

Political Governance: The Rhetorical Presidency and the Post-State of the Union Addresses of
George W. Bush and Barack H. Obama

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Abstract

As American presidential rhetoric has evolved over the last 225 years, presidents have increasingly sought new instruments to affect policy change and new mechanisms to communicate with the American people. Over the course of the last century, many have noted the rise of the rhetorical presidency where the quantity of speeches has dramatically increased and the purpose of presidential rhetoric has changed. In the Presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama, their respective post-State of the Union tours have typified a relatively new dynamic of the rhetorical presidency. After a close examination of Bush and Obama's Post-State of the Union tours in their second terms, one can see the continuing evolution of the rhetorical presidency and a predominantly personal mode of persuasion of the modern presidency.

Introduction

The work of a president is never done. The modern president is expected to execute the laws, administer the federal government, and communicate with the people of the United States about what they have done, what they are attempting to do, and what they plan to do. For some presidential scholars, this communicative action has become the bedrock of the modern presidency, a so-called “rhetorical presidency” (Tulis, 1987). Within the last decade, a new trend in presidential rhetoric has emerged. Directly following the State of the Union, both President Bush and Obama have undertaken speaking tours of the country to reiterate their policy priorities outlined in their State of the Union. The “chief task” of the president is “to present effective and politically appealing remedies for public problems” (Hargrove, 1998, p. 38). In this vein, the following paper will analyze the conception of the presidency as “a rhetorical presidency.” After a close examination of Bush’s and Obama’s post-State of the Union tours in their second terms, one can see the continuing evolution of the rhetorical presidency and the predominantly personal mode of persuasion of the modern presidency.

Literature Review

The study of presidential rhetoric is not neatly housed within a particular discipline, but rather as Bimes (2009) asserted, it bridges two disciplines: political communication and political science. Additionally, adding to the already complicated task of a review of relevant research is the fact that scholars themselves rarely build on the work of other scholars from outside their own discipline; political communication scholars tend not build on the work of political scientists and vice versa (Bimes, 2009). With the exception of the importance given to Tulis’ (1987) landmark work, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, the study of presidential rhetoric is

consistently in flux. Despite the incredible diversity of studies, there remain significant gaps in studies, and perspectives.

All modern study of presidential rhetoric must consider the work of Tulis (1987). His work on the rhetorical presidency began in 1981 with Caesar, Thurrow, Tulis, and Bessete (1981). In that article and in his subsequent work (1987), Tulis made the central claim that prior to the twentieth century, popular leadership through the use of oratory was a rarity and viewed with suspicion. Beginning with Wilson, a second informal constitution was legitimized. This constitution required the president to engage in the popular leadership and direct appeals to the people that most Americans have come to expect by the second half of the twentieth century. For Tulis (1987) and his colleagues, this was “more deleterious than beneficial” (p. 181). The most notable of the deleterious effects was the decline in the quality of the speeches and messages given by the president, and deeds had been replaced by speechmaking.

While this work is considered “seminal,” scholars have had significant concerns. Medhurst (1996) had five principle concerns that have informed criticism of the rhetorical presidency in the years since. First, it assumes that there existed a non-rhetorical presidency. Secondly, for Medhurst (1996), rhetoric is more than increasingly “emotional appeals to ignorant audiences” (p. xiv). Third, rhetoric is more than a substitute for political action, but should be considered symbolic action. Fourth, Tulis (1987) presumes that the only form of rhetoric meaningful to effective governance is policy oriented. Others such as Jamieson and Campbell (2008) have demonstrated the wide range of presidential rhetoric. Lastly, the theoretical underpinnings of Tulis’ argument do not appear to have incorporated modern rhetorical criticism methodologies. Medhurst (1996) stated, “Aristotle may have written the first systematic treatise on rhetoric, but he did not write the last” (p. xiv). The above criticisms ought to inform all future

study of presidential rhetoric as areas or gaps to consider when incorporating in whole or part Tulis' work. Also, Tulis' (1987) *Rhetorical Presidency* and Kernell's (2006) work, *Going Public*, are often considered in tandem, and made similar claims.

