

Obama's Conflict:
A Close Textual Analysis of the President's Discourse on the 2011 Libyan Civil War

by

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ABSTRACT

In 2011, President Barack Obama was charged with the necessity to respond to the atrocious human rights violations occurring in Libya at the hands of the Muammar al-Qaddafi government. As a result of a U.N. resolution requiring the establishment of a no-fly zone, the Obama administration sent warships to the Mediterranean to eliminate the threat of a tyrant. The following analysis recaps these events from a rhetorical standpoint. President Obama spoke about the conflict and the possibility of U.S. intervention as the civil war grew in scope and became a threat to U.S. national security. Throughout his discourse on the conflict, Obama engages in two rhetorical strategies to justify foreign intervention without a declaration of war. First, Obama creates a rhetorical imperialist strategy for defending U.S. action in Libya. To accomplish such a task, he rhetorically establishes a homogenized notion of democracy, conflating the needs and goals of Libyan democracy with western and American notions of human and civil rights. With this notion of consubstantiation of identity and misinterpretation of Libyan desires, Obama could then frame the threat of democracy failure in Libya as a necessity for intervention, justifying military and economic imperialist action in the name of national security. His second strategy illuminated a spatial panopticon within his rhetoric. Obama frames Qaddafi as the prisoner of Jeremy Bentham's all-seeing, all-knowing prison structure that was at the will of the international community, the watchtower led by its supervisor, the U.S. and President Obama. For the first time in presidential address, the conception of East versus West was diminished in foreign policy rhetoric as Obama transformed the rhetorical field to new focus of international affairs, the U.S. versus the world.

CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHOD

“Our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.”

~ Barack Obama, 2008 Inaugural Address

Introduction to Presidential Rhetoric

The United States Constitution affords the president several enumerated powers in an attempt to fulfill the duties of the office. Despite the Founding Fathers’ wish to limit the scope of the executive branch, the power wielded by the president throughout history continues to grow. The Constitution charges the president with proposing possible appointments, signing or vetoing legislation into law, and ensuring the execution of the laws, all while commanding the U.S. Armed Forces. The president demonstrates his responsibilities through various forms of presidential address. Political scientist Jeffrey Tulis contends that the president has extended his power through his ability to circumvent Congress by appealing directly to the people.¹ The public comes to understand the powers of the president through media interpretations of presidential actions and through various forms of presidential address. Both the Constitution and the rhetoric used to discuss the facets of the executive office, demonstrate the extent of presidential power.

Rhetorical studies are a decisive method for analyzing presidential discourse and the strategic decision made within particular speech acts. Presidential rhetoric

scholar David Zarefsky contends that studies in public address tend to emphasize contingency and choice—two characteristics that allow scholars to analyze particular actions and strategic decisions made by presidents.² The president’s rhetorical power, though not explicitly stated in the Constitution, becomes a starting point for all policy and action stemming from the executive branch. According to Zarefsky, presidential rhetoric “defines political reality,” setting the stage for policy action and inaction.³ Presidents are, as rhetorical scholar Jason Edwards describes, “the proverbial sun of America’s political universe.”⁴ The president not only determines policy, he is also concerned with shaping rhetorical possibilities to enhance the power of the executive office, about which rhetorical studies work to uncover.

Robert F. Durant of the Policy Studies Organization at American University tells us that rhetoric is the artful adaptation of language, which is key in understanding presidential address.⁵ Language acts, then, as a mechanism for demonstrating the power of political rhetoric. Policy ideas, interactions with legislators, and executive orders all become manifestations of presidential discourse and it shapes rhetorical possibilities for the president. American political scientist Richard Neustadt tells us that since some rhetorical powers are not constitutionally defined, they are a tool of persuasion.⁶ Understanding particular instances and encapsulations of various discursive acts can foster scholarly interpretation of the power of rhetoric, its extent, and its persuasive appeal. Persuasive discourse is a tool used by the executive branch to persuade the public as to the suitability of the president’s public policy.

The study of political rhetoric is a necessary endeavor to understand language as a tool of the political process, which professor of political rhetoric, Theodore Otto

Windt Jr., argues becomes a defining element between the government and the governed.⁷ From undertaking further examinations of presidential address, scholars understand how rhetoric shapes policies that stem from the executive branch, as well as how such policies are accepted, rejected, or witness limited discussion in the public sphere. Presidents both implicitly and explicitly have developed further powers that are rhetorical in nature. Zarefsky argues that an example is the presidential mandate as through the mandate, the president is both managing the government and leading the country. The rhetorical facet of the president's office has bridged the gap between public expectations and political necessity in the face of limited enumerated constitutional authority.⁸ The presidency demonstrates the scope of the executive office, as the president's power continues to grow.

Through close textual analysis, I demonstrate the ways in which President Barack Obama uses the 2011 Libyan civil war as a persuasive tool to both justify U.S. intervention in Libya to the American populous but also to promote United States hegemony and leadership, as the international community called for action to solve the crisis. Commencing with his first State of the Union address and concluding with remarks nine days after U.S. intervention in the Libyan civil war. I argue that Obama engages in two rhetorical strategies as he attempts to justify his views and actions to the American people and the world. In his first strategy, Obama promotes imperialistic notions of American identity and universal notions of democracy to justify a security threat to the U.S. in attempt to demonstrate rhetorically that economic and military action. Obama's second strategy employs a rhetorical panopticon through which Obama frames the potential for future biopolitical control. Each strategy culminates in

an application and extension of close textual analysis to uncover and fill the gap in the study of presidential address.

Presidential Address Scholarship

Characteristics of Presidential Discourse

Presidents engage in a number of strategies to promote the scope of their office and engage in persuasive acts to sway public opinion. Throughout presidential address scholarship, rhetoricians have discovered common themes and genres among speeches and speakers to demonstrate effective strategies and persuasive appeal. Rhetorical practices throughout the literature include relying on idealistic and pragmatic arguments, shifting the frame of the discussion, and promoting presidential leadership as the encapsulation of bolstered rhetorical power.

The persuasive appeal of presidential discourse is found in various characteristics and strategies that allow presidents to influence policy, their political agenda, and their constituents to agree with their policies. Denise M. Bostdorff and Steven R. Goldzwig argue that one such strategy is a speaker's reliance upon idealistic and pragmatic arguments as two fundamental and primary appeals.⁹ The president speaks to instill ideas of hope and change throughout the populous as an attempt to put the people at ease during times of conflict or to persuade them that his agenda will make their lives better. Rhetorical theorist Richard Weaver tells us that idealistic arguments help to define a particular understanding in terms of common principles among the audience of the message.¹⁰ Idealistic arguments also help to progress the executive agenda by constructing the necessity to promote one course of action over

another, as such arguments become a tool to persuade the public and Congress to follow a particular policy initiative.

Another strategy is through constructing frame-shifting arguments. For example, Zarefsky chronicles how President Bush framed the Iraq War with tyrant symbols as justification for invasion.¹¹ Bush created a different frame of reference to mobilize public acceptance for finding weapons of mass destruction and defeating terrorism. According to Zarefsky, Bush's strategy was useful in gaining acceptance for war and invasion, especially one year after taking office. A president's interests are at stake in how situations are defined and framed. Zarefsky offers the example of President Bush and his wording of partial birth abortion in domestic policy.¹² Topics like abortion prove difficult in gaining public acceptance for policy initiation. Zarefsky's argument is similar to conclusions from visual rhetoric scholars Cynthia Enrich, Holly H. Brower, Jack M. Feldman, and Howard Garland who argue that presidents who engage in more image-based rhetoric during their inaugural addresses and most significant speeches, such as pivotal foreign policy addresses and State of the Union addresses, are rated higher in charisma.¹³ Image-based discourses are an integral part of persuasion as they work to change the ways in which the public views particular arguments, like a reframing of partial birth abortion issue worked to justify its existence to various facets of the public sphere. Presidents perceived as more charismatic are perceived as more confident and effective, and, because of this, they are better able to gain popular acceptance.

Globalization has also played a role in presidential address scholarship. Lately, Lim and other scholars argue that presidential rhetoric has changed, as discourse has

become, “more anti-intellectual, more abstract, more assertive, more democratic, and more conversational.”¹⁴ Changes in presidential rhetoric are due to globalization, the new media, and the polarization of politics. Globalization has changed the political landscape drastically. No longer do a nation’s actions solely affect itself. Globalization has fostered increased dialogue with other nations, conversations that stem from the executive branch. The media has also shaped the rhetoric of the executive branch; social media, in particular, has fostered the progression of reduced electronic privacy and increased the accessibility of information. Every statement, comment, or remark made by President Obama is widely available on the Internet. The president is constantly in the limelight of the World Wide Web. Presidents can use the media to shape public attention and perception of the executive agenda. Political scientists B. Dan Wood and Jeffrey S. Peake contend that the president utilizes media attention as a rallying point to push his agenda.¹⁵ The stories and events in the media spotlight lay foundation for the trajectory of presidential rhetoric. Wood and Peake argue that the president will select to discuss successful policy endeavors that are prevalent throughout the media.¹⁶ The polarization has also changed presidential rhetorical strategies to rescue the alienated pole within his conversations with Congress. The characteristics of the change in presidential rhetoric follow the trend of emboldened charismatic rhetoric, which defines the current Obama presidency.

Another characteristic of presidential address lies in the resulting leadership. Presidential rhetorical leadership according to communication scholar, Leroy G. Dorsey, is a phenomenon exerted through talk and persuasion, yet rhetorical leadership is full of complexities that are only understood through careful analysis.¹⁷

Rhetorical leadership is a key component in molding policy, making declarations, sustaining relations with other nations, as well as mobilizing the public. Rhetorical scholar Thomas Goodnight explains, “the effectiveness of a president’s leadership in the late twentieth century depends heavily on his persuasive abilities.”¹⁸ If a president is not seen as persuasive, his policy initiatives will be less successful. Additionally, Wood argues that rhetorical leadership is multifaceted; presidents can apply their leadership unilaterally without impediment or delay.¹⁹ The enumerated power of the executive branch functions as a starting point for rhetorical leadership for the president. The president does not need permission from Congress or his cabinet to make a public address; leadership, then, facilitates the growing capacity of the executive branch. Although the scope and power of the executive was originally limited, a president’s power now grows due to its rhetorical abilities. Zarefsky argues that presidents exercise rhetorical leadership by transforming rhetorical conventions or inventing new rhetorical resources because powers are insufficient for the challenges they face.²⁰ As Commander in Chief, the president must justify and explain important decisions to the American populous. The ability to persuade the political arena is made possible due to the growing capacity of a president’s rhetorical leadership. Although the president is in the spotlight of the executive office, he must navigate the sea of politics to facilitate the utmost forms of political persuasion.

Going Public: What to Say, When (Agenda Setting at Its Finest)

The study of public address drives a discussion of the public versus private distinction that determines disclosure of presidential rhetoric to various sectors of

society. “Going public” sets the stage for the audience of presidential address. A common question asked by scholars in the field is “to whom does the president speak?” Presidential address becomes a strategic decision to release certain information to the public framed in a certain way. Some considerations include the content of the message, the audience, and the current political climate. Zarefsky argues that not all of presidential rhetoric evokes positive public responses.²¹ If a president attempts to push a particular agenda, going public becomes a prong of the strategy for that agenda’s implementation, functioning as a supplement to the policy. Political scientist Samuel Kernell tells us that the president can use rhetoric in an attempt to shape and to change the structure of public deliberation over various policy issues.²² In this sense, the president hides some issues from the public eye, while others are brought to the forefront to distract discussion from national security concerns and other similar topics or ideas. For presidents, agenda setting, election seasons, the current political climate, and foreign policy crises all guide the notion of going public.

Agenda setting plays a substantial role in presidential address, setting a context for governmental action. As a necessity for presidents, agenda setting demonstrates where and why a rhetorical focus exists. The president plays an extensive part in influencing the nation’s political agenda through utilizing his rhetorical power to justify particular policies. Political science experts Lydia Andrade and Garry Young note that the ability to influence the U.S. political agenda is one of the most valuable resources a president possesses.²³ Political influence is a means for the president to guarantee they fulfill their own agenda, while shaping U.S. policy. According to Paul Light, director of Government Studies at Brookings Institute, “the president’s agenda

works as a signal,” demonstrating the issues the president believes to be the most dire and imperative.²⁴ Presidential address focuses on the most important facets of a president’s agenda, guiding the scholarship of presidential rhetorical power.

Election seasons can also demonstrate insight into the president’s influence on agenda and public perception. Here, presidential rhetoric becomes particularly important and influential. Political scientists James N. Druckman and Justin W. Holmes argue that the president can have a substantial affect on his own approval by priming the criteria about which citizens base their approval evaluations.²⁵ Priming does not alter public perception of the president but works as a tool of persuasion to alter the importance of issues, shifting the focus to the president’s agenda. Druckman and Holmes find “clear evidence that the president can use rhetoric to influence his own approval by priming the issues that underlie approval evaluations.”²⁶ The notion of presidential influence raises questions of accountability. If the president sways voters to focus on particular views, the president must focus his policy priorities on those voters’ views. Policies must be implemented and promises must be kept, especially during election seasons.

The current political climate is another factor that guides the president’s agenda setting. Writer Herbert Kaufman argued that the president attempts to implement policy, particularly as policy is enunciated in rhetoric and realized in action.²⁷ Congress is his first hurdle in agenda setting. Presidential address signals to Congress what course of action to take, while simultaneously enlightening the public about which policies to support. Additionally, professors in political science, Andrew B. Whitford and Jeff Yates, argue that presidential rhetoric has the capacity to change

how public agents implement policy.²⁸ Public acceptance of executive policy alters the president's agenda, allowing for more control over policy promotion and implementation. Bringing awareness to the public throughout each stage of the decision making process is a constant concern for the president. Andrade and Young offer that the office possesses a higher level of autonomy regarding foreign policy issues, as the president does not necessarily need to obtain congressional or public approval.²⁹ He has discretion to the degree to which he discloses foreign policy discourse to the public.

Political context is also important when deciding to go public with information, especially when the information concerns foreign affairs. According to Andrade and Young, when international crises arise, presidents temporarily shift their focus to foreign policy.³⁰ The public must both understand the confines of the conflict and be persuaded that the course of action is beneficial for the United States, creating a double bind for the president. Either he engages in the conflict, forcing him to persuade the public to accept military intervention, which can be a difficult task, or he does not intervene, which forces a justification for allowing the conflict to continue despite U.S. global leadership norms. He must weigh the political consequences resulting from the two options, which range from public dissent, Congressional infighting, ally alienation, and consequences of a failed intervention. For international affairs, Matthew A. Baum, professor of global communication, argues an issued threat could either prevent a conflict from occurring or worsen it and risk defeat.³¹ When going public, presidents expose their policy to scrutiny, especially as foreign policy mishaps can draw much opposition. According to political scientist, Jeffrey E. Cohen,

the problems presidents encounter also tend to have a longer lasting effect on the public.³² As international conflicts and foreign policy issues are less common in public address, there are fewer issues in the public eye, allowing a more focused and broader awareness for those issues among the populous. Another contributing factor to divulging information about foreign issues concerns the risk calculus for intervention.³³ American presidents are less likely to speak publicly about potential adversaries, unless they are quite confident of success if a fight ensues. Presidents find no need to alarm the public if a conflict is not going to ensue. Foreign address offers unique insight to the president's international agenda.

Different foreign policy endeavors receive varying amounts of attention. Risks to U.S. national security, for example, have the propensity to receive more media attention and spotlight in presidential address when they are more recent or more widely known. Other endeavors are either confidential or unnecessary to tell the public. At times, presidential concerns could involve national security issues the public cannot know about or unimportant or irrelevant discourse between the president and leaders of other nations. When considering going public, analyses demonstrates an interesting relationship between the powers of rhetoric to influence policy on issues made public, public acceptance of those issues, and the president's agenda setting capacity. Going public demonstrates the influence of presidential rhetoric on public acceptance, issues made public, and presidential agenda setting.

Domestic Presidential Address

Presidential address primarily concerns domestic issues. Presidents via memos, public addresses, meetings, press releases, and the like, continuously stress certain issues in an attempt to persuade the public that the aims and goals of the current Administration are beneficial for the forward movement of the United States.

Persistence is a factor that aids in enacting domestic policies. Cohen notes that when presidents continue to promote particular policies in public address and through the media, their policies can become a reality, demonstrating the rhetorical power of the presidency.³⁴ The president socially constructs a public problem in domestic address, akin to the framing of various political issues. One particular example is the drug war. Initially, the U.S. government did not frame the fight against the cartel as a “war,” yet after the president did so, the issue became a national concern. Whitford and Yates noted the ability for the president to influence his agenda regarding discourse on the drug war through naming the issue as a war rather than another policy initiative.³⁵ Presidential rhetoric sent a clear signal to set the national agenda, leading to further arrests and success in the drug war, all while enhancing the policy-making ability of the president.³⁶ The president has more power in setting his agenda than is enumerated in the Constitution, allowing him to make his policy priorities a reality.

One of the primary methods used to study domestic presidential address lies in generic criticism. Rhetoric scholars Karolyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson argue that generic analysis is justified if the meaning and purpose of the work are “illuminated by struggling with the evidence to determine the work’s best clarification.”³⁷ Generic criticism works to enlighten scholars about common patterns

and occurrences throughout rhetorical acts. Campbell and Jamieson tend to denote genre as a “constellation of recognizable forms bound together by an internal dynamic.”³⁸ A reciprocal and dynamic relationship emerges, demonstrating the ways in which genre is possible. Jamieson argues that genre can function as a deductive approach, as it measures a text against a pre-existing model of genres.³⁹ For others, like Campbell, generic analysis is inductive; scholars assume no prior model and a genre instead emerges.⁴⁰ Despite the approach or method, a genre is situational; unique situations, such as inaugural addresses, shed light on the similarities and characteristics of genres to understand persuasive appeal and intent of orators like American presidents.⁴¹

Scholars recognize and describe the characteristics of generic criticism. Campbell and Jamieson argue that genre criticism must examine multiple speeches and forms in order to draw accurate conclusions about the categories of a particular genre.⁴² Analyzing a series of discourses has the propensity to denote the significant rhetorical similarities that exist, allowing the conclusion to create or to exemplify an existing genre. Campbell and Jamieson note several constants in defining a genre. The characteristics include a justification of the generic classification by the critical enlightenment it produces, generic criticism discussed as means of close textual analysis, that it is a complex combination of stylistic, substantive, and situational elements, and generic criticism reveals a unique positionality of a rhetorical act among the various generic classifications.⁴³ Political scientist Richard A. Joslyn also offers guidelines for the consensus of generic criticism, denoting four characteristics as well. His guidelines include the necessity of a consideration of the rhetorical situation as a

starting point, a comparison of more than one rhetor, an understanding of the rhetorical choice, creativity, imitation, and similarity, and finally an explicit advancement of a set of rules for guiding rhetors and critics to understand the true essence of the genre.⁴⁴ Though some discrepancies exist between scholars about the nature and characteristics of genre, each idea outlined has the propensity to add to the study of rhetorical criticism to understand rhetorical acts.

Despite their rules and constraints, genres are also dynamic. Over time, they adapt and change to particular situations, again demonstrating the situational essence of rhetoric.⁴⁵ They change and develop as determined by actors' responses to recurrent situations. Generic scholars Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas N. Huckin tell us that genres also give weight to an interpretive framework between communicative activity and agency.⁴⁶ The orator of a speech gains a sense of agency and rhetorical power through his/her discourse, and generic analysis allows for an embodiment of this agency and power. Berkenkotter and Huckin also note that throughout generic analysis, "recurring situations resemble each other in certain ways and only to a certain degree."⁴⁷ Individual actors have their own socially created perceptions of the world, and the ways in which actors discuss their perceptions demonstrate the varying perceptions actors have. Generic analysis has the propensity to shed light on how recurring situations are addressed and re-negotiated throughout different spheres of society, especially in domestic presidential address. The establishment of generic analysis serves to uncover how a deviation from a genre works to uncover new rhetorical strategies in public address.

A common means for analyzing public address is through genre and generic criticism. Presidential and political genre holds much significance throughout the field. Throughout governmental discourse, patterns of political rhetoric exist, which give way to understanding the ways in which presidents, congresspersons, and other political members may deviate from what is classified as a political genre. Joslyn argues that the situation and ceremonial occasion are crucial for such an understanding.⁴⁸ Campbell and Jamieson discuss various political genres, and in particular, demonstrate the confines of the presidential inaugural as genre. They discuss four major elements that constitute this genre, which include a distinctive type of epideictic rhetoric that comes into being, a characterization of the epideictic character, understanding the inauguration as a rite of investiture, and by the inaugural tradition in and of itself.⁴⁹ Inaugural address is only one genre of presidential discourse that helps to define the power of persuasion among presidential addresses. When generally applied to presidential discourse, Campbell and Jamieson explain, genre can emphasize “continuity within change and treats recurrence as evidence that symbolic institutional needs are at least as powerful as the force of events in shaping the rhetoric of any historical period.”⁵⁰ As a tool of analyzing public address, generic criticism offers unique insight to strategies, intent, and effect of presidential discourse in different categories within the current literature base, although it will not be used as the primary method to analyze Obama’s rhetoric on Libya.

Much research exists on domestic policy rhetoric, particularly as many State of the Union speeches and analyses focus on domestic issues. In domestic policy discourses, presidents discuss the economy more than other domestic issues. Wood

argues that the president has a strategic incentive to discuss the economy in public address.⁵¹ When focusing on the economy, the president has the propensity to sway public opinion in his favor. The president is the rhetorical leader of the economy; the economy is one recent issue the public uniquely follows, particularly during election cycles. Throughout their research, Wood, Owens, and Durham assess that speeches focusing on the economy tend to set a tone for the economy and federal involvement; it functions as an indirect solution to aid the economy.⁵² Economic issues affect every American on a daily basis, ensuring that the public not only desires economic discussion, but also expects discussion on the economy as this area is considered one of the two most important areas of leadership for presidents, as per Wood, Owens, and Durham's analysis.⁵³ Presidents face disincentives to address foreign policy in the public sphere, which is why domestic rhetoric is more common. Domestic policy leanings are the primary topic of discussion, first, because of the fear of failed foreign attempts and questionable public acceptance.⁵⁴ Discussing domestic issues possesses fewer risks for the president. Lawrence R. Jacobs and colleagues argue future research is needed to understand the issues that presidents emphasize in their public policy discourse.⁵⁵ Knowing the particular focus of presidential domestic policy discourse sheds light on presidential policy prerogatives, to understand strategic choices within, and persuasive appeal of, presidential public address.

The Scope of Presidential Foreign Address Scholarship

Though presidential address tends to focus on domestic issues, scholars need to study presidential foreign address to understand the ramifications of foreign policy

discourse on presidential approval, foreign relations, and public support. Wood and Peake argue that throughout history the executive branch has been the primary broker in U.S. foreign policy.⁵⁶ As a figurehead for U.S. international affairs, much of the information the public learns about U.S. foreign initiatives comes from presidential address. A large portion of the president's responsibilities fall into the category of foreign policy, yet current scholarship in foreign presidential address focuses on particular crises and international hot button issues. If a president's foreign policy initiative is successful, the discourse has beneficial implications for the executive as his speech can create a rallying effect for the nation, gain further acceptance of the executive agenda, or prevent backlash for further international intervention. If the mission is unsuccessful, the public will remember the failure for limited but prolonged periods of time, tainting future executive action. Foreign policy leadership effects last longer than domestic or unpopular policy initiatives.⁵⁷ The public tends to remember foreign entanglements due to their scarcity as compared to domestic initiatives, as is seen with the Bush years. The aftermath of September 11 and the resultant war became an event many Americans continue to remember. The power of rhetorical leadership may grow because of foreign policy rhetoric concerning successful policy initiatives. Tracing the scholarship of presidential foreign address offers unique insight to the scope of his rhetorical leadership in foreign affairs.

One of the ways in which scholars discuss foreign policy is through genre. In particular, Campbell and Jamieson discuss war rhetoric as a fundamental facet of presidential address. Presidents seek Congressional support for initiating military action, which demonstrates the institutionalization of the genre. Initiating the use of

the military transforms the president to the commander in chief, which denotes an important shift in the types and characteristics of rhetoric that comes from the executive branch. Campbell and Jamieson argue that the president's role as commander in chief becomes central in the persuasive purpose of presidential messages to Congress concerning wartime engagement.⁵⁸ Presidents justify intervention messages through chronicle or narrative, which contains the argument for warranting intervention.⁵⁹ Presidential rhetoric surrounding a crisis, particularly a crisis in which the United States mediates and gains national attention; the crisis serves as the spotlight and moment in time for the President to gain public acceptance of his actions. According to political scientist, Joseph Nye, Jr., the framing of the presidential agenda determines its persuasion.⁶⁰ The establishment of war rhetoric has the ability to change third party perceptions, granting the argument legitimacy. Military action becomes the only appropriate and accepted response. Another important facet of presidential war rhetoric is the particular framing of the enemy. As was noted by Edwards, presidential rhetoric has the ability to frame the enemy in such a way to create acceptance of international action. Although an effective strategy, demonizing the enemy has significant implications, such as incentivizing retaliation, losing allies, or harming domestic public policy.⁶¹ As an example, many roots of current anti-American sentiment can be witnessed through the inception of the Iraq war. War rhetoric as a genre denotes the importance of foreign policy address scholarship.

