

Frame analysis: the central organizing idea

Obama at the 2014 UN Climate Summit

Abstract

The 2014 Climate Summit at UN headquarters in New York was a major political communicative event where leaders from the private sector, governments and civil society addressed the issue of climate change. Among the attending heads of government was Barack Obama.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the content of Obama's 2014 Climate Summit speech. I have used frame analysis along with frame theory to analyze what frames are present in the speech, and to find out how Obama approached the framing of climate change. I have found and interpreted three frames: the alarmist frame, the generational frame and the development frame. Applying frame theory to conduct my hermeneutical analysis of these frames reveals that frames are chosen because they resonate with a large audience. My interpretation is that these frames constitute what is called the central organizing idea, an idea that provides clarity in communication but also requires strategic selection in these circumstances. Obama strategically picks frames that are galvanizing, not polarizing. The concept of framing is highly political and competitive, and applying frame analysis to Obama's speech will provide a deeper understanding of the ideas therein.

Key words: 2014 Climate Summit, Barack Obama, frame analysis, frame theory, speech

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1 Introduction

What is a frame? A frame is a mental structure that shape the way we see the world (Lakoff, 2004:xv). Whatever this mental structure may be, it helps shape what we count as good or bad, what plans we make and the way we act. A frame is also understood in contrast to its effects, where changing the frame leads to a change of perspective, values, and sometimes personal preference.

Frame analysis is a methodological approach to hermeneutics and discourse theory, focusing on how to dissect a communicative event. Frame theory however, is the focus on the relationship between purpose and reason; the meaning actors assign their actions (Rein, 1976:96). I find and present the frames using frame analysis, and I analyze them using frame theory.

Through a political science perspective, frames are of importance because they shape our institutions and social policies. It is about perception, because frames do not exist in reality; they are a socially constructed. Nor can we easily access our personal frames, because they are a part of what cognitive scientists call the “cognitive unconscious”--structures in the brain. Frames, much like the concept “common sense” or reason, are things we know because of their consequences. Hearing or reading a word evokes a frame: like hospital for example. The consequence of hearing the word hospital evokes a frame that makes me think of a front desk reception, wheelchairs, sick people and so on.

“Alarm bells keep ringing”, “we cannot condemn our children” and “our international development programs and investments” are all phrases that reveal how Obama frames the issue of climate change. Like lobbyists or the media, Obama has the power to present powerful frames to the public that shape opinion (Druckman, 2015:161). This is why the study is relevant to political science.

For example, if Obama's economic policies are prioritized over all other issues, the administration would be in an “economic” frame of mind (Keren, 2010:6). These frames of mind become important when analyzing the speech by President Obama at the 2014 UN Climate Summit. I want to pinpoint statements and words that stand out as revealing. The reason I chose to conduct this study is because the concept of framing interests me. What are the central organizing ideas in Obamas 2014 Climate Summit speech?

What frames did Obama use in addressing climate change at the 2014 UN Climate Summit?

Answering my research question stated above, will provide clarity and deeper understanding of Obama's 2014 Climate Summit speech. This is why I chose to utilize frame analysis in answering my research question. When referencing my research question in the future, I will simply write *how Obama framed the issues*. When citing my primary source, I will write it as (no. 4) as in paragraph number 4 in the numbered appendix.

When answering what frames Obama used in the speech, I am also describing how Obama framed the issues. Emphasis will be on the speech itself, rather than anything else Obama has written or expressed in the past regarding the same issue. That being said, ideas and values that constitute the frames in the speech will nevertheless be presented and examined. I wish study this major political communicative event, therefore; frame analysis and frame theory will be used together for method and theory respectively.

The content of the speech and the frames therein are the focal point of study, while answering my research question will inevitably give room for interpretation in my hermeneutical analysis.

Using frame analysis as a method, provides a critical analytic tool for analyzing Obamas speech at the UN Climate Summit. This method highlights beliefs, assumptions and values that make up the frames that in turn make up the speech.

2 Methodology

This section will present the methods I will use for writing this thesis, as well as a brief presentation of frequently used concepts, and disposition. How do I answer the question *how Obama framed the issues at the 2014 Climate Summit* and how will I arrive at my conclusion?

Hermeneutics make social scientists arrive at different theoretical conclusions for the same speech or event, because it is interpretive (Wagenaar, 2011:60). This is mentioned first, because everything in this paper is open to interpretation and this notion should be present with the reader throughout the thesis. Nevertheless, when discussing justifications, ideas and ways of acting in politics, frame analysis provides the necessary tools for dynamic interpretation.

The transformation of frames has become a common topic of study for researchers and in terms of methodology, raises the question: is there only one way to find frames and interpret them? These questions are repeatedly posed in the literature and create a common speed bump with this frame mindset (Rein, 1976:103). This is called frame-criticism. This frame-critical approach helps me find frames in the speech, like the generational frame (Keren, 2010:21).

This study is an example of how political leaders use communication to convey a message, which in itself is highly political. Since politicians spend significant time establishing potential frames that might be advantageous for them, a strategic element comes into play (Lakoff, 2004:94). This strategic element is why the speech interests me and why the thesis has relevance to political science.

An example from where frame analysis is used as a methodological approach is Gamson and Modigliani's study from 1989, which provides a clear example of how frame analysis has been used to analyze political science and more specifically; policy analysis. They explain that the interpretations that win in the political arena are the public policies we see implemented by law (Wagenaar, 2011:86). This might seem obvious, but it should be mentioned because it's this perspective that this study adopts. Obama's values and interpretations of the climate change issue, are expressed in the frames found in the Climate Summit speech.

I will introduce a number of authors, Lakoff, Hulme and Wagenaar being the most prominent ones. Presenting other authors bring other perspectives to the table, and make for a dynamic analysis when studying said beliefs, assumptions and values. The reason for Lakoff and Hulme's voices in this study is to make the analysis nuanced. Being that they come from different disciplines, they have different takes on framing and how it can be applied to climate change.