As studies into the rhetorical presidency continue, a researcher must bear in mind that an awareness of other literature on the presidency as an institution itself is paramount. Dorsey (2002) reminded the reader of the vast literature on the office of the presidency. Knowledge of negotiating and arbitrating role of the presidency as outlined by Neustadt (1980) or a familiarity with Burns' (1984) assessment that the president ought to be more concerned with process than rhetoric is essential. In Zarefsky's (2002) survey of presidential rhetoric as leadership, he made extended use of Hargrove's (1998) and Skowronek's (1993) work. Zarefsky's (2002) piece is a model for incorporating elements from both political communication and political science while analyzing presidential rhetoric. His use of both rhetorical analysis combined with more traditional political science sources contextualized his study; it was not merely a study of rhetoric within a vacuum.

More recently, Beasley (2010) has provided a critique of the rhetorical presidency by utilizing the theory of the unitary executive. The model of the unitary executive offers "institutional reasons why presidents might *not* use public discourse to promote their policies" (p. 9). The expanding powers of the office of the presidency provide considerable "private mechanisms of policy creation and enforcement" (p. 9). While the unitary executive model and the previously discussed rhetorical presidency model are not generally seen as complementary, both emphasize a decreasing dependence of the President on Congress. In the administrations of Reagan and George W. Bush, these two models are useful for seeing how public policy is developed. Stuckey (2010), on the other hand, recommended not a specific model or paradigm

change, but the need for the study of presidential rhetoric to incorporate additional elements such as class, gender, race, and the effect of mediation in light of the Internet and an accelerated media culture. Stuckey (2010) believed that the study of presidential rhetoric will profit from the fresh ideas and perspectives offered by ideas that incorporate the above and challenge current thinking.

Yet this scholarship is just a small sample of the literature on presidential rhetoric. Other important literature that has examined the impact of presidential rhetoric on politics and has critiqued the field was by Edwards (1996, 2003). With the exception of the broad and comprehensive works by Campbell and Jamieson (2008) and Lim (2008) the vast majority of research on presidential rhetoric and its impact on politics are individual case studies. Edwards (1996, 2003) argued that these case studies are unique to the particular President being studied, can be either quantitative or qualitative, and are generally not united by methodological approach. Qualitative research includes Drury's (2007) analysis of the bandwagon appeal in the modern presidency from Carter to George W. Bush. Kuehl (2012) discussed education reform in the speeches of George W. Bush and Ronald Reagan.

Quantitative research includes the work of Coe and Neumann (2011), who attempted to establish the parameters of data set for all major address of modern presidents. This was developed in order to provide consistency in longitudinal analyses of presidential rhetoric. Druckman and Holmes (2004) used presidential approval ratings within the context of George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address. Jacob and Burns (2004) demonstrated the changing nature of how presidents are assessed. Rottinghaus (2009) did a similar, but longitudinal analysis, of presidential manipulation of public opinion through public appeals. According to Jacob and Burn's (2004) data, presidents are being assessed increasingly on non-policy

evaluations such as personality. Other case study analyses include Rowland and Jones (2011) on Obama, Lucas (2002) on Washington, Black (1996) on Nixon, Greenstein and Bose (2002) on Eisenhower, and Murphy (2002) on Clinton.

Before discussing methodological concerns, it would be useful to briefly summarize Edwards' (2003) critique of the current study of presidential rhetoric, Hart's (2002) research agenda for presidential rhetoric, and Asen's call to action (2010) to address the overabundance of case-based scholarship. Edwards (2003) suggested that presidential rhetoric might not even matter. By analyzing public opinion polls and attitudes on policy priorities for both Clinton and Reagan, he finds that neither was particularly successful in swaying public opinion. Edwards (2003) asserted that even an expanded outlook on hundreds of public opinion polls and additional presidents demonstrate that the results do not change. All rhetorical studies henceforward must address this singular question, namely if going public can be shown to have little to no effect on public opinion why study presidential rhetoric? Zarefsky (2004) among others have responded, but the question remains pressing for all scholars. Zarefsky compared Edwards critique to the "limited effects model" of media studies, where over the past 50 years the "empirical research generally found that mediated messages had little effect at all" on public beliefs and attitudes (Zarefsky 2004, p. 608); however, "few would argue seriously that mediated messages make no difference" (p. 608). Zarefsky (2004) added:

Unpacking a text, probing its dimensions and possibilities, helps the scholar to understand better the richness of a very specific situation that already has passed and will not return in exactly the same way... while no two situations are exactly alike, patterns of rhetorical choice do tend to repeat across situations with the same central characteristics" (p. 610-11).

By studying the rhetoric of presidents, new perspectives on moments of history or current events are illuminated, in addition to “broader principles that will help to explain rhetorical practice more generally” (Zarefsky 2004,p. 611). Additionally, Hart (2002) provided several recommendations for studies going forward. Among these are 1) a moratorium on traditional case studies 2) what are the invariant features of presidential discourse 3) how does the presidency change the person who is president’s rhetoric over time 4) can political emotion be systematized and how so and 5) how can scholars look beyond success bias and analyzed when president’s fail rhetorically (Hart, 2002). Asen’s (2010) introduction to a special issue of *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* can be seen as a call for the modification of current rhetorical studies. His primary criticism was that the field, thus far, has not thought enough of the meta-questions and theoretical questions of presidential rhetoric. Further, the field does not publish with method sections, and this, he believes, must change. While no singular method ought to be adopted, consideration of method as an insight into rhetorical criticism is very important going forward.

While there are thousands of individual case studies, notable gaps in the coverage emerge that provide for a research agenda. First, longitudinal analyses are in the minority. Most studies have been conducted on individual presidents, individual speeches, or individual issues covering one or two presidencies. The office of the presidency is constantly evolving, and the public and scholars within the context of past and future presidents judge each president. For instance, Obama cannot be viewed without an understanding of Bush or Clinton, or whoever succeeds him. Longitudinal studies provide an ability to appreciate this evolution and account for this context.

Second, most of the speeches analyzed are major addresses such as State of the Union addresses or Inaugural speeches; these are used in order to provide a consistent basis for comparison. Unfortunately, these speeches tend to be ceremonial and the rarest a president will give. Future studies must move significantly beyond these categories because they do not give insight into the everyday use of rhetoric by presidents. The American public has significantly more interaction with other speeches, and thus it is the other speeches that are arguably more important to the office of the presidency and its study.

Third, Ellis and Walker (2007), and Ellis (2008) are the only significant works to analyze barnstorming or whistle stop tour speeches as a genre; though it is notable they do not specifically define this genre. In an era where in the immediate aftermath of the State of the Union, Presidents Bush and Obama gave additional policy speeches in tours around the country after their State of the Unions. The study of these speeches is the duty of rhetorical critics.

With all of this in mind, this paper will study a more “common” type of speech; the speech given on the post-State of the Union tour. This is a speech that echoes the State of the Union, but focuses on particular legislative items that the President is seeking to promote. When studying these speeches, the guiding research questions were:

RQ1: How is the rhetorical presidency expressed through the Post-State of the Union tour that has developed in the presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack H. Obama?

RQ2: What are the central elements of the Post-State of the Union tour speech, and what arguments and rhetorical forms are employed in these speeches?

By answering these questions, the concept of the rhetorical presidency can be updated and amended, in addition to helping guide our understanding of how it continues to evolve into the present day.

