

Energy Security under Obama: Some hope, but not much change

Discussions about energy security in the US are routinely followed by claims that the country does not have an energy policy. However, while it may be true that US energy security strategy and energy policy remains uncoordinated and unclear, the government routinely pursues policy in the name of energy security. Energy security remains defined largely in terms of the availability of continuous and secure supplies at stable prices, and policy remains heavily focused on fossil fuels. Despite being elected on the promise that his presidency would mark ‘a new chapter in America’s leadership on climate change that will strengthen our security’, this chapter will analyse administration policy in the second term to show that Obama’s energy security strategy has since seen not only continued but *expanded* exploration and exploitation of conventional and unconventional fossil fuels. He has repeatedly and enthusiastically extolled the virtues of increased fossil fuel exploitation, and his ‘all-out, all of the above’ approach to energy security has represented a return to a fossil and nuclear focused policy rather than the shift towards sustainability promised. While Obama has acted on this promise to the extent that his second term has seen a shift in discourse, with the unveiling of a new climate strategy in 2013, it will be argued that without a clear change in energy policy, this is likely to have little substantive impact. This chapter charts Obama’s energy security strategy discourse and policy since his re-election in 2012, arguing that in practice and despite promises to the contrary, in many ways his approach has represented more continuity than change.

Bio:

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Introduction

As the United States geared up for election in the Spring and Summer of 2012, I spent three months in Washington DC interviewing experts and policy makers working on energy security and energy policy. I attended talks and roundtable discussions on energy from every ideological angle. Energy played an important role in debates leading up to the election, and talk of the shale revolution was high on the agenda. With growth in American energy production, energy independence and reducing oil imports were at the forefront of commitments by both Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. However, they disagreed on what the role government should play in the energy system, environmental regulation of the energy industry, and the proposed Keystone XL pipeline. Despite this, one of the results of bringing up energy security and energy policy in Washington is immediate cries of, 'but the US doesn't have an energy policy!' In some cases, this claim is based on the idea that the US energy system is independent from government; in other cases, it's a complaint that federal energy policy isn't clear enough. It may be true that US energy security strategy and policy is uncoordinated and unclear, but the government does routinely pursue policy in the name of energy security. Meanwhile, the supposed independence of the energy industry is a fiction. Firstly, fossil fuel lobbies exert a huge amount of influence on government, through donations, lobbying and other pressure tactics. Secondly, the federal government intervenes in the energy market in myriad ways: sometimes directly, as during the Unocal affair in 2005 and through bilateral energy agreements with foreign nations, and other times indirectly, through subsidies, regulation and legislation on energy which all affect energy production and consumption. As noted by Bamberger, 'not only does the nation have an energy policy, it has adopted several distinct policy approaches over the years' (2003: 1).

Energy security is usually considered to be made up of two parts: security of supply (access to secure and reliable energy supplies) and price security (reliable or stable energy prices). While the meaning of energy security is increasingly debated, most discussions in the United States relate back to these two concerns and centre heavily on fossil fuels. It is particularly engrained in US thinking on energy security because the country has a history of energy *insecurity* in these terms: the 1970s oil crises caused shortages and price hikes at a time when the country was used to energy abundance, and the effects still resonate. Indeed, every president since Nixon has endorsed energy independence to control supply and prices. As a result, energy is generally considered an issue of high politics in the United States. The term energy security is commonly used, and energy is generally considered an issue of national security (Nyman 2014). However, this notion of energy security leaves a dilemma: the energy resources focused on are finite, so any 'security' achieved is inherently time limited. Moreover, fossil fuel production and consumption is the largest single contributor to climate change, which itself poses new and unpredictable security concerns. Barack Obama has campaigned both in favour of changing energy policy and for taking action on climate change. However, initial promises of change have since given way to reticence: climate change was hardly mentioned during the 2012 election campaign, and increasing fossil fuel production has become key in Obama's energy strategy. While speaking about the evils of dependence on foreign oil, Obama has enthusiastically praised the benefits of fracking and drilling, expanding domestic pipelines.

