world-emissions-paris-goals-not-on-track.html>

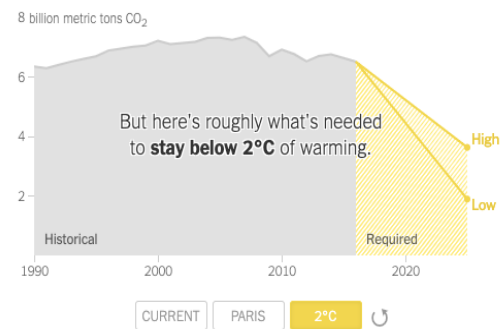
<sup>90</sup> Purdon, Michael. “Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance.” *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Vol.17, No.3. (2014) P.310



**Table 9**



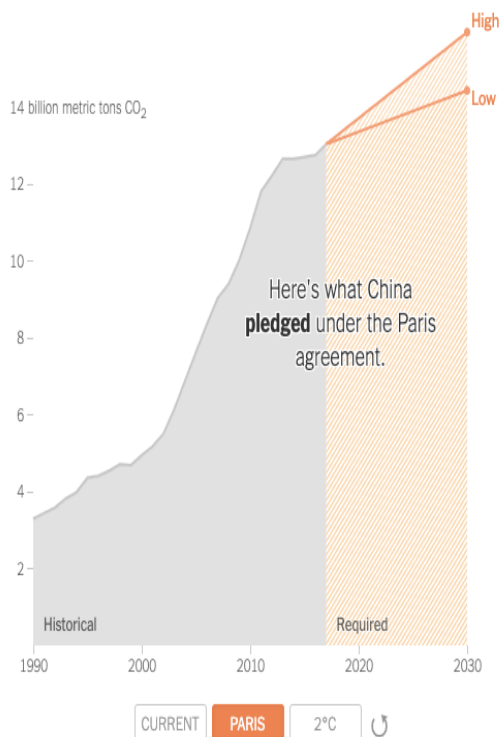
**Table 10**



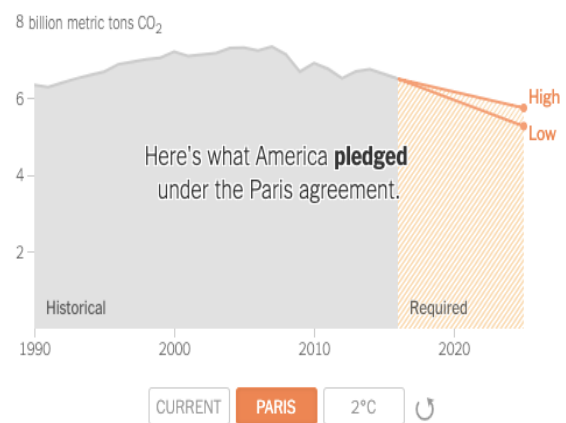
Source: *New York Times*. Measured what is needed to keep temperatures below 2 degrees celsius of warming. China until 2030. US until 2025.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/12/07/climate/world-emissions-paris-goals-not-on-track.html>

**Table 11**



**Table 12**



Source: *New York Times*. Chinas and US pledge to reduce emissions under the Paris Agreement. China until 2030. US until 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/12/07/climate/world-emissions-paris-goals-not-on-track.html>

When comparing China's targets to the ones of the US, it is evident that the US is pledging considerably more effort in reducing emissions in the Paris Agreement than China. This is also contemplated by President Trump's announcement:

*"The Paris Climate Accord is simply the latest example of Washington entering into an agreement that disadvantages the United States to the exclusive benefit of other countries, leaving American workers — who I love — and taxpayers to absorb the cost in terms of lost jobs, lower wages, shuttered factories, and vastly diminished economic production."*<sup>91</sup>

This statement arguably illustrates the consideration for relative gains "...may compel the state leadership of certain states to be prudent in their international efforts and conserve resources domestically for future contingencies, including their state's own adaption to climate change."<sup>92</sup> Moreover, an argument can be made that the evaluation of the individual state suggests that the concern for relative gains ascend due to the benefit of climate change mitigations only limitedly accumulate to the states that are expected to carry the burden.<sup>93</sup> The consideration of other states' relative gains from the Paris Agreement compared to the US, is certainly a substantial factor in the Trump administration's decision to withdraw and is clarified as Trump said:

*"China will be able to increase these emissions by a staggering number of years — 13. They can do whatever they want for 13 years. Not us. India makes its participation contingent on receiving billions and billions and billions of dollars in foreign aid from developed countries. There are many other examples. But the bottom line is that the Paris Accord is very unfair, at the highest level, to the United States."*<sup>94</sup>

This statement is obviously relevant to table 11, where it is apparent that the Paris Agreement demands minimal effort of China until 2030, and as table 6 indicates the cost is

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<sup>91</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord/>  
accessed February 19.

<sup>92</sup> Purdon, Michael. "Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance." *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Vol.17, No.3. (2014) P.305

<sup>93</sup> Purdon, Michael. "Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance." *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Vol.17, No.3. (2014) P.309

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord/>  
accessed February 19

limited to Chinese economy and therefor to the Trump administration the independent variable, in this case the relative power of other states is arguably a partly determining factor in the foreign policy decision.<sup>95</sup> This is an example of how neoclassical realism would argue that states "...respond to the uncertainties of the international anarchy by seeking to control and shape their external environment."<sup>96</sup> Therefore, the initial analysis of the US at the systemic level suggests that the US could be inclined to seek to influence and secure interests by withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, because of the assumption of the US being a rational actor concerned with maximizing interests. Thus, the argument is based upon the US consideration of relative gains and that participation in the Paris Agreement has added economic benefit to other major powers in the international system e.g. China, India and the EU and because each actor's relative material power "[...]established the basic parameters of a country's foreign policy."<sup>97</sup> Added to this argument, one could look to table 13, where the share of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are listed in percentage. China emits almost double the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> compared to the US, which had already reduced its emissions. Therefore, it can further be argued that relative power is essential to the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and because "[...]China and the United States are the most powerful countries on global warming because they have the largest emissions and thus the greatest ability to inflict global harm and avoid harm through their actions."<sup>98</sup> Therefore, the US is increasingly concerned with relative power in climate diplomacy and because the Trump administration considers the Paris Agreement as disparaging to American economy and therefore opposes national interests. Furthermore, the Trump administration considered the ramifications of the Paris Agreement unfair, since the US already had a decrease in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, whereas China and India both increased their relative emissions. It is therefore argued that US is focusing on economy instead of climate diplomacy and that "[...] the Trump administration seems to have no intention to