George Lakoff's definition of framing, "frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world", will be used throughout the thesis. His expertise lies in the field of communication, which I know will bring another vantage point to this thesis. Lakoff explains that frames being highly political and due to that, he theorizes about how frames make up individual political preferences. His ideas on

Obama's use of language will also briefly be presented, as it is relevant to his framing process.

Mike Hulme also provides methodological support as well as theoretical approaches in this thesis. Hulme explains that the main reason why climate change is polarizing is because it references our virtues, our duties to nature and to our fellow human beings (Hulme, 2009:144). I adopted this approach when searching for frames in Obama's speech. I study my primary source to find these virtues Hulme speak of, and expose another frames in the speech.

In the book "Why we disagree about climate change", Hulme puts forth a number of valid points: the social meanings of climate change, why it is so polarizing and what we fear about it. This book proved its usefulness when I conducted my analysis. A more in-depth use of Hulme's ideas will be combined with frame theory and analyzed in the analysis section.

2.1 Disposition

To answer *how Obama framed the issues at the 2014 Climate Summit* in a comprehensive and clear way, there must be no disconnect when moving from method to theory and from theory to analysis. To do this, a good disposition is needed. The disposition of this thesis will be as follows.

To start off, I will explain frame theory/analysis and what is relevant to study in answering my research question. This will in turn give the thesis an overarching structure in the analysis and conclusion. Then I will present authors who have applied frame analysis in examining climate change in the past, and I do this because it will show how I arrived at my perspective in my hermeneutic analysis. In the section where I introduce the primary source; the 2014 Climate Summit speech by Obama, a brief summary of the 2014 UN Climate Summit meeting will be presented. This in order to contextualize the speech and show the environment in which the speech was delivered. Lastly, I will summarize the answer to my research question in the conclusion.

2.2 Concepts

Frame analysis is a method and is used as a method in this thesis in order to find frames, not interpret them. Interpretation will be left to frame theory. Frame analysis is a concept launched by Erving Goffman in 1974 and has much to do about perspective in different situations (Goffman, 1974:9). Much like the constructivist perspective, the concept of frame analysis emphasizes social constructions, although frame analysis limits itself to communication. The epistemological position of this method derives from constructivism, or cognitivism, which usually brings normative elements to the table. Whilst applied frame analysis as a method in this study solely seeks to find the frames in Obama's Climate Summit speech, the interpretation of ideas is best left to they theory presented below.

A frame relates to communicating a certain issue, a discourse is general term for the study of a communicative event (Bryman, 2008:474). A distinction needs to be made between discourse analysis and frame analysis, because this thesis will

reference both. The two concepts seem to be used interchangeably in the literature, which shows the absence of consensus when it comes to the frame analytical approach to social science. It is noted that the difference between a frame and a discourse has to do with the degree of precision.

Frame analysis highlights the notion that Obama is a political actor who should be interpreted as someone who is acting on the grounds of his own interpretation of the meanings of – in this case – climate change (Betsill, 2006:58). Focusing on dominant frames, or norms, regarding the environment and Obamas use of rhetoric, the frame analysis method compels the study to focus on ideas.

Frame theory is about examining the relationship between purpose and reason (Rein, 1976:96). A more in-depth explanation follows in the theory section but it provides this thesis with ideas about frames and frame selection; which helps with the analysis. I mention this now, in order to highlight the similarities between frame analysis and frame theory. An analytical approach to this definition of frame theory, often called frame analysis, means that I need to measure or operationalize *how Obama framed*. How do I find the frames in Obamas speech?

Contested frames is the process of selecting frames, it is the strategic element that makes framing highly political. Contested frames arise when answering the question: how does Obama decide on which frames to use and what does the selection process look like? This concept is important because Obama is highly aware of how he is packaging his speech. When it comes to elite political actors like Obama, the framing process is like a competition. The actors formulate frames that compete with each other in an attempt to influence public opinion or to raise awareness. The frame is then communicated from the actor to the media and finally, to the mass public (Zaller, 1992:18). For example (as I will present in my analysis): Obama is aware that a morality frame might be more controversial than a generational frame. Out of these contested frames the generational frame comes out the victor because of Obama's strategic frame selection process.

2.3 Operationalization

If I am to answer my research question, I must first describe *it*. *It*, in this case, is the way Obama communicated and organized his ideas in frames: the process of framing. Therefore, a description of how I arrived at finding the frames and the process behind it is relevant to mention here.

When applying frame analysis to Obama's speech in order to understand how he frames the climate change issue, the amount of space devoted to a certain frame becomes the main way I find frames to study. It is relevant to measure the amount of space given to a certain frame in the speech, to illustrate what and how Obama emphasizes the different aspects of climate change (Druckman et al, 2004:1181).

Applying frame theory provides the structure for analysis as well as paving the way for my hermeneutical analysis. This will be interpreted in the analysis section later in the thesis, where a look at the number of paragraphs dedicated to a certain frame reveals distribution. In this way, I take a step closer to answering my research question and how I arrived at finding the frames in the speech.

2.4 Solving the “puzzle”

Lakoff, Wagenaar, Druckman and other authors utilize frame theory in order to provide the structure needed for conducting the analysis. Applying frame theory to address my research question is a reliable interpretive method, relevant to my descriptive ambition.

In order to establish the validity, reliability and legitimacy of this thesis, it is important to make sure that the frames are examined and measured in the right way. This presents a limitation because I am working with interpretation without assuming a standpoint or position (Bryman, 2008:471). Interpretation without assuming a position makes the interpretation more difficult to conduct, but I avoid it by using frame theory. The academic ambition of this study is answer the question *how* or perhaps *why*, not *should*. This thesis presents the frames in order to discuss how they constitute Obama's specific way of addressing at an issue; I interpret and conduct a hermeneutic study.