This chapter argues that there is a fundamental conflict between Obama's energy policy and his position on climate change, that the two are incompatible. The chapter will analyse administration policy in the second term to show that Obama's energy security strategy has since 2012 seen not only continued but *expanded* exploration and exploitation of conventional and unconventional fossil fuels. Thus, while Obama came to power in 2008 on a wave of promises of hope and change, when it comes to energy security, the Obama administration has represented more continuity than change. Although his stance on climate change represents a welcome departure from his predecessor, his continued emphasis on fossil and nuclear energy industries devalue his environmental commitments. The chapter begins with a brief assessment of Obama's early years, outlining his pre-election and first term approach to energy

security, before moving on to discuss his second term, comparing the discourse and practice of the administration and outlining some of the limits to change.

In the beginning, there was hope

In 2008, Obama was elected on a platform of hope and change. Energy was an important issue during the election and in Obama's campaign it was often explicitly linked to climate change. New energy and reducing consumption were key in the Democratic platform, alongside calls for global cooperation on energy and climate change. While the Republican platform supported fossil fuels strongly, advocating 'accelerated exploration, drilling and development', the Democratic platform argued that 'We can't drill our way to energy independence' (The New York Times 2008). Obama promised that his presidency would mark 'a new chapter in America's leadership on climate change that will strengthen our security'. He spoke out loudly in favour of action on climate change, and even campaigned on cap and trade legislation to limit carbon emissions. He recognised the impact of energy choices on climate change. He went further to label climate change a shared security issue, stating that 'our dependence on oil and gas...puts the future of our planet in peril' – it is not only 'a security threat', but also 'a moral challenge of our time'. In response, he proposed investments to 'transform our energy economy', focusing on alternative energy as 'we need to do more than drill' (Obama 2008a). Obama's 'Blueprint for change' outlining his policy vision for the election campaign contained a similar message. Energy was picked out as a key issue, promising relief from high gas prices, reducing dependence on foreign oil, green jobs, action on climate change, alongside 'promoting the responsible domestic production of oil and gas' (Obama and Biden 2008: 37-9). On the whole, the focus was on new, alternative and cleaner energies, fitting with his vision on climate change, and though he did also support increasing oil and gas production in the third election debate (Obama 2008b) this was not a focus of discussion. Overall, Obama's campaign and election promised change, both in energy policy and on climate change.

As Obama came into power, the focus was on the economy and one of the first measures taken was the Recovery Act, an economic stimulus package passed by Congress in February 2009 formally known as The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This included specific provisions to fund renewable energy and energy efficiency developments, as well as a (much smaller) provision for fossil fuel research and development (Recovery Act 2009). Obama also established a White House Office of Energy and Climate Change to coordinate policy, suggesting a new approach to both. However, he soon ran into resistance. His attempt to push through cap and trade legislation failed to pass through Congress. Despite his aims to establish the US as a global leader on climate change, the United Nations Climate Change negotiations in Copenhagen in 2009 were widely seen as a failure. The world had hoped to develop a binding framework to replace the Kyoto Protocol, but the negotiations resulted in a weak, non-binding agreement. Congressional resistance to commit on climate change left the US in a weak negotiating position, and Obama's last ditch attempt to strengthen negotiations by arriving in person was not sufficient to strike a more ambitious agreement. He has made multiple failed attempts to cut federal subsidies for fossil fuels. Overall, Obama did focus more on climate change in the first couple of years of his administration, but the recession shifted the political climate. As a result, the focus was on clean energy as a jobs creator and way to restart the economy, rather than the threat of climate change, discussions of which largely disappeared from Obama's political discourse. The resistance he faced did not help: according to Open Secrets, an independent organisation tracking money in US politics, the oil and gas industries alone spent \$175million lobbying against climate legislation in 2009 alone (Mackinder 2010). Moreover, the global context changed with the Libyan revolution and the spike in oil prices that followed in 2011, and the administration shifted focus to the oil market and to fossil fuels more broadly.