Methodology

After completing an extensive review of the literature, it was clear that there has been no common method in the subfield of presidential rhetoric. After consideration of several methods, close textual analysis was determined to be best suited for the present research. Close-textual analysis is a uniquely suited methodology to analyze both the context and content of Bush's and Obama's post-State of the Union speeches. According to Burghardt (2000), "Close textual analysis seeks to study the relationship between the inner workings of public discourse and its historical context in order to discover what makes a particular text function persuasively" (p. 545). In terms of the case studies for the present analysis, close textual analysis will analyze the individual speeches closely and then interpret them within their respective historical and political contexts of 2005 and 2013. Utilized by Leff (1988), and Lucas (1990) among others, close-textual analysis agrees with many revisionist criticism movements in that it maintains that traditional rhetorical criticism is "too narrowly focused, and uninformative about how discourse actually persuades" (p. 545). One of the key elements of this mode of criticism is the special attention to the arrangement of ideas at the sentence, phrase and word level (Burghardt, 2000, p. 545). Close-textual analysis was best defined by Leff (1986):

The enterprise begins with a severely empirical orientation; the critic must attend to the elements contained within the text itself. The empirical contents of a text, however, are in no way equivalent to the symbolic action that marks a work as rhetorical discourse. Texts simply do not yield up to their own rhetorical interpretation. Critics must move from

what is given in the text to something that they themselves produce—an account of the rhetorical dynamics implicit within it (p. 378).

Essentially, the critic produces a description of the rhetorical elements of the text and then proceeds to identify the “significant features of the text” such as symbolic images, guiding metaphors, mode of argumentation, etc., and explain the interactions between them (Leff, 1986). While this requires the judgment of the critic, it is important to recognize that the emphasis is on the rhetorical action in the text. Close-textual analysis demands a look at how a speech works *as a speech* and not how the speech works ideologically or politically. In an increasingly politicized world, it is important to view the speeches as persuasive texts and not just ideological documents.

Despite Asen’s (2010) criticism, this analysis comprises two case studies; one each from President Bush and President Obama to extrapolate trends that emanate from their respective tours around the country after their State of the Union speeches. The speeches chosen for analysis were the first speech each President gave in their post-State of the Union tours and were delivered the day after their State of the Union Address. In order to generalize, I chose these particular post-State of the Union tours because both Bush in 2005 and Obama in 2013 were at similar points in their presidency. Both Presidents were recently reelected, thus there were no re-election efforts or concerns in the sample. Both speeches demonstrate modern governance, even though they contain many elements of campaign rhetoric. Both chose to travel for multiple days in multiple states directly after their first State of the Union of their second term, a strategy neither employed in his first term. In addition, both speeches focused on domestic policy, thus the often complicated considerations of foreign policy can be removed from the present analysis. The similarities in style of governance and in substance of issues between Bush and Obama in

the first February of their second terms merit consideration. By analyzing, we may uncover trends in the current development of the rhetorical presidency.

Close textual analysis intersects and conjoins with these particular speeches because of its emphasis on how a speech works rhetorically and how a speech persuades. Jacob and Burns (2005) wrote that modern presidents are increasingly concerned with personal appeal. “The strategic motivation for presidents to construct an appealing image helps to explain the allure of going public” (p. 539). They sell who they are as a leader, in addition to their policies. The effect of this strategy is that a President’s policies can be unpopular, but the President’s popularity can remain intact and provide cover for them to pursue their policy initiatives. The President’s personal popularity has become a key component of the rhetorical presidency. Leff and Mohrman’s (1974) seminal close-textual analysis of Lincoln’s speech at Cooper Union noted the distinction between “non-personal and personal persuasion:”

In the former, the speaker attempts to influence audience attitudes about a particular issue, and ethos is important insofar as it lends credence to the substance of the argument. In the latter the process is reversed. The focal point is the speaker, and the message becomes a vehicle for enhancing ethos. Campaign orations, on this basis tend to be examples of personal persuasion, or while ‘the ostensible purpose of a given speech may be to gain acceptance of a particular policy...the actual purpose is to gain votes for the candidate.’ In other words, the ultimate goal of the campaign orator is to promote himself as a candidate. Both policies and character are in question, but the treatment of issue is subsidiary to the purpose of creating a general identification between the speaker and the audience (p. 348).