The theory sections main purpose is to provide clarity regarding the concept of framing and frame theory. The utilization of frame analysis as a method, and frame theory as a theory proved more difficult than expected. Since I am not applying classical critical theories like liberalism or realism, a clarification needs to be made here. The boundaries between frame theory and frame analysis are not as clear as the boundaries between qualitative research methods and critical political theory, for example. With this in mind, the upcoming theory section will also present what Obama is not saying, as well as points, or frames, that he could have mentioned.

3 Theory

What overarching structure and framework will help me conduct the analysis and what is relevant to study in answering my research question? What has been written about frame theory in the social science field in the past? The application of frame theory to my research question helps me interpret and understand the frames. Hopefully, the distinction between how frame analysis and frame theory is used in this thesis will become clear.

How to combine frame theory with Obamas Climate Summit speech? This question might seem to be methodological, but it belongs here because frame theory suggests certain structures for analysis. The questions one might have about the speech depend on what approach or perspective one takes, and the position this thesis takes is presented below.

This thesis utilizes frame analysis as the method and the upcoming theory sections will be about the different ways I interpret how Obama framed climate change. This interpretation together with how authors in the past have addressed my research question and what the points of interests for my study are; will make up the theory sections below.

3.1 The concept of frame theory

I have mentioned that frames are, in the abstract sense of the word “mental structures that shape the way we see the world” (Lakoff, 2004:xv). Frame theory then, in politics, is the study of how these frames either shape our social policies, and/or how these frames are used in political communication (ibid). Frame theory in communication provides a structure for analysis and helps determine what becomes relevant to study.

This conceptual approach shape the frames found in the speech and can be interpreted by further categorizing the speech into frames, frames that are socially constructed (Wagenaar, 2011:84). Frame theory suggests that there is no use in searching for a general or overriding depiction of the world we live in, or how others communicate about it. It becomes even more evident that frame theory has its roots in social constructivism. The theory in this thesis does not reject the facticity of reality; the theory simply adheres to the fact that the frames in Obamas speech are open for interpretation. To clarify: frames do not exist in reality, so when studying the speech we must find the frames and interpret them before further analysis can take place.

Are frame analysis and frame theory interchangeable? It is becoming increasingly evident why frame theory and frame analysis are used interchangeably in the literature. Framing as a concept can travel between many areas: theoretical and methodological.

In this thesis, examining frame discourses in Obama's speech enables

understanding and interpretation and also makes it possible to expose how political leaders give meaning to their words. This is what becomes interesting; exploring reason and purpose.

3.2 The application of frame theory

Applying frame theory to this hermeneutical study assigns a central role for values. The Climate Summit speech contains ideas about climate change, and ideas are made up of values, so studying the speech will expose present values in the speech. Values, theory, facts and purpose go hand in hand when understanding reality (Wagenaar, 2011:84). Frame analysis and frame theory can be used as both a method and as a discourse theory in hermeneutics.

The frames exposed in the speech may identify what values, information and beliefs are presented which is interesting to highlight according to frame theory. The highlighting of the frames are made because it answers *how Obama framed the issues*, at the same time as it provides clarity for my hermeneutical analysis. This mainly because of the fruitful combination of frame theory and Hulme's ideas on why we disagree about climate change in the conclusion section. Once I highlight the frames, they can be analyzed through frame theory together with ideas from Hulme.

Frame theory is applied to the primary source and pays no attention to the media coverage surrounding the 2014 UN Climate Summit. This is how frame theory is usually applied in the literature: applying the theory to the primary source. This mostly because frame theory, much like discourse analysis, applies a schemata of interpretation to communicative events. I focus in part on what Obama addresses and neglects to address, but mainly how the application of frame theory has been used by social scientists to address similar research questions in the past.

The central theme in frame theory application has to do with finding meaning, interpretation, in other words; hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is also a methodological approach, frame theory as a strict theory suggests ideas about the relationship between ideas and value, purpose and reason, and standpoints similar to the theory of social constructivism (Goffman, 1974:503). Frame theory guides me in interpreting social constructions derived from social phenomena, similar to discourse theory. Although drawing a line in the sand between frame analysis and frame theory can be difficult, how the two concepts are used here should become clearer as I apply it to my primary source. Frame theory emphasizes the importance how ideas make up frames, because frames are the central organizing idea. Frame theory provides the base for analysis with the notion that interpretation is just as important as the objective phenomenon that is being interpreted (ibid).

To make the theory fit the research question, a brief presentation of the primary source is presented below.

3.3 The central organizing ideas

As part of the National Action and Ambition Announcements at the UN, Obama spoke in the General Assembly Hall at 1:03 P.M. EDT on the 23rd of September 2014 in New York. The overarching theme of the 1661 word speech was a call to arms: we must mobilize against climate change and we must take action now. Without delving deep into specific plans of action, Obama spoke on the effects climate change will have and the sense of urgency the world should have. Setting aside petty grievances and working together is the suggested course of action; global problems need global solutions.

The application of frame theory in examining my research question and finding the issues in the speech demands not only a focus on the frames presented, but also use of language (Lakoff, 2004:23). Obama's central organizing ideas, expressed in his speech, fits the frame of an environmentalist state of mind; thinking in terms of protecting future generations, sustainability and sacredness of the earth (Lakoff, 2004:14).

Examining how Obama expressed preferences, values in value-driven statements and using frame theory to bring *the central organizing ideas* to the surface is what becomes relevant in this section. In exploring what Obama neglects to address, we look at how *positions* or *packages* fit together. Lakoff and Wagenaar use different terminology for the same concept when looking at how actors create bundles of opinions that target to certain groups. I borrow the terminology from Wagenaar and call these bundles of opinions, *packages*. These groups could be conservatives or environmentalists, subscribing to a certain political line; pro-life, small government and low taxes, for example (Wagenaar, 2011:88). The bundles of opinions, or *packages*, expressed by Obama will be presented in the analysis section.

How Obama frames the issues in the speech, is in this thesis also addressed as an example of how a political leader attempts to influence decision making. The 2014 Climate Summit speech is the object of study because it provides an example of how a political actor conducts a major communicative event.