The shift is well illustrated in Obama's 2012 State of the Union speech, where he announced that 'this country needs an all-out, all-of-the-above strategy that develops every available source of American

energy' (Obama 2012a). With this, Obama and his first Secretary of Energy Steven Chu put everything on the table, allowing a refocus on fossil fuels. This was a clear change from previous Democratic administrations which tended to focus more on efficiency and renewables. For a Democratic administration, they also made a stronger, unequivocal commitment to nuclear energy. In practice, the 'all-out, all-of-the-above' approach involved a refocus on traditional sources of energy, increased drilling for oil and gas, and more 'clean' coal and nuclear, while continuing the focus on efficiency/clean energy. The mood had shifted, and energy became key. This is not to say that the administration gave up all ambitions on climate change, but the prevailing atmosphere suggested that focusing on clean energy, green jobs and economic growth was the solution: climate change would get dealt with along the way. As one interviewee noted during my own research, 'dealing with energy, you're not allowed to say climate change anymore'. However, despite the focus on clean energy, the administration also continued support for non-renewable and fossil energy industries.

Before turning to Obama's second term, it's worth noting the level of continuity between his energy policy and that of the preceding Bush administration. The two are often seen as representing opposing sides of the energy/climate spectrum. Of course, Bush was more sceptical of climate change, especially during his first administration, and more committed to the fossil fuel industries. However, there is more continuity between the two in terms of energy policy than is usually recognised. They both focused strongly on reducing dependence on foreign oil, and emphasised increasing domestic production as a response. While Obama has taken more of a regulatory approach and has placed more emphasis on renewable energy, the support for domestic fossil fuel industries has remained. In 2011, Obama boasted that 'last year, American oil production reached its highest level since 2003' (Obama 2011). Despite his emphasis on climate change, Obama has not only permitted but actively promoted and pursued expanded domestic fossil fuel production. This is also recognised in an Oxford Institute for Energy Studies Report, which notes that throughout Obama's first administration 'the public message has been more about energy security and creating jobs than about climate change. To the extent that these objectives were in conflict, the priority was not climate change' (Robinson 2013: 3).

Re-election: 'We've added enough new oil and gas pipeline to encircle the Earth and then some'

In 2012, Obama's election campaign exemplified the changing focus of the administration. With the world (and oil prices) in turmoil as the Arab Spring gained force and the country still suffering from the recession, climate change was not a vote winner. Energy was key in the campaign, following the new energy strategy announced in the 2012 State of the Union. During a campaign speech in a TransCanada pipeline yard in the oil town of Cushing, Oklahoma, Obama noted that 'producing more oil and gas here at home has been, and will continue to be, a critical part of an all-of-the-above energy strategy'. He went on to add,

Now, under my administration, America is producing more oil today than at any time in the last eight years. (Applause.) That's important to know. Over the last three years, I've directed my administration to open up millions of acres for gas and oil exploration across 23 different states. We're opening up more than 75 percent of our potential oil resources offshore. We've quadrupled the number of operating rigs to a record high. We've added enough new oil and gas pipeline to encircle the Earth and then some... And as long as I'm President, we're going to keep on encouraging oil development and infrastructure (Obama 2012b)

In May 2012, after poor results in a Democratic primary in West Virginia, a state 'heavily reliant on the coal industry', the Obama campaign quietly added 'clean coal' to its energy policy website (Markay 2012). Having already shifted away from a stronger public stance on climate change, Obama's 2012 campaign focused heavily on energy while climate change was largely absent both from the campaign and from the election debates. At the same time, the shale revolution was also gaining force, with 2012 seeing frequent discussions and debates over the possibilities for American energy independence with

growing shale oil and gas production. Obama seized on this opportunity to showcase his energy and economic growth agenda. Shale gas in particular was continually represented as environmentally friendly, compared with coal. However, in practice shale gas often replaced renewable energy production rather than coal production, so the climate benefit is debatable, especially given the potential environmental impacts of shale production (particularly methane leaks and groundwater contamination). Indeed, a 2011 study suggested that if we look at long-term impacts, shale gas has a larger greenhouse gas footprint than either conventional gas or oil, or coal (Howarth et al. 2011). Again, during the election debates there was discussion on offshore drilling and coal, but no focus on climate change.