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<sup>95</sup> Rose, Gideon. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.151

<sup>96</sup> Rose, Gideon. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.152

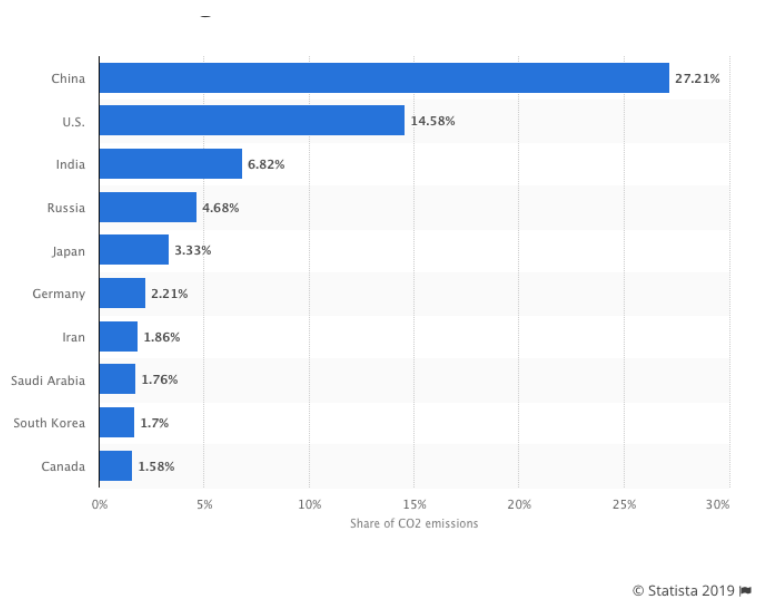
<sup>97</sup> Rose, Gideon. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.148

<sup>98</sup> Purdon, Michael. "Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance." *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Vol.17, No.3. (2014) P.311

use its diplomatic resources to persuade other climate actors to identify, participate in and accept specific climate governance action plans.”<sup>99</sup>

Thus, based on the theoretical standpoint of neoclassical realism that assumes that the US is a rational actor within the anarchic international system, these indications makes it irrational for the US to remain in the Paris Agreement, because the influence of systemic factors such as relative power is crucial to the US withdrawal.

**Table 13**



Source: Germanwatch: Largest producers of territorial fossil fuel CO<sub>2</sub> emissions worldwide in 2017, based on their share of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/271748/the-largest-emitters-of-co2-in-the-world/> (accessed 4/17/19, 10:17 AM)

### Summary of Analysis of Systemic Factors

It was argued that Trump “[...] claimed that the Paris Agreement was a punishment to the United States, and that if the United States fulfilled its commitment of carbon reduction in the agreement, it would lose nearly 3 trillion U.S. dollars in GDP and 6.5 million jobs.”<sup>100</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Hongyuan, Yu. “The U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities for China.” *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* no.4 (February 2018): P.287

<sup>100</sup> Hongyuan, Yu. “The U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities for China.” *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* no.4 (February 2018). P.289

Therefore, the argument suggested in this thesis analysis of systemic factors would point to a correlation between the economic incentives, current CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the requirement for the US in the Paris Agreement. This argument is based on the assumption of the US as a rational actor, that are concerned with the relative gains of other actors e.g. China and India.<sup>101</sup> The US are concerned that the Paris Agreement poses restrictive force on the US economy, combined with the fact that the US already has reduced its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the distress is constructed in the relative comparison to China that already emits more and India that is predicted to emit more than the US in the future.

Nevertheless, neoclassical realism acknowledges that consideration of relative power and systemic pressures cannot solely explain state behavior, and in climate relations Purdon argues that "[...] states will vary in their sensitivity to relative gains concerns because climate change is a two-level game involving international political forces (international and state specific) as well as domestic ones to which state leaders must respond. Some of these forces, particularly domestic ones, will be moral in nature."<sup>102</sup> Therefore, one could argue that the relative power of each state affects its behavior in matters of climate change and climate diplomacy and that.<sup>103</sup>

## Analysis of Intervening Variables and Domestic Factors

By now, it should be clear that systemic factors cannot solely explain the foreign policy behavior according to neoclassical realism and neoclassical realism assumes that "[...] domestic political arrangements act as intervening variables through which systemic imperatives are translated into foreign policy responses."<sup>104</sup> Therefore, the following segment will seek to analyze domestic factors relevant to the US withdrawal from the Paris

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<sup>101</sup> Rose, Gideon. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998). P.151

<sup>102</sup> Purdon, Michael. "Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance." *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Vol.17, No.3. (2014) P.304

Purdon, Michael. "Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance." *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Vol.17, No.3. (2014) P.317

<sup>104</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W., "Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy." *Cambridge University Press*, 2009. P. 171

Agreement. These factors will be: Interest groups, power struggle between the two major political parties in the US, climate skepticism in the US, and Donald Trump.