As with any genre, particular characteristics signify its classification. For presidential war rhetoric, Campbell and Jamieson illustrate five common

characteristics that represent the continuity and adaptation within this rhetorical genre.⁶² First, the messages are deliberative, particularly as military intervention is an important decision for presidents during times of international conflict. Second, “forceful intervention is justified through a chronicle or narrative from which argumentative claims are drawn.”⁶³ Presidents create narratives through national addresses, attempting to sway the public to accept the military intervention as a necessity. Third, war rhetoric urges the audience toward “unanimity of purpose and total commitment.”⁶⁴ Sweeping public acceptance becomes an ultimate goal of the rhetorical acts. Rhetorical justification throughout the presidential war genre works to stifle dissent and to unify the nation for sustained action.⁶⁵ The fourth characteristic concerns the justification of the use of force. Presidents legitimize their action through the institutional delegation of their power as the commander in chief.⁶⁶ The last characteristic that signifies the genre of presidential war rhetoric is the role of strategic misrepresentations.⁶⁷ Adding dramatic narratives and slight mischaracterizations of international events can add to the persuasive appeal of the justification for intervention. Campbell and Jamieson argue that dramatic narrative has the ability to spur the audience to “join a just cause in defense of humanity and civilization.”⁶⁸ Patriotism becomes an ultimate goal. Essentially, as with any genre, the five characteristics are not the end-all be-all of presidential war rhetoric. The categories are not static, as they encourage comparisons that deviate from the established views of the genre, allowing for the interpretation of current rhetoric to transform these characteristics and add to the understanding of presidential war rhetoric.

In order to understand war rhetoric fully within the confines of presidential address, it is necessary to conduct a survey of foreign policy discourse since the Cold War. The Cold War laid the foundation for decades of presidential foreign address. Rhetorician Martin J. Medhurst notes that during the Cold War presidents defined their threat environment through discursive constructions of the U.S.S.R. Cold War rhetoric, even when discussed today, denotes rhetoric of polarization, highlighting the demonic force that was communism.⁶⁹ During the war, President Truman was iconic of the Presidential Governmental Model of Leadership as he sought to utilize the executive to stop foreign attacks, according to foreign policy analysts Glen P. Hastedt and Anthony J. Eksterowicz.⁷⁰ Truman framed McCarthyism as a necessary endeavor for national security, framing the enemy, communism, as that which the United States must destroy. Cold War rhetoric created an “us versus them” mentality that permeated all facets of U.S. foreign policy discourse, promoting the U.S. as democratic and open as compared to the communist other. Though much of the rhetoric in foreign policy establishes an “other” against which the U.S. must act to contain, the “other” shifts from president to president, especially after the Cold War. The discourse of the Cold War laid the foundation for future foreign policy rhetoric.

The Korean War is another war that denotes rhetorical significance through the speech acts the war produced. For President Eisenhower, these years represented a hot war in the middle of the ideological conflict resulting from the Cold War. Medhurst explains that Eisenhower’s rhetoric embodied the mind frame of the era.⁷¹ Eisenhower’s speeches, once establishing his argument, utilize Cold War rhetoric and discourse. Medhurst argues that Eisenhower’s “I shall go to Korea” speech in

particular illuminated ideological notions of Cold War rhetoric, including ideas of atheism, communism, barbarism, violence, and that the enemy was active.⁷² Through his discourse, Eisenhower demonstrated to the public that he was a military analyst who knew the necessary direction for the nation; yet, scholarship regarding Eisenhower and Korea tend to discuss only one speech act, which is indicative of the gap in the literature base on presidential foreign address.

The ideological conflict of capitalism versus communism continued through the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon Administrations. Capitalism promotes the ideals of freedom, opportunity, and enterprise—all facets of American foreign and domestic policy initiatives. President Kennedy utilized these terms and idealism throughout his rhetoric to justify intervention in Vietnam. He characterized the struggle as a practical necessity to defend freedom. Bostdorff and Goldzwig note that to fight the ideological war against communism, protecting Vietnam was a necessary first step.⁷³ For Kennedy, winning Vietnam signified that freedom. Zarefsky tells us that President Johnson aimed to change the context in which his constituents thought about their social world.⁷⁴ For Johnson, war and ideological crises continued as themes in public address. He framed domestic issues—such as poverty—through the lens of foreign concepts using a metaphor of war. Doing so, Zarefsky argues, was a deliberate attempt to rally the people and mobilize support, as war rearranges rhetorical ground by shifting the public's attention, thus creating a sense of urgency and a rallying effect to gain public support for the president's agenda.⁷⁵ War is a sensitive subject for most of the populous, and thus requires careful framing if presidents are to gain public acceptance, particularly for presidents not expected to engage in war-like activities.

For Nixon, the public expected a rhetorical presidency with a larger focus in foreign policy, which was different from previous presidents. According to Jacobs and colleagues, Nixon encountered high-profile international issues while in office, including conducting military operations in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, tenuous relations with China, and ushering an era of détente with the Soviet Union.⁷⁶ Coupled with the influence of the media, Nixon tended to enact policy to follow-up with his rhetoric surrounding foreign policy that found similarities with other characteristics Cold War rhetoric, like discussions of violence as compared to the enemy.

Presidents Ford and Carter existed in what Goodnight, Jacobs, Neumann, and Coe call the “post-imperial presidency.” Imperial rhetoric was out of fashion.⁷⁷ Instead, values of modesty, openness, and integrity marked the era. In addition to focusing on idealistic principles, Rico Neumann and Kevin Cole argue that President Carter limited aggressive stances in his foreign policy rhetoric in an attempt to gain public support.⁷⁸ The values of the post-imperial presidency extended to the Reagan presidency as well. President Reagan stressed the American dream, utilized idealistic rhetoric, and attempted to empathize with his constituents.⁷⁹ Specifically in the realm of foreign policy, Goodnight argues, Reagan frequently used blaming, creating an enemy and actor at fault for international problems.⁸⁰ Many of the rhetorical strategies seen throughout the post-imperial presidency continued in future Administrations, which demonstrate the necessity to analyze rhetorical strategies in the current political era.

The Gulf War serves as an iconic representation of President George H. W. Bush’s rhetoric throughout his presidency. The war set the stage for media coverage of

international conflicts until the present. It was the first war that featured 24-hour coverage on CNN. Communication scholar Rachel Martin Harlow notes that presidential rhetoric gains significance as the president persuades us to see a conflict, issue, or idea, as he wants us to see it.⁸¹ With constant news coverage, Bush had to frame the war in a particular way to justify it to the American people, especially as the Cold War was coming to an end. In order to accomplish his task, Bush centered his war rhetoric on the agents of the war as characters in a drama.⁸² Harlow tells us that President Bush used devil terms, denouncing foreign activity through dialectics of legality versus illegality and unity versus disunity.⁸³ Each tactic and rhetorical strategy created another us versus them mentality, but in the post-Cold War era, it was not founded on the battle between communism and capitalism. Instead, some justifications for war came from the necessity of promoting democracy and maintaining U.S. imperialist interests.

The Clinton Presidency demonstrates interesting changes and goals in presidential rhetoric as he resided in the post-Cold War era of presidential address. President Clinton, along with President George H. W. Bush, spoke more about the economy than other presidents did; Clinton's focus on domestic issues in his discourse, as per Wood's analysis, forced a hole in foreign policy address scholarship.⁸⁴ Clinton worked to move further away from the previous era of Cold War rhetoric by restructuring foreign policy discourse with a domestic focus. Clinton's transformation is evident through his discourse on globalization, akin to Edward's analysis. The president viewed the post-Cold War world as an inevitable result of globalization, meddling in domestic and international affairs.⁸⁵ The post-Cold

War era produced a different political climate and commitment to global leadership. The new threat other presidents framed in terms of the “communist other” was now gone. Clinton’s foreign policy “enemy” was underwritten and changing, as compared to the Cold War era enemy.⁸⁶ For Clinton, there was no explicit “other” to be named as an enemy, as he encountered dynamic issues like ethnic and religious violence, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, AIDS, and others. Each issue altered his discourse and the framing of the “other” the U.S. must eliminate. Additionally, the world witnessed conflict in both Bosnia and Somalia, creating a space for presidential discourse in the Clinton Administration.⁸⁷ Akin to other presidents, Clinton labeled foreign leaders in these international conflicts as the enemy, creating an “us versus them” mentality through his discourse.

Much of the scholarship on Clinton’s rhetoric focuses on his style. Peter Suedfeld, psychologist at the University of British Columbia argues Clinton’s cognitive style of speaking, based on complex arguments, was a linchpin for his political outcomes; he waded through the complex issues to cover various ideological bases and diverse attitudes, in an attempt to persuade his audience.⁸⁸ As a strategy in his style, Clinton focused on presidential exemplars in his speeches, similar to other presidents. He referenced other presidents, akin to President Bush’s references to presidents during WWII. Political scientist Lara M. Brown argues that Clinton’s historical references worked as persuasive political symbols through identification with prior presidential rhetoric.⁸⁹ Here, symbolism works to demonstrate presidential rhetoric in ideological ways, adding to Clinton’s persuasive appeal. Additionally, communication scholar John M. Murphy notes Clinton’s use of metaphors as a

rhetorical tool during his presidency.⁹⁰ Clinton used a variety of language and imagery, easily understood by all, to increase his persuasive ability. In the foreign policy realm, Clinton utilized the idea of a journey for Americans to embark upon, painting a vivid image in the hearts and minds of all Americans to gain their acceptance for particular policy initiatives, which denotes a nuanced shift from other presidents. Though the use of metaphor is not unique to Clinton, scholars must address the study of metaphor in foreign policy presidential address for other presidents in the post-Cold War era.

The transformation of Cold War rhetoric to the post-Cold War era continued with President George W. Bush. In the new era, nuanced facets of Cold War rhetoric still arose to normalize nuclear weapons as a means of preserving U.S. security interests in a changing climate of globalization. Through his analysis, communication professor Bryan C. Taylor argues that President Bush utilized narratives of national identity and purpose to justify securitization of nuclear stockpiles and the normalization of these weapons, demonstrating the urgency of his rhetorical focus.⁹¹ Bush utilized more of a narrative style, creating a distinction between himself and Clinton. Taylor notes that negotiations surrounding nuclear rhetoric are an attempt to rid the world of Cold War remnants, which is a topic of discourse that had been constant for the last several Administrations.⁹² Another transformation comes with communication scholars Stephen John Hartnett and Jennifer Mercieca's discussion of the death of presidential rhetoric during the George W. Bush Administration. They characterize the phenomenon as caused by two factors: the white noise currently experienced by the overburdening of mass media and the enhancement of the

executive branch.⁹³ Harnett and Mercieca characterize the post-rhetorical presidency as:

an anti-democratic condition wherein presidential discourse is not meant to mobilize, educate, and uplift the masses; post-rhetorical presidential discourse attempts to confuse public opinion, prevent citizen action, and frustrate citizen deliberation. Under these new conditions, the president defines fantasy, not reality; he numbs citizens rather than energizing them; instead of informing and teaching, he chooses to dumb down and stupefy.⁹⁴

To justify acts like the Patriot Act, Bush needed to enact a politics of fear, depicting a reality in which to attain justice post-September 11.

The Bush Administration laid the foundation for a transformation in presidential rhetoric in the foreign policy realm. Douglas Kellner argues that one characteristic of the enhanced executive branch under the Bush Administration was “Bushspeak” and the inevitable politics of lying that ensued as Bush engaged in fantasy-esque rhetoric.⁹⁵ Kellner’s analysis is similar to that found by Harnett and Mercieca through their discussion of the post-rhetorical presidency. While some feel that Bush resurrected verbal certainty in American politics, Roderick P. Hart and Jay P. Childers argued the contrary. According to Hart and Childers, Bush inherently was vague in his rhetoric.⁹⁶ In addition, Coleen Elizabeth Kelley argues that the gap between the self-glorifying rhetoric embodied by Bush—and the reality experienced—continued to grow as he engaged in foreign issues.⁹⁷ Bush’s presidency marks an age of political deception and a growing sense of U.S. imperialism with the necessity for power projection abroad. Bush left promises unfilled, which led to disappointed voters, dissatisfied international supporters, and ineffective policies.⁹⁸ During the Bush

years, a presidency of imperialism and deception emerged as a situationally determined response to the current state of affairs during his administration.

The attacks on September 11, 2001 marked a fundamental shift in U.S. foreign policy and, consequently, the rhetorical strategies utilized by the executive branch as the nation entered a state of war. Kellner tell us that President Bush utilized a Manichean discourse of sorts to construct the “other” that he must eliminate.⁹⁹ A binary of good versus evil emerged. His construction of the other allowed for a targeting of the enemy to justify U.S. intervention and retaliation. He associated terrorists with evil, calling the attacks on the World Trade Center an act of war.¹⁰⁰ His words served as the inauguration of a war between good and evil. The battle was not necessarily about communism and capitalism, but the conflict certainly revolved around themes of democracy promotion. The conflict possessed imperialistic undertones, as well as the reduction of the threat of weapons of mass destruction and securitization for the United States. Bush utilized what Kellner labels as cowboy metaphors, such as his desire for Osama Bin Laden being brought to justice, “dead or alive.”¹⁰¹ Kellner also recognizes the continuance of a war metaphor throughout the entirety of the Iraq conflict.¹⁰² Kelley calls this rhetorical style an instance of “protofacism,” which deconstructs democratic rhetoric, leading to rhetoric grounded in religious and crisis discourse to sway the public.¹⁰³ The story was unremitting, adding to the strength of the image and therefore the chance of public acceptance of the future, inevitable intervention. The attacks on September 11 laid a foundation for future foreign policy rhetoric demonstrated by the Obama Administration.

The study of presidential address in the realm of foreign affairs provides unique insight to the scholarship of the field. The transitioning points between various presidents and the strategies employed provide a foundation for understanding future presidential discourse in the realm of foreign affairs. Tracing rhetoric since the Cold War provides a snapshot into the various discursive strategies of former presidents, allowing for comparisons and contradictions that could be witnessed throughout analyzing the foreign policy discourse of the Obama Administration. As scholarship since the Cold War is comprehensive, scholars must continue this trend to fulfill a necessary gap in the literature focusing on the Obama presidency.

The Rhetoric of President Barack Obama

*“Obama is substance and symbol.”*¹⁰⁴

Domestic Public Address

Little scholarly research exists regarding the oratory of President Obama, but a majority of the literature focuses on his years as an Illinois Senator and his election rhetoric during the 2008 campaign. Prior to Obama’s election, political scientist Clarence Lusane speculated about the ways in which a possible Obama presidency could alter American foreign policy.¹⁰⁵ Historian and philosopher Molefi Kete Asante asserts that Obama engaged in more visionary and idealistic agenda issues prior to stepping into the White House.¹⁰⁶ Asante explains how Obama’s 2008 campaign rested on notions of change and idealism, which are typical soft power ideals. Additionally, most scholarship on Obama tends to follow either a single speech or particular facets of his election rhetoric. Communication scholars Kevin Coe and

Michael Reitzes examined 2008 election campaign discourse, finding that Obama focused on hope, change, and unity across divisions of partisan and race through the utilization of policy appeals, thematic appeals, morality appeals, and factious appeals.¹⁰⁷ Obama utilized many of these themes for a few years post the election. According to Jonathan Rynhold, professor at George Washington University, Obama rhetorically bridged divides among partisan boundaries in the U.S. throughout his campaign rhetoric rather than maintain the good versus evil approach of the Bush Administration.¹⁰⁸ Obama promoted an ideal of community and unity among the populous, rhetorically constructing the leadership role he was to fulfill. Research must extend the trajectory of Obama's initial rhetorical strategies through his two Administrations and across different forms of discourse.

President Obama had to battle a wall of opposition before entering the White House. Communication scholar Robert E. Patterson considers the opposition to be one that rhetorically marginalized Obama as an elitist, interloper, antagonist, and a racial outsider.¹⁰⁹ The wall constituted hardships incurred during his presidency, as many were not yet ready for a transition to a democratic president. Trevor McCrisken, professor at the University of Warwick, explains how each label created difficulty for Obama, as he had to reinvent the narrative of the War on Terror while simultaneously gaining public approval.¹¹⁰ The Obama Administration mitigated opposition through various campaign strategies. Analyst Stephanie Hammer argues that during campaign speeches, Obama addressed the broadest coalition of voters possible through his rhetoric.¹¹¹ In each speech, Obama appealed to the largest audience possible. Communication scholar Judy L. Isaken notes that his use of audience analysis helped

Obama's momentum.¹¹² John Sargis contends that Obama frames the United States military as a friendly barbarian in an attempt to promote U.S. prosperity.¹¹³ The above scholars' findings indicate that since his stepping into the office of the presidency, Obama battled opposition in ways that denote possible shifts to the soft power strategies employed during his first election campaign.

Much of the scholarship on President Obama's rhetoric since he has taken office tends to focus on domestic issues. Rhetorician Ronald C. Arnett's analysis of Obama's commencement address demonstrates a focus on civic rhetoric that addresses both provincial and cosmopolitan moral demands.¹¹⁴ Such rhetoric tends to encompass as many viewpoints as possible, particularly when addressing national issues. Peter Suedfeld, Ryan W. Cross, and Jelena Brcic's analysis of Obama's radio addresses is indicative of his focus on domestic rather than foreign affairs, as well.¹¹⁵ Obama's attention to domestic issues illuminates several characteristics seen throughout his discourse.

The notion of inclusion in the American dream is one of the characteristics apparent throughout Obama's domestic discourse. Speeches tend to discuss vivid images like the American dream, which acts as constant reminders to reinforce the ideal among the American populous while simultaneously giving credit to Obama's policies. Political scientists Keith B. Jenkins and Grant Cos argue Obama has a tendency to address his audience through a moral voice of inclusion, which is indicative of an American dream attainable by all.¹¹⁶ Discourse that promotes inclusion allows Obama to get the attention of the public, particularly when his rhetoric uses a call and response framework that could mobilize and rally popular

support, as per communication scholar Sheena Howard's analysis.¹¹⁷ Obama's speech acts become a contemporary vision, adapted from the changing political arena to create a sense of national identity. Because of the vision employed, Deborah F. Atwater notes that the public could now rally behind an attainable American Dream, despite economic hardship.¹¹⁸ Obama also used a shared history and cultural meaning throughout his discourse.¹¹⁹ Though he may create an "us versus them" dichotomy in his addresses, Obama has incentive and a sense of belonging with the "us" he rhetorically constructs.¹²⁰ Themes of the American dream and ideas of inclusion are common throughout the beginning of the Obama presidency; whether he continues the trend must be addressed.

Another characteristic of Obama's domestic discourse focuses on his use of metaphors. Patterson notes Obama's use of binary and metaphors as a persuasive tool; metaphors aid the sense of inclusion through using words like stability, unification, togetherness, and order aided Obama's agency as president.¹²¹ Each metaphor serves as a means for Obama to gather public support; he attempted to bring together the polarized nation. The metaphors orient the public to Obama's point of view.¹²² Particularly, Atwater argues that Obama's rhetoric of hope throughout the campaign and into the first years of his presidency acted as a symbol to demonstrate a common set of values across the country.¹²³ Discourse of hope created a sense of faith in Obama's policy initiatives. Thematically, Obama focused on community, achievement, and called for coherence among all, asking for acceptance of identity, according to Mark Lawrence McPhail and Roger McPhail.¹²⁴ Focusing on these ideals works to create a sense of belonging for the public, to help the public understand

policy positions, and encourage the public to be more willing to work with governmental policies. Metaphors work to make Obama's goals of inclusion possible.

Much of the scholarship surrounding the rhetoric of the Obama Administration discusses ideas of Afrocentricism and race, particularly as his domestic discourse continued to break down the wall of opposition he encountered upon entering the executive office. Discussing race allowed him to utilize metaphors as a way to break down the racist barriers he encountered while in office, like accusations of pandering to the African American population or the notion that he was elected only because of his race. Obama as the first African American president holds much significance for the history and idea of race in the United States. African American literature scholar Linda F. Selzer characterizes Obama's personality as a "cosmopolitan blackness."¹²⁵ Obama demonstrates a critical standpoint between nationalism, ethnicity, and cultural hybridity. Howard's analyses of Obama's discourse show that the president has the ability to communicate effectively across cultures.¹²⁶ Again, the ideas of inclusion arise throughout his domestic discourse to gain acceptance of a large audience. Scholars Felicia R. Walker and Viece Kuykendall discuss a generative power of words, or *nommo*, which is unique to African American speakers. Facilitating *nommo* is a unique strategy and rhetorical tool to create reality, according to Walker and Kuykendall.¹²⁷ Obama utilizes African orality and storytelling through his discourse as a means to communicate across cultures. Other effective strategies when discussing race arise between discussions of historical realities and symbolic functions, according to McPhail and McPhail¹²⁸ Obama's use of metaphors, again, allows for imagery and the potentiality of a better future for equality and racial discrimination. In addition,

Isaken's analyses of Obama's speeches, including "A More Perfect Union," demonstrate a shift in Obama's rhetoric from multiculturalism to one that is post-racial, which she notes as Obama engaging in discourse of critical race theory.¹²⁹ Though distinctions or disagreements may exist about whether the U.S. is in post-racial society, Obama's discourse was race-neutral, as he engaged in an inconsistent approach to race issues, at times eliminating race from his speeches while other times directly combating race issues.

An additional characteristic of Obama's initial rhetorical strategy of inclusion is his transparency as the executive. Legal scholar and political scientist Cary Coglianese argues that Obama took numerous steps during his first 100 days to allow transparency in government, including policies such as "Sunlight before Signing," which allowed the public to view non-emergency policies five days prior to a scheduled signing into law so the public had time to review and comment on the policies.¹³⁰ The inclusion of the public into governmental affairs is an idealistic, democratic initiative witnessed during the first Obama Administration. The president has renegotiated the amount and types of information disclosed to the public, which offers unique insight when analyzing Obama's addresses to the nation. The inclusion and exclusion of information is a rhetorical strategy to be explored further, especially in particular foreign policy instances, such as with the Libyan Civil War. Despite his goals of transparency in government, there exists a discrepancy between principle and practice; many analysts are critical of Obama's transparency as the executive, particularly so in the Libyan conflict, as accusations of a violation of the War Powers Act are looming in the political atmosphere. In sum, this affects the Obama

Administration “going public,” as the ways in which he discusses issues, and the rhetorical strategies employed, carry more significance than the content as transparency in government proliferates in the digital age.

Other domestic discourses follow trends from the Bush Administration. When specifically examining issues of immigration, scholars Margaret E. Dorsey and Miguel Diaz-Barriga note Obama’s platform rested on three general subjects: border security, employer accountability, and earned citizenship.¹³¹ Notions of security are present in both administrations, but a continued focus on legal issues illuminates further connections between the rhetoric of the Bush and Obama Administrations. Obama uses what Dorsey and Diaz-Barriga call “terms of legality” such as “illegal immigrants” and the need to “show respect for the law.”¹³² Terms of legality signify policy and a binary that the populous understands: citizenship versus non-citizen. The use of metaphors to discuss immigration has continued since the Bush administration, and descriptions of legality help to paint vivid pictures for the populous. Following Bush trends in his rhetoric, Obama frames his ideas as motive imagery, allowing for the advancement and achievement of U.S. security, akin to the Bush Administration.

Published scholarship that considers Obama’s rhetorical strategies focuses on his campaign and domestic policy rhetoric. None illuminates Obama’s rhetorical strategies in his foreign policy discourse. Because scholarship about President Obama’s foreign policy rhetoric is limited, the need exists to expand the analysis of his discourse concerning international affairs.

President Obama and Foreign Policy

Much research exists in the realms of political science and international affairs, yet scholars have conducted little research specifically about President Obama's foreign policy rhetoric. Explicitly looking at policy initiatives early in the Obama administration, Sneehalata Panda notes the similarities in his foreign policy as compared to the prior Administrations.¹³³ Rhetorical choices embedded in policies, like the containment of the "axis of evil," remain unchanged.¹³⁴ Without rhetorical alternatives, the Obama Administration continues some of the same rhetorical approaches to the nations of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as the Bush Administration. Additionally, the focus of Obama's foreign policy discourse is important to discover and analyze. Public affairs scholar George Katito notes that Obama's rhetoric has shifted the tone of U.S. policy towards African political culture by taking a harsher, more critical stance against the negative facets like corruption and poor governance.¹³⁵ The idealistic nature of Obama's election and domestic discourse has transformed in the foreign policy realm. Obama's style contains a sense of chastising rhetoric to pinpoint the root cause of human rights abuses and inequity across the continent, akin to Katito's analysis.

In order to analyze Obama's foreign policy rhetoric and policy, one must understand hegemony and power projection within his oratory. Power is a contested concept in international affairs, as is obvious in differing definitions from scholars like Foucault and Nye, Jr. Understanding the facets of power are important to comprehend how and why nations will act in response to international problems. For Antonio Gramsci, Marxian Italian philosopher, hegemony functions through the supremacy of

a social group's domination over other groups of society, through a combination of force and consent.¹³⁶ Hegemony becomes similar to a common sense consensus through indirect imperial rule. A policy-oriented conceptualization of power includes discussions of what, how, where, and when, whereas relational power involves commanding change, controlling an agenda, and establishing preferences over policy initiatives.¹³⁷ According to Nye, Jr., the United States tends to focus on what he calls the "first face of power," utilizing threats or rewards as an attempt to change behavior.¹³⁸ The use of a threats and rewards system of foreign policy is reflected throughout American political culture, demonstrating the inevitability of realist tendencies in international politics. Hegemony is multifaceted. Hegemonic discourse and action consists of soft, hard, and smart power—all culminating to maintain the United States' primacy of global leadership.¹³⁹ Changing the trajectory of these types of power are the growing influences of entities like non-state actors, which cause a diffusion of power from the states to these new organizations and groups. Hegemony for Obama becomes akin to the changing enemy for Clinton; hegemony becomes a multifaceted and nuanced cog in the foreign policy machine.