3.4 Applying frame theory to Obama's speech

The application of frame theory in answering my research question, as mentioned before, commands a focus on interpretation. Frame theory in political communication is used by Lakoff in studying how family values steer political ideology. Frame theory in policy analysis is used by Wagenaar in studying the relationship between reason and purpose. Frame theory in analyzing speech is used in this thesis to examine *how Obama framed the issues*.

Frame theory also rises above the pure descriptive ambition and over the years, has transformed itself from an interpretive method, to a deliberative way of finding meanings and values (Wagenaar, 2011:82). This is why I choose to apply frame theory to my research question: to interpret how and what frames Obama uses.

3.5 Contested frames in frame competition

Frame competition, much like contested frames, has to do with the process of frame selection. For example, Lakoff suggests that strongly held frames that do not fit the facts will still be presented. This because it is more important, strategically speaking, that a frame resonates with an audience than with facts (Lakoff, 2014:37). Frame competition is a concept frame theory highlights and it plays a pivotal role in interpreting and analyzing the speech. Knowing what frames your audience holds dear and strategically picking them.

It can be revealing to study what Obama mentions and neglects to address. Frame theory suggests examining strong and weak frames (ibid). Strong frames influence opinion and weak frames do not (Lakoff, 2004:29). These are the things that become fruitful to study in my analysis section: the application of frame theory.

Applying frame theory in measuring the strength of frames is relevant in answering my research question. Frames that evoke personal preferences are strong and are likely to persuade individuals (Keren, 2010:30). This seems to be a common theme in how authors have addressed research questions similar to mine in the past. It is also a satisfactory base for my analysis; emphasizing ideas that shape preference helps me give a satisfactory and clear answer.

A defining feature of frame theory in political science, and the application of the theory in practice, is the competition of frames. To my research question, the competitive political environment of the UN Climate Summit needs to be acknowledged because it is this that make frames highly political (Lakoff, 2004:26). Obama is careful in not mentioning polarizing statements like carbon tax, that could hinder the call for global participation in tackling climate change (Keren, 2010:28). Competitive environments call for competitive frames and these reveal values and preferences shaping a political line. Frame theory in this competitive context also highlights a frame's strength. There will be a discussion about frame strength in the upcoming analysis section but is also mentioned here to further show what frame theory emphasizes and brings to the table.

Obama's speech, like all political phenomena, is a social construct that is best understood by bringing different frames to light, according to frame theory. The framing contests arise because frame theory tells us that the world is pluralistic and is therefore contested (Wagenaar, 2011:85). Frame theory allows us to break down our complex world into frames, and these frames must be selected and interpreted. The theory provides this thesis with guidance in studying *how Obama framed the issues* and dissects the complex situation that is: Obama's speech at the 2014 Climate Summit.

3.6 Frame selection

Frame selection, unlike frame competition, is the general process of strategically choosing frames (Lakoff, 2014:37). The concept separates from frame competition because in addition of identifying what frames your audience holds dear, you must also know what frames to avoid. Neglecting to choose frames that are galvanizing is something that frame theory emphasizes and it is also

something that can be revealing to analyze.

How frames are selected demands the study of reasons why frames are not selected. Sometimes what individuals are not saying can be just as revealing as what they are saying. Here, the strength and weaknesses of frames become interesting once again, because it is the content of the speech that is interesting, not Obama's personal convictions. My research question can be answered in part, by looking at how he selected and neglected to select frames or topics in the speech.

Lastly, previous studies using frame theory to describe communicative events suggests a relationship between the degree of strength of frame, and the frame's ability to highlight specific emotion (Wagenaar, 2011:86). Obama's choice of frames seek to highlight specific emotion and brings further clarity to *how Obama framed the issues* at the Climate Summit. Frame strength and effects will be one of the main topics in the analysis.

In this section, I have attempted to provide clarity regarding frame theory, the concept of framing and how frames might be contested. The following analysis section will be about the existing frames in Obamas speech and my findings. Ultimately moving closer to answering my research question. Another voice will also be introduced in the analysis, a perspective from Mike Hulme.

The section below also provides information about the 2014 UN Climate Summit in order to contextualize and understand what environment the speech was delivered in. Then from there I move towards the analyzing the content of the speech. Lastly my analysis of the frames will be presented.

4 Analysis

Historically, economics and security have been the main topics of discussion, when international leaders meet. Therefore, in high politics, climate change is shoved out into the periphery of international relations (Eckersley, 2004:21). Although the concern for environmental degradation has been in the public limelight for decades, global leadership participation has not been the best. This mostly because, according to Eckersley, ecology and national interest don't make sense being used in the same context (ibid:20).

This section will explore if Obama can overcome the divide between ecology and national interest. It will be about Obama's 2014 Climate Summit speech and the analysis of the frames therein. After a brief presentation of the 2014 Climate Summit – which is given to contextualize – the application of frame theory together with Hulme's perspective on climate change will be used in the analysis. To present my hermeneutic analysis and pave way for the conclusion is presented in this section. I also present eventual findings from applying frame theory, resulting in dynamic interpretation and views from different perspectives.

4.1 The 2014 Climate Summit

On the 23rd of September, world leadership answered UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's call and met at the UN headquarters in New York. The topic of climate change was addressed by more than a hundred leaders of state. Leaders from both civil society and the private sector spoke on the issue. Provoking positive and negative hopes for the future: new commitments and concrete financing was put forth. The Secretary-General summed up the results of the Summit: “This summit was not about talk. History is made by action. And now we have seen that the world is ready to act”.

40 percent gas reduction over 1990 levels promised by several European countries, resilience efforts promised the The States and China declared that it will reduce its carbon intensity. The 2014 Climate Summit had achieved something, what exactly, is yet to be seen. A renewed sense of optimism and hope was the aftermath of the summit according to Mr. Ban.