## Interest Groups

In neoclassical realism, there is an assumption that the perception of domestic factors is founded upon the argument that well-organized interest group have access to the political leadership and have the possibility of affecting the legislature and influence policy.<sup>105</sup> Therefore, an approach to pushing the agenda of an interest group can be by economic contribution such as political donations. It is no secret, that the Oil&Gas industry in the US potentially would be affected negatively by the Paris Agreement.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, the industry would arguably favor the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. According to Norrin Ripsman, because decision makers main interest is to retain their power and to push their desired agenda they are “[...]receptive to influence from actors who can provide or deny electoral support.”<sup>107</sup> Deciphered in to the case of the US’ withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, one could apply Ripsman’s argument to Table 14, which illustrates the combined annual lobbying of the Oil&Gas industry in the US. In 2017 Oil&Gas lobbied over \$125 million in total. Of those contributors e.g., Exxon Mobil donated \$11.4 million, Koch Industries donated \$9,5 million. Exxon initially opposed the Paris Agreement, however before the US decided to announce its withdrawal, Exxon recognized that the company should commit to the targets of the Paris Agreement. A curious point is, that Exxon Mobile who donated \$11.5 million to the fossil fuel lobby in 2017 and that former Exxon CEO, Rex Tillerson, became Secretary of State in the Trump administration. However, curiously Tillerson openly supported the Paris Agreement and criticized the withdrawal.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, Koch Industries funneled \$10 million to Republican decisionmakers and conservative groups in 2017, which arguably could have impacted the US decisions to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. Moreover, domestic actors who

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<sup>105</sup> Ripsman, Norrin M. “Neoclassical Realism.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. November (2017) P. 14

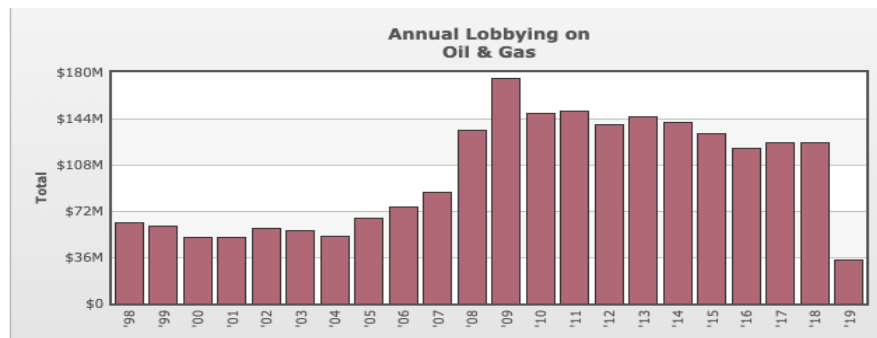
<sup>106</sup> Hongyuan, Yu. “The U.S. Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities for China.” *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* no.4 (February 2018): P.287

<sup>107</sup> Ripsman, Norrin M. “Neoclassical Realism.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. November (2017). P.16

<sup>108</sup> Mutikani, Lucia. ”Tillerson says the U.S. Could Stay in Paris Climate Accord”. *Reuters*. September 2017. Accessed March 16 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-climate/tillerson-says-u-s-could-stay-in-paris-climate-accord-idUSKCN1BS0LW>

engage in pushing their agenda through decision makers can be unaware of political environment and their attempt to intervene in foreign policy formulation [...] are primarily motivated by personal, parochial, or domestic political motivations.”<sup>109</sup>

**Table 14**



**Source:** Open Secrets. Illustrates the Oil&Gas industry's annual lobbying measured in USD.

<https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus.php?ind=E01>

The assumption by Ripsman is that foreign policy can be influenced by domestic actors e.g. interest groups that can either reward or punish political allies. In this case, the reward would arguably be campaign donations. Ripsman's assessment of interest group is continued by arguing that neoclassical realism "[...] assumes that the international system plays the dominant role in shaping national security decisions, but international imperatives are filtered through the domestic political environment, which can lead to variations in the way states respond to common international pressures."<sup>110</sup> Moreover, these domestic actors can employ pivotal influence on decision makers interpretation of systemic pressures and how to respond to threats and opportunities in the international system. Therefore, Ripsman presents a solid argument for the influence of interest group and how they can affect foreign policy formulation.<sup>111</sup> However, in order for these interest groups to be able to influence

<sup>109</sup> Ripsman, Norrin M. "Neoclassical Realism." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. November (2017). P. 10

<sup>110</sup> Ripsman, Norrin M. "Neoclassical Realism." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. November (2017). P. 12

<sup>111</sup> Ripsman, Norrin M. "Neoclassical Realism." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. November (2017). P. 13

foreign policy, they have to be able to provide substantial payoff to decision makers.<sup>112</sup> Applying this neoclassical realist assumption to table 15, one can make an argument, that the interest groups could have influenced the Republican agenda and affected the foreign policy decision of withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, on May 8 2017 prior to the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, a correlation of 39 organizations e.g., American Energy Alliance and Heartland Institute wrote a letter to President Trump, urging him to “[...] fully withdraw from the Paris Climate Treaty and to stop all taxpayer funding of UN global warming programs.”<sup>113</sup> The letter entails guidelines and options for how the US could withdraw from the Paris Agreement and claims how continued participation would considerably damage US economy.<sup>114</sup> Although, one cannot necessarily conclude that this letter were persuasive to US foreign policy, one could argue that the Trump administration was “[...] being lobbied to participate and comply by advanced industrial nations and corporations, while conservative think tanks were pushing it towards withdrawal.”<sup>115</sup> Additionally, there is evidence suggesting that “[...] traditional Republican think tanks like the Heritage Foundation have also been advocating a negative stance toward climate governance.”<sup>116</sup> Combined with the examined data that proves the Oil&Gas industries lobbyism effort towards the Republican party, it is maintained that interests groups were important in the Trump administration's decision. The argument here is that although leaders outline interest and conduct foreign policy based on relative power and the assessment of other state's intention, leaders are always subject to domestic constraints. Therefore, interest groups are relevant to the process of foreign policy formulation, as they are able to intervene and potentially influence leaders' decisions in order to promote their own agenda.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ripsman, Norrin M. “Neoclassical Realism.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. November (2017). P. 19