Presidents attempt rhetorically to justify the continuation of United States hegemony. Edwards discusses the rhetorical framing of hegemony as an attempt to validate the use of force internationally. Dozens of times, according to Edwards, presidents have constructed images of the enemy as a savage and the United States as civilized to demonize the enemy and justify intervention, such as seen with Clinton and the Bosnia conflict.¹⁴⁰ The dichotomies become effective tools of persuasion. When presidents cast the enemy in a negative light, they establish the necessity for

some kind of intervention.¹⁴¹ Edwards also argues that other times, presidents utilize specific reasons to mediate international affairs and conflicts, either to civilize the “savage” world or to maintain the American dream.¹⁴² The images of civilization and savagery serve as rhetorical justifications for military intervention, although other alternatives exist, including diplomacy and negotiation.¹⁴³ Many within the U.S. populous prefer to limit engagement in war abroad, demonstrating a propensity for desiring peaceful resolutions via deliberation and diplomacy rather than military confrontation. Despite the intent of their strategy, presidents tend utilize addresses to the nation or to Congress to justify hegemonic expansion abroad.

A primary influence within the discussion of hegemony and primacy concerns both hard and soft power initiatives. The United States’ use of hard power is an important factor to protect allies and allegiances across the international community, although Nye, Jr. argues hard power is less focused upon now due to the financial burden and internal constraints to wielding military power.¹⁴⁴ Economic stability is not a constant in the current global community, forcing particular international responses and actions to promote hegemonic influence. Through what Nye, Jr. calls “coercive diplomacy,” military resources have the potential to change behavioral outcomes, whether through the utilization of those resources or their perceptual existence.¹⁴⁵ Despite this, military force and combat proficiency are not sufficient to create an understanding of power. Similarly, soft power is not the only effective solution to international problems.¹⁴⁶ Soft Power depends on credibility, and in a growing global sphere of anti-U.S. sentiment, soft power cannot be as effective. According to Nye, Jr., soft power rests on its culture, political values, and its foreign policies.¹⁴⁷ When seen

as illegitimate, the international community views diplomacy or other soft power strategies as ineffective as a moral authority or persuasive tool for behavioral change. Both hard and soft power initiatives play a role in the types of discourse presidents use to discuss their actions.

Smart power, in particular, is a concept worth addressing when considering the trajectory of United States primacy as hard power or soft power alone cannot maintain U.S. hegemony, especially during the Obama presidency. According to Nye, Jr., smart power combines the coercion of hard power with the power of persuasion and attraction of soft power.¹⁴⁸ As a strategy, smart power becomes a more suitable means of preserving sovereignty and security for the United States. According to Nye, Jr., smart power is about finding ways to “combine resources into successful strategies in the new context of power diffusion and rise above the rest.”¹⁴⁹ Strategically, smart power involves a questioning of preferred outcomes, available resources, contextual backing, the positions and preferences of the targets of influence attempts, forms of power most likely to succeed, and the probability of overall success. Analyses of presidential rhetoric and strategies has the propensity to shed light on these questions, demonstrating the effectiveness of smart power in the global sphere and the strategies utilized to achieve effective smart power influences. Nye, Jr., also discusses a successful course of action for continued United States primacy, concluding that a smart power strategy would include choosing among power behaviors—command power or co-optive power—in different situations and then adjusting tactics so that they reinforce each other.¹⁵⁰ Analyzing the smart power trajectory during the Obama

presidency is important to understand how and if the U.S. rhetorically can maintain its primacy in the global sphere despite counterbalancing nations and non-state actors.

An important discussion lies in the relationship between President Obama and United States hegemony. Panda claims that the U.S. continues to dominate the internal affairs of others as a focal point of U.S. foreign policy.¹⁵¹ The idealist, democratic, liberal president witnessed during the election campaign could have possibly changed over the course of his first term when considering the realist notions of international affairs. At the beginning of his term, Obama facilitated an emphasis on soft power with foreign policy initiatives, engaging in diplomacy and deliberation before considering militaristic endeavor, which Lusane argues, was a way “to heal the militaristic and unilateral policy of the Bush Administration.”¹⁵² Prior to his ascendance into the presidency Lusane and others expected Obama to become a moderate realist who utilized more affection for international rules and norms through more diplomatic tools.¹⁵³ Throughout the first years of his Administration, Obama engaged in more second order issues in relation to foreign policy, which include issues like human rights, third world development, poverty, and multilateral cooperation in security issues than unilateral approaches and militaristic initiatives.¹⁵⁴ The discourse surrounding these enterprises takes on a different tone, one more idealistic and hopeful, than the tone surrounding the militaristic endeavors representative of the Bush Administration. Obama engages in a framing strategy, akin to the analysis done by rhetorician Mark Edward Taylor, who argues that the ways in which Obama frames issues allows the justification of his actions.¹⁵⁵ Discussions of hegemony and the ability to promote U.S. primacy abroad are apparent throughout Obama’s presidential

addresses, particularly in his framing of democracy in the State of the Union addresses. How Obama frames U.S. advancement in the global sphere is necessary to understand his policy motives, framing of political issues, and the scope of his rhetorical power.

Obama's idealistic foreign policy views come into conflict with notions of neoconservatism, a view that democracy or other initiatives are a security concern rather than an idealistic goal, and a changing political landscape. Security policy expert Alexandra Holomar-Riechmann contends that—despite current presidential ambitions or policy leanings—the neoconservative view of the United States as a moral power is inevitable within foreign policy traditions and will continue to resonate within the realm of international affairs.¹⁵⁶ The current state of affairs demonstrates a unique time for questions of hegemonic sustainability when considering the fragile stability of the Middle East and the rise of non-state actors. With the new media age, questions of cyber security and terrorism remain foremost among discussions about prolonging the United States' hegemony. Nye, Jr. notes that current counterbalancing between Europe, Japan, non-state actors and the United States forces the U.S. to compete with other countries with similar economies and allied interests.¹⁵⁷ Power conversion has been a long-standing problem within the United States, which highlights the necessity for the nation to maintain its primacy amongst counterbalancing nations. The capacity for the United States to maintain its alliances is an important facet of the nation's hard and soft power, as per Nye, Jr.'s analysis.¹⁵⁸ The policy leanings of the current administration provide valuable insight into how to maintain U.S. primacy in a world of changing influences. What arises are questions of

national security, which concerns economic decline, liberal democracy, promoting human rights safety, and avoiding environmental disasters.¹⁵⁹ The ways in which these policies and ideals are attained demonstrate the ability of the executive branch rhetorically to justify United States dominance as a global hegemon.

United States policy rhetoric in the Middle East produces noteworthy implications for United States initiatives and Obama's strategies in the region. Terrorism and the remnants of the Iraq War are important topics of discussion throughout the Obama Administration. In 2002, Lusane's analysis demonstrates that Obama sought a staunch opposition to the Iraq War.¹⁶⁰ He continued to run against the war, which became an important policy and rhetorical strategy.¹⁶¹ His firm stance against the Bush Administration's invasion of Iraq framed his future discussions about the War in Iraq and that against terrorism. The War on Terror has become the lynchpin in defining almost all U.S. bilateral relationships abroad.¹⁶² Reemerging anti-terrorist discourse is a way for the Obama Administration to maintain its position in the War on Terror. The President has taken a direct approach to defining U.S. action in the Middle East by arguing explicitly that the United States needs to refocus the war on terror by reinforcing the commitment in Afghanistan and being more proactive in its relations with other nations, according to Rynhold.¹⁶³ McCrisken found that Obama repeatedly revisits failures in the conflict, demonstrating where focus is necessary.¹⁶⁴ He rhetorically redirects the focus to priorities of the current Administration within the Middle East, while simultaneously justifying hard power strategies of the previous Bush Administration, which include boots on the ground, utilizing military forces, and strict sanctions as compared to soft power strategies of diplomacy and negotiation.

Obama's focus on hard power issues, such as security concerns and the War on Terror, place him in a rhetorical double bind by forcing him to make rhetorical choices to maintain his soft power and liberal persona while simultaneously exercising United States hard power to maintain security interests abroad.¹⁶⁵ Although Obama attempted to change the rhetorical approach to the Middle East conflicts, a changing political landscape impeded his ability to do so.

Obama pursues the promotion of global democracy as an idealistic principle rather than as an international security concern.¹⁶⁶ Multilateralism and deliberation take prerequisite over militaristic discourse and action. Panda refers to current U.S. foreign policy as "transformational diplomacy," which is characterized through sustaining and fostering democracy in the international system.¹⁶⁷ Contrary to the Bush Doctrine, which called for preventative use of force, Obama articulates the use of force as a last resort, primarily utilizing diplomatic means to solve the conflict.¹⁶⁸ The Obama Administration attempts to sustain its policy objectives, i.e. democracy and sustainability, through action and discursive strategies. Despite this, Panda argues that contradictory opinions and statements exist concerning Obama's policy objectives. Though Obama rhetorically claims to want a liberal democratic system, his hawkish policies demonstrate his calling for the U.S. to maintain its primacy as a world power.¹⁶⁹ The world continues to witness counterbalancing and the rise of non-state actors as a means to promote democracy. Maintaining U.S. primacy and the promotion of hegemony function as a new wave of democracy promotion; the new strategy is one that focuses on democracy promotion through a liberal framework with necessary militaristic intervention and discussions as necessary to promote U.S.

security interests abroad. Essentially, the promotion of global democracy in an idealistic lens dictates Obama's foreign policy rhetoric and discursive choices. The ways in which Obama frames foreign issues become important in the context of U.S. democracy promotion and hegemonic expansion.

Particularly since the war on terror began, the spotlight for international conflict has resided in the Middle East. Combating terror and defeating al-Qaeda have been priorities for the United States government, focusing much foreign policy discourse on these topics. Rhetoric is one of the primary instruments for presidents conducting foreign policy, particularly as it is the link to promoting public understanding of an issue in the international realm, as Edwards argues.¹⁷⁰ Despite the importance of presidential discourse in foreign policy, Druckman and Holmes argue that understanding the scope and power of this rhetoric lacks systematic focus within the scholarly community.¹⁷¹ Analyzing the use of presidential discourse during times of international crisis is an important endeavor to undertake because the president is the most important and powerful actor in American politics.¹⁷² Within his speeches, a president outlines his goals, aims, and strategies he will use in international crises and in shaping international policy. Zarefsky writes that analyses of presidential rhetoric shed light on how to advance a cause or overcome an impasse, demonstrating how effectively a president can overcome a situation.¹⁷³ Highlighting particular moments of the Obama presidency can shed light on these phenomena, helping to broaden the understanding of rhetorical exercise and public persuasion. Particularly, the literature on presidential address illuminates a trend to analyze conflicts during a presidency to find speeches representative of a president's foreign policy rhetorical strategy. As

Baum notes, public awareness of a crisis increases throughout the duration of a conflict, creating support or opposition to governmental policy.¹⁷⁴ Various international conflicts shed light on presidential powers of persuasion and rhetorical constructions, especially when considering timing and the current state of political affairs. Scholarship must address presidential rhetoric in continuing foreign policy crises in the Middle East.

An analysis of a particular international event would help scholars understand the Obama Administration's rhetorical strategies and how the U.S. attempts to influence world affairs. For President Obama, that event and crisis that would best his foreign policy rhetorical strategies is the 2011 Libyan Civil War. The conflict was one that occurred solely within the confines of Obama's presidency, making it a prime source to understand Obama's foreign policy rhetoric, as his rhetorical choices will be particularly insightful. Analyzing his rhetoric surrounding this conflict has the propensity to shed light on how he utilized persuasive appeals to justify foreign intervention and maintain the promotion of United States hegemony abroad.

The 2011 Libyan Crisis

The 2011 Libyan civil war marks a turning point for the Obama Administration; the conflict represents an international crisis that demands U.S. attention, serving as a foreign policy issue that begins during the Obama Administration. Over the past four years, Obama has continued mediating other international conflicts, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, but those conflicts did not begin during his Administration. Relations between Libya and the United States have been

tenuous for decades, due to various military encounters, Libyan policies for supporting terrorism, Libyan chemical and nuclear weapons programs, and Libyan fostering of terrorism, causing security concerns in other nations. The need for rhetorical leadership increased as the Libyan crisis became exacerbated.

In 1969, a military coup in Libya framed the future for U.S.-Libyan relations by creating an unstable relationship between the two nations. Government scholar Dirk Vandewalle notes that militants led by Muammar el-Qaddafi¹⁷⁵ overthrew the monarchy as an attempt to foster Arab nationalism, changing the government structure throughout Libya.¹⁷⁶ After declaring sovereignty over the Gulf of Sidra, Libya strained its relations with other nations, particularly with the United States, by fostering terrorism across the Middle East and sanctioning violence. In 1979, rebels burned down the U.S. embassy in Tripoli, and Libyan officials did nothing to stop the violence that ensued.¹⁷⁷ Following this incident, the United States took a hardline stance on Libya, banning all exports other than food and medicine to Libya and prohibiting Libyan oil from entering the U.S.¹⁷⁸ After the implementation of these sanctions and various military encounters, the world witnessed the 1988 Pan American Airlines bombing. Flight 103, en route from London to New York, exploded on December 21, killing 244 passengers, 15 crewmembers, and 11 people in Scotland, the country over which the plane exploded, according to Steven Bianci, historian and Libyan expert.¹⁷⁹ After accusations and allegations, the United States discovered that this explosion was the work of two Libyan intelligence officials: Abd al-Baset Ali al-Megrahi and Al-Amin Khalifah Fhimah.¹⁸⁰ The 1988 Pan American Airlines issue led to years of contempt for Libya by U.S. officials and other leaders in the international

community. The U.S. imposed sanctions via various U.N. resolutions, and tensions between the U.S. and Libya resulted in assassination attempts, air and sea battles, and the expansion of terrorism. In retaliation, the United States, under the Reagan Administration, launched 100 aircraft to destroy two military complexes, two air bases, and a port off the coast of Libya, killing 70 people, including Qaddafi's daughter.¹⁸¹ Jon B. Alterman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies explains that throughout all of these military confrontations, a key diplomatic challenge faced by both the U.S. and Libya was how to build trust.¹⁸² The history of tenuous relations between the U.S. and Libya laid the foundation for future political problems.

Relations between the two countries began to change during the Clinton Administration for the better, fostering healthier relations. June 11, 1999 marks the first meeting between the United States and Libya in 18 years. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss sanctions against the Libyan government.¹⁸³ Drastic changes did not occur, however, until the Bush Administration. In May 2003, Qaddafi approached President Bush to discuss the removal of sanctions and to put an end to the hostility surrounding the 1988 Pan American flight explosion.¹⁸⁴ After years of negotiations, U.N. resolutions, and trials, the Pan American flight conflict concluded in 2002, and the resolution began establishing a stepping-stone for changing the field of U.S.-Libyan relations, as justice system awarded families compensation and set blame for what had happened.¹⁸⁵ Continued discussions and negotiations also led to the removal of equipment and documents about nuclear proliferation and missile programs, while simultaneously dismantling Libya's chemical weapons program.

Libya committed to eliminating terrorism and the removal of nuclear equipment and weapons development documents was the manifestation of this commitment. In 2004, President Bush lifted the travel ban and revoked the trade embargo.¹⁸⁶ The United States followed these actions by removing Libya from their list of nation states that sponsor terrorism.¹⁸⁷ Since the beginning of the Clinton Administration, relations between Libya and the United States stabilized, depicting an era of little violence, peaceful negotiations, and positive diplomatic relations.

Recent events deserve particular attention when tracing the history of U.S.-Libyan relations. In December 2010, protesters in Tunisia opposed police brutality, marking the beginning of pro-democracy movements across the Middle East. Known as the Arab Spring, Fouad Ajami, a Senior Fellow at Stanford University Hoover Institution, describes what the goals of the protests were (and continue to be) and opposition to tyrannical regimes across the Middle East.¹⁸⁸ As in other nations, protests have led to conflict and violence across Libya. In February of 2011, protesters in Benghazi, Libya condemned delays in the building of their housing units.¹⁸⁹ Because they needed somewhere to live during construction, individuals inhabited government buildings, which led to police spraying tear gas and shooting rubber bullets into the crowd in an effort to clear the building. The encounter led to the proliferation of protests against the Qaddafi regime, attempting to end the state-sponsored violence against Libyan citizens. The goal of the rebellion: end the regime that had begun in 1951. Hundreds of protestors mobilized throughout the nation, sparking a civil war. Despite international pressure to halt the violence, Qaddafi refused to back down; he would rather become a martyr in an attempt to maintain his

leadership in the governmental regime, according to Aljazeera reports.¹⁹⁰ As stated in a BBC report, Qaddafi and his government used cluster bombs, imprisoned and murdered civilians, raped prisoners, and conducted other reprehensible human rights abuses that the regime censored by torturing, attacking, and imprisoning international and national journalists.¹⁹¹ The developing crisis in Libya was ripe for international intervention.

As the humanitarian catastrophe in Libya continued, the international community deliberated about the extent which intervention should or could occur. U.N. Resolution 1973 authorized nation-states to take all necessary measures to protect civilians, to enforce the arms embargo, established a no-fly zone over Libya, froze assets of Libyan authorities, implemented targeted sanctions against the Qaddafi regime, and created a panel of U.N. experts to monitor the sanctions.¹⁹² Thus began formal international intervention in the Libyan civil war. The United States played a formal, militarized role through Operation Odyssey Dawn, a mission that sent cruise missiles and strategic bombers to protect the U.N. sanctioned no-fly zone by striking Libyan military and air capabilities.¹⁹³ The official U.S. report on Operation Odyssey Dawn discussed the mission as commencing on March 19, 2012; the mission was limited in scope and scale and was effective in neutralizing air defenses.¹⁹⁴ U.S. forces launched the first wave of strategic bombers late that Saturday night and utilized 112 Tomahawk missiles to establish the no-fly zone. NATO took control over this mission four days later, renaming it Operation Unified Protector. In June 2011, Qaddafi announced Libya would hold elections, fulfilling the international goal of promoting

democracy abroad, and later in August, Qaddafi fled to Algeria. The international intervention was successful.

Though Qaddafi fled, the international community deemed finding him an international priority. Two months later, the Royal Air Force was conducting a reconnaissance mission when their service members spotted a convoy outside Sirte. Concurrently, the city rebels attacked the city, searching for Qaddafi loyalists. NATO strikes followed the reconnaissance mission. At the time, NATO was unaware Qaddafi was a member of the convoy attacked by NATO forces. When rebels found Qaddafi hiding in a drainage pipe, they captured and killed him. President Obama noted, “Today’s events prove once more that the rule of an iron fist inevitably comes to an end.”¹⁹⁵ Finally, Qaddafi was removed from power.

During a wave of the violent and deadly protests, anti-United States sentiment resulted in another attack on the United States embassy in Libya on the 11th anniversary of September 11. Originally, some argued the attack was the result of the anti-Islam video, but upon further review, members of the United States State Department were convinced otherwise because of the types of weapons utilized in the attack. The attack took the life of U.S. Ambassador to Libya, Chris Stevens, and three other Americans. Marked as a plotted terrorist attack, the Obama Administration commenced an investigation as to how and why the attack occurred. Protests and violence continues to exist across the Middle East, but the international community condemned the violence of these protests, as the global community continues to try to bring peace and democracy to the Middle East.

Obama's response to the Libyan crisis represents a unique instance of presidential discourse during his Administration. The international intervention that ensued served as one of the primary foreign policy issues during Obama's first Administration. Analysis the rhetoric surrounding the crisis serves as an effective means to understanding the rhetoric of the Obama presidency. Rhetorical choices and strategies demonstrate the persuasive appeal of his messages, indicating the multiple dimensions the speeches have to offer. In order to understand Obama's rhetorical strategies, the following section outlines the methodology behind my analysis on Obama's discourse on the Libyan crisis.

Close Textual Analysis

The study of speeches is an important endeavor for rhetoricians to undertake. Wayland Maxfield Parrish characterizes a speech as an utterance meant to be heard and intended to exert an influence on those who hear it.¹⁹⁶ Political crises are created within a speech act, according to rhetorician Richard E. Vatz, allowing presidents to alter the symbolic nature of the situation at hand.¹⁹⁷ Speeches are tools of persuasion, particularly in politics, denoting the significance of analyzing President Obama's speeches on Libya.

Scholars must consider several important characteristics when analyzing a speech. Parrish argues that scholars look to style, orality, chronology, psychological orders, appearance, voice, the type of delivery, content of the speech, structure of reasoning, the depth and weight of the ideas presented, and a consideration of clarity, vividness and vivacity.¹⁹⁸ Marie Hochmuth discusses that several important elements

to evaluating a speech exist; these include the position of the speaker, an evaluation of the situation and context, the place of the speech both ideologically and physically, the purpose of the speech, the voice, control of the materials spoken, and the substance.¹⁹⁹

All of these facets culminate to produce a work of art that functions as a persuasive tool. The goal of the speech becomes important. Additionally, scholars work to understand the text based on its multiple perspectives. Zarefsky notes, “unpacking a text, probing its dimensions and possibilities, helps the scholar to understand better the richness of a very specific situation that has passed and will not return in the same way.”²⁰⁰ Rhetoricians must judge whether a speaker has adapted the message for the intended audience, demonstrating the multifaceted nature of the study of speeches.

Close textual analysis, as a method, works to understand the internal workings of a speaker’s speech act. According to close textual scholar Michael Leff, the central task of textual criticism is to understand how rhetorical action affects the reconstruction of a symbolic event.²⁰¹ Close textual analysis works to uncover how events are reconstructed in relation to how they occurred. The method reveals the “artistic destiny of well-made rhetorical texts.”²⁰² Because of this, it demands careful interpretive study of rhetorical acts to understand how they create and recreate these symbolic events. Leff explains,

the history of this exercise in textual criticism reveals the formidable number of elements involved in the enterprise: the close reading and rereading of the text, the analysis of the historical and biographical circumstances that generate and frame its composition, the recognition of basic conceptions that establish the co-ordinates of the text, and an appreciation of the very way these concepts interact within the text and help determine its temporal movement.²⁰³

The critic develops a relationship with the text through the amount of diligence, and careful thought the critic gives to the rhetorical act. Re-reading the text provides the ability to find facets and characteristics of the speech that were previously missed. The text, context, and time all play a significant role in understanding a rhetorical act. Close text analysis links theory with activity as a way of doing to understand it.²⁰⁴ Rhetorical moments are unique. Each speech possesses its own set of intents, persuasive strategies, and components that scholars work to uncover.

Close textual analysis also presents various strategies for unpacking and understanding the possible intent of a speaker. The ways in which scholars facilitate this knowledge accumulation is through careful evaluations of the text and texture of the message.²⁰⁵ A rhetorical analysis possesses strategies to illuminate investigations of a speech or series of speeches. Zarefsky, in discussing presidential rhetoric, explains how using analogies and definition by dissociation to help illuminate how a text works rhetorically.²⁰⁶ Analyses work to understand how rhetorical forces work within a speech. These sorts of comparisons help to demonstrate the timing and context of the speech. These elements demonstrate how a speaker's point of view and context of a speech illuminate the rhetorical strategies the speaker employs. Each strategy allows for investigation of rhetorical power in presidential, and other, discourse. Close textual analysis allows for a deeper insight to the power of speeches through a careful examination of their text and texture.

Context, through close textual analysis, also demonstrates importance as the speech act moves throughout time. The speech utilizes context to re-create events symbolically, at times to persuade and gain acceptance. History and context play a role

as they serve to influence the speaker's rhetorical choices.²⁰⁷ Zarefsky contends that the key relationship in criticism is "between the text and the rhetorical critic."²⁰⁸ The critic has previous knowledge and experience to undress the text's potential. Close textual analysis helps to reveal how the text works rhetorically, particularly when considering the context in which the speech occurred. Scholars work to demonstrate the intent and ability of close textual analysis as a method to understand particular speech acts in presidential rhetoric.

Close textual analysis also considers time as the method works to unfold the significance of a text. A speech's temporal nature situated in history can demonstrate how a speech is localized both in the history of presidential address as well as in the context of a particular set of speeches. Leff states, "every rhetorical text is a particular construction that unfolds in time as it is written or spoken."²⁰⁹ There exists an engagement with time that both constrains and facilitates the elements throughout a speech. The engagement with the text values the status of oratory as a temporal art.²¹⁰ Close textual analysis functions on multiple levels to demonstrate how the elements of time play off one another. Through this method, Leff demonstrates a distinction between time and timing through his analysis of President Lincoln's second inaugural. Leff's close reading demonstrates "that this progression" of past, present, and future, "is more than a device for separating the gross structural units of these discourse."²¹¹ Studying the temporal nature of a speech enables a critic to understand how time not only moves throughout the speech, but also provides an illumination of how form influences its arguments. Leff also discusses that the timing in the text determines the appearance of the discourse throughout the speech and as is connected to the outside

context of the speech.²¹² The world in which the speech was made also denotes a mode of significance to understanding how time functions, demonstrating how time and context play off one another. Time serves as an element of close textual analysis to demonstrate the temporal art of a speech.

Scholars have found that close textual analysis is an effective means through which to understanding political discourse, especially in the realm of presidential address. Several questions tend to guide the journey through a speech act. What were the implications of the speech on society? How is it internally consistent? How are the rhetorical strategies developed to persuade the public that the President is taking legitimate and persuasive action? These questions, plus others, tend to provide an introspective avenue for understanding the rhetorical power of a speech act or series of speeches. In order to understand how power functions, we must work to comprehend the “symbolic and rhetorical contexts in which rhetorical acts are created.”²¹³ A speech creates a forum for it to function within, to shed light on its rhetorical power. Stephen E. Lucas highlights the benefit in close textual analysis through an investigation of the Declaration of Independence, which sheds light on the literary qualities and rhetorical power of discourse to explain the “candid world,” that American colonies sought to establish.²¹⁴ Scholars find close textual analysis a suitable means of understanding political issues and discourse. Investigations of political discourse have benefitted from close text analysis as a methodological tool to explain the power constructions in American political discourse.