Global governance is relevant to mention here because it has become an established term in political science and can provide clarity in contextualizing the way the speech is analyzed (Betsill, 2006:237). Global governance is the “increased participation of civil society in world politics” (ibid). This increased participation is shown at the Summit, where advocates from civil society pressed the issue – one of many – of setting a 2-degree Celsius rise in global temperature-goal by 2015. Global governance as a political project is used to tackle problems that have to do with modernity, climate change being one of them, and the UN Climate Summit can be seen as a manifestation of global governance. Obama's

strategic choice of alarmist, generational and developmental frames resonate with relatively universal values. It is important that they do because he is speaking to a global audience at the UN Climate Summit.

4.2 Obama at the 2014 Climate Summit

In political speeches, frames operate in four key ways, according to Kuypers's. They define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. Frames are often found within a narrative account of an issue or event and are generally the central organizing idea (Kuypers, 2004:21). This can be found in Obama's speech and proves to be a useful notion to have in mind when conducting the analysis and finding the frames. Because the frames in this speech do not clearly make moral judgements or specifically suggest remedies, the frames brought up will center around how Obama frames the climate change issue and diagnoses the causes. Although it should be mentioned that Obama suggests remedies in general, like the reduction of carbon emissions.

To clarify my findings regarding the morality frame: Obama at the UN Climate Summit seeks to be a moral authority, without using the morality frame. Or, without directly referencing people's morality. The United States being the greatest country in the world, a moral authority, knows the best course of action in order to tackle climate change. Being that self-interest steers most international relations, Obama also conveys a message that tackling climate change is in every nation's best self-interest (Lakoff, 2004:10). This is proven to be a successful strategy on the international political arena. As the notion of climate change meets different cultures and is addressed throughout different forums, the framing of climate change differs. Here, Obama does a good job in avoiding polarization.

The frames in the speech are analyzed one by one, to reveal the relationship between reason and purpose, which frame theory commands that I highlight (Rein, 1976:96). What frames did Obama choose to bring up and how did he frame the issue of climate change?

Three frames are present throughout the speech and at least one of them is present at all times. These are the alarmist, generational and development frames. Since these dominant and significant frames take up so much space, I have chosen to analyze them. I call these three dominant frames overriding frames.

There are also other frames that I have coalesced into the mentioned overriding frames. The overriding frames are the lowest common denominator in that they are general and encompass other frames in the speech.

I found that there are twenty five paragraphs in the speech, each containing an idea. In the twenty five paragraphs, I found many different frames within ideas. For spacial reasons I am compelled to choose certain frames to highlight, which leaves other frames to be untouched in this thesis. The frames I found in the speech besides the three overriding one's are: the moral frames, the scientific frames, the experiential and the leadership frames. The reason for not choosing any of these frames for analysis is the constant presence of the three overriding frames. Every paragraph in the speech referenced either the generational, alarmist and development frames, and sometimes they overlap each other.

The alarmist frame is referenced in paragraph numbers: 1, 3, 4, 17 and 24.
The generational frame is referenced in paragraph numbers: 2, 5, 6, 23, 24 and 25.
The development frame is referenced in paragraph numbers: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

In the Climate Summit speech, Obama does not give the moral frame much room. The moral frame is a frame that lost the framing competition, Obama chooses to avoid it because it is far too polarizing. Druckman has examined the strength of this frame in a study of support for a publicly funded casino. Although the context is different, Druckman's perspective has relevance in this section because it has to do with opinion formation. It also addresses how authors have addressed my question in the past. Druckman's discovery of frame strength when it comes to the framing contest is highly relevant when answering *how Obama frames the issues*.

In the same way, Obama is strategic in his choice of addressing climate change: building an alarmist, generational and developmental frame. These universal concerns are galvanizing, not polarizing. In addressing what Obama is, and is not saying in the Climate Summit speech, I apply frame theory. The moral and leadership frames being the frame I found most significantly left out. This because of it being quite polarizing, but this is a point to which I will return later.

4.2.1 Obama's alarmist frame

The alarmist frame is one of the main frames in Obamas Climate Summit speech. Five out of the twenty five paragraphs reference the alarmist frame, which automatically makes it a frame to be reckoned with. “The alarm bells keep ringing” (no. 4) captures the core alarmist frame in one sentence. In introducing the challenges of climate change, he compares the issue with others, like disease, inequality and terrorism. Of those issues, climate change is the one that according to Obama, will define the contours of this century more than any other. The threat is real, urgent and growing and if nothing is done soon, the effects might be irreversible. Obama goes on to explain that climate change should be viewed as a security threat: like droughts, wildfires and rising sea levels. The context of the alarmist frame is one of dramatic effect. An imminent threat is looming but it is not one of traditional security politics, of those most noticeable: war.

As mentioned above, “The alarm bells keep ringing” captures the core alarmist frame in one sentence. Wagenaar calls this a *package*, which function is to make sense of climate change effects through the core alarmist frame and several *reasoning devices* that justify what should be done (Wagenaar, 2011:86). These packages, or bundle of ideas, are in turn influenced by what he calls *cultural resonances*; some packages have an inherent advantage because they adhere to certain ideas that resonate with larger cultural themes (ibid). The package might also be called the primary framework, because it is not itself particularly specific, but specific enough for the recipients of the speech to understand the sense of urgency.

Wagenaar provides useful concepts for the analysis when he discusses how *packages* act like the central organizing idea. It is important that these packages or ideas get cultural resonance and strike a chord with the audience. Depending on

what audience, maybe the alarmist frame would have been presented in a different way or perhaps neglected altogether (Goffman, 1974:498)?

4.2.2 Obama's generational frame

The generational frame is the other significant frame in Obamas Climate Summit speech. It is dominant in six of the twenty five paragraphs in the speech. There is one sentence that captures the generational frame better than any other; “we cannot condemn our children, and their children, to a future that is beyond their capacity to repair” (no. 5). In the very beginning of the speech he introduces the frame by mentioning the consequences climate change might have for future generations. The alarmist frame touches on the generational frame in that they both are connected to the phrase “tackle this global threat before it is too late” (no. 4). Here the message is conveyed loud and clear, it is not only our children we need to consider, it is an issue that effects generations to come.