<sup>113</sup> American Energy Alliance, 2017. Coalitions Urges Trump to Withdraw from Paris Climate Treaty. May 8

<sup>114</sup> American Energy Alliance, 2017. Coalitions Urges Trump to Withdraw from Paris Climate Treaty. May 8

<sup>115</sup> American Energy Alliance, 2017. Coalitions Urges Trump to Withdraw from Paris Climate Treaty. May 8

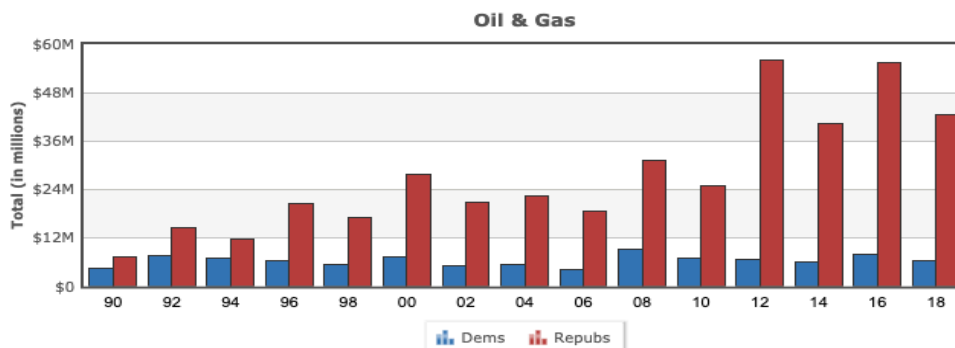
<sup>116</sup> Hongyuan, Yu. “The U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities for China.” *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* no.4 (February 2018) P. 295

<sup>117</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W., “Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy.” *Cambridge University Press*, 2009.P. 164



**TABLE 15**

**Party Split, 1990-2018**



Source: Open Secrets.

Illustrates the split between the Democrats and the Republicans received donation from the oil & gas industry. <https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus.php?ind=E01>.

### Decision Makers: GOP vs. Democrats Debate on Climate Change

The initial part of the analysis of the different perception on climate related issues between Democratic and Republican decision makers in the US is to some extent overlapping with the domestic groups. This is because, this segment aims to analyze the dispute between GOP and Democrats in climate change and therefore it is relevant to identify and analyze what fuels the GOP's, generally speaking, conservative approach to climate related issues. The perspective of political dynamics in the US suggests that there is a division in the approach and concern for climate change between Republicans and Democrats and "[...]the U.S. climate policy not only lacks political consensus between the Democrats and the Republicans, but has also become an increasingly fragmented public issue."<sup>118</sup> Added to this argument, there are indications that US response to climate change and climate diplomacy is "[...] characterized by a historical divide between Democrats and Republicans. While Democrats are traditionally more sensitive towards environmental issues, Republicans believe that the economic interests of US companies shall prevail over

<sup>118</sup> Hongyuan, Yu. "The U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities for China." *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* no.4 (February 2018): P. 295

the collective interest to the protection of the environment.”<sup>119</sup> Therefore it is noteworthy that 20 Republican Senators wrote a letter to President Trump in 2017, urging the President to withdraw the US from the Paris Agreement and arguing that the Paris Agreement was ineffective and burdensome on American economy and would hurt the working class.<sup>120</sup> This obviously implies that the GOP are traditionally more conservative in climate change relations. Moreover, it is interesting that some of the GOP senators, who wrote the letter to President Trump, were major beneficiaries of donations from the oil & gas and coal industries between 2012 and 2016. These included Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell who received \$1.5 million in the period. Another significant recipient of donations was Senator Ted Cruz, who, according to the New York Times, received a total of \$2.5 million in the period. Both McConnell and Cruz are strong voices within the Republican party, and both are incontestable deniers of human impact on climate change. An MIT study showed “[...] that Over 56 percent of current Republicans in the House of Representatives and 65 percent in the Senate deny the basic facts of climate science.”<sup>121</sup> Now, once again, this part of the thesis does not intend to discuss whether human activity impacts climate change, but merely look at the different domestic factors that might have influenced the foreign policy decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. It is evident that since the majority of Republicans members of the US Congress denies climate change, it could be a contributing factor on the executive branch's decisions to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. It is important to emphasize that there is not definite evidence for a channel between these, but they could arguably serve as a domestic factor. Moreover, an argument can be made, that the domestic adjustment to international climate related issues, may indicate resiliency to what can be depicted as the ‘common good’ for the international system, because “[...]increasing concerns over relative gains may compel the state leadership of certain states to be prudent in their international efforts and conserve resources domestically for future contingencies, including their state's own adaptation to climate change.”<sup>122</sup> In this regard, Ripsman would assume the importance of domestic

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<sup>119</sup> Pavone, I.R. “The Paris Agreement and the Trump administration: Road to nowhere?” *Journal of International Studies*, 11,1 (2018). P. 38

<sup>120</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jun/01/republican-senators-paris-climate-deal-energy-donations>. Accessed April 15

<sup>121</sup> <https://www.fossilfreemit.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/FossilFreeMIT-Lobbying-Disinformation.pdf> Accessed April 17

<sup>122</sup> Purdon, Michael. “Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance.” *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Vol.17, No. 3. (2014) P.305

political motivation can have influence on foreign policy decisions, because of the decision makers primary interest of maintaining their power. Thus, when decision makers perceive that their power is tumbling, they may be more receptive to the influence of interest groups and choose riskier “[...] policies in order to secure themselves domestically.”<sup>123</sup> Adding to that argument, Rose would point out that various factors affect how decision makers observe their capabilities and how these are converted into foreign policy formulation, therefor “[...]the link between objective material capabilities and policymakers’ subjective assessment of them remains murky.”<sup>124</sup>