Obama's second administration saw a growing conflict between his energy policy and supposed climate commitments. As will be discussed later, climate change does resurface in 2013, but Obama's enduring commitment to fossil fuel exploitation undermines his climate agenda. He has achieved some changes in energy policy, notably some increases in domestic renewable energy production and energy efficiency. However, without a more substantial change in energy policy his climate strategy will have little substantive impact. The rest of this section will discuss Obama's second term positions of energy and climate change, beginning by detailing his discourse on the issues before outlining and comparing the discourse to his policies.

Part one: Discourse

Energy security has been key in Obama's second term agenda: he has continued his all-of-the-above energy strategy in the name of sustainable economic growth and energy independence. The importance of both energy and climate change in the discourse of the Obama administration can be seen in Obama's State of the Union speech in January 2013. Here, both issues were central: Obama directed his Cabinet to come up with measures to 'reduce pollution, prepare our communities for the consequences of climate change, and speed the transition to more sustainable forms of energy' (Fox-Penner 2013). He also proposed an Energy Security Trust, to support research into shifting trucks and cars off oil (Obama 2013c).

A key 40-page document released on the strategy in 2014 spends the first 30 pages detailing the ways in which the strategy has driven the energy revolution and the economic recovery, and it's only on page 31 that the document turns to the need for a low carbon future (White House 2014a). Even here, there is continued emphasis on nuclear energy and clean coal. In the summary, the benefits of the strategy are listed in the order of economic growth, energy security, and then lastly reducing emissions (White House 2014a: 2). The document also notes that 'The United States has emerged as the world's leading producer of petroleum and natural gas. In 2013, combined production of petroleum, natural gas, and other liquid fuels in the United States exceeded that of Saudi Arabia and Russia', and the strategy aims to continue this (White House 2014a: 3). It takes an unusual approach in that it defines energy security explicitly, which is rarely the case in official policy documents (Littlefield 2013). Here, it states that 'the term energy security is used to mean different things in different contexts, and broadly covers energy supply availability, reliability, affordability, and geopolitical considerations' (White House 2014a: 20). Interestingly, this is followed by a footnote referencing a joint statement by the G7 energy ministers on energy security. However, there is an important difference between the two definitions: the joint statement includes reducing greenhouse gas emissions as part of creating enduring energy security, something which disappears in the definition from the White House document.

Indeed, expanding oil and gas production is explicitly raised as key to national security in both of Obama's National Security Strategies (White House 2015a, 2010). Overall, Obama's discourse on energy security shows a significant amount of continuity with previous administrations, particularly in the continued focus on energy independence through the all-of-the-above strategy. This strategy has led

to some progress on clean energy and renewables, but the overall commitment to increasing domestic production of fossil fuel energy sources as well as nuclear power suggest that climate change remains a secondary priority. Herbstreuth has studied the focus on energy independence in the United States, and suggests that the discourse on energy dependence and independence is constructed on particular geographical/spatial delineations, where energy independence doesn't actually necessarily mean only domestic production, but includes imports from 'safe' countries, namely Canada and Mexico (Herbstreuth 2014). Thus, dependence is constructed as negative, but is strongly linked with cultural representations of the Middle East as foreign and other. Thus, 'foreign' oil is only a problem when it comes from particular countries or regions: in other cases it represents mutually beneficial economic interdependence (Herbstreuth 2014). Genuine American energy independence is often dismissed by experts as either impossible, unnecessary, or both: yet consecutive presidents continue to consider it a goal.