What consequences might climate change have for future generations? The *package* in this case might be the core generational frame, together with the encouragement to make future generations the moral object. Obama is encouraging the audience to think of the consequences climate change might have for their grandchildren. Note that this is not to confuse with a morality frame, which Obama neglects to give any space. The *reasoning devices* differ from the framing devices which are descriptions, metaphors or visual images (Wagenaar, 2011:86). Obama achieves *cultural resonance* by basing the generational frame on morality; we owe future generations this (no. 23). Wagenaar explains that the deal breaker when it comes to frame selection, is cultural resonance (ibid). Does the frame have factual holes but still resonates with the audience; go for it!

Obama explains that future generations cannot and should not inherit an unsustainable earth. This frame reminds of frames in drama, since it references what most individuals give the deepest significance, the children.

The generational frame is not exclusively about the children of future generations, it is also about future efforts. Obama goes on to explain what future plans he has for climate change mitigation in the US, and the responsibility to lead. Obama makes it clear that the US is “stepping up to the plate” but the responsibility to lead should also lie with emerging economies; “no one gets a pass” (no. 19). Much like the morality frame, the responsibility to lead could be interpreted as a separate frame for analysis. I have chosen to not delve deeper in the morality or responsibility to lead ideas because the speech's overriding frames are much more significant.

Since rising economies like China and India are experiencing a rise in carbon emissions, Obama urges for cooperation in his speech, which is a point in which I will return. It is noted that this falls under the overriding development frame.

4.2.3 Obama's development frame

The development frame is made up of a main idea. The idea that we as a society ascribe different value to resources, assets, activities and constructs (Hulme, 2009:112). Hulme goes on to explain that when we ascribe different

values to these ideas, a rift occurs. Obama in using phrases like “...we're helping more nations skip past the dirty phases of development” (no. 14), shows a strategic choice in framing the issue of development. It is no secret that if developing countries are as dirty in their use of energy as the West was during industrialization, the Earth will suffocate. It is simply not sustainable. How Obama circumvents the negatives of the “who does what” development frame is to – similar to the alarmist and generational frames – use language that galvanizes rather than polarizes.

The responsibility is encompassed by the development frame. Obama mentions talks with the Chinese president, talk between the two largest economies and the two largest emitters. The responsibility to lead could be interpreted as another frame, but here Obama uses it in the context of the development frame, a strategic choice. Nations taking action against climate change, are at a disadvantage compared with nations that ignore it.

“We will do our part and we will help developing countries do theirs... we must lead” (no. 19), this references the end goal of sustainability. This is an example of where the developmental frame wins the framing competition, because it is galvanizing, not polarizing. It also suggests a pathway that many might find attractive, the developed helping the developing, one of the virtues Hulme mentions (Hulme, 2009:280). The many and varied implementations of tackling climate change are what actors mainly disagree upon, and here, Obama chooses to frame in a way that causes the least amount of resistance. We agree upon the goals, but not the way to achieve them. Obama's frame selection is very strategic. The development frame together with the responsibility to lead is more galvanizing than polarizing.

In Obama's speech, the growing knowledge and relevance of science in climate change is referenced. Here is another example of frames that have lost the frame contest, and thus is not given any space relative to the other three overriding frames. The development frame is referenced in fifteen of the twenty five paragraphs. Obama also calls for global action against climate change, which raises the question, who does what and when? Are not the developing countries entitled to as much pollution as the west during their period of industrialization? I will return to this point in the conclusion section, but it is brought up here because it raises a critique of the frame mindset. Regardless of eventual flaws in the frame perspective, “America is stepping up” and “responsibility” (no. 13,19) are phrases that reveal ideas, ideas that fall under the overriding frame called development.

4.3 Findings

“Alarm bells keep ringing”, “we cannot condemn our children” and “our international development programs and investments” are all phrases I found in Obamas speech and reveal how Obama framed the issue of climate change.

So far, searching and finding frames in the speech has been straight-forward and relatively clear. The amount of space in the speech given to the alarmist and generational frame is significant and that is why I chose those frames to interpret. Hulme suggests that these frames are chosen by Obama because they are what most environmental scientists consider *constants* in the ever mutating discussion that is climate change (Hulme, 2009:xxvi). In other words: it is common to choose

these frames in these circumstances.

The media pays no attention to the sustainability of the frames. By this I mean the actual usefulness and purpose of the speech. The frame limits become clear when transferring what the speech means, to the actual events it references. Events concerning floods, forest fires and droughts are concrete and are categorized as part of the alarmist frame. The generational frame plays to emotion (Goffman, 1974:56) and plays into the presumed beliefs that the abstract future is of importance to the audience of the Climate Summit speech. In this way, other than urging for mobilization, the speech has limited use. I should take the speech at face value and interpret it as a galvanizing and inspirational speech. This seems to be the right way to go and also Obama's intention for the audience.

If I am to analyze *how Obama framed the issues* I must first take a broad approach to different ways of analyzing climate change, because that is what I interpret when adding all the frames together. Applying frame theory to analyze Obamas speech as a whole, can reveal frames that are not as outstanding as the alarmist and generational.

Climate change as a political battleground, climate change as justification for action, climate change as justification for global governance and cooperation, or climate change as a security threat are all ways of perceiving climate change (ibid). The alarmist frame, according to frame theory, has to do with the communication of risk. The generational frame then, has to do consequentialism and the effects neglecting climate change might have. The development frame, delivered in the right way, prevents the many and varied implementations of development from clashing and creating polarization (Hulme, 2009:281).

Individuals become discombobulated when receiving different conflicting frames about climate change and this in turn creates discord and political polarization (Hulme, 2009:215). In other words, climate change can be framed in different ways, and to figure out how Obama went about framing climate change in the Climate Summit speech, it is beneficial to be aware of this. Like lobbyists or the media, Obama has the power to present powerful frames to the public that shape opinion (Druckman, 2015:161).