Thus, one could make a sound argument that there is a connection between the two intervening variables of interest groups and decision makers and as the data put forth in the analysis of domestic factors suggest that interest groups can affect decision makers and therefore, to some extent, legitimizes these intervening variables in examining why the US is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, contributing to the argument of Republican reluctance to climate diplomacy a comparison to the George W. Bush administration’s withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol where similar argumentation was used for the withdrawal when Bush uttered:

*“I oppose the Kyoto Protocol because it exempts 80 percent of the world, including major population centers such as China and India, from compliance, and would cause serious harm to the US economy.”*<sup>125</sup>

The statement initially touches the same features as expressed in Trump announcement of withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and establishes an argument based on the concern for relative material power being a dominant factor in the climate diplomacy for the Bush administration as well. Thus, neoclassical realism would assume that foreign policy is decided by actual leaders and elites, therefore it is their perceptions of relative power that

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<sup>123</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.  
Accessed (April 26, 2019). P. 171

<sup>124</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998), P.169

<sup>125</sup> Hovi, Jon, Detlef F. Sprinz, and Guri Bang. “Why the United States Did Not Become a Party to the Kyoto Protocol: German, Norwegian, and US Perspectives.” *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 1 (March 2012): P. 147

is instrumental.<sup>126</sup> It is therefore apparent, that the general more climate change conservative agenda pushed by the Republican party, can have intervened in encouraging US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.<sup>127</sup> Because “[...]with policies to promote the production of fossil fuels already implemented and the primary policy to reduce carbon emissions from existing electricity generation facilities (i.e. the Clean Power Plan) a high visibility target for weakening or abandonment, it was clear that the U.S. would have great difficulty complying with the Agreement.”<sup>128</sup> In summary, an argument can be made that Republican decision makers are potentially influenced by interest groups who favor withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and that these decision makers at least attempted to persuade the executive, President Trump, in the decision.

### Climate Change Skepticism in the US

Contributing to the analysis of domestic factors in the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, another substantial aspect lies in the perception of climate change in the US. There is evidence to propose that climate change skepticism in the US, is more divisive than other countries. What causes the general climate skepticism in the US, is difficult to accurately depict. However, it is without a doubt a divisive matter that often aligns with political party affiliation. As touched upon in the preceding chapter, Democrats tend to be more worried about climate change, whereas Republicans are skeptical and occasionally deny human activity's impact on climate change. There is even indications “[...]that the U.S. climate policy not only lacks political consensus between the Democrats and the Republicans, but has also become an increasingly fragmented public issue.”<sup>129</sup>

Relevant to the analysis of climate change skepticism in the US, it has been deemed relevant to explore how the topic is covered in US media. A Schmid-Petri study regarding climate change skepticism and how it is covered in US media, confirmed that “[...] Many members of the political administration, mainly Republicans, publicly doubt the human

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<sup>126</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” In *World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998) P.147

<sup>127</sup> Cooper, Mark. “Governing the global climate commons: The political economic of state and local action, after the U.S. flip-flop on the Paris Agreement.” *Energy Policy*. (2018) 117. P. 449

<sup>128</sup> Cooper, Mark. “Governing the global climate commons: The political economic of state and local action, after the U.S. flip-flop on the Paris Agreement.” *Energy Policy*. (2018) 117. P. 455

<sup>129</sup> Hongyuan, Yu. “The U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities for China.” *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* no.4 (February 2018): P. 287

contribution to climate change and argue that regulations to cut down greenhouse gas emissions would have severe economic consequence.”<sup>130</sup> The contribution to climate change denial by conservative media is, according to Schmid-Petri essential, because the coverage has amplified the climate change skepticism.<sup>131</sup> Although, Schmid-Petri is cautious in concluding how influential climate change in media is, the study does confirm that “[...]the withdrawal of the United States from the Kyoto Protocol in 2001 and the increasing polarization of Congress meant that climate skepticism became an identifier of conservative convictions.”<sup>132</sup> Purdon agrees with the general climate change skepticism in the US and assumes that there is a significant “[...] degree of skepticism about climate change science in the United States, which is often used to explain US opposition to climate change policy.”<sup>133</sup> Climate change skepticism in US media, is especially evident at Fox News, where prolific political commentators such as e.g. Sean Hannity and Tucker Carlson consistently deny climate change and often have similar conservative voices support their denial of climate change.<sup>134</sup> Sean Hannity and Tucker Carlson’s possible influence is proved by both being in the top 3 of most watched prime time cable news shows in the US.<sup>135</sup>

Moreover, Fox News is the most watched cable news network in the US and although this does not necessarily mean that the viewers share their beliefs, it does mean that Fox News and conservative media provide an amplified message that disputes climate change, and that has the agenda of influencing decision makers and public opinion.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, it argued that conservative media have debunking climate change as a central

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<sup>130</sup> Schmid-Petri, Hannah, Silke Adam, Ivo Schmucki, and Thomas Häussler. “A Changing Climate of Skepticism: The Factors Shaping Climate Change Coverage in the US Press.” *Public Understanding of Science* 26, no. 4 (May 2017): P. 505

<sup>131</sup> Schmid-Petri, Hannah, Silke Adam, Ivo Schmucki, and Thomas Häussler. “A Changing Climate of Skepticism: The Factors Shaping Climate Change Coverage in the US Press.” *Public Understanding of Science* 26, no. 4 (May 2017): P.499

<sup>132</sup> Schmid-Petri, Hannah, Silke Adam, Ivo Schmucki, and Thomas Häussler. “A Changing Climate of Skepticism: The Factors Shaping Climate Change Coverage in the US Press.” *Public Understanding of Science* 26, no. 4 (May 2017): P. 503

<sup>133</sup> Purdon, Michael. “Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance.” *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Vol.17, No. 3. (2014) P.316

<sup>134</sup> Dryzek, John S., Norgard Richard B. and Schlosberg, David. *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society* New York. 2011. P. 377

<sup>135</sup> Katz, A.J., “Fox News is the Most-Watched Network on Cable for the Third Straight Year.” *TVNewser* January 2. 2019.