Analyzing speeches through close textual analysis is a suitable means of understanding foreign policy address, in particular. Campbell and Jamieson maintain

that presidential wartime rhetoric is “an attempt to demonstrate that military action was the only response to a clear, unavoidable, and fundamental threat.”²¹⁵

Understanding wartime rhetoric across various presidential administrations is an important endeavor to maintain the scholarship of presidential address. Another means of accomplishing close textual inquiry is through an analysis of multiple speech acts, as is done in the following analysis of Obama’s speeches on Libya. Speeches can be compared to one another to explain the limitations of an address.²¹⁶ The facets that are included or excluded help demonstrate the effectiveness of a speech. Interesting conclusions will be drawn from an understanding of how a speech deviates from classifications of a genre. An effective means of accomplishing this is through close textual analysis as it has the propensity to compare rhetorical acts to one another in a thematic fashion. In the current political climate, scholars must address how President Obama frames the threat in Libya as a means to justify U.S. intervention via Operation Odyssey Dawn. Close textual analysis is a suitable means of uncovering the ways in which Obama justifies intervention.

As a method, close textual analysis provides a suitable means of analyzing President Obama’s rhetoric surrounding the Libyan crisis. Close text provides insight to the embedded artistic strategy encompassed throughout the speeches, as well as each speech’s context, temporal nature, intent, and rhetorical power. Analyzing the scope of presidential address on Libya offers a comprehensive view to understand how President Obama furthers United States hegemony through policies of strategic ambiguity and smart power. Rhetorically, how Obama employs each strategy demonstrates the persuasive appeal and context among each set of speeches. Close

textual analysis has the propensity to uncover the rhetorical forces embodied throughout speeches to understand their position among foreign address scholarship. To understand the ways in which I employ this method of analysis, the following section offers an outline of the three chapters of analysis to follow.

Description of Artifacts and Chapter Summaries

Analysis Artifacts

Through close textual analysis, I analyze nine artifacts that encompass a timeframe from January 27, 2010 through March 28, 2011. The first is Obama's initial State of the Union address to Congress on January 27, 2010, which reveals Obama's transformation from his campaign rhetoric to the conclusion of his first 100 days.²¹⁷ As most State of the Union addresses tend to be, he tends to focus on economic issues, while spending minimal time framing his foreign policy prerogatives. The second artifact is Obama's State of the Union on January 25, 2011, which demonstrates insight into his preferences on the Arab Spring and democracy promotion across the Middle East.²¹⁸ Additionally, this speech, chronologically, is two weeks prior to the start of Obama's discourse on the Libyan conflict. Each State of the Union address works to frame the initial rhetorical strategy of the Obama administration concerning foreign policy initiatives.

The remainder of the artifacts involves Obama's discourse on the Libyan conflict itself, commencing February 18, 2011 and ending March 28, 2011. The third artifact on February 18 marks the point shortly after the beginning of the state sponsored violence against Libyan citizens.²¹⁹ In his statement from D.C., President

Obama demonstrates his concern and condemnation of the violence against Libyan, Bahraini, and Yemenis citizens. He highlights the necessity for the governments themselves to allow for peaceful protests and end the violence against their citizens. The fourth artifact occurs on February 23, 2011, as Obama addresses the nation in the Grand Foyer of the White House, framing the Libyan crisis as a human rights endeavor that is critical to protect the safety of American citizens.²²⁰ He indicates that international, cooperative efforts to address the suffering and bloodshed prevalent throughout Libya were necessary. The fifth artifact for analysis is Obama's statement concerning the economic sanctions targeted at Libya, which occurred on February 25, 2011.²²¹ The sixth artifact is a letter from the President regarding Libyan sanctions to the Speaker of the House, sent on February 25, 2011.²²² The letter serves as evidence of the economic control Obama omits over Qadhafi's government. March 18, 2011 was the day immediately before U.S. intervention in the conflict, and on this day, Obama frames U.S. intervention in the crisis as a distinct possibility, constructing reasons we should intervene to take down a dictator.²²³ As the seventh artifact, the speech serves as his final moment to speak on the conflict prior to U.S. military action to establish the no-fly zone. The eighth artifact is Obama's speech on the day of intervention, March 19, 2011, as he speaks at the Tryp Convention in Brazil, discussing his authorization of the U.S. military to enforce U.N. Resolution 1973.²²⁴ Obama's last address, the ninth artifact, occurred on March 28, 2011, as he informed the American people about U.S. action in Libya, marking his most extensive public discussion about U.S. intervention at this point in the civil war.²²⁵ The analyzed artifacts end March 28, as Obama's address on this date was his substantial address on

the justification for intervention in the conflict. Further discourse from Obama on the civil war takes on a broader scope than is examined in this close textual analysis, as each of the artifacts included are centralized around the notion of U.S. justification and Operation Odyssey Dawn.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 uncovers the president's rhetorical strategy of imperialism in his discourse on the conflict. Beginning with the State of the Union addresses, the president discusses a consubstantiated U.S. populous, to which he attempts to justify intervention in the conflict. After this initial framing, Obama engages in a rhetorical imperialism strategy to homogenize all notions of democracy, correlating western conceptions of democracy with the aspirations of the Libyan people. From here, Obama works to frame democracy promotion abroad as a security concern, a necessary threat against which the U.S. must act. Through his discourse, Obama creates a moral imperative, a sense of urgency, and a necessity for protection against a terrorist and tyrant, which resulted in militaristic and economic rhetorical constructions and physical policy action. The chapter uncovers the ways in which Obama can justify intervention, despite his initial, idealistic demeanor.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 examines Obama's strategy of presidential Panopticism to justify involvement in the conflict. Utilizing the structure of Jeremy Bentham's inspection house structure, Obama rhetorically constructs each facet of the prison, the cell, the prisoner, the watchtower, and the supervisory authority of the watchtower. Obama

frames Qaddafi as a prisoner in the cell, one that must be contained due to the atrocities the Libyan people incurred as a result of the tyrannical government. Along a spatial axis, Obama hones in on the specificity of the cause of the violence as well as the violent acts themselves, creating a sense of urgency for the U.S. to act through a manipulation of psychological time. Obama also constructs the watchtower as comprised of the international community, a global bond that is overarching and atop the political hierarchy. Through his rhetoric, Obama demonstrates the watchtower's power, the ability to be omniscient while serving as a mechanism of constant surveillance over international affairs. At the center of the watchtower hierarchy rests the United States, the supervisor of the international community. Discursively, Obama sets the U.S. apart from other actors in the conflict, demonstrating the prominence of the United States as a leader of global affairs. Set in a new age of globalization, Obama's rhetorical strategy plays off the biopolitical power inherent within society to demonstrate a new presidential strategy of persuasion.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 offers conclusions from my analysis of the president's rhetoric on the Libyan conflict. This chapter demonstrates the significance of this analysis for the discipline by filling in the foreign policy gap in the literature of the Obama presidency, extending close textual analysis as a method of investigation, and by highlighting an application of the presidential war genre within the study of generic criticism.

Each analysis chapter provides insight as to how President Obama rhetorically justifies the promotion of U.S. hegemony through intervention in the wake of the

Libyan civil war. The forthcoming analysis demonstrates the rhetorical strategies of persuasion that Obama utilizes in his speeches, uncovering the power of his rhetoric and fulfilling a need in the scholarship of presidential foreign address.

Notes

¹ Jeffrey Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

² David Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2004): 608.

³ Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition," 611.

⁴ Jason A. Edwards, *Navigating the Post-Cold World: President Clinton's Foreign Policy Rhetoric* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), 2.

⁵ Robert F. Durant, "A 'New Covenant' Kept: Core Values, Presidential Communications, and the Paradox of the Clinton Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (2006): 358.

⁶ Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960), 11.

⁷ Theodore Otto Windt Jr., "Presidential Rhetoric: Definition of a Field of Study," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1986): 112.

⁸ David Zarefsky, "The Presidency Has Always Been a Place for Rhetorical Leadership," in *The Presidency and Rhetorical Leadership*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst and Leroy G. Dorsey (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 28.

⁹ Denise M. Bostdorff and Steven R. Goldzwig, "Idealism and Pragmatism in American Foreign Policy Rhetoric: The Case of John F. Kennedy and Vietnam," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24, no 3. (1994): 517.

¹⁰ Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), 56.

¹¹ Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition," 613.

¹² Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition," 612.

¹³ Cynthia G. Emrich, Holly H. Brower, Jack M. Feldman, and Howard Garland, "Images in Words: Presidential Rhetoric, Charisma, and Greatness," *Administrative Sciences Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (2001): 547.

¹⁴ Elvin T. Lim, "Five Trends in Presidential Rhetoric: An Analysis of Rhetoric from George Washington to Bill Clinton," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2002): 329.

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CHAPTER II

OBAMA'S RHETORICAL IMPERIALISM STRATEGY

Introduction

President Obama's discourse on Libya provides unique insight into the imperialist rhetorical strategies at play. Instead of following the democratic and deliberative notions he established along the campaign trail, he co-opts Libyan notions and definitions of democracy to justify the use of the U.S. military and economic prowess. After the turmoil witnessed in Afghanistan and Iraq, Obama must shift the discussion to justify a new military encounter in the Middle East. In his discourse on Libya, Obama manifests his rhetorical strategy through several imperialistic tactics. He creates a sense of national unity he can use to rally around his goals of democracy and security, homogenizes all notions of democracy under the guise of Western interpretation, and engages in security rhetoric and threat constructions to justify acts of military and economic control against the Libyan regime.

The State of the Union and American Homogenization

The State of the Union, for any president, serves as a framework through which he guides policy making for both domestic and foreign affairs. As noted in my literature review, most presidents tend to focus on domestic issues, particularly the economy. Obama is no different in this respect; less than ten percent of Obama's State of the Union on January 27, 2010 is dedicated to foreign policy issues, though he spends a majority of that discussion on issues regarding the Middle East. The two sections discussing Middle Eastern foreign policy help to establish a framework for

U.S. action on the Libya conflict and the rhetorical strategies Obama creates to justify U.S. intervention.

For Obama, his first State of the Union serves as an idealistic and hopeful framework for the policy actions that would constitute the remainder of his first term. Although the notions of hope and change were more prevalent during his campaign than his presidency, Obama discusses these ideals in the State of the Union to justify future hegemonic discourse and action. To summarize his election goals coupled with his idealized vision of the U.S. in the coming term, he states,

I campaigned on the promise of change—change we can believe in, the slogan went. And right now, I know there are many Americans who aren't sure if they still believe we can change or that I can deliver it. But remember this—I never suggested that change would be easy, or that I could do it alone. Democracy in a nation of 300 million people can be noisy and messy and complicated. And when you try to do big things and make bit changes, it stirs passions and controversy. That's just how it is.²²⁶

The ways in which Obama discusses change in this segment demonstrate the necessity for him to follow the message established in his campaign slogans. Especially so, his thoughts on democracy are intriguing given that he refuses to comply with the demands of the opposing party. A continuance of a hopeful campaign message can facilitate the perpetuation of a powerful hegemon like the United States. Additionally, he is vague about what “change” will occur, akin to the change discussed in his campaign slogans. The ambiguity allows the maintenance and fostering of soft power tendencies as he attempts to continue to differentiate himself from past administrations. He even recognizes the complexity in such a challenge. He argues, “There will be difficult days ahead. But I am absolutely confident we will succeed.”²²⁷ Difficulty for Obama could mean transitions away from his idealistic, democratic, and

deliberative means of conducting foreign policy, despite his fervent opposition during the campaign. Obama's discussion of hope and change as an ambiguous notion allows for a transformation to more hawkish policies as an attempt to engage in Nye, Jr.'s conception of smart power to maintain U.S. prominence in the global sphere.

Obama's two State of the Union addresses prior to the commencement of the Libyan conflict are important for his establishment of the necessity of national security. Through his discussions of security and U.S. enemies, he imposes three important rhetorical choices: the prioritization of threat construction and extremism, a lack of definition of the "other" and "enemy" that the United States is pitted against, and the establishment of a sense of collective security. Rhetorically, Obama engages in threat construction in these two speeches as a justification for the militaristic actions taken by the federal government. "Since the day I took office, we've renewed our focus on the terrorists who threaten our nation. We've made substantial investments in our homeland security and disrupted plots that threatened to take American lives."²²⁸ Utilizing strong words such as "terrorists" and "threaten" shift the debate to encompass militaristic tendencies. The idea of threat construction and the usage of words like terrorist seem to be contradictory to the personae seen during the presidential campaign. Instead, Obama utilizes harsh, accusatory rhetoric to justify U.S. involvement abroad to fight the threat of terrorism. Not only does Obama deem it necessary for defeating threats, he also fails to define that threat. "So now we must defeat determined enemies wherever they are."²²⁹ Obama lacks a solid and explicit definition of the enemy. Akin to other presidents when discussing foreign policy, Obama outlines the existence of an unidentified "other" against which the U.S. must

fight to maintain its prominence. The brief establishment of threat construction and the unidentified enemy demonstrate the hawkish, imperialist nature of the Obama Administration, laying the framework for future rhetorical imperialism.

Obama engages in the notion of a collective identity through a description of common ideals, the Constitution, and his use of the word, “we.” Obama, in his first State of the Union argues, “Abroad, America’s greatest source of strength has always been our ideals. The same is true at home.”²³⁰ Obama is vague about the ideals he is discussing for a possible risk of alienating portions of the population. The Constitution and Declaration of Independence also serve as rallying points for national identity coupled with a desire for the same vague ideals he discussed earlier. Obama recognizes the importance of the document in both of his State of the Union addresses. In 2010, he argues, “We find unity in our incredible diversity, drawing on the promise enshrined in our Constitution: the notion that we’re all created equal; that no matter who you are or what you look like, if you abide by the law, you should be protected by it; if you adhere to our common values you should be treated no different than anyone else.”²³¹ Obama uses the Declaration of Independence as a foundation for commonality among all people, no matter their background. His rhetoric carries with it an idealistic notion, one of hope for equality in the land of opportunity. In 2011, he manifests the same democratic ideals and values, which allows Obama to create a solid foundation for a collective identity. “We may have differences in policy, but we all believe in the rights enshrined in our Constitution. We may have different opinions, but we believe in the same promise that says this is a place where you can make it if you try. We may have different backgrounds, but we believe in the same dream that

this is a country where anything is possible.”²³² Again, Obama recognizes difference but knows that a sense of collective identity is necessary in order to fulfill the imperialist agenda of the United States in foreign affairs. To maintain acceptance of national security, homogenization of collective security and identity is necessary.

Through his use of the word “we,” Obama rhetorically establishes a sense of collective identity for the American populous, through his use of first person pronouns to discuss adherence to ideals and to the fundamental rights of the Constitution. The State of the Union address allows President Obama to craft the American people as homogenized. In order to ensure public opinion is on his side, he needs first to establish a collective national identity with which he can make future comparisons and justifications for action in the Middle East. Important in creating a sense of homogenization is to include anyone applicable in such a definition of identity. By establishing a “we,” Obama can justify the elimination of external threats that could affect “us.” Obama also uses the pronoun to discuss military and diplomatic action. “We’ve prohibited torture and strengthened partnerships from the Pacific to South Asia to the Arabian Peninsula.”²³³ Obama allows the American populous to take credit for the reduction of torture as well as the spread of diplomatic relationships across the globe, which primarily are executive and State Department courses of action. The ability to create a rhetorical sense of unity allows Obama to justify the continuance of smart power, the use of both hard and soft power tactics, in the name of collective security and a homogenized American populous.

Rhetorically, Obama creates a synthesis of Muslim Americans and his previously established national collective identity. He states, “American Muslims are a

part of our American family.”²³⁴ Christopher Layne, Associate Professor in international studies at the University of Miami, argues that when discussing hegemony, “the cultural dimension to U.S. preeminence is also important.”²³⁵ His argument has resonance especially when considering the effects of September 11 on the division of Muslim Americans and non-Muslim Americans in the United States. In the State of the Union, Obama must work to bridge this gap, as he has done here rhetorically to deem “American Muslims” as part of the majority populous. When discussing this population, he begins with the word America, prioritizing a U.S. identity over Muslim heritage. Obama’s rhetorical strategy works to maintain the prominence of an American identity, contributing to his goal of collective identity for national security.

Time serves as an important mechanism with which Obama can separate himself from prior presidential administrations. As noted by Leff, the notion of time becomes important in understanding the power of a rhetorical act.²³⁶ Obama’s State of the Union addresses rhetorically examine time on two levels, which Geoffrey N. Leech, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at Lancaster University, and Michael H. Short, author and linguistic scholar, more aptly define within their interpretation of the concept, iconicity.²³⁷ Leech and Short argue that iconicity can be experienced as chronological, psychological, or juxtapositional. Obama engages in iconicity to lay a framework of foreign policy that plays to the hearts and minds of the American populous. The country had seen the turmoil of two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and wanted progress in terms of foreign policy. In his January 27, 2010 State of the Union address, Obama makes sure the American people know of the nation’s progress since

the end of the Bush Administration. “In the last year, hundreds of al Qaeda’s fighters and affiliates, including many senior leaders, have been captured or killed—far more than in 2008.”²³⁸ Obama engages in chronological time here when discussing action in the Middle East. He traces temporal experiences in the real world as he discusses the actions the U.S. has taken since the conclusion of the Bush years. Simultaneously, Obama distances himself from the Bush era. The emphasis on, “far more than in 2008,” sets him apart from Bush working to juxtapose the disdain for the Bush Administration’s actions concerning the war on terror with the feelings of the American populous in a new political climate. Forcing the discussion in such a way differentiates his foreign policy initiatives and discussions of those initiatives from previous administrations subtly to justify foreign intervention that could occur during the course of his presidency.

The State of the Union that occurred on January 25, 2011 functions on both chronological and psychological levels of iconicity and time constructions. Chronologically, the State of the Union is only two weeks prior to the commencement of the Libyan conflict, which works to demonstrate how he frames issues concerning Middle Eastern policy. Obama speaks in present tense in this speech. “Thanks to our intelligence and law enforcement professionals, we’re disrupting plots and securing our cities and skies. And as extremists try to inspire acts of violence within our borders, we are responding with the strength of our communities with respect for the rule of law, and with the conviction that American Muslims are a part of our American family.”²³⁹ His quote here functions on two levels, as he reiterates a collective national identity to justify collective security and to show the urgency for U.S. action. His

framing of a chronological timeframe facilitates acceptance of his Middle Eastern policy initiatives. Speaking in present tense works to demonstrate to the American people that the issues being discussed function now and with urgency. Each is an issue that must be addressed immediately and with the full force of the United States power.

President Obama uses his homogenization of the American people and notions of democracy to justify economic imperialism over the Libyan people. In his 2011 State of the Union address, he rhetorically constructs an idealized government using metaphors to guide his analysis and framework. “The 21st century government that’s open and competent. A government that lives within its means. An economy that’s driven by new skills and new ideas. Our success in this new and changing world will require reform, responsibility, and innovation. It will also require us to approach that world with a new level of engagement in our foreign affairs.”²⁴⁰ Following the trend of historic State of the Union addresses, Obama focuses on the economy in an idealized democratic manner, but he adds a caveat to the possibility of economic success. Obama states that there will be a new level of engagement abroad, which rhetorically constructs a sense of urgency and anticipation for actions in the future. True economic success is not possible until we are economic leaders abroad, especially if we are to promote Western notions of democracy.

Democracy is another prominent discussion in the State of the Union. Obama’s discussion about democracy is also important to consider for understanding his prioritization of engaging in democracy promotion strategies once the Libyan conflict begins. He notes, “And yet, as contentious and frustrating as our democracy can sometimes be, I know there isn’t a person here who would trade places with any other

nation on Earth.”²⁴¹ Obama adds an elitist element to the notion of democracy; only the United States maintains a system that is worthy of adopting or participating within, allowing for future justification of western democracy promotion. If U.S. interpretations of democracy are seen as the ultimate concern, implementing such a system should be a priority of U.S. national security, allowing diplomatic democracy promotion to become a tool through which the imperialist agenda is furthered. As part of a rhetorical strategy to justify military intervention in foreign affairs, Obama highlights the importance of democracy promotion abroad.

The transformations across the Arab Spring forced discussion on democracy in Obama’s rhetoric. At the time of Obama’s State of the Union in 2011, democratic revolutions began to flourish across the Middle East. Obama’s discussion about the first instance of regime change, Tunisia, establishes a foundation through which he later discusses Libya and the resultant U.S. intervention. Obama notes, “And we saw that same desire to be free in Tunisia, where the will of the people proved more powerful than the writ of a dictator. And tonight, let us be clear: The United States of America stands with the people of Tunisia, and supports the democratic aspirations of all people.”²⁴² Obama discusses an event that has come and passed; Tunisia was free of a dictator at the time of the State of the Union, yet, his rhetoric following that statement is in the present tense. Obama’s dialogue alludes to the notion that U.S. involvement is not yet over, ensuring that the U.S. as a collective actor will continue to be a part of democracy promotion in Tunisia and other nations across the Arab Spring. Additionally, Obama’s characterization of the support of all people seeking democracy serves as foreshadowing to U.S. intervention in the Libya conflict,

particularly due to the resistance the Libyan people witnessed in their attempt to attain democracy.

Creating a sense of imperialism over the American people via the State of the Union addresses lays a foundation for three other types of imperialist rhetoric: rhetorical imperialism, militaristic imperialism, and economic imperialism. Usually, maintaining control over a populous is in the government's best interests; the government then has more ease in gaining acceptance for various policies and promoting its agenda. In this instance, Obama seeks to gain acceptance of U.S. intervention in the Libyan civil war, despite prior public opposition to Bush era policies in Iraq and Afghanistan. The following analyses on Obama's discourse on the Libyan conflict are representative of the three types of imperialism in an attempt to justify U.S. intervention to a homogenized U.S. populous.

Rhetorical Imperialism

Just two weeks after the State of the Union address in 2011, violence erupted in Libya, Bahrain, and Yemen, which gained the attention of the United States. Obama made clear in his prior addresses, spreading democracy throughout the Arab Spring was a priority. Throughout his seven statements and remarks on the Libyan conflict, Obama is charged with the task of promoting Western notions of democracy and freedom while retaining public support while the U.S. intervened in the conflict, akin to the ways in which Panda argues the Obama administration would engage in foreign affairs.²⁴³ The President's rhetoric on Libya creates a scenario where the U.S. as a world super power is necessary to ensure the promotion of democracy in a violence-

ridden nation-state. After the State of the Union addresses, Obama embarks on a campaign of rhetorical imperialism that promotes Western ideals, blurs first-person pronouns to gain acceptance of his worldview, homogenizes notions of democracy, and attempts to instill these notions among the people of Libya through his rhetorical devices, threat construction and security rhetoric.

Obama begins to lay the foundation for a universal notion of human rights in his State of the Union addresses. His rhetoric in both speeches helps to justify imperialist continuances of his interpretation of democracy and human rights. Institutionally, Obama starts his quest within the bureaucratic confines of the executive branch. In his 2010 State of the Union address, Obama states, “My administration has a Civil Rights Division that is once again prosecuting civil rights violations and employment discrimination. We finally strengthened our laws to protect against crimes driven by hate.”²⁴⁴ With the establishment of the Civil Rights Division came a formal and established interpretation of human rights according to the perspective of the U.S. government. Here, Obama accomplishes the ability to compare other democracies and their interpretations of human and civil rights. Despite the comparisons, Obama clarifies that the United States would serve as the exemplar for human rights. “And America’s moral example must always shine for all who yearn for freedom and justice and dignity. And because we’ve begun this work, tonight we can say that America’s leadership has been renewed and America’s standing has been restored.”²⁴⁵ He alludes to United States leadership as a necessary precursor to promoting democracy and playing a crucial role in modeling its democratic practices around the world. Obama’s declarations and framework for a universal notion of

human rights in the State of the Union allow him to justify imperialist rhetoric and actions throughout his discourse on the Libya conflict.

In order to recognize the ways in which President Obama utilizes imperialist rhetoric on Libya to homogenize notions of democracy, an understanding of Rhetorician Kenneth Burke's concept of consubstantiation is necessary. Burke discusses consubstantiality as an identification between two things, people, or otherwise, who have joined and similar interests. When explaining the concept regarding two coworkers with comparable interests, Burke argues, "He is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with one another."²⁴⁶ Though two interpretations may exist, imperialistic tendencies within rhetoric tend to subsume definitions, allowing one to become more powerful than the other or forcing consubstantiality among terms and ideas to become inevitable. Burke argues, "A doctrine of consubstantiality, either explicit or implicit, may be necessary to any way of life."²⁴⁷ Consubstantiality, for Obama, is necessary to create a common and universal notion of democracy. As Zarefsky argues, presidential rhetoric serves as an avenue for presidents and governments to overcome a political situation.²⁴⁸ For Obama, consubstantiation and the cooption of varying interpretations of democracy become a way for him to engage in the conflict on a rhetorical level, justifying his use of smart power in Libya and promoting U.S. notions of democracy.