5 Conclusion

The alarmist, generational and development frames are all means to an end, the end in this case being for nations to take action against climate change. In identifying the frames found in Obama's Climate Summit speech, I am also describing how Obama framed the issues of climate change in the speech. The purpose of this study was to identify the central organizing ideas, or frames and conduct my hermeneutical analysis. I will present the answer to my research question in this section.

The issues of climate change have been addressed in many different ways throughout the years; the arguments have been framed and reframed. The way political leaders in developed countries have spoken on the environment compared to developing countries show an immense rift. It has been proven difficult for politicians everywhere to agree upon goals, best shown in the ambiguously formulated resolutions and protocols regarding climate change. The sovereignty of nation-states play a big role here. Perceived “loss of sovereignty” is a fundamental part of disagreeing about what needs to be done, especially in the types of circumstances like the 2014 Climate Summit. The expression *global problems require global solutions* cause as many problems as it hopes to fix. I believe that highlighting the frames in Obama's speech, makes the speech more understandable. Therefore, I will go through each frame one by one, and answer how they constitute a central organizing idea and answer *how Obama framed the issues*.

The **alarmist** frame, the frame that almost references morality, is exposed in the phrase “Alarm bells keep ringing”. Our beliefs about our role in the world as moral agents affect our perception of ourselves and our responsibility for nature. This frame is used by Obama because it shapes the way we assign our role in the battle against climate change. Climate change is occurring, and with that comes beliefs about who the victims are and who the perpetrators are. The alarmist frame is present because Obama is aware that we do not all see the earth and our relationship with it the same. Due to the fact that frame theory examines the relationship between purpose and reason, we understand Obama's choice of this frame (Rein, 1976:96). Throughout the speech and the frames therein, Obama's way of addressing climate change bases itself on an movement. An environmental movement deeply rooted in a spiritual ethic, not materialism. This frame is no exception, the alarmist frame is expressing a call to arms and referencing the sacredness of the earth. Frames in communication would highlight the strategic choice of starting the speech off with this frame. It grabs audience attention and makes them attentive to anything that Obama might say next (Goffman, 1974:547).

The **generational** frame, I concluded, has some conflicting elements within it's own core ideas. Firstly, the frame itself has to do with caring for other people in future generations. The question is then, what about people in the now generation? Here I am not talking about combating poverty before combating climate change, I am talking about regions being affected by climate change now. What about the

Maldives that will soon be submerged under water? The frames in this speech has to do with the social meanings of climate change, and how Obama chooses to address and frame these meanings in the speech. Arguably, even though Obama tries to avoid it, this frame might be the most controversial and polarizing. The idea that we can not condemn our children is one that most of us would agree upon, but is it morally acceptable to divert attention from the people currently being affected by climate change? Obama addresses how his own nation is affected and in this way, the framing becomes more legitimate. Nevertheless, I can't help noticing the subjectivity of addressing climate change when speaking about who the victims are. Future generations will feel the affects of climate change and there is little arguing that, but there are a set of ethical considerations. Security, life, liberty, freedom and other basic human rights are all things that can disappear for people that have seen their land ravaged by severe climate change. This claim to care about future generations could have easily been sidelined in order to talk more about the imminent effects on the now generation, which would go and in hand with the alarmist frame.

While the generational and alarmist frame is targeting a home audience, the **development** frame is targeting the leaders in attendance. In answering how Obama framed the issues, he framed them in part, to target different audiences. The development frame is about who is going to take action against climate change, what are they going to do and how much? What makes this frame differ from the others presented by Obama is that it speaks directly to political actors. The audience around the world might be interested in what Obama suggests to be the best course of action for governance to take against climate change, but it is not as close to the average individual as the previous frames. This targeting of a different audience brings up the relationship between individual and systemic. How Obama framed the issues earlier in the speech can reference individual or personal action and emotion. The development frame, takes a more systemic or structural approach. Everyone has an individual responsibility, but the context in which the speech is given, where Obama addresses the Climate Summit, commands him to plead to the leadership in attendance. The way Obama frames the issue of development adheres to the famous environmentalist battlecry; *global problems require global solutions*.

I have presented the frames Obama used to address climate change at the 2014 Climate Summit. The reason for presenting these central organizing ideas in the speech was to enable deeper understanding between the reason he framed like he did, and the purpose behind it. The communication of a political issue like climate change is best understood through frame analysis and frame theory, and each of these framings emphasize certain aspects of the issue. The implications for how climate change is perceived depends on the framing and that is why it is of importance to political science.

The structural injustices in the world economy, over-consumption by the North and the failure of markets all need to be addressed if climate change is to be negated. How Obama framed the issues of climate change in the speech can give an insight to how the future of combating climate change will be addressed. Each of the frames in the speech emphasize and de-emphasize certain issues, that is inevitable. So the strategic process of framing is something to analyze and interpret anytime one seeks clarity and understanding in a major political communicative event.

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8 Appendix

1:03 P.M. EDT

1 THE PRESIDENT: Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, fellow leaders: For all the immediate challenges that we gather to address this week -- terrorism, instability, inequality, disease

-- there's one issue that will define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other, and that is the urgent and growing threat of a changing climate.

2 Five years have passed since many of us met in Copenhagen. And since then, our understanding of climate change has advanced -- both in the deepening science that says this once-distant threat has moved "firmly into the present," and into the sting of more frequent extreme weather events that show us exactly what these changes may mean for future generations.

3 No nation is immune. In America, the past decade has been our hottest on record. Along our eastern coast, the city of Miami now floods at high tide. In our west, wildfire season now stretches most of the year. In our heartland, farms have been parched by the worst drought in generations, and drenched by the wettest spring in our history. A hurricane left parts of this great city dark and underwater. And some nations already live with far worse. Worldwide, this summer was the hottest ever recorded -- with global carbon emissions still on the rise.