<sup>136</sup> Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/373814/cable-news-network-viewership-usa/> Accessed May 5

cause, where anti-environmentalist public sentiments are mobilized.<sup>137</sup> However, a Yale Study in 2017 showed that 69 percent of all registered voters in the US, favored the US participating in the Paris Agreement, whereas only 13 percent preferred the US the withdraw.<sup>138</sup> This study was conducted before the Trump administration announced its intentions of withdrawal and in addition, 47 percent of Republican voters was aligned with the national majority, whereas only 28 percent favored withdrawal. This is interesting, because if we choose to believe the data within the Yale Study, then the climate skepticism within the US, cannot justifiably serve as a rationale in the decision to withdraw. Another study on climate change skepticism made by *Human Ecology* in 2016 revealed that almost 19 percent of Americans are denying climate change, that number was not significantly higher than other countries.<sup>139</sup> All these contradictory studies on public opinion can therefore not help explaining the rationale behind the foreign policy decision of withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. It is important to note, that although the public opinion can occasionally influence decision makers in the process of formulating foreign policy that is not always the case because these decision makers are privileged with classified information “[...] evidence does suggest that the world looks different to those in power.”<sup>140</sup> Thus, it can be argued, that although the public opinion on climate change in the US cannot justifiably be proven to have affected the decision, it is therefore maintained that the general skeptic view on climate change held by conservative media, intervened in the process of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. Moreover, it is evident that conservative media e.g. Fox News holds a skeptical view of climate change, and because Fox News is the largest cable news network in the US, their influence can have intervened in the process of formulating US foreign policy.

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<sup>137</sup> Schmid-Petri, Hannah, Silke Adam, Ivo Schmucki, and Thomas Häussler. “A Changing Climate of Skepticism: The Factors Shaping Climate Change Coverage in the US Press.” *Public Understanding of Science* 26, no. 4 (May 2017): P. 507

<sup>138</sup> Marlon, JR., Fine, E., and Leiserowitz, A. “A majority of American in every state say the U.S. should participate in the Paris Climate Agreement. *Yale University*. New Haven. CT (2017) Accessed May 3 <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/paris-agreement-by-state/>

<sup>139</sup> McCright, Aaron M. “Anti-Reflexivity and Climate Change Skepticism in the US General Public.” *Human Ecology Review* 22, no. 2 (2016): P.94

<sup>140</sup> Ripsman, Norrin M. “Neoclassical Realism.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. November 2017. P.12

## President Trump and The Cabinet Members

A considerable factor in the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, President Donald Trump, is fundamental to analyze. Being the leader and the executive branch, the primary responsibility for foreign policy formulation is vested in President Trump. The following section will discuss why Trump's personal opinion on climate change is essential to the withdrawal. Neoclassical realism would argue the international system flashes indications to the states, however, the indications have to be filtered through the imperfect transmission and perception leaders before being a formulated foreign policy response.<sup>141</sup> Moreover, according to neoclassical realism "[...] The calculations and perceptions of leaders can inhibit a timely and objectively efficient response or policy adaptation to shifts in the external environment."<sup>142</sup> Statements made by President Trump suggesting a highly critical view of the Paris Agreement as he said at the announcement of withdrawal:

*"China will be allowed to build hundreds of additional coal plants. So we can't build the plants, but they can, according to this agreement. India will be allowed to double its coal production by 2020. Think of it: India can double their coal production. We're supposed to get rid of ours. Even Europe is allowed to continue construction of coal plants."*<sup>143</sup>

Such a statement obviously indicates the US's immediate concern over relative gains and can be explained by neoclassical realists' depiction of leaders' perceptions systemic restraints and because these are filtered through the imperfect mind of a leader whose cognition and background is ultimately decisive for the foreign policy outcome.

Therefore, in some cases, leaders' perceptions of systemic constraints can deviate from reality and vary from leader to leader.<sup>144</sup> Trump has often been critical of the Paris Agreement and has taken to Twitter to utter his discontent for Americans having to pay the biggest cost:

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<sup>141</sup> Ripsman, Norrin M. "Neoclassical Realism." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. November 2017. P.5

<sup>142</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. A. P. 162

<sup>143</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-agreement/>  
accessed: February 7 2019.

<sup>144</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.P. 169



*"[...]in the world. I want clean air and clean water and have been making great strides in improving America's environment. But American taxpayers – and American workers – shouldn't pay to clean up other countries' pollution."*<sup>145</sup>

The withdrawal from the Paris Agreement sparked little surprise, as Trump had prior to taking office, often denied climate change and Trump has signified his commitment to ensuring American interests over pledging to global environmental ideals.<sup>146</sup> Trump also criticized the agreement as it, in his perception, would result in severe constraints to American economy in comparison to other major economic powers such as China and India. If one believes in climate change, and for the sake of the argument, holds the idea that the introduction of the Paris Agreement was for the global good, one could argue that "[...] leaders may fail to identify all the policy alternatives available to them or may choose between them in a suboptimal manner, rather than selecting the option likely to maximize the expected payoff at the lowest possible cost."<sup>147</sup> Therefore, domestic factors such as leaders' perception can ignore or misrepresent the objective of international conditions, because signals can be misunderstood because leaders are essentially cursed with the flawed human mind, they do not always react rationally to systemic pressures and therefore a state's foreign policy can be constrained by domestic factors.<sup>148</sup> However, such an argument could easily be denounced by pointing to how the systemic dynamics analyzed previously, constructs a solid argument for the withdrawal being a rational decision considering how the Paris Agreement affected the US. In addition to this, Trump withdrawal speech highlighted the concern of the economic impact continued participation in the Paris Agreement would have. Trump's continued criticizing the Paris Agreement by saying:

*"Not only does this deal subject our citizens to harsh economic restrictions, it fails to live up to our environmental ideals. As someone who cares deeply about the environment, which I do, I cannot in good conscience support a deal that punishes the United States —*

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<sup>145</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord/> accessed: February 7 2019.