By analyzing “microscopically” (Lucas 1990), Leff and Mohrmann (1974) were able to discern Lincoln’s mode of persuasion. The present analysis will do the same for Bush and Obama. It will look microscopically to see how Bush and Obama chose to persuade and how the rhetorical dynamics of their respective speeches worked.

The present analysis began with a look at speeches in Bush’s and Obama’s presidencies. Then the speeches to be considered were narrowed down to look at only second term speeches in order to control for re-election efforts. After a consideration of the previous literature, it was clear that a study of Inaugural addresses and State of the Union address in and of themselves would not be sufficient to understand the everyday use of rhetoric. It was then determined to look at speeches related to the State of the Union address, which consisted of a post-State of the Union tour around the country. Bush toured several states as a part of push to sell Social Security reform, but each speech contained similar elements first incorporated in his first speech of the tour in Fargo, North Dakota. This speech was the template for subsequent speeches and occurred the day directly after his State of the Union address. After choosing the speech for Bush, the analysis chose the first speech of Obama’s post-State of the Union tour in Asheville, NC. While he spoke about three separate issues in his tour, the Asheville speech was also the day directly after his State of the Union and was chosen because of its proximity to the State of the Union. After both speeches were chosen, close-textual analysis was utilized to carefully study Bush’s 2005 State of the Union, North Dakota speech, Obama’s 2013 State of the Union, and Asheville Speech. The following analysis is the culmination of those efforts.

On the Road: Social Security in 2005

On February 3, 2005, newly re-elected President George W. Bush began a post-State of the Union tour across the country to push for the legislative cornerstone of his second term

agenda: Social Security reform. His first visit was to North Dakota in an event described in a press release as “President Participates in Social Security Conversation in North Dakota” (Bush 2005b). Bush had indeed gone public by leaving the White House and travelling across the country to North Dakota the day after his 2005 State of the Union. The event itself, as the title indicates, was not billed as a speech. Additionally, the local newspaper accounts refers to the North Dakota event and the rest of his tour as “campaign-style rallies,” which demonstrates that the purpose of the event was to sell his Social Security reforms to the public (Hutcheson 2005, p. 1). In a non-election year, after winning the last presidential election he is eligible for, and less than three weeks after his second inauguration, Bush was conducting a PR campaign for his legislative priorities. The President also included a discussion on stage with several panelists. The panelists were Dr. Jeffrey Brown, a Professor of Economics at the University of Illinois, Mary Bond, a 60 year-old North Dakotan, Tricia Traynor, a woman in her 30s, and Paul Thomas, a North Dakota farmer. The guests spoke for roughly the last 50% of the event in a “conversation” in front of the entire crowd. While the efficacy of this strategy ought to be pursued in a separate analysis, the staging of this panel invited an entirely separate reaction than seeing the President at the rostrum of the House of Representatives. Bush became a ‘man of the people’ for the event, amongst them and not above them. In image and in content, Bush was campaigning for his legislative priorities not through argument, but with a heavy reliance on his personal ethos. This descriptive analysis will focus on the themes as presented in Bush’s 2005 State of the Union, how the North Dakota speech related to these themes, and the various rhetorical strategies that Bush used in the North Dakota Speech.

In the State of the Union (SOTU), Bush (2005a) discussed the responsibility of his generation to the next and asked “What will be the state of their union?” Adding, “Over the next

several months, on issue after issue, let us do what Americans have always done and build a better world for our children and our grandchildren.” The core theme of this State of the Union is the responsibility of one generation to the next. The older generation must develop policies that will “make our economy stronger and more dynamic...and more competitive...and more productive” (Bush, 2005a). By repeating the word “more,” Bush affirmed that the United States was already strong and productive, but that it could be even better. He highlighted specific policies from his first term, such as tax relief and No Child Left Behind, and urged action on a wide array of policies such as the long-stalled Clear Skies legislation, immigration reform, and of course Social Security. Bush (2005a) stated:

One of America's most important institutions -- a symbol of the trust between generations -- is also in need of wise and effective reform. Social Security was a great moral success of the 20th century, and we must honor its great purposes in this new century.