While climate change was downplayed during the 2012 election campaign, Obama moved quite swiftly to reposition the issue in his 2013 State of the Union, and unveiling a major new Climate Action Plan in June 2013. The Climate Action Plan is an impressive document outlining the climate strategy of Obama's second administration. The language in the plan is strong: 'we have a moral obligation to future generations to leave them a planet that is not polluted and damaged... climate change is no longer a distant threat – we are already feeling its impacts across the country and the world' (White House 2013: 4). It sets clear targets, and one of the key pillars on which it is based is to cut carbon pollution in the United States. It recognises that 'Climate change represents one of the greatest challenges of our time' (White House 2013: 5) – a far cry from the early George W. Bush years. Even the energy strategy discussed above recognises that 'Approximately 87 percent of U.S. anthropogenic emissions of all greenhouse gases are energy-related' (White House 2014a: 31). The plan also talks specifically about climate security, and there is a broader shift in Obama's discourse on climate change in 2013 to emphasise the security implications.

In the State of the Union, he noted the need to 'act before it's too late' on climate change, suggesting that this means he may need to act without Congressional approval (Obama 2013c). However, the commitment to domestic fossil fuel production was retained with a promise to 'keep cutting red tape and speeding up new oil and gas permits' (Obama 2013c). In a speech in Berlin, Obama called for joint action on climate change, explicitly labelling it 'the global threat of our time' (Obama 2013a). He presented a new plan 'to lead the world in a coordinated assault on a changing climate' (Obama 2013b). Here, he created a sense of urgency and emergency associated with security discourse. On the other hand, the 2014 State of the Union noted the continuing 'commitment to American energy', the all-of-the-above energy strategy and energy independence, as well as continued increases in natural gas (Obama 2014). While Obama's framing of climate change as a security issue is important, it is continually undermined by his energy policy. However, in his second administration he has taken a stronger position on climate change, together with efficiency and environmental regulations, some of which will be discussed under policy, below.

Overall, Obama's second term discourse shows some hope, and some change. The Climate Action Plan, together with the repositioning of climate change as a key issue, suggests that climate change has come back into focus. However, the discourse on energy security makes it difficult to take this seriously: the continued emphasis on increasing domestic fossil energy production in the name of national security and energy independence call Obama's climate commitment into question. Some of the language around energy security is particularly problematic, framing it as a national security issue in ways that make it seem like boosting domestic production is the cure for all ills.

Part two: Policy

In many ways Obama's 'all-out, all of the above' approach to energy security has represented a return to a fossil and nuclear focused policy rather than the shift towards sustainability promised. His strategy has tried to depoliticise the issue, appointing two scientists as his consecutive Secretaries of Energy. The second National Security Strategy also highlights a growing focus on energy as a national security issue. Energy is frequently framed either in security terms, or an issue of economic growth: and both are seen to necessitate a strategy centred on domestic production of fossil fuels (Nyman 2015). The 2014 Energy Security Strategy emphasises the energy revolution, highlighting the impact increasing oil and gas production has had on economic growth and jobs creation (White House 2014a: 3). Obama has embraced the shale gas industry, viewing gas as a key bridging fuel for moving towards cleaner energies. However, while he has attempted to phase out fossil fuel subsidies, Congressional resistance has made this impossible and in practice the growth of the industries has meant that subsidies for oil and gas exploration actually doubled between 2009 and 2013 (Leber 2014). Obama has opened more areas, offshore and onshore, for oil and gas exploration, and presided over an unprecedented expansion in production. A White House blogpost from 2014 heralds growing US oil and gas production. It notes:

Onshore, nearly 36.1 million acres of federal land were under lease to oil and gas companies last year. Of that land, over 12.6 million acres were actively producing oil and gas – the highest acreage under production since 2008. Last year, the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) held 30 separate oil and gas lease sales, offering 5.7 million acres for lease by industry, the most in a decade. Even as sales have gone up, processing time for onshore drilling permits has gone down – last year, it took an average of 194 days to process an APD, down from 228 in 2012 and faster than any time since 2005. Offshore, the Interior Department's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) offered 59 million acres for lease by industry in the Gulf of Mexico last year, and industry submitted bids on 3 percent of these acres, resulting in \$1.3 billion in high bids. The current Five Year Offshore Oil and Gas Leasing Program includes 15 potential lease sales in six planning areas that comprise some of the richest and most promising areas for oil and gas exploration and development (White House 2014c).

Overall, there's been a lack of new legislation on energy because of Congressional resistance, and as a result oil and gas industries in particular continue to be treated very favourably. Under Obama, the focus remains reducing dependence on *foreign* oil, rather than dirty sources of energy altogether (White House 2015b). The administration has opened up huge new areas for oil and gas exploration and continued to invest federal money in dirty sources of energy: all in the name of energy independence.

Alongside this, Obama has included a focus on renewable sources of energy in his second term strategy. He has pursued a number of initiatives supported by the Recovery Act. Overall, 'total energy obtained from wind, solar, and geothermal sources has more than doubled since 2009' (White House 2014a: 2, 2014b, 2012). The Administration has also introduced important efficiency standards for vehicles, homes and appliances (White House 2014a: 8). To an extent, these policies have been quite successful, and Obama has managed an increase in renewable energy production and consumption, as well as energy efficiency (Nyman 2015: 22). After a long waiting period, he also vetoed the controversial Keystone XL pipeline citing its potential environmental impacts as a core reason. However, as the United States increases renewable energy production, there is also a growing debate over oil, gas and coal exports. For example, the US continues to export a large amount of coal, which negates the net climate benefit of US consumers shifting off coal and onto renewables (EIA 2015).

Some of Obama's initiatives on climate change have been significant, however. The Climate Action Plan from 2013 has three pillars: cutting carbon pollution, preparing for the impacts of climate change, and leading international efforts on climate change (White House 2013: 5). It includes 75 climate targets, many of which it has already achieved and all of which it has made some progress on (Tubman 2015). It also announces a Presidential Memorandum directing the Environmental Protection Agency to develop carbon pollution standards: an important sign of what was to come. Climate policy in Obama's first term was halted by Congressional resistance which has made it difficult to implement change. Even at that stage, however, Obama chose to use Executive Action to direct the EPA to regulate emissions. The

initiatives taken under the new Climate Plan give the EPA further directives to regulate carbon pollution, and the vast majority of the Plan relies on Executive Action. Moreover, in 2014, Obama took further Executive Action on climate change, unilaterally pushing cap and trade regulation through the EPA in the face of continued Congressional resistance (Dumaine 2014). In some ways, action has been limited by Congressional resistance, and while the use of Executive Action has allowed Obama to push some of his policies anyway, the next president can reverse the changes just as easily.

The energy security strategy notes that ‘The United States has reduced its total carbon pollution since 2005 more than any other nation on Earth’, a significant achievement, but it also recognises that projections suggest emissions may rise again (White House 2014a: 3). Energy related CO₂ emissions have fallen by 10% since 2007, partly due to cleaner energy and energy efficiency, but more than half of the reduction can be attributed to the slowed economic activity with the recession (White House 2014a: 31). Problematically, the Climate Plan continues to endorse natural gas as a bridging fuel, which is dubious – even researchers from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a US federal agency, have called into question the climate benefits of natural gas (Romm 2013). It also calls for phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, which has still not been achieved.