<sup>146</sup> Pavone, I.R. "The Paris Agreement and the Trump administration: Road to nowhere?" *Journal of International Studies*, 11,1 (2018) P.38

Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 167

<sup>148</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 169



*which is what it does — the world's leader in environmental protection, while imposing no meaningful obligations on the world's leading polluters.”<sup>149</sup>*

An important aspect of the Paris Agreement related to Trump's criticism is based on the outline and emphasis that developed countries are inclined to lead in financing and enhancing technology in order to achieve the targets, developed countries shall also “[...] continue taking the lead by undertaking economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets.”<sup>150</sup> The justification for this perception is founded in the depiction that larger emitters have more resources, therefore they should be held to a higher standard. Although the US asserts itself as one of the environmental global trailblazers, the Trump administration recognizes the Paris Agreement as an exploitation of the US compared to other large emitters. Therefore, “[...] the Trump administration's complaints go to the core values of the commitment to manage the resource in a cooperative and progressive manner [...]”<sup>151</sup> This is arguably because established powers, such as the US, perceive the rise of emerging economies such as China as challenging and therefore the US is sensitive to international resource transfers.<sup>152</sup> Furthermore, Trump's criticism of the Paris Agreement and climate in general dates a long way back. Prior to running for office, Trump has denied climate change and said that the concept was created by China to make US manufacturing less competitive.<sup>153</sup> However, President Trump has since denied those comments, but President Trump has a long record of being skeptical of climate change and has often quoted conservative climate change deniers. Therefore, it is noteworthy that one of Trump's advisors on climate issues and energy, William Happer, is a staunch climate change denier and has been quoted for saying:

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<sup>149</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-agreement/> accessed: February 7 2019.

<sup>150</sup> United Nations, Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2015. Report of the Conference of the Parties on its twenty-first session, held in Paris from 30 November to 13 December.

<sup>151</sup> Cooper, Mark: “Governing the global climate commons: The political economic of state and local action, after the U.S. flip-flop on the Paris Agreement.” *Energy Policy*. (2018) 118. P.449

<sup>152</sup> Purdon, Michael: “Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance.” *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Vol.17, No.3. (2014) P.316

<sup>153</sup> Carroll, Lauren. “At New York debate, Donald Trump denies saying climate change is a Chinese hoax” *Politifact*. (September 2016) <https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2016/sep/26/donald-trump/donald-trump-denies-saying-global-warming-chinese/>

*"This disappearance of the hiatus in global warming, which was trotted out just before the [UN] Paris conference it was clearly just a political fanfare. We shouldn't be doing that. They were fiddling with the temperature records to make the hiatus go away."*<sup>154</sup>

This is of course significant, because one would assume that Happer could potentially play a part in the decisions to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. Another, potential influence in the US decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement could be President Trump's pick of Scott Pruitt as Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency, Pruitt has been critical of climate change and the Paris Agreement and when President Trump made his announcement Pruitt supported the decisions by saying:

*"We owe no apologies to other nations for our environmental stewardship. After all, before the Paris Accord was ever signed, America had reduced its CO<sub>2</sub> footprint to levels from the early 1990s. In fact, between the years 2000 and 2014, the United States reduced its carbon emissions by 18-plus percent. And this was accomplished not through government mandate but accomplished through innovation and technology of the American private sector."*<sup>155</sup>

It is interesting that, although Trump is highly critical of the Paris Agreement and has prominent cabinet members who likewise dispute climate change, his argumentation for withdrawing is based on economic principles and the systemic restraints and strayed from making actual statements on his personal belief on climate change. As discussed previously in this thesis, the majority of Americans believe in climate change, therefore it could be a strategic choice from Trump to not mention it directly, or he could have changed his view on the matter. However, this plays little importance to the foreign policy decision and therefore, it is assessed that President Trump's personal opinion on climate change and the Paris Agreement, could be interpreted as a substantial factor in the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, because although the rhetoric delivered by Trump suggests a concern for relative gains and systemic pressures, there is indications that his assessment of climate change was not insignificant in the foreign policy decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. Moreover, an argument can be made that although the executive is likely the main function in foreign policy conduct and autonomous from society, the executive will still in several political contexts "[...] bargain with domestic actors (such as the legislature,

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<sup>154</sup> Devlin, Hannah. "Trump's likely science adviser calls climate scientists 'glassy-eyed cult'" *The Guardian*. (February 2017) <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/15/trump-science-adviser-william-happer-climate-change-cult>

<sup>155</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord/>  
accessed: February 7 2019.

political parties, economic sectors, classes, or the public as a whole) in order to enact policy and extract resources to implement policy choices.”<sup>156</sup> Trump's previous statements regarding climate change, combined with his selected cabinet members, who share his skeptical approach to climate change, is therefore arguably an important intervening variable in the process of withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. The announcement speech attributed only systemic factors as clarifying for the decision and it has not been possible to find verification on President Trump's personal belief influencing the foreign policy decision. Trump's own perception made the final decision. Therefore, the findings in the analysis of the domestic factors suggested that Interests Groups, Decisions Makers and Climate Change Skepticism facilitated the Trump administration's decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