By referring to Social Security as a “symbol of trust” he harkened back to the central theme of his State of the Union, and emphasizing his generation’s responsibility to the next; however, in order for Social Security to be reformed, Bush would need public support and he began to seek it out in North Dakota the following day.

In Fargo, ND Bush began his speech with the usual introductions of local elected officials: Senator Conrad, Congressman Rehberg, both from North Dakota, and Senator Burns from neighboring state of Montana. Congressman Rehberg served on the Committee of Appropriations, which would play a role in any funding changes to Social Security. Senator Conrad was the Ranking Member of the Senate Budget Committee, and a leading conservative Democrat. Senator Burns served on the Senate Appropriations Committee. Their presence

highlighted the importance of their votes to Social Security legislation. Interspersed within the introductions was a discussion of rural health care. Before he spoke to the audience about Social Security, he discussed an issue locally important to them. Bush (2005b) stated, “I used to think these problems could be solved at the state level...I believe the medical liability crisis is a national problem and requires a national solution.” In addition, he discussed the lack of available doctors in rural areas, and how medical liability ran “good doctors out of business” (Bush 2005b). He argued for a national solution, which set the stage for his proposal to overhaul Social Security.

He also briefly discussed some of his foreign policy accomplishments. He stated, “Before I get to Social Security, I do want to talk about how amazing these past couple months have been in the history of our world” (Bush, 2005b). He noted the “elections in Afghanistan...a vote in Ukraine that elected a new President...a vote in the Palestinian Territories [and] the people of Iraq, when given a chance, went to the polls” (Bush, 2005b). He argued that this spread of freedom was due to his policies and his actions in Afghanistan, and he tied those accomplishments into a broader discussion of human freedom. He stated, “Freedom is God’s gift to every single person in the world. And if given the chance, people—people will express their desire to be free and take great risks to do so” (Bush, 2005b). It is the role of America to “spread freedom so everybody, every soul can be free” (Bush, 2005b). If God has endowed humanity with political freedom, then freedom in retirement savings ought to be noncontroversial. This discussion of freedom became the foundation for the discussion of the financial freedom generated by personal accounts in his Social Security reforms, which directly followed.

The topic of Social Security came immediately after the paragraphs of freedom and the foreign policy triumphs and accomplishments of the Bush Administration. At the time Bush gave

the speech, his approval rating on foreign policy stood at 51% (Gallup, 2006). His approval rating on foreign affairs would not reach that level again during his time in office. The audience would be presumed to approve of Bush's handling of foreign policy, and by implication Bush argued they should extend that trust into the domestic sphere. Further, the spread of freedom is the "call of our generation" to "leave a peaceful world behind for our children and grandchildren" (Bush, 2005b). The "call of our generation" statement related to the theme of his State of the Union the night before. He was also attempting to put the weight of history behind the contemporary issue of Social Security reform. He did so by arguing of the historic nature of the times and the role his administration has played in bringing the aforementioned changes to fruition. If his administration could usher in historic changes in foreign affairs, then they can bring about historic changes in domestic policy, namely Social Security. Bush was trying to transfer American's patriotism from the battlefield to the halls of Congress in his efforts to reform Social Security. The average American should root for him in his fight with a Congress already opposed to his efforts. Bush was building an ethos appeal with his audience before he laid out the details of his reform agenda; however, surprisingly, there was no discussion of the state of the economy in the North Dakota speech.

Bush argued that the Social Security system has been "important" and it has "worked," but it has already changed (Bush, 2005b). "You see, when it was created, most people's life expectancy was, what, around 60 years old, I guess. And today people are living longer" (Bush, 2005b). The informal, kitchen table tone with the casual "what" and "I guess" introduces the complex problem of Social Security in may be an easy to understand and easy to relate to language, but it may have also undermined Bush's ethos with the audience. By stating "I guess," the rhetor was not confident in the policy details. In discussing the next two changes in Social