Obama's use of forced consubstantiality when discussing Libyan democracy affords him a successful mechanism to justify U.S. intervention. Burke tells us that consubstantiality has an impact on persuasive ability, allowing Obama to justify

intervention to the American populous and members of the international community not already involved in the conflict. Burke writes,

as for the relation between “identification” and “persuasion”: we might well keep it in mind that a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identifications; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker’s interests; and the speaker draws on identification of interests to establish rapport between himself and the audience. So there is no chance of our keeping apart the meanings of persuasion, identification, (“consubstantiality”) and communication (the nature of rhetoric as “addressed”).²⁴⁹

Identification becomes the means of persuasion, allowing Obama the ability to adopt this tactic to persuade the audience to adopt his interests, as outlined in the State of the Union: the fulfillment of a democracy abroad, based upon Western notions of freedom and human rights. Rhetorical acts, such as his speeches and remarks on Libya help to make Obama’s persuasive ability uniquely possible. Through his use of consubstantiation, Obama can connect the U.S. and western notions of freedom and struggles for democracy with those the Libyan people oppressed via tyrannical regimes.

The roots of Obama’s consubstantiality of democratic norms lie in the interplay between the first-person pronouns and the subjects of his sentences. He continues the homogenization framework of the American populous evident in his State of the Union addresses in an attempt to gain acceptance of future military intervention. In his first address on the violence in Libya on February 18, 2011, President Obama states three sentences that denote importance. First, he declares, “The United States condemns the use of violence by governments against peaceful protestors.”²⁵⁰ He first uses the federal government as the agent that condemns the

violence, discussing the U.S. as one entity. Next Obama moves to the same collective identity that was prevalent in the State of the Union. He notes, “We express our condolences to the family and friends of those who have been killed during the demonstrations.”²⁵¹ Shifting the focus from the government to a collective national identity helps to solidify control over the homogenization of a collective sympathy in regards to the conflict. Obama then moves back to using the United States as the subject of his argument. “The United States urges the governments of Bahrain, Libya and Yemen to show restraint in responding to peaceful protests, and to respect the rights of their people.”²⁵² The interplay of the “U.S.” and “we” as varying subjects in his discourse establishes a framework for Obama to justify imperialist rhetoric over Libyan notions of democracy.

Obama maintains the notion of a collective identity throughout the remainder of his discourse on the Libya conflict. Five days later, Obama continues to emphasize what “we are doing” to address the situation.²⁵³ He maintains that the people of the United States are responsible for the decisions and maintain the same levels of empathy and sympathy for the individuals in Libya. “The American people extend our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of all who’ve been killed and injured.”²⁵⁴ He promotes a national calling to condemn the violence and collective necessity to feel sympathy about the human rights abuses occurring in Libya. Obama’s rhetoric continues through his last speech on the conflict, “A Responsibility to Act,” in an attempt to gain acceptance of his military intervention in Libya. A collective identity is crucial to engage in imperialistic actions concerning U.S. interests and security concerns.

Obama uses the established collective identity in his rhetoric throughout the conflict to promote U.S. interests above all, which is an imperialist act in and of itself. In his first set of remarks on the Libyan conflict, Obama argues, “First, we are doing everything we can to protect American citizens. That’s my top priority.”²⁵⁵ Through his rhetoric, Obama establishes a hierarchy of importance; Americans and the U.S. as an entity are naturally the priority of the executive office while dealing with the conflict, but he frames the remainder of his discourse as a prioritization of the American populous. His conversation maintains the homogenization rhetoric he utilized throughout the State of the Union addresses in order to promote the U.S. above all others. “In a volatile situation like this one, it is imperative that the nations and peoples of the world speak with one voice, and that has been our focus.”²⁵⁶ Obama furthers his assimilation of people under the U.S. definition and worldview to the remainder of the international community. Speaking with one voice has to find its roots in a particular worldview, and Obama posits the U.S. as the center and arbiter of such a worldview. Burke argues that an “identity would here be its uniqueness as an entity in itself and by itself, a demarcated unit having its own particular structure.”²⁵⁷ In order for Obama to justify promoting a U.S. definition of democracy, he must establish a boundary for a blended national and international identity through which he justifies intervention in Libya. U.S. interests and now the homogenized interests of the international community speaking with one voice trump all others, allowing his imperialist rhetoric to frame the U.S. response to the situation in Libya.

The ways in which Obama defines democracy prove important to understand the standardization of the definition of democracy on the Libyan people. For Obama,

his notion of freedom promotes a worldview where rights are universal. The problem, though, is that his definition is an Americanized and Western notion of freedom and democracy. In his first statement on the Libyan conflict, Obama discusses an ambiguous interpretation of rights with limited specificity on what human and civil rights may mean to the Libyan people. “Wherever they are, people have certain universal rights including the right to peaceful assembly.”²⁵⁸ Obama only highlights the right to assemble, which is a right explicitly enumerated in the U.S. Constitution. To discuss his first general notions of human rights concerning the conflict, Obama cites the Constitution, deeming the right to assembly a singular idea and right that all people would understand and recognize and desire. Obama maintains an explicit interpretation of universal rights witnessed under the guise of democratic regimes. “The United States also strongly supports the universal rights of the Libyan people. That includes the rights of peaceful assembly, free speech, and the ability of the Libyan people to determine their own destiny. These are human rights. They are not negotiable. They must be respected in every country.”²⁵⁹ Here Obama conflates democratic rights with human rights, which has several implications. First, his labeling of rights that concern participation within a democratic government brings about a sense of urgency and humanitarian appeal. When a leader or government infringes on human rights, the international community will intervene to ensure the protection of those rights. Second, he lists two rights that again are enumerated in the U.S. Constitution, which allows him to frame the rights recognized in the U.S. as a set of established, universal rights sought after by all. Despite the good nature or benefits of the right to free speech or peaceful assembly, Obama is applying western, idealistic

notions to define universal rights, disallowing the interpretations of those rights by the Libyan people to enter the discussion.

Obama references the desire for freedom by the Libyan people in a way to justify imperialistic expansion and intervention in the conflict. The ways he homogenizes the notion of democracy works to coopt the experiences of the Libyan people while furthering an imperialist and coopting agenda. In his first statement on the conflict in Libya, Obama argues that the Libyan government must alter its behavior, “to respect the rights of their people.”²⁶⁰ Here, Obama is rather vague; he fails to allude to the rights the Libyan people want, specifically. Not once does he state the demands of the people other than to be free from violence and their desire for universal rights. Even as he discusses the rights of the Libyan people or their aspirations, allusions to rights protections and democracy dwindle. As his discourse continues along the timeframe of the conflict, he argues that the U.S. will work “to oppose suppression and support the rights of the Libyan people.”²⁶¹ Again, the space meant to occupy the definitions of rights and democratic desires of those in Libya is overshadowed by his vague interpretations. Obama repeatedly alludes to the demand for “universal human rights, and a government that is responsive to their aspirations,” but he fails to state explicitly what those aspirations or goals may be.²⁶² Instead, Obama merely is repetitive of the vague conceptions of democracy he envisions throughout his rhetoric. As noted, Burke argued that consubstantiality allows for both identification as well as individual recognition, but Obama disallows the identity of Libyan democratic ideals to exist, forcing those ideals to be overshadowed by Western conceptions of democracy and rights promotion.²⁶³ When discussing the origins of the

conflict, Obama remarks that, “Last month, protestors took to the streets across the country to demand their universal rights, and a government that is accountable to them and responsive to their aspirations.”²⁶⁴ Obama only discusses governmental accountability to its people, and while he promotes the notion of U.S. democracy and accountability at the forefront of the conversation, any Libyan interpretation of democracy is pushed to the periphery, and essentially, is deemed nonexistent.

As Obama continues his discourse on the rights protections of the Libyan people, he is able to create a notion of democracy that is consubstantial, to correlate the ideas and experiences of the American people to those of the Libyan protestors. He notes, “We have made clear our support for a set of universal values, and our support for the political and economic change that the people of the region deserve.”²⁶⁵ His interpretation serves as an extension of U.S. policy; the political and economic change he discusses in this statement is akin to the rights and policies of the United States rather than those that are suited for or desired by the Libyan people. He even uses historical comparisons between the fight for American independence to the contemporary fight for freedom in Libya. “Born, as we are, out of a revolution by those who longed to be free, we welcome the fact that history is on the move in the Middle East and North Africa, and that young people are leading the way.”²⁶⁶ Again, he rhetorically constructs a common set of values that the U.S. is crucial to help attain. He argues that the common set of values understood in the U.S. guides his approach in Libya.²⁶⁷ Our history, our principles, and our values are deemed crucial to the implementation of a democracy in Libya, as Obama promotes the U.S. as an integral component to facilitate any possible execution of democracy.

Throughout his Libyan foreign policy discourse, Obama maintains the sentiment that U.S. notions of democracy that are necessary for U.S. foreign policy priorities. He frames the United States as a necessary agent of change for the Libyan people; their rights are only possible with the help of the United States. “Today we are part of a broad coalition. We are answering the calls of a threatened people. And we are acting in the interests of the United States and the world.”²⁶⁸ Again, the United States is key; the hegemon becomes the necessary connection to promoting the notion of universal human rights that Obama continues to reference in his discourse on the conflict. By “answering the call,” Obama demonstrates rhetorically that Libya could not attain democracy without aid; the violence is inevitable in a world absent the United States, maintaining Obama’s imperial prowess on the issue. His characterization allows the United States to regulate freedom and the attainment of rights across the globe, one of Obama’s policy priorities, while masking the notions of imperialism running rampant throughout his discourse and action.

For Obama, intervention is necessary; without doing so, he risks American democracy losing credibility and credence in the international community and the importance of democracy in changing regimes across the Arab Spring. This concept is evident on multiple occasions, as President Obama references democratic regime change occurring elsewhere in the Middle East. In his first set of remarks on the conflict, he argues that, “our efforts continue to address the events taking place elsewhere, including how the international community can most effectively support the peaceful transition to democracy in both Tunisia and in Egypt.”²⁶⁹ Akin to his rhetoric on the rights desired by the Libyan people, his discourse on this matter is

rather vague; he fails to reference explicitly what form or ideology lies behind the looming democracy sought in both Tunisia and Egypt. Again, the vague construction of the democratic transition allows Obama to prioritize western notions and conceptions of democracy and human rights, while silencing and homogenizing others. Interestingly, he utilizes the risk of failed democracy promotion in Tunisia and Egypt as justification for its promotion and necessitated success in Libya. He mentions the two countries and their desire for democracy in three of the seven sets of discourse on the issue. Now is key; the U.S. must ensure Libya is under control to guarantee Tunisia and Egypt are not at risk for failure, as a disastrous Libya would put, “enormous strains on the peaceful—yet fragile—transitions in Egypt and Libya.”²⁷⁰ Democratic regime change is a delicate process, and Obama must engage in whatever means necessary to preserve its integrity and success, particularly when framed as a global, homogenized goal. Specifically, he argues that without the United States working in Libya, “The democratic values that we stand for would be overrun.”²⁷¹ Western democratic idealism is at risk without U.S. imperialist engagement to maintain democracy throughout the Middle East. According to Obama, “we” must protect our values, no matter what the cost.

Democracy promotion is a tool through which an imperialist agenda is furthered; yet the ways in which Obama engages in such actions must be nuanced and persuasive to hide his imperialist tendencies and actions. Historically, the United States has not been silent regarding its desire to implement democratic regimes in tyrannical states witnessing revolt and revolution, akin to the circumstances witnessed across the Arab Spring. For Nye, Jr., the backbone of liberal imperialism involves the

imposition of democracy in an attempt to maintain primacy.²⁷² Obama's rhetoric demonstrates that the United States enacts imperialist policies in its quest to foster democracy in the region. He frames his engagement in Libya as "an important strategic interest" to ensure U.S. notions of democracy remain prominent throughout the region.²⁷³ Democracy promotion also allows the justification of other imperialist actions later in an attempt to maintain western conceptions of freedom. Jonathan Monten, a research fellow in international security at the University of Oklahoma, claims, "because democracy is fragile and difficult to propagate, the ability of the U.S. government to directly promote and consolidate democratic institutions is limited and constrained."²⁷⁴ Monten's argument disallows the view that the U.S. can create and manifest democratic government institutions and norms abroad directly. Rather, the ways in which Obama can accomplish the task despite the constraints of the democracy's brittle nature is through his rhetorical constructions of consubstantiation, as a nuanced discursive strategy. Creating a universality of democracy embedded in Western idealism allows Obama the propensity to influence democracy in Libya, validating and propagating the continued historical, imperialist tendencies of the United States federal government.

Connecting U.S. imperialist propensities with democracy promotion produces an inevitable discussion of U.S. leadership and hegemonic interests. In the speech to the American populous several days following intervention, Obama deems the United States has a responsibility to act in the conflict, creating a moral imperative of sorts around which to justify his military encounter. In his address post-intervention, he reminds his audience of the historic leadership role the U.S. has served to protect the

international community. “For generations, the United States of America has played a unique role as an anchor of global security and as an advocate for human freedom. Mindful of the risks and costs of military action, we are naturally reluctant to use force to solve the world’s many challenges. But when our interests and values are at stake, we have a responsibility to act. That’s what happened in Libya over the course of these last six weeks.”²⁷⁵ Obama plays with psychological time as he compares the historical role of the U.S. to the current situation in Libya. His discourse creates a temporal dimension to his moral imperative of fulfilling a leadership role in the quest for democracy. He rhetorically constructs a sense of urgency to connect a necessity to intervene with accepted reasons to maintain U.S. leadership, mainly democracy and human rights protections. Stemming from the possible implications if the U.S. did not intervene, including the risk that democracy fails in Tunisia and Egypt, Obama rhetorically constructs the necessity for the United States to maintain its primacy concerning issues of democracy promotion and regime change. Obama explicitly notes America’s important strategic interest in Libya as a way to justify intervention in the conflict. He begins with soft power strategies, through his homogenization rhetoric, to later justify the use of hard power, as Nye, Jr. predicts, is necessary in today’s political climate.²⁷⁶ Obama frames the U.S. as the guardian of people and democratic regimes, which works to justify a smart power strategy. In his last speech on the conflict, he argues that, “for generations, we have done the hard work of protecting our own people, as well as millions around the globe.”²⁷⁷ Historically, the U.S. has engaged in numerous imperialist acts aimed at protecting the world’s people, and the hegemon

will continue to do so, especially in light the situation in Libya; Obama must act to protect Western notions of democracy.

U.S. hegemony and imperialist actions via a strategy of rhetorical homogenization becomes inevitable in a world where Obama can continue to overshadow the rights and desires of other nations and peoples. Obama frames a future necessity for the U.S. as a leader. “Because wherever people long to be free, they will find a friend in the United States. Ultimately it is that faith—those ideals—that are the true measure of American leadership.”²⁷⁸ American leadership becomes the lynchpin for all democratic initiatives now and in the future, especially as Obama frames the strengthening of American leadership after a successful military encounter. Obama establishes his superiority, demonstrating many of the complexities in rhetorical leadership as discussed by Dorsey.²⁷⁹ Obama claims that the U.S. is “acting in the interests of the United States and the world.”²⁸⁰ Again, a collective identity is necessary to justify U.S. action in the conflict. Instead of the rights promotion of the Libyan people as the forefront of his argument, the ideas of a national and international mandate coupled with an elimination of violence gives Obama the necessary backing to promote U.S. hegemony and imperialism, working to protect the Libyans, whose rights are secondary to the discussion, especially after intervention. He argues, “To brush aside America’s responsibility as a leader and—more profoundly—our responsibilities to our fellow human beings under such circumstances would have been a betrayal of who we are. Some nations may be able to turn a blind eye to atrocities in other countries. The United States of America is different. And as President, I refused to wait for the images of slaughter and mass

graves before taking action.”²⁸¹ Here Obama takes a preemptive stance to protect the deaths of thousands and justifies such action through framing intervention as a responsibility for the U.S. Sociologist John Bellamy Foster contends that hegemonic imperialism seeks to expand imperial power to whatever extent possible to subordinate the world to its interests.²⁸² Rather than highlighting the needs of the Libyan protestors as the ultimate concern, Obama discusses the U.S. responsibility as a leader as a priority for action.

Particularly in the new age of globalization, the term “imperialism” has received much scrutiny in the international community. Repeatedly, nations accuse the United States of imperialist tendencies or risking imperialist actions when the U.S. finds itself involved in issues concerning other nations. In order to hedge against such accusations, Obama makes a point of definitively articulating the ways in which the United States is in no way responsible for the democratic revolutions and regime changes occurring throughout the Middle East, particularly in Libya. In six instances, Obama works to hide the guise of American imperialism to ensure the U.S. is not blamed for its involvement in the regime change occurring in Libya. In his first set of remarks on the issue, he argues, “So let me be clear. The change that is taking place across the region is being driven by the people of the region. This change doesn’t represent the work of the United States or any foreign power. It represents the aspirations of people who are seeking a better life.”²⁸³ He rhetorically constructs a scapegoat through the aspirations of the Libyan people so he and the imperialist tendencies of the U.S. are free from scrutiny for meddling in Libyan affairs, particularly after the U.S. did not intervene in Bahrain or Yemen. Burke argues that

the scapegoat is inherently necessary to the progression of society and the inevitable hierarchy within it.²⁸⁴ The Libyan people are depicted as the reason the U.S. has to intervene, as Obama denounces his imperialist attributes. He continues to argue that the people themselves will drive the change in Libya, yet previously, he depicted that it was necessary for the U.S. to meld the regime change, particularly via military means. Obama's hypocritical and scapegoating stance reduces the legitimacy of his intentions, but in order to seem anti-imperialist, he creates several disclaimers to avoid accusation of imperialist actions and discourse. It is only with a disclaimer that he frames the Libyan people as his reason for acting in the conflict. Additionally, Obama phrases each instance of denial with a powerful precursor statement to signal his deliberate framing of an anti-imperialist agenda. "But I want to be clear"²⁸⁵ and "I also want to be clear about what we will not be doing."²⁸⁶ Each phrase attempts to hide the imperialist notions of the U.S. to avoid scrutiny by the international community and the Libyan people themselves.

Through the use of his rhetoric, President Obama allows for the justification of U.S. imperialism over the Libyan people. Obama constructs a homogenized interpretation of democracy he is able to utilize to justify U.S. intervention in the Libyan civil war. Via consubstantiation, Obama masks the true desires for freedom or democracy from the Libyan people, declaring a universal set of rights to justify military intervention and the promotion of U.S. hegemony. Despite his scapegoating of U.S. imperialist tendencies upon the desires of the Libyan people, Obama's forceful rhetoric promoting U.S. interests in the name of Libyan cries for help allows him to

promote a unified, western interpretation of rights to further the arm of the U.S. hegemonic machine.

Security Rhetoric: The Construction of the “Other”

Among his speeches on Libya, Obama constructs a rhetorical space for military intervention on the conflict, which establishes an axis upon which he can create a sense of urgency to act. In order to accomplish such a task, he fashioned a security concern against which the U.S. must combat. Dr. Steven Talbot, a defense sociologist at the South Australian Defense Science and Technology Organisation, argues that labeling a threat shapes our understanding of the discourse surrounding power relationships and our subsequent security responses.²⁸⁷ The U.S. is a necessary agent in order to eliminate the threat. To demonstrate this action through his addresses, President Obama justifies the security threat in Libya as an extension of U.S. interests and international goals, constructs Qaddafi as a tyrant who must be defeated, and rhetorically constructs the primacy of the U.S. militarily, which works to maintain United States’ smart power and imperialism.

Security rhetoric is not a new concept in presidential foreign address, for in most foreign policy speeches presidents utilize some facet of threat construction in order to justify their actions abroad. Panda finds that the Obama administration continues a long line of threat construction rhetoric to maintain U.S. interests.²⁸⁸ Security is not necessarily a goal but is a set of actions and justifications for those actions. By describing the world as full of threats and justifying foreign intervention in terms of security, a government can utilize whatever means, violent or nonviolent,

necessary in the name of protecting and preserving security. Øyvind Jæger, analyst for the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, argues that when government label an issue a security concern, “one legitimizes the employment of extraordinary measures to counter the threat, because it threatens security. In other words, security is a self-referential practice that carries its own legitimization and justification.”²⁸⁹ The quest to maintain security becomes a circular process of inevitable violence and intervention, which is resultant of imperialistic and hegemonic tendencies. Obama’s pursuit of security over U.S. notions and extensions of democracy as well as the threat he constructs in his rhetoric on Libya serve to justify the military intervention he ordered in March 2011. Obama maintains a norm and tendency of many prior U.S. presidents who utilized security rhetoric to justify their foreign policy actions.

Obama begins his security discourse through a changing spatiality of the Libyan conflict. He constructs a chronological outline of the conflict to amplify the persuasive appeal of his security concern. Leff and Mohrmann’s work creating two spatially constructed axes, part of a subtle conceptual pattern in the text, created a sense of space to explain the order and movement of the text.²⁹⁰ Akin to their spatial creation, Obama rhetorically constructs two axes, which he uses to both intensify the rhetoric on the violence occurring in Libya and shift the blame from the government of Libya to only Qaddafi. Obama’s rhetoric creates a source of blame for the violence and discursively creates a vivid portrait of the abhorrent atrocities occurring in Libya. The rhetorical space Obama fabricates paves the way for his rhetorical strategy and artistry to transform an international human rights issue into a U.S. security concern.

Obama's initial rhetoric on the civil war lacks specificity. His discourse fails to pinpoint details about the unique situation at hand. In his first statement on Libya, Obama defines the conflict as an "ongoing situation."²⁹¹ He refrains from calling the civil war a conflict and is rather vague when discussing the violence or the political situation. He calls the atrocities, "reports of violence."²⁹² Obama omits any particular details about the violence in any of the countries experiencing crackdowns from tyrannical Islamic governments. Additionally, Obama cites the Libyan government as the necessary actor to rectify the atrocities at the onset of the conflict, all the while alluding to the government as the inherent source.²⁹³ Obama's rhetoric at the commencement of the conflict is indefinite both about the violence occurring as well as the source of that hostility at the onset of the struggle as he lacks specificity about the nature of the government attacks and that Qaddafi as the head of state is ultimately responsible. The ambiguous nature of his rhetoric points to a guise of soft power in handling the indefinable violence. Using words such as "urges" when pinpointing the initial calls to action for the Libyan government denotes a deliberative connotation, hiding the possible propensity for military intervention in the future, a strategic smart power strategy.²⁹⁴ The ominous and ambiguous nature of Obama's rhetoric illuminates the first step in his spatial, axial transformation rhetorical strategy.

After his initial statement on the violence in Libya, Obama focuses the audience's attention on a more specific interpretation of the mayhem in Libya its source. Obama renegotiates the rhetorical space in which he constructs a security threat. Obama discusses the conflict as a "period of unrest and upheaval across the region."²⁹⁵ His wording alludes to the continuance of concern for the region, as the

skirmish is not yet solved, despite the polite demands of the U.S. federal government. A new level of specificity arises, transforming the nature of the security threat. Obama moves along an axis of specificity, honing in on the violence occurring in the region. He also states, “the suffering and bloodshed is outrageous and it is unacceptable.”²⁹⁶ Obama’s specificity about the violence works to paint an image of carnage that can be visualized by the American populous. Additionally, Obama reframes the source of the violence. “By any measure, Muammar el-Qaddafi’s government has violated international norms and common decency and must be held accountable.”²⁹⁷ In his address, Obama cites the source of the violence as Qaddafi’s government rather than the government of Libya. Obama names a scapegoat and figurehead as a security threat in order to reconfigure the rhetorical space in which he operates. Qaddafi also moves along the spatial axis. Similar to a conical shape, both the definition of violence and its source start with a broader interpretation, moving to a more specific interpretation as time progresses. A clarification of the violence and its cause provides Obama a rhetorical artistry that facilitates threat construction.

We witness a final shift in Obama’s rhetoric once intervention has occurred. Obama transforms accountability of the Libyan government to casting blame solely on Qaddafi to solve a mounting security concern. Obama frames as Qaddafi as the sole arbiter of the acts of state sponsored terrorism. “In the face of the world’s condemnation, Qaddafi chose to escalate his attacks, launching a military campaign against the Libyan people.”²⁹⁸ Instead of the label “Qaddafi’s government,” Obama names only Qaddafi as the perpetrator, demonstrating further specificity along a spatial axis. Obama describes a scene of humanitarian crisis, but this time it is at the

hands of Qaddafi. “For more than four decades, the Libyan people have been ruled by a tyrant—Muammar Qaddafi. He has denied his people freedom, exploited their wealth, murdered opponents at home and abroad, and terrorized innocent people around the world—including Americans who were killed by Libyan agents.”²⁹⁹

Historically, tyrannical leaders maintain oppressive regimes that are condemned by the international community. The rhetoric of a military campaign contains very violent measures, alluding to heinous crimes committed by Qaddafi against his citizens.

Obama’s labeling of Qaddafi as a tyrant shifts the blame from the government to solely him, deeming him the only individual accountable for the atrocities incurred by the Libyan citizens. Robert Ivie, professor of communication and culture at Indiana University, argues, “The stubborn question of security, which always confounds and often preempts or subsumes and subordinates any immediate aspiration of peace, is itself provoked by a rhetoric of evil, which envelops all considerations of safety and well-being in a swirl of fear and hatred.”³⁰⁰ Obama’s discourse crescendos in strength and specificity, while it decrescendos in scope, as he discusses the brutality of the conflict and its source, thus allowing Obama to justify the securitization mindset to the American people through a rhetoric of fear.

When the security of the United States is at stake, Obama has made clear he will act to preserve his security interests, especially in his rhetoric on Libya. If he is willing to intervene to promote democracy, he certainly is willing to justify military action via his security rhetoric. A reference to the impact of the violence on Americans solidifies his framing of the issue to construct a rhetorical security concern in Libya. Again, a transformation across an axis occurs; now there is a specific description of

the violence in Libya that impacts both Libyan and United States citizens. As Ivie argues, considerations of safety become a vital concern.³⁰¹ Obama begins to frame the security concern for the United States only hours before intervention occurred. He argues, “Many thousands could die. A humanitarian crisis would ensue. The entire region could be destabilized, endangering many of our allies and partners.”³⁰² Now, Qaddafi’s regime has the propensity to affect the U.S. and its allies rather than just its conception of democracy. Destabilization of the region means refugee displacement, border conflict, and an economic burden for U.S. allies in the region. The U.S. must act to solve the conflict if Obama’s depicted scenario is a potential reality.