In many ways, Obama’s climate policy and climate commitments are impressive, and increasingly match his rhetoric on climate change – particularly since the release of the 2013 Climate Action Plan which has been followed by an impressive number of initiatives. His energy policy also matches his rhetoric, showing continued focus on increasing domestic fossil fuel production alongside cleaner sources of energy. However, what does not match up is Obama’s approaches to energy security and climate change. Energy security policy focuses on energy independence, emphasising increasing domestic production in the name of national security and economic growth. However, continued focus on fossil fuels is clearly not sustainable, in any sense of the word. Despite some increases in renewable energy production, Obama’s energy policy more generally continues to undermine his climate agenda. His approach to energy security is finite, and does not produce security in the longer term.

Change is difficult: there are many barriers and political resistance. There is clear evidence that climate change and energy security are best dealt with together (McCollum et al. 2013; Jacobson 2009). But Obama cannot be wholly blamed for his record. He has attempted to push climate change and renewable energy, but has faced a difficult context and institutional resistance. The recession placed the focus on economic growth, and Obama has tried to use this to push clean energy as a jobs and growth creator. To some degree, this has been successful: the Recovery Act provided funding for clean energy and energy efficiency measures. However, Vezirgiannidou’s study of different ways of framing climate change in the United States found that the Obama administration consistently framed climate change in terms focused on energy security and economic growth (2013). In practice, she finds that rather than increasing support for climate change, such strategies allow other concerns to take over, effectively overriding climate considerations and ‘the climate message loses its potency’ (Vezirgiannidou 2013). So Obama’s attempts to ‘hide’ climate change in energy security and growth strategies may not have been the most effective strategy.

Obama has also faced political resistance: both from Republicans in Congress and from the fossil fuel lobby which has used pressure tactics to resist climate legislation and attempts to cut subsidies. The effects also can be seen in the failed cap and trade bill and the failure of the Copenhagen negotiations. Obama’s second term has faced a House and Senate dominated by Republicans. Even the Chair of the Senate Committee on the Environment, Senator Jim Inhofe, favours increased domestic energy production and has called climate change a hoax: he recently threw a snowball in the Senate to ‘disprove’ global warming. Energy security itself does not help: it’s rarely clearly defined, and vague and imprecise terminology over energy prohibits genuine discussion and meaningful public debate,

allowing different groups to hijack terms for their own ends (Littlefield 2013). Bang's study of the US political system found that while dealing with energy and climate issues together resulted in more climate-friendly policy, 'the established energy policy majority preferred to focus exclusively on energy security issues and disregard the effects for climate change, trying to keep it off the agenda' (2010: 1649). Ultimately, 'the design and structure of the political institutions and their voting rules prevented radical change away from the status quo' (Bang 2010: 1652). A persistent divide between staff working on energy and climate in key institutions also makes it hard to coordinate the issues (Nyman 2015).

House Republicans in particular have continued to push domestic fossil fuel production through the American Energy Initiative (House Committee on Natural Resources 2015). Initiatives have favoured lowering petrol prices, expanding fossil energy production, protecting coal mines, and removing barriers to offshore oil exploration (put in place after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010). Funding was also cut for Obama's White House Office on Energy and Climate Change in 2011. Climate change remains deeply divisive and politicised. Despite this, Obama hasn't completely given up his climate agenda, pushing action through the EPA where possible.

Conclusion

Obama's record on energy security is significant. However, despite triumphant messages proclaiming 'America's new energy security', suggesting that the United States is more secure than ever (Yergin 2011), these policies may actually be making America less secure in the long term. For a president who sees action on climate change as key to his legacy, an energy policy which continues to support expanding domestic fossil fuel and nuclear energy production is shameful. Energy is frequently framed either in security terms, or an issue of economic growth: and both are seen to necessitate a strategy centred on domestic production of fossil fuels. However, boosting domestic production is not the panacea Obama presents it to be. Experts argue that we cannot even extract all the oil and gas we have already discovered if we want to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Climate change, in turn, is listed as a 'threat multiplier' by the United States' own Quadrennial Defense Review (US Department of Defense 2014: 8; see also US Department of Defense 2015). Thus, overall, Obama's approach to energy security has represented some hope, but not enough change.

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