Security he continued in an informal tone. He stated, “The benefit structure has gone up over time. And you’ve got fewer workers paying for more retirees” (Bush, 2005b). He continued by stating “we’ve got a problem...there’s not enough money coming into the system to pay for the promises for all those who are retiring, like baby boomers like me” (Bush, 2005b). Again, the language is informal and relatively slim on the details. By saying “like me,” he was attempting to relate directly to the audience by stating that his benefits are at risk too; he is invested in the system not only as President, but as an American citizen. He concluded this section by re-stating the premise he started with; “In other words, the system has changed” (Bush, 2005b). The purpose of this section has been to both emphasize his relationship as one of the people, and to argue that the system has already changed. The status quo does not exist because the system is not static. Social Security is constantly changing, and his reforms only hope to redirect that change.

In the following paragraph, Bush seemingly contradicts this line of thinking by stating “not a thing will change” for those over 55 (Bush, 2005b). He reduced further the scope of his reforms. First, he noted that he was not changing a stable system but merely changing an already changing system. Second, he would limit those changes to those people who were over a decade away from retirement, thus consciously refuting the opposition before he even mentioned his plan. His plan is for “younger folks” where “the math doesn’t work” (Bush, 2005b). Bush cited the expected funding shortfall in 2018, 2027, 2032 or 2033, and that “in 2042, it’s bust” (Bush, 2005b). This time oriented argument did not place significant weight on the moral duty Bush mentioned earlier. He used a dispassionate line of reasoning to argue to reform a system that often invokes intense passions. The reform is pure math and the burden of time. It is non-ideological, it is non-philosophical, it is numbers, plain and simple. However, this double tack of

setting up a moral duty to reform and then arguing that it is rather a mathematical problem suggests indecision on the best argument to pursue and an inconsistency in the speech. By not fully adopting either tack, Bush's argument is weakened.

Bush also alluded to Congressmen and Senators who do not look beyond the next election and are hesitant to act. He stated:

Now, for people who have been elected, I guess that seems like a long time down the road. If you've got a two-year horizon, you're only thinking about two years—or four years...But I believe the role of a President, and I believe the role of a Congress is to confront problems and not pass them on to future generations (Bush, 2005b).

This has two implications. First, as President, he asserted himself as the only one not worried about electoral consequences and committed to reform, which is relatively easy for a second term President to state, as he will never participate in another election. Second, it is an attempt to redirect hostility for a lack of action to those in Congress. The jab at Congress should be understood within the political context. First, he had three key Democratic members of Congress with him at the event. Second, every Democratic member of the Senate vowed to oppose Bush's plan, according to Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid of Nevada, and that could spell defeat in the Senate (Westphal, 2005). Based on Gallup's (Carroll, 2006) polling conducted immediately after of Bush's State of the Union address, 50% of respondents already disapproved of Bush's reform plans. Before Bush could even begin to push for reforms in earnest, his plans lacked both popular and bipartisan support.

In the previous night's State of the Union, Bush discussed several previous reform plans and name-dropped prominent Democrats such as Congressman Tim Penny, President Clinton, Senator John Breaux, and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. By doing so, Bush attempted to

pressure the Democrats, who supported Democratic reforms in the past into accepting his plan. In the North Dakota speech, he only focused on one plan: his own. He even stated, “so last night, I said, all options are on the table except for running up payroll taxes” (Bush, 2005b). In fact, “all different ideas as to how to solve the problem are on the table... because now is the time to put partisanship aside and focus on saving Social Security for young workers” (Bush, 2005b). By stating that all options are on the table Bush is attempting to further demonstrate his non-ideological purpose and demonstrate a good faith effort to consider other options; however, he does not mention any other ideas in which he sees value. In effect, Bush hinted that other good ideas might exist, but he, and thus the audience, was focused on his because they were the only ones being discussed at the event. Except it should be noted that almost all Democratic solutions included increasing taxes in some way, shape, or form. Thus, Bush had already summarily rejected almost all of their ideas in one sentence before stating “all different ideas” were on the table (Bush, 2005b). Further, it was not just any workers, but young workers, that Bush mentioned. “Young” is important because he reminded his audience that reforms were not for his generation, but for the next generation. The system will change for “young” workers, not those close to retirement. In fact, he used the phrase young or “younger workers” five more times in the speech (Bush, 2005b).