Obama also frames a security concern in his address to the nation after the intervention. He states, “We knew that if we waited—if we waited one more day, Benghazi, a city nearly the size of Charlotte, could suffer a massacre that would have reverberated across the region and stained the conscience of the world.”³⁰³ Here, he compares Benghazi to a town the entire U.S. would recognize, which forces a sense of sympathy and further urgency in securitizing the issue. The President connects disaster in Libya to disaster in the U.S. to create a rhetorically established sense of exigency for military intervention. Finally, Obama justifies action in future international conflict. “There will be times, though, when our safety is not directly threatened, but our interests and our values are. Sometimes, the course of history poses challenges that threaten our common humanity and our common security—responding to natural disasters, for example; or preventing genocide and keeping the peace; ensuring regional security, and maintaining the flow of commerce. These may not be America’s problems alone, but they are important to us. They’re problems worth solving.”³⁰⁴

Rhetorically, Obama makes another important connection—one to the importance of democracy. The United States as a global leader will continue to interfere in foreign affairs to maintain peace in the region and to establish democracy, both of which are imperialistic and hegemonic conceptions. Obama discursively constructs security rhetoric in his speeches, demonstrating an inevitability of U.S. threat construction and imperialism.

Once Obama establishes the tyrannical nature of Qaddafi along a spatial axis, Obama uses the word terror on two occasions, both of which are rooted in the security mindset and used to justify military action. His first use of the word functions as a connection of terror to U.S. interests, as he states, “For decades, [Qaddafi] has demonstrated a willingness to use brute force through his sponsorship of terrorism against the American people as well as others, and through the killings that he has carried out within his own borders.”³⁰⁵ Discourse on state sponsored terrorism is persuasive to an audience that cares about democracy, as most would generally argue that acts of abuse by one’s government should be eliminated and prevented. Edwards notes its propensity to become a powerful agent in governmental action.³⁰⁶ Terror rhetoric is a speech act, which governments will utilize to justify any measures, particularly in the wake of 9/11. Talbot argues that the current terrorism climate affords the government further justification for action as, “to label a problem a ‘security’ issue or a ‘threat’ gives this problem a special status, and one which can legitimate extraordinary measures to tackle it.”³⁰⁷ Discourse on terrorism has the propensity to highlight international issues and problems as a priority, one threat the United States must work to conquer.

Persuasive fear rhetoric and threat construction justify military intervention and economic securitization, which is evident in Obama's rhetoric on Libya. Attorney Alexander Marcopoulos argues, "terror rhetoric in today's society has afforded U.S. policy makers the propensity to use fear tactics as legitimization for the elimination of terrorists."³⁰⁸ Through his use of fear tactics, Obama constructs chronological iconicity as he creates an evil tyrant who commits atrocities against his own people who must be stopped.³⁰⁹ Qaddafi invoked terror on his own people, which sparked a sense of fear that lacks political limits, which justifies U.S. imperialism through military and economic means.

Militarism

The implication for securitization rhetoric is witnessed in the military intervention that occurred after Obama's initial framing of the conflict. Militaristic rhetoric justifies military intervention based on a fabricated security concern. Christine Ahn, the executive director of the Korea Policy Institute, and Gwyn Kirk, founder member of the East Asia-US-Puerto Rico Women's Network Against Militarism, argue, "For all the talk of change, militarism hasn't gone away in the new administration."³¹⁰ Obama's discussion of the U.S. armed forces increases as Obama progresses through time in his public addresses. "Yesterday, in response to a call for action by the Libyan people and the Arab League, the U.N. Security Council passed a strong resolution that demands an end to the violence against citizens. It authorizes the use of force with an explicit commitment to pursue all necessary measures to stop the killing, to include the enforcement of a no-fly zone over Libya."³¹¹ Obama explicitly

notes the use of force, which alludes to future U.S. action, as of now, is the only way to pressure democracy and eliminate threats is through the military. In his speech after military intervention, Obama juxtaposes U.S. military intervention now with that in the 1990s. “To lend some perspective on how rapidly this military and diplomatic response came together, when people were being brutalized in Bosnia in the 1990s, it took the international community more than a year to intervene with air power to protect civilians. It took us 31 days.”³¹² The current U.S. military war machine is efficient, particularly when compared to historic, similar circumstances, allowing Obama to create a sense of juxtapositional iconicity.³¹³ “To summarize, then: In just one month, the United States has worked with our international partners to mobilize a broad coalition, secure an international mandate to protect civilians, stop an advancing army, prevent a massacre, and establish a no-fly zone with our allies and partners.”³¹⁴ Obama’s statement is very matter of fact; he simplifies a complicated effort to demonstrate the power and agility of the U.S. military, which demonstrates Obama’s possible conquest for security through a smart power strategy in international politics.

Security rhetoric forces the inevitability of militarism, making peace unattainable. Obama’s rhetoric on the Libyan conflict drives the continuance of imperialist international actions as he framed a security threat in an attempt to intervene militarily in the civil war. Governmental actions seeking, or forcing, peace become risks to security, making the securitization mindset inevitable in international politics. Military action, then, becomes a mechanism to further a political agenda through a rhetorical construction of a collective identity. Talbot argues that a liberal democracy reflects a social identity through a common set of ideals and practices.³¹⁵

Democracy promotion is a topic through which he can project U.S. ideals onto other nations, and security rhetoric is the key to doing so. According to Michael Hardt, Professor of Literature and Italian at Duke, and Antonio Negri, expert in State Theory, “The institutions of imperial justice and the international courts will punish crimes against humanity, as long as they are dependent on the ruling global powers.”³¹⁶ International hierarchies are inevitable, thus making imperialist, security constructions in rhetoric unavoidable, particularly if Obama continues his current discourse about foreign conflicts during the remainder of his presidency. The ways in which Obama homogenizes democracy while creating a security concern creates the possibility for future military endeavors as safety becomes a matter of salvation in the rhetorical universe that is war culture.

Economic Imperialism

Economic security is another facet of the security rhetoric imposed by Obama in his rhetoric. In the State of the Union two weeks prior to the Libyan civil war, Obama tells the American public, “Just as jobs and businesses can now race against borders, so can new threatens and new challenges. No single wall separates East and West. No one rival superpower is aligned against us.”³¹⁷ Obama creates an “other” that the U.S. must protect itself against, but the other is vague and undefined. Akin to his vague interpretation of the violent Qaddafi regime, Obama begins his discussion on economic security in a similar and nebulous manner. Security theorist Mark Neocleous states, “the new international order moved very quickly to reassert the connection between economic and national security; the commitment to the former

simultaneously a commitment to the latter, and vice versa.”³¹⁸ Obama’s advancement of economic imperialism becomes certain in his attempts to establish security rhetoric. Economic security discourse attempts to reorder the world via endless violent interventions in the name of economic well-being.

In response to Qaddafi’s resistance to international condemnation, Obama utilized his framework for economic imperialism to create an executive order to impose sanctions on Libya. The executive order serves as a policy substantiation of the control Obama will impose to maintain U.S. security and democratic interests abroad. Rhetorically, Obama constructs a pinnacle in the axis of blame similar to his discussion on security rhetoric and threat construction. His first set of remarks that concerned economic control came in a statement on the possibility of sanctions. His words here function in a similar fashion as his spatial transformation of the atrocities and Qaddafi along an axis. “These sanctions therefore target the Qaddafi government, while protecting the assets that belong to the people of Libya.”³¹⁹ Obama shifts blame to Qaddafi as the center of government to justify the use of economic imperialism over the nation of Libya.

In his letter to Congress, as well as within the Executive Order itself, Obama specifies the property that is sanctioned as well as who is uniquely affected by their policy requirements. The discourse in both the letter to Congress about the sanctions as well as that of the Executive Order is cold and calculated, as most policy rhetoric tends to be. “The order blocks the property and interests in property of persons listed in the Annex to the order, who I have determined meet the first or second of the six criteria set forth below, to be a senior official of the Government of Libya;”³²⁰ He

speaks with precision, a persuasive tool to justify his actions. With discourse to Congress, Obama ensures his words are specific to ensure his desires are enacted in policy, contrary to his metaphorical, rhetorically homogenizing rhetoric he uses with the American people.

Another justification for intervention in the conflict is the ability to stop human rights atrocities. Although Obama also made a connection to rights protections and democracy to protect domestic security, he eludes to rights violations in terms of economic discourse. In his letter on sanctions, he specifies that human rights violations are at the center of the discussion on whether sanctions are necessary. He specifies that those sanctioned in his executive order must “be responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, or to have participated in, the commission of human rights abuses related to political repression in Libya.”³²¹ Obama isolates humanitarian assistance in terms of economics, stating that, due to the sanctions, the U.S. would be in charge of facilitating supplies across the border. “Humanitarian assistance was positioned on Libya’s borders, and those displaced by the violence received our help.”³²² The U.S. became a broker for dealing humanitarian aid once Obama rhetorically constructs a connection between economics and human rights protections. Imperialist intervention is a crucial link to the elimination of human rights abuses in Libya. The rights that become important are those he discusses throughout his remarks on democracy. Journalist Michael Ignatieff argues that human rights work to justify a free-market order, which uses individual social and economic security to sustain itself.³²³ The rights needed to guarantee the hegemony of liberal market capitalism abroad become of the utmost importance and

forever sought to maintain U.S. prominence and the elimination of human rights violations.

Solidified economic security allows for the promotion of U.S. hegemony. Beginning with the State of the Union, Obama discusses the ways in which he would promote U.S. soft power. “We’re working with Muslim communities around the world to promote science and education and innovation.”³²⁴ Technology and innovation are necessary to promote the world economy, particularly as the world’s resources are depleting. In the State of the Union, Obama establishes cooperation through innovation, which promotes U.S. involvement in areas that will continue to rule the global economy. Nye, Jr. argues that soft power strategies are conducive to the empire, which work to, gain a legitimate foundation for imperial rule.³²⁵ Imperialism is framework through which nations justify their hegemonic actions. For Obama, the imposition of sanctions promotes U.S. dominance in the international sphere via economic imperialist control. His Libyan conflict rhetoric demonstrates his progression via smart power methods. “We froze more than \$33 billion of Qaddafi’s regime’s assets. Joining with other nations at the United Nations Security Council, we broadened our sanctions, imposed an arms embargo, and enabled Qaddafi and those around him to be held accountable for their crimes.”³²⁶ Obama demonstrates his progression through the conflict in an attempt to halt humanitarian abuse, a natural extension of an imperialist, smart power strategy.

Obama employs a facet of control when discussing the specifics of the \$33 billion in frozen assets. In his address after intervention, he tells the American people, “We will safeguard the more than \$33 billion that was frozen from the Qaddafi regime

so that it's available to rebuild Libya. After all, the money doesn't belong to Qaddafi or to us—it belongs to the Libyan people. And we'll make sure they receive it."³²⁷

Obama makes very clear that the funds are in control of the United States to rebuild Libya. Discourse on democracy promotion tends to concern nation building, which will now be at the helm of the U.S. federal government. Obama's economic discourse promotes imperial control and justifies U.S. influence in nation building and the imposition of democracy.

The continued dominance of the U.S. in the international political economy is inevitable. Globalization has forced the United States to maintain its prominence in the international community, especially by means of economic control. The use of sanctions in the Libyan conflict is an example of such control. Continued justification and acceptance of economic sanctions forces the capitalistic machine to maintain itself, creating a world after its own image, which allows imperialist economic control by the United States to be inevitable.

Conclusion

President Obama's rhetoric on the Libyan conflict provides a unique opportunity to understand his strategies in justifying foreign intervention. Libya is Obama's conflict; the civil war is his first opportunity to discuss and decide an international issue that began during his presidency. Analysts predicted the notions of hope and change would flourish throughout his presidency, yet instead, a hawkish, imperialist type of discourse emerged instead. Through a nuanced rhetorical strategy, President Obama justifies U.S. military intervention abroad in an attempt to save

Western notions of democracy and maintain United States security. In order to accomplish this task, Obama homogenizes the American people to talk with one voice and create a sense of collective identity. His rhetoric demonstrates an imperialist means of justifying foreign intervention later in the course of the conflict.

Following his establishment of a sense of national unity, Obama develops a consubstantial interpretation of democracy to defend U.S. intervention in Libya. Obama promotes a western sense of democracy to justify security rhetoric and economic imperialism over the Libyan government and specifically Qaddafi. Because Libya created a threat to U.S. democratic interests abroad as well as security concerns, Obama was able to justify the imposition of economic sanctions and military action in order to fulfill his conquest. Obama utilized imperialist actions and rhetoric to justify western conceptions of democracy, which is contrary to the diplomatic and the deliberative presidential platform upon which he campaigned. Akin to Nye, Jr.'s interpretation of soft power, Obama uses a multifaceted approach to rationalize his actions to the American people. Brute force is insufficient in asymmetric warfare, so Obama's alternative methods of control, which include social, economic, and militaristic, advance imperial control in a subtler and more nefarious manner; Obama engages in imperial warfare against the Libyan government to substantiate the U.S. war machine.

Notes

²²⁶ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 27, 2010).

²²⁷ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 27, 2010).

²²⁸ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 27, 2010).

²²⁹ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 25, 2011).

²³⁰ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 27, 2010).

²³¹ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 27, 2010).

²³² Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 25, 2011).

²³³ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 27, 2010).

²³⁴ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 25, 2011).

²³⁵ Christopher Layne, “Offshore Balancing Revisited,” *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (2002): 241.

²³⁶ Leff, “Textual Criticism,” 360.

- ²³⁷ Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short, *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* (London: Longman, 1981), 233.
- ²³⁸ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 27, 2010).
- ²³⁹ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 25, 2011).
- ²⁴⁰ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 25, 2011).
- ²⁴¹ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 25, 2011).
- ²⁴² Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 25, 2011).
- ²⁴³ Panda, “Values and National Interest,” 106.
- ²⁴⁴ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 27, 2010).
- ²⁴⁵ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 25, 2011).
- ²⁴⁶ Kenneth Burke, *On Symbols and Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 180.
- ²⁴⁷ Burke, *On Symbols and Society*, 181.
- ²⁴⁸ Zarefsky, “Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition,” 611.
- ²⁴⁹ Burke, *On Symbols and Society*, 191.

²⁵⁰ Obama, “Statement by the President on Violence in Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen” (February 18, 2011).

²⁵¹ Obama, “Statement by the President on Violence in Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen” (February 18, 2011).

²⁵² Obama, “Statement by the President on Violence in Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen” (February 18, 2011).

²⁵³ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (February 23, 2011).

²⁵⁴ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (February 23, 2011).

²⁵⁵ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (February 23, 2011).

²⁵⁶ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (February 23, 2011).

²⁵⁷ Burke, *On Symbols and Society*, 181.

²⁵⁸ Obama, “Statement by the President on Violence in Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen” (February 18, 2011).

²⁵⁹ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (February 23, 2011).

²⁶⁰ Obama, “Statement by the President on Violence in Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen” (February 18, 2011).

²⁶¹ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (February 23, 2011).

²⁶² Obama, “Statement by the President on Libya Sanctions” (February 25, 2011).

²⁶³ Burke, *On Symbols and Society*, 181.

²⁶⁴ Obama, “Remarks by the President on the Situation in Libya” (March 18, 2011).

²⁶⁵ Obama, “Remarks by the President on the Situation in Libya” (March 18, 2011).

- ²⁶⁶ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).
- ²⁶⁷ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (February 23, 2011).
- ²⁶⁸ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (March 19, 2011).
- ²⁶⁹ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (February 23, 2011).
- ²⁷⁰ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).
- ²⁷¹ Obama, “Remarks by the President on the Situation in Libya” (March 18, 2011).
- ²⁷² Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power*, 18.
- ²⁷³ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).
- ²⁷⁴ Jonathan Monten, “The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy,” *International Security* 29, no. 4 (2005): 124.
- ²⁷⁵ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).
- ²⁷⁶ Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power*, 25.
- ²⁷⁷ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).
- ²⁷⁸ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).
- ²⁷⁹ Dorsey, “Introduction: The President as a Rhetorical Leader,” 4.
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CHAPTER III

PRESIDENTIAL PANOPTICISM

For generations, the United States of America has played a unique role as an anchor of global security and as an advocate for human freedom. Mindful of the risks and costs of military action, we are naturally reluctant to use force to solve the world's many challenges. But when our interests and values are at stake, we have a responsibility to act. That's what happened in Libya over the course of these last six weeks.

Libya sits directly between Tunisia and Egypt—two nations that inspired the world when their people rose up to take control of their own destiny. For more than four decades, the Libyan people have been ruled by a tyrant—Muammar Qaddafi. He has denied his people freedom, exploited their wealth, murdered opponents at home and abroad, and terrorized innocent people around the world—including Americans who were killed by Libyan agents.

Last month, Qaddafi's grip of fear appeared to give way to the promise of freedom. In cities and towns across the country, Libyans took to the streets to claim their basic human rights. As one Libyan said, "For the first time we finally have hope that our nightmare of 40 years will soon be over."

Faced with this opposition, Qaddafi began attacking his people. As President, my immediate concern was the safety of our citizens, so we evacuated our embassy and all Americans who sought our assistance. Then we took a series of swift steps in a matter of days to answer Qaddafi's aggression. We froze more than \$33 billion of Qaddafi's regime's assets. Joining with other nations at the United Nations Security Council, we broadened our sanctions, imposed an arms embargo, and enabled Qaddafi and those around him to be held accountable for their crimes. I made it clear that Qaddafi had lost the confidence of his people and the legitimacy to lead, and I said that he needed to step down from power.

~ Barack Obama, "Address to the Nation on Libya, March 28, 2011"

Introduction: Bentham's Inspection House

Biopolitical control, the subjugation of populations by the will of the state, permeates international affairs; coercing nations into acting in a particular fashion has become a natural part of the daily workings of global politics. In his discourse on the Libyan conflict, President Obama seeks to condemn Muammar al-Qaddafi for the atrocities incurred on the Libyan people. In order to demonstrate the dominance of the

international community, Obama rhetorically constructs a tool of persuasion that is representative of both power and control in politics; he rhetorically constructs the inner-workings of Jeremy Bentham's panoptic prison structure, the penitentiary inspection-house, to outline the justification for the United States' recent involvement in the Libyan crisis. In addition to the notion of punishment inherent within the prison system, prisons also serve another essential purpose, which is to create change. Philosopher Michel Foucault argues, "Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behavior must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used."³²⁸ Obama's rhetoric and action in the crisis is demonstrative of a desire for behavior change of the Libyan government and the biopolitical nature of the United States. To facilitate his rhetorical strategy, Obama constructs a rhetorical panopticon with Qaddafi as a prisoner in a cell under the surveillance of the watchtower, the international community, which serves the purpose of justifying U.S. military action on Libyan soil.

In a set of letters written in 1787, Bentham laid the foundation for an inevitable surveillance mindset stemming from the creation of a prison. In order to establish the idea of the inspection principle, Bentham wrote of his plans for a penitentiary inspection-house. He outlines his plans and designs throughout his letters to establish his idea of constant observation, mentioning that the outside building is circular, where prisoners occupy cells that are divided from one another.³²⁹ All of the prisoners, through their living arrangements are "by that means, secluded from all communication with each other, by partitions."³³⁰ Seclusion, compartmentalization, and surveillance were his goals. The cells occupy a circular building that surrounds a

central watchtower, which manages the surveillance of the cells. Applicable to various circumstances, the panopticon prison structure came into being as a result of crisis. Crises bring about change, which was evident during the bubonic plague. According to Foucault, “The plague is met by order: its function to sort out every possible confusion.”³³¹ The plague led to disciplinary projects, separating individuals from one another, creating an organization of surveillance and control. Discipline is innate within human nature, allowing political actors to utilize its mechanisms within international affairs.

Prisons are agents of change; each possesses its own rehabilitation and punishment systems with which prisons alter behavior. Jenny Edkins, Professor of international politics, claims, “once established, prison became the ‘self-evident’ form of punishment, precisely because of the way it was bound up at a deep level with the functioning of society.”³³² Power and control are innate in human nature, and especially in governmental affairs. Prisons serve to change an individual’s actions to promote a better society; the ideals of rehabilitation and change are not confined to the bars of an actual prison, as a desire for perpetual discipline is evident in Obama’s discourse. According to political theorist Ernesto Laclau, the penal system sought the deprivation of liberty and the transformation of individuals.³³³ Prisons bring about a sense of control; their rhetorical construction serves as an effective rhetorical strategy for correcting actions via fear and disciplinary mechanisms.

In the instance of Libya, the international community found a cause of concern. As Qaddafi maintained his atrocities against his people, Obama responded. Bentham argues, “No matter how different, or even opposite the purpose: whether it

be that of punishing the incorrigible, guarding the insane, reforming the vicious, confining the suspected, employing the idle, maintaining the helpless, curing the sick, instructing the willing in any branch of industry, or training the rising race in the path of education: in a word, whether it be applied to the purposes of perpetual prisons.”³³⁴

In his description of a prison’s purpose, Bentham created the framework necessary to justify inevitable power structures based upon discipline and punishment. The prison is not only a physical depiction of the inspection house; it is also representative of the power structures at play in Obama’s discourse on Libya.

In order to establish a power hierarchy, Obama rhetorically frames a hierarchical power structure similar to that of Bentham’s prison to justify U.S. surveillance, security, and action now and in the future as Obama transforms the dichotomy of “East” and “West” prevalent in past presidential discourse. Foucault argues that the panopticon “is in fact a figure of political technology.”³³⁵ As the political climate continues to change as a result of globalization, the technology of an all-seeing, all-knowing prison is now possible and wholly evident in President Obama’s rhetoric on the Libyan civil war. His discourse illuminates a power structure similar to the panopticon to justify U.S. hegemonic projection and foreign intervention. The construct of power plays a large role in international politics. Power is a reproducing agent; for many nations, power becomes a solvency mechanism for world affairs. Foucault contends, “Panopticism is the general principle of a new ‘political anatomy’ whose object and end are not the relations of sovereignty but the relations of discipline.”³³⁶ The discipline about which he talks is applicable wholly to the inner workings of the international community. Panopticism is a disciplinary

mechanism, which will inevitably create a more effective design of coercion in international affairs, which Foucault argues will be prevalent in society in the future, allowing Obama to alter the current scope of foreign relations to facilitate the U.S. as the center of the power hierarchy.³³⁷ Never before has the panopticon been applied to presidential address scholarship, yet its application is prevalent on other subjects. Ravina Aggarwal and Mona Bahn apply the panopticon to politics in India, framing a border issue to manage a relationship between the military and local populous.³³⁸ In line with discussions on democracy, Michelle Baliff discusses the creation of a new rhetoric based on the sophistry, one that forges the promotion of democracy through a “we-formation” that silences and excludes difference.³³⁹ Other common usages of the panopticon in rhetoric concern technology as in Gail E Hawisher’s and Cynthia L. Selfe’s analysis, as well as in the use of media.³⁴⁰ Sumiko Higashi conducts an analysis of propaganda film, as a practical application of the panopticon. However, application of the panopticon to Obama’s rhetoric is unique; it paves the way for a new understanding of presidential address scholarship.³⁴¹ An analysis of his rhetoric allows for a deeper understanding of how the language of going to war is constructed to manage power in an all-seeing, all-knowing way; Obama conducts such a strategy through his framing of the U.S. and other members of the international community as the watchtower in the center of the prison, with Obama as the supervisor, to frame Qaddafi as a prisoner in the cell of the metaphorical prison structure.

Obama's Rhetorical Panoptic Construction

The Central Watchtower

In order for a prisoner to envision constant surveillance or live within its panoptic schema, there must exist a watchtower as the source of that observation. The watchtower stands at the center of the panoptic prison, serving as the center of control and observation. The panoptic scheme's arrangement allows the watchtower to shed light on international problems. In this instance, the watchtower, embodied in the actions of the international community, seeks to illuminate the terror and atrocities of the prisoner, Muammar al-Qaddafi, by creating an overarching sense of surveillance. Foucault contends, "A generalized surveillance, rests of a historical transformation."³⁴² Prisons and disciplinary mechanisms effortlessly spread throughout society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, establishing a historical framework for future, collaborative disciplinary mechanisms in the new age of globalization and multilateral organizations; essentially, globalization has led to the potential for the international community to become innate in the watchtower of the panoptic scheme. Through his rhetoric, Obama establishes the watchtower as an all-seeing, all-knowing machine comprised of the international community. As his discourse on the conflict reaches the date of U.S. intervention, his rhetoric shifts to justify the U.S., and ultimately himself, as the supervisor of the biopolitical watchtower.

The watchtower is a necessary facet of the panoptic power structure. This component in particular is crucial for the establishment of surveillance and security, as the watchtower serves as the first step in the power hierarchy of the panopticon both

physically and metaphorically. Foucault contends, “By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and perfectly visible.”³⁴³ Those in the tower are in the perfect position to maintain constant surveillance on those in the cells, making it key to the element of supervisory control. The watchtower is crucial to witness wrongdoing and guarantee those who deserve discipline receive the punishment incurred, while enclosing prisoners in a biopolitical fashion. Additionally, the rhetorical construction of the watchtower allows multiple entities or individuals to function from within the tower. “Furthermore, the arrangement of this machine is such that its enclosed nature does not preclude a permanent presence from the outside: we have seen that anyone may come and exercise in the central tower the functions of surveillance, and that, this being the case, he can gain a clear idea of the way in which the surveillance is practiced.”³⁴⁴ Surveillance is all the more possible when others can contribute to the observation and supervision of the prisoners. Obama utilizes the notion of the watchtower to demonstrate the international community as the center of the political arena, the set of actors with the power to protect, conduct surveillance, and ensure the safety of the global community.