4 So the climate is changing faster than our efforts to address it. The alarm bells keep ringing. Our citizens keep marching. We cannot pretend we do not hear them. We have to answer the call. We know what we have to do to avoid irreparable harm. We have to cut carbon pollution in our own countries to prevent the worst effects of climate change. We have to adapt to the impacts that, unfortunately, we can no longer avoid. And we have to work together as a global community to tackle this global threat before it is too late.

5 We cannot condemn our children, and their children, to a future that is beyond their capacity to repair. Not when we have the means -- the technological innovation and the scientific imagination -- to begin the work of repairing it right now.

6 As one of America's governors has said, "We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and the last generation that can do something about it." So today, I'm here personally, as the leader of the world's largest economy and its second largest emitter, to say that we have begun to do something about it.

7 The United States has made ambitious investments in clean energy, and

ambitious reductions in our carbon emissions. We now harness three times as much electricity from the wind and 10 times as much from the sun as we did when I came into office. Within a decade, our cars will go twice as far on a gallon of gas, and already, every major automaker offers electric vehicles. We've made unprecedented investments to cut energy waste in our homes and our buildings and our appliances, all of which will save consumers billions of dollars. And we are committed to helping communities build climate-resilient infrastructure.

8 So, all told, these advances have helped create jobs, grow our economy, and drive our carbon pollution to its lowest levels in nearly two decades -- proving that there does not have to be a conflict between a sound environment and strong economic growth.

9 Over the past eight years, the United States has reduced our total carbon pollution by more than any other nation on Earth. But we have to do more. Last year, I issued America's first Climate Action Plan to double down on our efforts. Under that plan, my administration is working with states and utilities to set first-ever standards to cut the amount of carbon pollution our power plants can dump into the air. And when completed, this will mark the single most important and significant step the United States has ever taken to reduce our carbon emissions.

10 Last week alone, we announced an array of new actions in renewable energy and energy efficiency that will save consumers more than \$10 billion on their energy bills and cut carbon pollution by nearly 300 million metric tons through 2030. That's the equivalent of taking more than 60 million cars off the road for one year.

11 I also convened a group of private sector leaders who've agreed to do their part to slash consumption of dangerous greenhouse gases known as HFCs -- slash them 80 percent by 2050.

12 And already, more than 100 nations have agreed to launch talks to phase down HFCs under the Montreal Protocol -- the same agreement the world used successfully to phase out ozone-depleting chemicals.

13 This is something that President Xi of China and I have worked on together. Just a few minutes ago, I met with Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli, and reiterated my belief that as the two largest economies and emitters in the world, we have a special responsibility to lead. That's what big nations have to do. (Applause.)

14 And today, I call on all countries to join us -- not next year, or the year after, but right now, because no nation can meet this global threat alone. The United States has also engaged more allies and partners to cut carbon pollution and prepare for the impacts we cannot avoid. All told, American climate assistance now reaches more than 120 nations around the world. We're helping more nations skip past the dirty phase of development, using current technologies, not duplicating the same mistakes and environmental degradation that took place previously.

15 We're partnering with African entrepreneurs to launch clean energy projects. We're helping farmers practice climate-smart agriculture and plant more durable crops. We're building international coalitions to drive action, from reducing methane emissions from pipelines to launching a free trade agreement for environmental goods. And we have been working shoulder-to-shoulder with many of you to make the Green Climate Fund a reality.

16 But let me be honest. None of this is without controversy. In each of our countries, there are interests that will be resistant to action. And in each country, there is a suspicion that if we act and other countries don't that we will be at an economic disadvantage. But we have to lead. That is what the United Nations and this General Assembly is about.

17 Now, the truth is, is that no matter what we do, some populations will still be at risk. The nations that contribute the least to climate change often stand to lose the most. And that's why, since I took office, the United States has expanded our direct adaptation assistance eightfold, and we're going to do more.

18 Today, I'm directing our federal agencies to begin factoring climate resilience into our international development programs and investments. And I'm announcing a new effort to deploy the unique scientific and technological capabilities of the United States, from climate data to early-warning systems. So this effort includes a new partnership that will draw on the resources and expertise of our leading private sector companies and philanthropies to help vulnerable nations better prepare for weather-related disasters, and better plan for long-term threats like steadily rising seas.

19 Yes, this is hard. But there should be no question that the United States of America is stepping up to the plate. We recognize our role in creating this problem; we embrace our responsibility to combat it. We will do our part, and we will help developing nations do theirs. But we can only succeed in combating climate change if we are joined in this effort by every nation — developed and developing alike. Nobody gets a pass.

20 The emerging economies that have experienced some of the most dynamic growth in recent years have also emitted rising levels of carbon pollution. It is those emerging economies that are likely to produce more and more carbon emissions in the years to come. So nobody can stand on the sidelines on this issues. We have to set aside the old divides. We have to raise our collective ambition, each of us doing what we can to confront this global challenge.

21 This time, we need an agreement that reflects economic realities in the next decade and beyond. It must be ambitious — because that's what the scale of this challenge demands. It must be inclusive — because every country must play its part. And, yes, it must be flexible — because different nations have different circumstances.

22 Five years ago, I pledged America would reduce our carbon emissions in the range of 17 percent below 2005 levels by the year 2020. America will meet that

target. And by early next year, we will put forward our next emission target, reflecting our confidence in the ability of our technological entrepreneurs and scientific innovators to lead the way.

23 So today, I call on all major economies to do the same. For I believe, in the words of Dr. King, that there is such a thing as being too late. And for the sake of future generations, our generation must move toward a global compact to confront a changing climate while we still can.

24 This challenge demands our ambition. Our children deserve such ambition. And if we act now, if we can look beyond the swarm of current events and some of the economic challenges and political challenges involved, if we place the air that our children will breathe and the food that they will eat and the hopes and dreams of all posterity above our own short-term interests, we may not be too late for them.

25 While you and I may not live to see all the fruits of our labor, we can act to see that the century ahead is marked not by conflict, but by cooperation; not by human suffering, but by human progress; and that the world we leave to our children, and our children's children, will be cleaner and healthier, and more prosperous and secure.

Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.)

END

1:16 P.M. EDT