### Summary of Analysis

There is evidence that domestic actors such as media, decision makers and interest groups intervened on the process of formulation the foreign policy and that could potentially have been decisive for President Trump prior to the announcement. The analysis of Republicans v. Democrats decision makers clearly showed, a larger amount of skepticism of Republican decision makers depiction of climate change and the Paris Agreement. There was evidence to support this claim of attempted influence on the foreign policy decision, because the official letter submitted by the 20 Republican senators proved concern for the impact of the Paris Agreement on domestic economy. Moreover, it was argued that the apparent difference in opinion in climate diplomacy and the Paris Agreement between Republicans and Democrats derives from the power struggle between the two parties.<sup>157</sup> Analyzing the public opinion on climate skepticism in the US, it was clear that there was not enough evidence to attribute the public opinion as an intervening variable. To sufficiently to support such a claim, there would have to be abundant data to prove a majority of American deny climate change – which could not be proved to be the case. Therefore, the public

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<sup>156</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 16

<sup>157</sup> McCarthy, Tom. “The Republicans who urged Trump to pull out of Paris deal are big oil darlings” *The Guardian*. (June 2017) <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jun/01/republican-senators-paris-climate-deal-energy-donations>

opinion climate skepticism cannot accurately depict any intervention in the US the foreign policy, thus disproving or at least limiting the relevance of the public opinion as a domestic factor in the analysis. However, as illustrated the analysis of media influence proved that conservative media held a very critical view on climate and that it could have intervened in the process of formulating US foreign policy. The last domestic factor analyzed, was President Trump. This factor proved, that Trump held a critical opinion on climate change in general and the Paris Agreement.<sup>158</sup> It was therefore argued that President Trump and climate change deniers of the cabinet were an attributing factor to the withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. Moreover, a vast amount of the argumentation for the rationale was based on concerns over relative gains and because foreign policy is arguably an outcome partly decided by "[...] political leaders and elites, and so it is their perceptions of relative power that matter [...]"<sup>159</sup> In summary, it has been illustrated in the analysis of the domestic factors and intervening variables, is that they facilitated the basis for the withdrawal by promoting and pushing an agenda that centered around climate change skepticism and concern of the Paris Agreement's impact on US interests.

## Conclusion

As this thesis aimed to analyze and explain the rationale behind the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, it was determined that in order to do so, the incorporation of two levels of analysis, would be the advantageous. These two levels were systemic and domestic variables and, therefore, neoclassical realism was chosen as the theoretical standpoint. Furthermore, this thesis intended to provide a unique contribution to the academic discussion of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement by incorporating IR theory in the analysis.

The analysis of systemic factors exposed that academic content regarding the rationale of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement was scarce. Therefore, the systemic factors were analyzed mainly through quantitative data and sources providing theoretical assumptions of neoclassical realism. The content of the data used for the

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<sup>158</sup> Hongyuan, Yu. "The U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities for China." *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* no.4 (February 2018): P.287

<sup>159</sup> Rose, Gideon. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *In World Politics*. Vol.51, No.1, (October 1998). P.147

analysis of systemic factors indicated a connection between economic incentives and the ramification of the Paris Agreement and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Therefore, it was argued that these provided enough evidence to suggest that the analysis of systemic factors was at least partly explanatory in the rationale of the withdrawal. Furthermore, it was contended that the consideration for relative gains were apparent in the analysis of US' relative power compared to China and India. Thus, since US and China are the largest emitters and because China is a rising economy this is instrumental to how established powers, such as the US, has become increasingly sensitive to climate diplomatic relations with China.<sup>160</sup>

Furthermore, the basis of neoclassical realism meant that an analysis of domestic factors was called for, because the concept of relative gains is not exclusively determining for states behavior, and in the case of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement there were indications that the change of the U.S. climate and energy policies is a reflection of political, economic and social characteristics at the domestic level.<sup>161</sup> It was therefore argued that states' responses to climate change and climate diplomacy are a two-level game<sup>162</sup> that involves both the systemic and domestic level, and that states will likely adapt their consideration to relative gains because climate change is a two-level game that involves both systemic and domestic forces to which leaders of states must respond. Furthermore, it was argued that even though leaders, according to neoclassical realism, primarily conduct foreign policy on their valuation of relative power and the intentions of other states within the anarchic system, they are still potentially influenced by domestic constraints. Thus, highlighting how domestic factors can serve as a transmission belt in foreign policy formulation.<sup>163</sup>

The analysis of domestic factors included: Interests groups, Republicans v. Democrats (decisions makers) view on climate change, climate change skepticism and Donald Trump and his Cabinet Members. It was evident that there was a division in the perception of climate change between Republicans and Democrats, and from the assessment of domestic political dynamics this descends from the party struggle in the

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<sup>160</sup> Purdon, Michael: "Neoclassical realism and international climate change politics: moral imperative and political constraint in international climate finance." *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Volume 17, Number 3. (2014) P.316

<sup>161</sup> Hongyuan, Yu. "The U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities for China." *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* no.4 (February 2018): 281-300.

<sup>162</sup> Putnam, Robert D. "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games." *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): P.431.

<sup>163</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Ripsman, Norrin M., and Taliaferro, Jeffrey W., eds. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 167

US.<sup>164</sup> Additionally, as previously explained, there was sources suggesting that lobby efforts by interest groups intervened in the process and could have influenced the decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. To this, neoclassical realism would point out that interest groups are potentially intervening in the process of formulating foreign policy, because leaders outline national interests and base the state's foreign policy on the depiction of relative power and intentions of other states. However, leaders are always subject to constraints at the domestic level. Therefore, interstate actors are significant in process of defining and outlining national interests. It is therefore maintained, that the domestic factors in the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement are conditioned by the international system and that systemic level factors, such as relative power, must be deciphered through the perception of national interests.

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<sup>164</sup> Hongyuan, Yu. "The U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities for China." *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* no.4 (February 2018): P. 296

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