Essentially, the watchtower is crucial for surveillance of prisoners in the cells of the panopticon. Because the prison is “the place where the inmate is under permanent observation and surveillance,”³⁴⁵ the watchtower must fulfill this role to ensure surveillance is carried out, serving as an integral part of supervisory control.

Foucault asserts that the panopticon “is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centres and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power.”³⁴⁶ The watchtower is a crucial point in the hierarchy of power at play in Obama’s rhetoric; the supervisory nature of the tower is embodied in a spatial construction of an all-seeing, all-knowing, and efficient group of international organizations. Obama demonstrates the height of the tower, allowing for its command over Qaddafi’s actions.

Obama begins the construction of the watchtower rather early in his rhetoric on the Libyan conflict. He frames the international community as above the cells and the prisoner, as if the global police are omnipresent, witnessing all of Qaddafi’s actions. Obama argues, “The entire world is watching, and we will coordinate our assistance and accountability measures with the international community.”³⁴⁷ The global community knows what the Libyan government is doing; Qaddafi cannot hide. Foucault maintains that the panoptic schema spatially ensures that the mechanism should be able to see constantly and recognize immediately wrongdoings of the prisoners.³⁴⁸ Obama also discusses the notion that all voices are possible in the watchtower; the entirety of the world condemns the actions of the Qaddafi regime. Obama stated, “This same message, by the way, has been delivered by the European Union, the Arab League, the African Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and many individual nations. North and south, east and west, voices are being raised together to oppose suppression and support the rights of the Libyan people.”³⁴⁹ Each international organization and division among geographic

coordinates stands with one message, with one goal in mind. His discussion demonstrates the goal of Bentham's inspection house, "for the greatest proportion of time possible, each man should actually be under inspection."³⁵⁰ Logically, the more eyes in the watchtower, the more available the security and insight into the actions of the prisoners, and as a rhetorical tool, Obama creates a rhetorical space for the watchtower to examine Qaddafi's actions and impose the will of the international community.

Obama's rhetorical construction of the watchtower lays the foundation for an inevitable surveillance of Qaddafi's regime by the will of the international community. In Bentham's prison, the watchtower needs a supervisor, an individual who maintains the efficiency of the tower as a surveillance apparatus. Though powerful as an entity, the watchtower lacks the power of the supervisor. To continue his metaphor, Obama uses his creation of the watchtower to justify that of the supervisor, which he frames as the United States.

The Supervisor

The second facet of the panopticon metaphor for Libyan intervention is the supervisor of the tower, which serves to demonstrate the power structure between the United States, other international leaders of the watchtower, and the Qaddafi regime. Foucault argues that once the tower is established, "All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker, or a schoolboy."³⁵¹ The supervisor is the prerequisite for containing the threat of the maniac, whom in this instance is Qaddafi. The supervisor

is a crucial element in the construction of power, acting as the guardian of those in the watchtower and of those in the cells. As an entity, the supervisor possesses more power, allowing those in that position more authority in controlling the alteration of behavior. Bentham asserts efficiency is the inevitability of this power structure, as the omnipresence of the inspector, or supervisor, and its real presence, facilitates a stronger notion of control.³⁵² The supervisor function is a unilateral one that holds the status of superiority in the power structure of the panopticon. Essentially, Obama rhetorically establishes the necessity for a guardian to oversee the behavioral change of Qaddafi, the prisoner, while controlling the inner workings of the tower itself.

In order to engage in these power relations, Obama must demonstrate leadership by framing himself as the supervisor of the watchtower. Obama rhetorically explains the superiority of the U.S. over others in the power structure of the panopticon. He has made it clear: the U.S. is the supervisor. Within his rhetoric on the conflict, President Obama constructs the United States as the supervisor of the tower, the lynchpin for its success in curbing Qaddafi's aggression against his citizens through Obama's discourse illuminating his superiority, his rhetorical tactics before and after intervention, and the justification for hegemonic power projection to maintain control of democratic regime change. In order to establish the U.S. as the supervisor of the watchtower, Obama must differentiate U.S. actions from those of its allies to facilitate an extension of U.S. interests of democracy promotion through biopolitical means.

In his rhetoric, Obama sets a framework for justifying the U.S. and his leadership as being the supervisor of the watchtower. Throughout his discourse about

the international community as an illustration of the observation powers of the panopticon, Obama recognizes that the U.S. is an integral component of the coalition. Obama declares, “the United States will play a supporting role—including intelligence, logistical support, search and rescue assistance, and capabilities to jam regime communications.”³⁵³ He fails to pinpoint any of the other members of the watchtower as supreme or crucial in quashing Qaddafi’s reign. His rhetoric discusses the U.S. and its allies or the U.S. with the help of the international community; though at times he uses an inclusive “we” to discuss those in the watchtower, he maintains a distinction between the U.S. and the rest of the global police force in the tower. Moreover, Obama frames the distinction to absolve the U.S. of future responsibility or blame in the conflict. When discussing the reallocation of control over Operation Odyssey Dawn, Obama announces, “This transfer from the United States to NATO will take place on Wednesday.”³⁵⁴ He again creates a distinction between members of the watchtower, distinguishing the U.S. from NATO and other allies once the job had been completed. The watchtower could take over responsibility once the supervisor deems it appropriate. The nuance of this discussion allows Obama the propensity to frame the U.S. and his own actions as the lynchpin to international security and surveillance; the U.S. is the vital factor to allowing panoptic control in the Libya conflict.

To understand the role of the supervisor, Obama attempts to not only differentiate the supervisory nature of the U.S. from other nations and organizations but also from himself the rest of the United States. Obama creates an axis along which he plays with a binary between himself and the United States to demonstrate his

superiority as the guard in the tower. Foucault argues that the supervisor “inscribes in himself the power relation in which he can simultaneously play both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.”³⁵⁵ Obama can be both a member of the watchtower as well as the leader, creating a distinction he can then apply to demonstrate his own prominence within the United States. This transformation begins early amongst his rhetoric. In the State of the Union addresses, as previously noted, the president established a community against which he can distinguish himself as a biopolitical leader. He claims, “The idea of America endures. Our destiny remains our choice. And tonight, more than two centuries later, it’s because of our people that our future is hopeful, our journey goes forward, and the state of our union is strong.”³⁵⁶ Obama uses the commonality of identity, the historic nature of the U.S. to demonstrate its superiority in the international community; the nation has endured hardship in the past, and future successes are now inevitable. Again in his State of the Union address, he notes, “when I ran for President, I promised I wouldn’t just do what was popular—I would do what was necessary.”³⁵⁷ Obama rhetorically establishes a distinction between himself and the remainder of the U.S. If a policy or action is unpopular, he will still act regardless of public opinion or opposition. His play on the subject of his discourse, himself versus the United States as an actor, is prevalent throughout his discourse occurring chronologically in the conflict; the binary is applicable to his rhetoric both before and after intervention, moving along an axis, shifting the nature of the supervisor from the United States as a political entity to solely Obama.

In his State of the Union addresses, Obama begins at one end of the axis, framing the supervisor of the watchtower as the United States as a singular entity, to

promote peace and prosperity in the U.S. and across the world; this framing continues in his first set of remarks on the conflict to promote the United States as the supervisory authority in the watchtower of international security. He noted, “The United States condemns the use of violence by governments against peaceful protesters in those countries and wherever else it may occur.”³⁵⁸ His statement, here, functions to achieve two rhetorical goals. First, Obama uses the United States as the subject of his sentence, which pinpoints a source of the condemnation and surveillance Qaddafi was experiencing. The president begins what Foucault calls, “a procedure for the subordination of bodies.”³⁵⁹ Obama’s first procedure seems to target Qaddafi, to control the Libyan government’s actions, to halt the atrocities occurring within Libyan borders. Second, his statement is void of mention of the international community, which aids to outline the United States as the supervisor in the watchtower. Without yet mentioning NATO, the U.N., or other nations involved in stripping Qaddafi of his power, Obama rhetorically can subordinate the other members of the watchtower and promote U.S. prominence. From the onset of the conflict, Obama demonstrates the superiority of the U.S. as a watch guard for the international community.

As chronological time progresses, Obama stylistically transforms the supervisor of the watchtower from the United States as the agent of change to the president himself, demonstrating his power and ability creating a rhetorical space for himself outside of the U.S. Foucault contends that the panopticon carries with it an analytical arrangement of space, which is similar to the spatial construction of an international power hierarchy that Obama creates to demonstrate his political power and prominence as a leader.³⁶⁰ As he progresses through his discourse, Obama hones

in on his interpretation of the supervisor in the tower, shifting to the use of “I” coupled with the use of “we” or the “United States” rather than using the United States as the sole arbiter of policing Qaddafi. Two weeks prior to intervention, Obama tells the audience, “I’ve also asked my administration to prepare the full range of options that we have to respond to this crisis. This includes those actions we may take and those we will coordinate with our allies and partners, or those that we’ll carry out through multilateral institutions.”³⁶¹ Here, he uses both “I” and “we” to discuss the supervisor in the panoptic power construction. The actions to be coordinated demonstrate his connection to the tower itself; he recognizes its existence and that the U.S., and primarily himself, is responsible to ensure its success in carrying out action to end the Qaddafi government’s atrocious actions. The switch between “I,” “we,” and the “U.S.” occurs throughout his remarks prior to intervention. As Bentham notes, neither the space controlled nor the persons contained cannot be too large for the supervisor in the watchtower to manage.³⁶² This explains Obama’s nuanced shift from solely the U.S. to a coupling of himself with the U.S. government; he subtly is testing the waters to ensure his panoptic control is possible.

The pinnacle of Obama’s transformation to the supervisory position occurs in his address after the commencement of Operation Odyssey Dawn. Two shifts occur in his rhetoric. First, Obama’s use of first person pronouns increases to demonstrate his part in the conflict, moving the supervisor along the spatial axis created in Obama’s rhetoric. “Today I authorized the Armed Forces of the United States to begin a limited military action in Libya in support of an international effort to protect Libyan civilians.”³⁶³ Obama, here, takes credit for the military action taken by the U.S. armed

forces; he focuses attention to himself as the arbiter of the conflict through his use of first person pronouns. Obama was a successful leader in the punishment of Qaddafi.

Second, Obama uses more harsh and descriptive discourse on the specific instances and examples of violence in Libya to justify his use of military force. He notes that, “as President, I refused to wait for the images of slaughter and mass graves before taking action.”³⁶⁴ Violent atrocities and now the potential for genocidal actions will incur the wrath of the United States and President Obama. American leadership is crucial for Obama to justify action; through his rhetoric, it seems that Obama made a conscious decision to act, describing his role in preventing future violence in addition to halting the current atrocities. He juxtaposes current and future violence in terms of time, which demonstrates his power as supervisor. Only a dominant supervisor could engage in such efficient and effective biopolitical strategies. The supervisor is vital to end the norms violations, and with a looming humanitarian crisis, Obama had the responsibility of a supervisor in a disciplinary position to place Qaddafi at the hands of the international community.

The distinction between the watchtower and the supervisor of that watchtower brings forth several important implications for Obama and his administration. Foucault insists, “the panoptic schema makes any apparatus of power more intense,” through an assurance of its economy, its efficacy, and continuous functioning via its automatic mechanisms.³⁶⁵ The panopticon creates its inevitability in its applications, demonstrating the ability for Obama to promote hegemonic perception via biopolitical control. Foucault notes, “The perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary.”³⁶⁶ Eventually they use of power becomes so innate to the

international community that any future action can be most likely justified as long as its justification is depicted through the lens of the panopticon. Obama's persuasive strategy becomes an indication that United States hegemony is inevitable in the realm of international politics. The ability to show this power structuring establishes a continued necessity for the structure. Clearly, the concept of power becomes inherent within international politics, outlining that future action is both justified and desired to maintain the hierarchy. The end goal: the role of amplification, creating more effective power mechanisms. If Obama is successful in promoting himself as the pinnacle in the panoptic structure surrounding the Libyan conflict, he can maintain this power construction to promote U.S. hegemonic influences elsewhere.

In the case of Libya, the supervisor of intervention is Obama. He uses his position of power to justify the use of force against the tyrant, Qaddafi. "And that's why the United States has worked with our allies and partners to shape a strong international response at the United Nations."³⁶⁷ He says this statement as if it behooved him to play a part in the intervention; the supervisor must regulate the actions of its subordinates. Bentham advocates that a successful panoptic structure maintains control not only over those confined in the cells but also over those in the watchtower, preserving the power of the panopticon.³⁶⁸ His rhetoric serves as a demonstration of the power of the supervisor in the tower. There are two ways to engage in power, according to Foucault, are to control relations and compartmentalize the actions of others.³⁶⁹

Due to his rhetorical constructions, Obama could justify military and economic action against the Qaddafi regime. Military and economic controls become physical

manifestations of the biopolitical rhetoric inherent in Obama's addresses. Militarily, Obama's rhetoric shows that his primacy, combined with the power of the United States is untouchable and unverifiable to the point that justification for intervention in Libya was not only accepted but also necessary. He argues, "I've made it clear that I will never hesitate to use our military swiftly, decisively, and unilaterally when necessary to defend our people, our homeland, our allies and our core interests."³⁷⁰ As a supervisor, Obama recognizes the necessity to watch over other nations and organizations that comprise the surveillance mechanism of the international community. The use of the U.S. military, coupled with its efficiency, works as a deterrent to nations, tyrants, or citizens willing to violate the norms of the international community. Economic control functions similarly for Obama. He claims, "We froze more than \$33 billion of Qadhafi's regime's assets. Joining with other nations at the United Nations Security Council, we broadened our sanctions, imposed an arms embargo, and enabled Qadhafi and those around him to be held accountable for their crimes."³⁷¹ Accountability was discussed as a goal of the coalition, and at the direction of the U.S. hegemonic and biopolitical machine, control was possible, and Qaddafi was contained.

Democracy promotion also becomes an extension of biopolitical control in the panoptic schema. If Obama is successful in imprisoning Qaddafi in the cell of the panopticon, democracy promotion in Tunisia and Egypt is safer than if Qaddafi is untouched. Concerning those imprisoned in the cells of the panopticon, Foucault maintains, "If they are madmen, there is no risk of their committing violence upon another."³⁷² Compartmentalizing and controlling Qaddafi serves as an internal link to

the control of democracy promotion in other countries. The values Obama continually talks about operate as rules and norms established by the supervisor of a prison. He affirms this notion through his rhetoric; “I am convinced that a failure to act in Libya would have carried a far greater price for America.”³⁷³ Turning a blind eye to the atrocities would destroy the democracy promotion in other nations while questioning the security of U.S. values and democracy. Questions of national security, according to Nye, include the economic and military facets as noted earlier while also impacting liberal democracy and the promotion of human rights safety.³⁷⁴ Biopolitical control becomes a necessary agent in democracy and the idealistic goals Obama contended to strive for at the onset of his presidency.

Obama’s rhetoric on the Libyan conflict demonstrates panopticism as a normal part of international relations. For Obama, efficiency is crucial; his use of axial transformation to establish himself and the U.S. at the top of the panoptic hierarchy serves as a nuanced method of justifying intervention and maintaining the highest level of control, which demonstrates U.S. biopolitical control and hegemonic power projection. A new norm in international affairs has been established; instead of an “East” versus “West” dichotomy, Obama has transformed international relations with the U.S. as the center of global politics. The ways in which Obama framed himself at the root of the panopticon demonstrate the ability of the executive branch in rhetorically justifying United States dominance as a global hegemon. He uses the nuance of shifting control from the United States to himself as the sole guardian of the watchtower to promote and reveal the biopolitical nature of the Obama administration.

The Cell and the Prisoner

The cells of a prison contain those who need to be kept from society, controlled, and managed. Obama's play on power allows a rhetorical framing of Qaddafi as in the cell of the panopticon. Obama's rhetorical strategy places Qaddafi within the ever present, watchful eye of the U.S. in an attempt to secure Qaddafi's compliance with international pressure to halt human rights abuses. In the panopticon, the arrangement of the room becomes important, as it prevents the prisoner from coming into contact with other prisoners, guaranteeing order. Foucault claims that the notion of order is rather concealed, as the separated cells, "imply a lateral invisibility."³⁷⁵ The prison creates a division between the controller and those controlled, establishing a hierarchy in the prison system and beyond. The panopticon functions as what Foucault labels as a laboratory of power, which "could be used as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behavior, or to train or correct individuals."³⁷⁶ Placement in the cell of Bentham's inspection house guarantees an alteration in individual behavior, which here, finds application in international affairs. Within the confines of Bentham's prison, a prisoner is restricted to a cell, unable to see the supervisory oversight that controls it. Prisoners are stripped of their liberty, sovereignty, and dignity when placed into the cell of the panopticon, especially when they fail to comply with the demands of the authority in the watchtower of the prison.

Obama's call for transformation, and his rhetorical construction of prisoner within a cell, is the best framing to encourage Qaddafi's compliance with international human rights. In order to establish Qaddafi as a prisoner in the cell, he rhetorically constructs a division between leader and tyrant, a label that Obama applied to Qaddafi

to justify discipline via international condemnation and military engagement. For Obama, the power of the panopticon has several implications. He uses a persuasive tool through the application of a metaphor that could find use in future foreign policy discussions, all the while working to alter and change the behavior of Qaddafi, who is threatening democracy and engaging in human rights abuses. Using the laboratory of power allows the further advancement of power, allowing Obama to control Qaddafi. Obama argues, “The suffering and bloodshed is outrageous and it is unacceptable. So are threats and orders to shoot peaceful protesters and further punish the people of Libya. These actions violate international norms and every standard of common decency. This violence must stop.”³⁷⁷ Obama establishes the necessity for Qaddafi to be imprisoned; he had violated international rules, which deems the necessity for punishment. In his rhetorical creation of the cell and the prisoner, Obama transforms Qaddafi from leader to a tyrant and prisoner when viewed through the lens of the panopticon and the hierarchy of power.

Control and the invisibility of order are at the crux of the power hierarchy at play in Obama’s speeches on Libya. He works to create a rhetorical space, forcing the image of Qaddafi, the prisoner, to move along an axis of specificity and tyrannical interpretations. Obama begins discussing the conflict by stating, “The United States urges the governments of Bahrain, Libya and Yemen to show restraint in responding to peaceful protests, and to respect the rights of their people.”³⁷⁸ Obama uses mild language to discuss his desires of the governments of Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen. Rather than demand a change in behavior, he says the U.S. urges compliance. Though subtle, he outlines his goals for the Libyan government, which demonstrates evidence

of a biopolitical gaze in the eyes of the international community. Foucault argues, “The panopticon is a prison-machine with a cell of visibility in which the inmate [is caught] and a central point from which a permanent gaze may control prisoners and staff.”³⁷⁹ Within Obama’s first address on Libya, the entire world is watching Qaddafi. Obama discusses the government of Libya as an agent that must alter its actions to comply with the demands from a higher actor in the biopolitical hierarchy of international relations.

As his discourse about the conflict continues, Obama specifies the reasons behind and to what extent Qaddafi is deserving of imprisonment and surveillance. In his next address, he states, “By any measure, Muammar el-Qaddafi’s government has violated international norms and common decency and must be held accountable. These sanctions therefore target the Qaddafi government, while protecting the assets that belong to the people of Libya.”³⁸⁰ His statement here is useful in two ways. First, he establishes a set of rules that Qaddafi has violated. Current society imprisons those who commit crimes and break societal rules and norms, which gives Obama credence to label Qaddafi a tyrant and rhetorically construct him as prisoner in the cell of the panopticon. Rules violations incur discipline and punishment. Second, Obama establishes a notion of accountability. If the Libyan government is held accountable, there must be some sort of arbiter to determine guilt or innocence. Obama creates a distinction between Qaddafi and other leaders in the international community, as a prisoner cannot determine its own justice. Spatially Qaddafi is separated from the rest of the internationally community that resides in the watchtower of the panopticon. Instead of residing as a leader in the international community, Qaddafi is reprimanded

for his actions at the whim of the global police force. Obama's rhetorical construction of Qaddafi as guilty of human rights abuses justifies the need for intervention.

One of the ways in which Obama deems Qaddafi worthy of surveillance and discipline is through a depiction of the violence occurring on Libyan soil. Obama discusses the atrocities in Libya by noting Qaddafi, "has denied his people freedom, exploited their wealth, murdered opponents at home and abroad, and terrorized innocent people around the world—including Americans who were killed by Libyan agents."³⁸¹ Obama outlines the aggression Qaddafi takes out against his people from multiple dimensions, depicting violations of liberty, economic control, and the ultimate act of hostility, torture and death. His statement here not only discusses the atrocities against the Libyan people, it also outlines the impact of the violence against American citizens. The U.S. has a personal stake in eliminating the atrocities. Obama argues, "So we must be clear: Actions have consequences, and the writ of the international community must be enforced. That is the cause of this coalition."³⁸² Consequences are incurred upon those who violate international norms—cause/effect reasoning which demonstrates a responsibility for the U.S. and the other actors of the watchtower to act.

Obama's spatial axis becomes even more specific with each speech as he discusses the prisoner, Qaddafi, and his crimes. He outlines that Qadhafi and his regime are criminals to capture, to contain, and to bring to a halt. Human rights violations necessitate a need for intervention. "For more than four decades, the Libyan people have been ruled by a tyrant—Muammar Qaddafi."³⁸³ Obama describes a ruler that must be eliminated from the top of the political hierarchy. The label of tyrant

transforms Qaddafi from a leader to a criminal, an individual who must become a prisoner in Obama's metaphorical prison. In his last address on the conflict, Obama demonstrates a state of permanent visibility, which is an integral component of Bentham's panopticon. Foucault argues that it becomes important to "induce in the inmate a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power."³⁸⁴ Obama's rhetoric creates a space by which the United States can maintain control of Qaddafi. The President states, "I made it clear that Qadhafi had lost the confidence of his people and the legitimacy to lead, and I said that he needed to step down from power."³⁸⁵ Obama depicts leader that lacks the authority to lead his own people. Obama makes clear the future of biopolitical control over the Libyan government, foreshadowing the necessity for the watchtower to coerce Qaddafi to step down from power. Through his rhetoric, Obama paves the way for future U.S. intervention to contain the Libyan regime in the cell of Obama's metaphorical power hierarchy until Qaddafi steps down—or is removed—from power.

Power is a necessary construct in international relations. In order to coerce nations into acting in accordance with international norms, maintaining a level of power is necessary. Bentham noted that in order for the surveillance of the prisoner to be effective, "the persons to be inspected should always feel themselves as if under inspection, at least as standing a great chance of being so."³⁸⁶ When the prisoner perpetually fears surveillance, there is a greater chance of compliance with disciplinary measures. Obama was able to utilize a rhetorical construction of Qaddafi as a tyrant, as a prisoner to gain advantage in guaranteeing order in the international community. Power becomes visible and unverifiable; the inmate in the prison will

never know if it is being looked upon but knows of its possibility and inevitability.³⁸⁷ Eventually the Qaddafi regime witnessed the supervisory power of the U.S. and its allies. Obama maintains, “We will provide the unique capabilities that we can bring to bear to stop the violence against civilians, including enabling our European allies and Arab partners to effectively enforce a no fly zone.”³⁸⁸ The establishment of a no-fly zone is an encapsulation of the further isolation and surveillance of Qaddafi; it serves as a physical manifestation of the compartmentalization and rhetorical construction of him and his regime into the cell of the panopticon of international power relations. A new fly zone is the physical manifestation of power to create an inevitable environment of biopolitical control over Qaddafi, a prisoner whom the international community must contain and surveil.

Punishment through confinement often is necessary to curb violent, authoritarian regimes. Qaddafi’s acts against his people ensure he must go to prison and witness persecution through Obama’s panoptic metaphor. Foucault’s depiction of the panopticon portrays that it “was the architectural representation of the ‘will to power’ of modernity. Its aim is to induce the inmate of a conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.”³⁸⁹ In order for Obama to demonstrate the necessity to control and overpower Libya, he must construct a Qaddafi to be a prisoner, deserving of punishment. Through his rhetoric, Obama frames Qaddafi as a tyrant, strengthening the discourse he uses to define the atrocities Qaddafi committed. Obama makes it clear that his audience will remember Qaddafi’s words, that he would, “show ‘no mercy’ to his own people.”³⁹⁰ By doing so, Obama

creates a framework to construct the watchtower and its supervisor to justify biopolitical control over the Libyan government's actions.

Conclusion

Obama rhetorically constructs a persuasive tool in his discourse on the Libyan civil war. His use of the panopticon as an organizing metaphor alters discourse in foreign relations, creating an inevitable power hierarchy in the new age of globalization and biopolitical control. No longer is there an East versus West distinction; the U.S. is the center of global affairs, a supervisor who engages in biopolitical control mechanisms to conduct surveillance and alter behavior through the most efficient means possible. Now, international politics permeates from the United States as a ripple effect. Through the various facets of Bentham's inspection-house, the prisoner, the cell, the watchtower, and the supervisor, Obama rhetorically constructs a power structure that was present in international politics during the time of Qaddafi's reign, through his framing of Qaddafi as a tyrant, a madman who needs to be confined in the always-visible cell, the international community as the omnipresent watchtower based at the center of all prisoner action, and the United States as the lynchpin to yield the power necessary to curb Qaddafi's aggression. Goodnight contends that presidential leadership depends upon persuasive skill coupled with civic discourse.³⁹¹ Panopticism is a persuasive metaphor Obama can utilize to alter the foreign policy landscape.

The implication of the use of the metaphor is witnessed in the actions of the international community to an uncooperative Qaddafi. Despite the will and desires of

the international community and those in Obama's rhetorical panopticon watchtower, Qaddafi failed to end the human rights abuses in his country, forcing international intervention. He establishes the authority and will of the watchtower to enforce the rules of the international community, which will protect and punish as is necessary, framing the spatial embodiment of the watchtower as it grows in height and power to condemn Qaddafi. Once Qaddafi refused to comply, the watchtower implemented punishment. In 2011 Obama declared, "Joining with other nations at the United Nations Security Council, we broadened our sanctions, imposed an arms embargo, and enabled Qaddafi and those around him to be held accountable for their crimes."³⁹² Rhetorically, Obama demonstrates a constant and inevitable observation of Qaddafi's regime. Discipline becomes the unavoidable implication for those who violate international norms. The international community then imposes control in all facets of the Qaddafi regime. As Foucault notes, visibility is a trap.³⁹³ The Qaddafi regime's failure to respond forced the hand of the global police force, created a physical manifestation of the surveillance capabilities of the international community; Qaddafi witnessed airstrikes and sanctions due to his contrary actions of the watchtower. Spatially, the size of the conflict and need for intervention cannot surpass that which is possible for surveillance. Bentham argues that, "to all establishments whatsoever, in which, within a space not too large to be covered or commanded by buildings, a number of persons are meant to be kept under inspection."³⁹⁴ The countries and organizations Obama framed within the confines of the watchtower ensure solvency for this and future crises. The U.S. and its allies refused for a massacre to occur among the Libyan people, which encouraged prescriptive and preventative intervention to

maintain the rules and norms of the multinational watchtower. The Libyan regime witnessed punishment through the use of force, allowing Obama's metaphor to manifest itself in international politics and action.

Hegemony and nation-state power projection becomes inevitable in a foreign policy built upon panopticism. The object of discipline in Bentham and Foucault's conceptions of the term seems to fall in line with notions of soft power tactics and efficiency in power relations. Obama threatened Qaddafi and held him accountable, akin to Bentham's goal of the supervisor in the inspection-house. "The essence of it consists, then, in the centrality of the inspector's situation, combined with the well-known and most effectual contrivances for seeing without being seen."³⁹⁵ The rhetorical tools employed by Obama in his discourse on Libya provide valuable insight into how the United States will continue to maintain primacy in a world of changing influences; he demonstrates via his power constructions how the U.S. can maintain hegemonic dominance in the hierarchy of international relations, despite his initial framing of the U.S. as part of the international watchtower. Foucault contends, "The disciplines must increase the effect of utility proper to the multiplicities, so that each order to increase the effect of utility proper to the multiplicities, so that each is made more useful than the simple sum of its elements."³⁹⁶ The supervisor of the tower is crucial for efficiency of the system, allowing for further control and hegemonic projection. "That's the kind of leadership we've shown in Libya. Of course, even when we act as part of a coalition, the risks of any military action will be high."³⁹⁷ Obama sets the U.S. apart; its leadership was crucial, even when coupled with the military prowess of the other international actors in the conflict. Continual U.S.

hegemonic expansion allows for a reduction of power among other nations to maintain U.S. dominance at the top of the international hierarchy. Nye argues that a liberal, realist strategy would stress the importance of the development of an integrated grand strategy, combining hard and soft power into a new smart power strategy.³⁹⁸ The panopticon becomes a symbol to demonstrate the justification for hegemonic power projection and intervention established throughout Obama's speech; he and the international community utilized diplomatic tactics of discourse prior to turning to military or economic engagement. Obama demonstrates that the United States can, and will, act upon international conflicts that he feels necessitate intervention. He can justify being a world power with these policing capabilities that other nations do not possess. "For generations, the United States of America has played a unique role as an anchor of global security and as an advocate for human freedom."³⁹⁹ Through a comparison of the current intervention in Libya to that of the panopticon, Obama rhetorically justified current and future United States hegemonic action.

The propensity to maintain the panoptic power structure in the future becomes inevitable due to Obama's rhetoric. Many scholars discuss applications of the panopticon metaphor in various contexts, yet its application in presidential address is nonexistent. The executive branch is riddled with power, sometimes beyond conceivable limits. Foucault argues that there are three criteria that power must fulfill in order to be exercised effectively, which include to obtain the exercise at the lowest possible cost, to bring the effects of this social power to the maximum intensity without failure, and to link the cost-productive use of power with output of other power apparatuses.⁴⁰⁰ Fulfilling the three criteria increases the docility and utility of

the elements in the panoptic scheme, making it more efficient and worthwhile in rhetorical constructions. Due to his rhetorical constructions, Obama paves the way for future panoptic rhetoric and action in international affairs; it becomes possible that the rhetorical panopticon will reemerge in the political arena, serving as a legitimate and continual tool of persuasion for United States hegemonic power projection in a realm of transformation of the U.S. as the center of global affairs.

Obama maintains that U.S. intervention is necessary to stop atrocities in the international community. The U.S. is all seeing and all knowing, and without a recalculation of the power structures in place, the U.S.'s hold on international power will not change. There exists an end goal for the panopticon for both continued power creation and solving norms violations. Prisons possess the ability to change the system of governance, and when applied to the Libyan crisis, prisons and discipline have the propensity to benefit the Libyan people as well, elevating them from tyrannical control due to the biopolitical nature of the U.S. hegemonic machine. Obama recaps the efficiency of the system as a means to demonstrate its unique capability in the Libyan predicament. He argues, "In just one month, the United States has worked with our international partners to mobilize a broad coalition, secure an international mandate to protect civilians, stop an advancing army, prevent a massacre, and establish a no-fly zone with our allies and partners."⁴⁰¹ The panoptic arrangement he created was apt to demonstrate the tyrannical nature of Qaddafi while promoting the prominence of U.S. leadership. McCrisken discovered that while on the campaign trail, Obama portrayed himself as an antidote to the excesses of the Bush administration, yet the reality of Obama's administration seems to be rather different.⁴⁰² Now, for the president, subtly

and persuasion in his rhetoric are crucial to hide the biopolitical nature of the Obama presidency in the new age of biopolitical control.

Notes

³²⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 205-206.

³²⁹ Jeremy Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, ed. Miran Bozovic (London: Verso, 1995), 35.

³³⁰ Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, 35.

³³¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 197.

³³² Jenny Edkins, *Structuralism & International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 49.

³³³ Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso, 1990), 160.

³³⁴ Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, 34.

³³⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 205-6.

³³⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 208.

³³⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 209.

³³⁸ Ravina Aggarwal and Mona Bhan, “‘Disarming Violence:’ Development, Democracy, and Security on the Borders of India,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68, no. 2 (2009): 519.

³³⁹ Michelle Baliff, “Writing the Third-Sophistic Cyborg: Periphrasis on an [In]Tense Rhetoric,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (1998): 67.

- ³⁴⁰ Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe, “The Rhetoric of Technology and the Electronic Writing Class,” *College Composition of Communication* 42, no. 1 (1991): 55.
- ³⁴¹ Sumiko Higashi, “Melodrama, Realism, Race: World War II Newsreels and Propaganda Film,” *Cinema Journal* 37, no. 3 (1998): 38.
- ³⁴² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 209.
- ³⁴³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200.
- ³⁴⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 207.
- ³⁴⁵ Edkins, *Structuralism & International Relations*, 49.
- ³⁴⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 205.
- ³⁴⁷ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (February 23, 2011).
- ³⁴⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200.
- ³⁴⁹ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (February 23, 2011).
- ³⁵⁰ Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, 44.
- ³⁵¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 205-6.
- ³⁵² Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, 46-47.
- ³⁵³ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).
- ³⁵⁴ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).
- ³⁵⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 202-203.
- ³⁵⁶ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 25, 2011).

³⁵⁷ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address” (January 27, 2010).

³⁵⁸ Obama, “Statement by the President on Violence in Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen” (February 18, 2011).

³⁵⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 208.

³⁶⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 203.

³⁶¹ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (February 23, 2011).

³⁶² Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, 34.

³⁶³ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (March 19, 2011).

³⁶⁴ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).

³⁶⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 206.

³⁶⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 201.

³⁶⁷ Obama, “Remarks by the President on the Situation in Libya” (March 18, 2011).

³⁶⁸ Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, 32.

³⁶⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 198.

³⁷⁰ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).

³⁷¹ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).

³⁷² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 201.

³⁷³ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).

³⁷⁴ Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power*, 232.

³⁷⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200.

³⁷⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 203.

³⁷⁷ Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (February 23, 2011).

³⁷⁸ Obama, “Statement by the President on Violence in Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen” (February 18, 2011).

³⁷⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 201.

³⁸⁰ Obama, “Statement by the President on Libya Sanctions” (February 25, 2011).

³⁸¹ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).

³⁸² Obama, “Remarks by the President on Libya” (March 19, 2011).

³⁸³ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).

³⁸⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 201.

³⁸⁵ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).

³⁸⁶ Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, 43.

³⁸⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 201.

³⁸⁸ Obama, “Remarks by the President on the Situation in Libya” (March 18, 2011).

³⁸⁹ Alan McKinlay and Ken Starkey, *Foucault, Management and Organization*

Theory: From Panopticon to Technologies of Self (London: SAGE Publications, 1998), 2.

³⁹⁰ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).

³⁹¹ Goodnight, “Ronald Reagan and the American Dream,” 221-222.

³⁹² Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).

³⁹³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200.

³⁹⁴ Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, 29.

³⁹⁵ Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, 45.

³⁹⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 220.

³⁹⁷ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).

³⁹⁸ Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power*, 231.

³⁹⁹ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).

⁴⁰⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 218.

⁴⁰¹ Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya” (March 28, 2011).

⁴⁰² McCrisken, “Ten Years On,” 781.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The onset of the Obama presidency highlighted the values of hope and change through diplomatic ideals, yet through a careful analysis of his foreign policy discourse on Libya, the idealistic façade of Obama's rhetoric becomes apparent, giving way to understanding the power structures underlying his policy initiatives. Continuing the trajectory of foreign policy address scholarship, this analysis on Obama's rhetoric concerning the Libyan civil war uncovers the president's rhetorical strategies when justifying intervention in foreign entanglements. Close textual analysis demonstrates Obama's return to prior rhetorical strategies in public address, the use of imperialist discourse to justify threat construction while promoting and highlighting the strength and prowess of U.S. leadership in the international community. Rhetorician Stephen Browne argues that a close reading of rhetorical acts can bring about a discursive formation of ideas within identifiable contexts.⁴⁰³ Obama returns to past rhetorical strategies, utilizing threat construction and the creation of power hierarchies in his rhetoric on the Libya crisis.

Imperialism

Throughout his discourse on Libya, Obama frames the need to intervene based upon rhetorical threat constructions of an evil, tyrannical regime aimed at infringing on democratic values. Baum argues that unless the public perceives a crisis to involve an important national security interest, the potential costs to a president or either backing down or losing a fight exceeds the benefits he can expect to derive from a

foreign policy success.⁴⁰⁴ Success in Libya was crucial for Obama to maintain democracy promotion across the Middle East as a security concern, which, as Panda argues, was a distinct possibility given the trajectory of the foreign policy actions of the last presidential administration.⁴⁰⁵ One of Obama's rhetorical strategies to justify intervention was through a homogenization of identity among the American populous. Consubstantiation facilitates a common identity, a community of cohesion to rally around foreign action. He uses subtle pronoun and subject shifts to accomplish this task, using "we" and "our" to create the collective, which was rooted in the State of the Union addresses. Akin to prior research in rhetorical criticism, the State of the Union address creates a national identity, focusing on ideals of the American dream, including democracy and freedom.

A sense of common identity allowed Obama to justify a singular notion of democracy, for which the United States has a responsibility to protect. He framed the desires and cries of the Libyan people as comprised of western ideals, like the right to peaceful assembly, free speech. Imperialist rhetoric allowed Obama to silence the desires and dreams of the Libyan people, replacing them with western conceptions of democracy and rights promotion. Also, discussing these rights as universal rights created a just cause for intervention to rescue. Obama discusses Qaddafi's infringement of rights along an axis in time; beginning rather vague and ominous about the government's actions allowed Obama's discourse to crescendo, to hone in on the atrocities occurring in Libya. His spatial construction dictates that intervention was a necessary endeavor, as democracy is crucial to alleviate the violence incurred by tyrannical regimes.

Obama's threat construction of a tyrannical "other" was the key in facilitating justification for the military engagement. Leff argues that the timing of the text conveys rhetorical action. Utilizing the temporal dimension of the text, Obama created a sense of urgency; a crisis to national security was imminent without U.S. involvement. Again, he uses vague terms to hone in on the daunting, immediate threat against U.S. security. Obama justifies the use of the U.S. military in an attempt to protect western notions of democracy and the elimination of a threat abroad. His success in eliminating that threat demonstrated rhetorical leadership, and ensuring he can benefit from his foreign policy success. His choice and success in his goals of eliminating Qaddafi is crucial for expanding political leadership.⁴⁰⁶ Imperialist rhetoric bred imperialist action in the Libyan civil war, justifying the continued use of the U.S. hegemonic war machine. Despite his deliberative façade, Obama continued the imperialist rhetoric of previous presidential administrations, rhetorically constructing validation for U.S. involvement in foreign crises now and in the future.

Panopticism

Imperialism breeds biopolitical control. For Obama to control the actions of Qaddafi, he embarked upon a new rhetorical strategy, the construction of a panoptic metaphor in presidential address. Leff argues that the central task of textual criticism is to understand how the rhetorical construction of an event creates a reconstruction that event.⁴⁰⁷ Obama creates a rhetorical panopticon in his discussion on the Libyan civil war to justify his intervention and explain his actions to the American populous. Bentham's prison structure seeks to establish a self-sustaining and efficient power

relationship. Through his rhetoric, Obama posits Qaddafi as the maniac prisoner in the cell, while the international community occupies the watchtower over the cells under the supervision of the United States.

The annular building of Bentham's prison contains cells that possess a permanent visibility from the eye of the watchtower. Obama again transmits Qaddafi along an axis, transforming him as more and more worthy of containment in the cell of his metaphorical power structure. Qaddafi's actions justify surveillance and punishment via the might of the international community. As Obama's discourse on the conflict came closer to the date of U.S. intervention, the intensity of his rhetoric condemning Qaddafi's actions and pinpointing the characteristics of a tyrant became more clear and explicit, justifying the use of the United States military.

In the center of the panopticon, there exists a watchtower, which is positioned to maintain optimal surveillance capabilities. Spatially, Obama positions the structure above Qaddafi, both in power and in position, as the guard within the watchtower knows his every move and act of violence. Obama makes clear the power hierarchy, maintaining the dominance of the international community in implementing rules and correcting behavior. Discipline is only possible with a successful creation of a power hierarchy, and through his rhetoric, Obama recreates the international community's role in the Libyan conflict through a panoptic lens. Qaddafi will inevitably be under surveillance unless he complies with the rules of human decency and international norms. Within the watchtower, though, resides a supervisor to ensure the success and efficiency of the panoptic schema's surveillance mechanism. Rhetorically, Obama creates a dichotomy between the U.S. and the international community, consistently

separating U.S. action and success from that of the rest of the actors in the conflict. His strategy demonstrates the dominance of the U.S. while he frames himself as the pinnacle of the supervisory position. Obama is the arbiter of peace; he claims responsibility for the successes in the conflict, while he shifts responsibility of the intervention back upon the entire watchtower. His transformation, here, demonstrates his biopolitical control over surveillance and discipline in international relations.

Panopticism as a rhetorical strategy allows Obama to justify U.S. intervention in the Libyan civil war. His spatial construction of a prisoner inevitably observed by an omniscient, efficient watchtower and supervisor creates a power structure based on biopolitical control. The United States engaged in a method of maintain power, via a subtle manner, which Foucault calls necessary to maintain and strengthen power.⁴⁰⁸ Hegemony seems acceptable and persuasive with rhetorical constructions of the panopticon in foreign policy. Obama's strategy makes biopolitical presidential rhetoric inevitable.

The New Global Panopticon

We currently live in a society of surveillance, which is inherent in the nature of international politics. Outside of the panoptic structure prevalent in Obama's discourse, society has witnessed an extension of the panopticon metaphor; no longer is the metaphor only applied to the external pervasiveness of government. The significance in the panopticon rests in its ability to be all seeing and all knowing; the panopticon molds behavior through its constant surveillance and efficient mechanisms, and a new transformation of the panopticon's mechanisms demonstrate a

new implication for public address. Historically, a rhetorical interpretation of the world rested along a horizontal plane, the East versus the West. Now, the rhetorical framing of the world has manifested in a panoptic scheme, as if the global community is discussed as a panopticon. The United States as a hegemonic leader is at the center of the annular building structure, the center of East and West, bridging divides while maintaining biopolitical control. Foucault argues that the panopticon can move outside of the conception of a typical prison, as its design, “was destined to spread throughout the social body; its vocation was to become a generalized function.”⁴⁰⁹ Panopticism and biopolitical control have altered international relations, as is evident in Obama’s discourse. No longer is the divide in global politics between the East and the West; the U.S. is now located at the center of international affairs.

Further scholarship is needed to compare presidential discourse across different constructs to understand the ways in which the new global sphere. Foucault notes that the panopticon works to fabricate a carefully constructed social order through various techniques.⁴¹⁰ Obama discusses the conflict in a way that generates a new sense of space and time; nine days were discussed as still in the present, changing the psychological and temporal nature of the crisis. Understanding the ways in which he and other figures discuss power constructs in the new age of globalization brings light to the nuances of the current state of surveillance framed by an inevitable panoptic power structure. The United States now resides at the center of the new structure of international politics, which will affect future scholarship in the field of public address.

As a mechanism, the panopticon seeks to perfect its application of power, making its exercise and facilitation innate. Foucault tells us that to accomplish such a task, the panopticon, “can reduce the number of those who exercise it, while increasing the number of those on whom it is exercised.”⁴¹¹ An efficient exercise of power works subtly to increase its efficiency and maintain its function, to exert biopolitical control. The progression of globalization and the changing nature of privacy in the new technological age permit Obama’s rhetoric to demonstrate an application of the panopticon’s goal of perfection; it becomes a subtle exercise of power possible outside the confines of a standard prison.

Methodological Implications

Multiple Discourses

Browne argues that to conduct an analysis, one needs a rhetorical performance. A singular text in this view, “as a whole may thus be envisioned as one wheel composed of smaller ones, each turning on its own even as it pushes forward and sustains the momentum of the larger structure.”⁴¹² If the intricacies on within one speech are rather important, then the various facets of rhetoric on the larger set of executive discourse on the Libyan conflict can provide unique insight to the rhetorical strategies at play. It would seem that the entire picture is necessary. Though one set of remarks provides valuable knowledge about the rhetorical strategies at play in a speech act, a different, more holistic and representative reaction seems possible from the entire set of rhetoric on a speech act. The analysis of Obama’s rhetoric created spatial and temporal movement across both a set of discourse as well as within

singular speech acts. The intensity of his discourse across the chronology of his speeches, Obama can create temporal and spatial artistry as tools of persuasion. Lucas argues that the benefit of close textual analysis is to, “slow down,” the action within a text to truly understand its rhetorical artistry.⁴¹³ Understanding the entire rhetorical performance on a particular subject can also uncover the artistry of a speaker’s discourse.

The Presidential War Genre

Another contribution to the field of rhetoric this research produces is an example and extension of the war powers genre in presidential address scholarship. Although generic criticism and close textual criticism find few similarities in method, facets of genre allow the cross-over of the findings in close textual analysis to serve as an extension of the rules embedded in generic criticism. Close text facilitates larger discursive formalities, particularly when multiple examples of rhetoric are analyzed. Even in his own analysis, Leff notes that the critic keeps in mind the genre of the speech while analyzing the internal workings of the text, as he did in his analysis of Lincoln’s speech at the Cooper Union. The spatial and temporal transformations in Obama’s rhetoric demonstrate a message similar to those that constitute Campbell and Jamieson’s interpretation of presidential war rhetoric.⁴¹⁴ In his rhetoric, Obama is deliberate about the decision to resort to force, as he called it the last resort in a string of smart power tools. Additionally, similar to Campbell and Jamieson’s contention that forceful intervention is justified through chronicle or narrative, Obama creates a construction of time that functions on both a chronological and psychological level,

demonstrating the use of iconicity.⁴¹⁵ To create the unanimity of purpose that is the third contention of the presidential war rhetoric genre, Obama creates a sense of homogenization of the American populous and the notions of democracy, which allow him to create a sense of urgency and necessity when deciding to intervene militarily.⁴¹⁶ The use of force is justified through the temporal urgency created in Obama's imperialist discourse as well as within his spatial construction of the panopticon, making the re-creation of a power hierarchy the norm in U.S. political affairs. Each manifestation also works as a new strategic misrepresentation, shifting time and space within his discourse to justify military intervention. Simons and Aghazarian argue that genericists work to create new conventions and set new precedents from witnessing how rhetors play off of existing genres and either deviate or maintaining their rules.⁴¹⁷ Close textual analysis facilitates a new lens into the ways in which Obama deviates and maintains the presidential war genre, demonstrating the method's further utility.

Conclusion

Every president has a conflict about which they are known for their charismatic and powerful, or perhaps dismal, foreign policy rhetoric. Obama's discourse on Libya produced a stimulating insight into the rhetorical strategies laden throughout his presidency. A close reading of his discourse promoted theoretical insights from the text's internal, rhetorical actions. Leff argues that critics must move to what they themselves produce, which becomes an account of the rhetorical dynamics implicit within the discourse.⁴¹⁸ Obama's rhetorical strategies serve as a

positioned response within a larger arrangement of presidential rhetoric. He works along what Leff calls spatial and argumentative distinctions, which work to create a rhetorical space for Obama to discuss the conflict.⁴¹⁹ Obama's charismatic election discourse bred a subtle and nuanced imperialist rhetorical strategy that resulted in threat construction and militarism as well as a panoptic power structure, with the propensity to become inevitable in his future discourse on foreign policy.

His stance and influence on the ideas of agenda setting and transparency become evident in the analysis of Obama's rhetoric on Libya. Andrade and Young argue that the occurrence of international events affects the content of presidential agendas.⁴²⁰ The context spurred the situation Obama framed within his rhetoric. Despite the chronology of his discourse, Obama created a sense of ever-present urgency, presented in a psychological timeframe to justify foreign intervention. A president's agenda also feels pressure from Congress; Congress also binds the content of a president's rhetoric. Obama incurred criticism for failing to inform Congress of his use of the armed forces, demonstrating a contradiction in Obama's idealistic, transparency goals at the beginning of his presidency as well as psychologically creating a timeframe within in his discourse to eliminate the nine days he waited to tell the American populous about the intervention. Jenkins and Cos call Obama's inclusive rhetorical campaign the ends of his discourse aimed at achieving community.⁴²¹ Instead, the ends are his means; Obama uses inclusion rhetoric to justify panoptic rhetoric, which under a historical transformation of surveillance, could witness, "their spread throughout the whole social body, the formation of what be called in general

the disciplinary society,” as forecasted by Foucault.⁴²² Biopolitical control is now at the forefront of the international politics agenda.

The logical progression in rhetorical scholarship continues with the presidential address of Barack Obama. Leff and Sachs argue that as a method, close textual analysis bring inferences about what the work is designed to do and how it is designed to do it while transmitting meanings to the realm of public experience.⁴²³ In his discourse, the president works to justify U.S. involvement in the Libyan civil war, and to do so, he utilizes new rhetorical tools. The internal action of Obama’s rhetoric illustrates imperialist rhetoric and the formation of a biopolitical discursive scheme, the antithesis of his campaign’s idealistic messages. As Lucas wrote in 1988, “the time has come to assert the intrinsic value of scholarship in American public address.”⁴²⁴ The same notion now exists in the new age of global and biopolitical control in international relations; the ways in which presidents undertake foreign policy concerns in future discourse facilitates the changing landscape of public address scholarship that must be analyzed.

Notes

⁴⁰³ Stephen H. Browne, “Edmund Burke’s Letter to a Noble Lord: A Textual Study in Political Philosophy and Rhetorical Action,” *Communication Monographs* 55 (1988): 218.

⁴⁰⁴ Baum, “Going Private,” 605.

⁴⁰⁵ Panda, “Values and National Interests,” 112.

⁴⁰⁶ Andrew B. Whitford and Jeff Yates, *Presidential Rhetoric and the Public Agenda: Constructing the War on Drugs* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2007), 97.

⁴⁰⁷ Leff, "Textual Criticism," 385.

⁴⁰⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 208.

⁴⁰⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 207.

⁴¹⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 217.

⁴¹¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 206.

⁴¹² Stephen H. Browne, "Encountering Angelica Grimké: Violence, Identity, and the Creation of Radical Community," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996): 61.

⁴¹³ Lucas, "Book Reviews," 249.

⁴¹⁴ Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 218.

⁴¹⁵ Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 221.

⁴¹⁶ Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 221.

⁴¹⁷ Herbert W. Simons, and Aram A. Aghazarian "Genres, Rules, and Political Rhetoric: Toward a Sociology of Rhetorical Choice," in *Form, Genre, and the Study of Political Discourse*, ed. Herbert W. Simons and Aram A. Aghazarian (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), 45.

⁴¹⁸ Leff, "Textual Criticism," 378.

⁴¹⁹ Leff, "Textual Criticism," 379.

⁴²⁰ Andrade and Young, "Presidential Agenda Setting," 600.

⁴²¹ Jenkins and Cos, "A Time for Change and a Candidate's Voice," 185.

⁴²² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 209.

⁴²³ Michael Leff and Andrew Sachs, "Words the Most Like Things: Iconicity and the Rhetorical Text," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54 (1990): 255.

⁴²⁴ Lucas, "Book reviews," 254.

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