By using “I put out an idea last night that I think is important,” and it’s “novel,” Bush suggested this is both a new and creative solution (Bush, 2005b). It is not one the audience has heard before and it is uniquely suited to solve the problem. By stating his idea is novel, he separated his reform efforts from the many attempted in the past. Also the primacy of *his* idea is readily apparent. President Bush (2005b) described his reforms this way:

[It's] called a personal retirement account, a personal retirement account that will earn a better rate of return than the current Social Security trust earns; a personal retirement account which you will call your own; a personal retirement account that can be only invested in conservative stocks and bonds; a conservative account that you can't withdraw all your money upon retirement. But it's your own account, and it grows.

By emphasizing “personal,” Bush was hoping the audience would identify more closely with “personal” accounts versus the impersonal current system. He mentions the word ‘personal’ four times in a span of 68 words to highlight that the accounts will be owned by American citizens. Instead of taking away a benefit, Bush argued that he was creating a new one, the personal account. The personal account would also receive a “better rate of return,” suggesting that the new program would generate higher value benefits for retirees. In addition to highlighting the word “personal,” Bush also called the account “your own,” as though to underscore that it was the individual who had control over it, not the government. The use of “conservative” to describe investments implied a lasting risk-averse quality of the accounts that will conserve funds. While it would be “your own” account, it can only be invested in safe and conservative ways. Overall, Bush was stating that there was only one idea that was worth considering for this; his.

While the policy itself is critically important, Bush made several statements asserting his beliefs, what he thinks, what he would do. For instance, “I believe,” “I set out a doctrine,” “I think our country,” “that’s what I believe the role of America must be,” “I fully understand,” etc. (Bush, 2005b). This personal assertiveness invited the audience to judge the person rather than the ideas. Bush inserted himself into the speech as President and aimed for the audience to judge him for his efforts, not necessarily the policy. The fact that he was trying to reform Social

Security became more important than the reforms themselves. Bush avoided traditional argumentation and was arguing against the current system except to maintain it for the elderly, as he had previously stated. What Bush was really trying to do, though, was to leverage his personal popularity to pressure the Senators in North Dakota and the people in attendance to support his plan.

Bush then went on to describe his plan as “a good deal for younger workers” because its interest “compounds” at a faster rate than inside the Social Security Trust, adding, “it’s your money...that the government can never take away” (Bush, 2005b). The statement that the government can never take it away, suggests that is a right much the same as freedom. It could not be taken away in the same way that property (with a few notable exceptions) cannot be taken away either. It was also a “new idea to encourage ownership in our society” (Bush, 2005b). His reforms would encourage personal responsibility and demand people plan for retirement. Further, it is actually not all that new on the national level. He stated, “you know, federal employees have this under the thrift savings plan, this kind of idea” (Bush, 2005b). This argument essentially is that this policy has worked in the past for federal employees, and it can work for the general public in the future. It is not an untried or unsuccessful idea.

Bush was also concerned about his opposition because his very next statement was “Now, I’ve heard all of the complaints, and you’ll hear a lot more—how this is going to ruin Social Security. Forget it. It’s going to make it stronger” (Bush, 2005b). He pre-empted his opposition. He did not address them directly, but instead he told his audience to “forget it” (Bush, 2005a). This is further evidence of Bush’s personality-based method of argument. He did not embrace traditional argumentation or provide counterarguments, he merely told the audience to “forget it” (Bush, 2005b).

At the conclusion of the speech, Bush returned his focus to the SOTU the night before. He reminded the audience of “what we are doing, and I did last night” (Bush, 2005b). They must not forget the role Bush played in pushing for reform. Bush stated, at the end of his prepared remarks (2005b):

I want the people, as I travel around this country, to know, one, there’s a problem; two, I’m willing to work with members of both parties to come up with a solution; and three, I’ve got an innovative idea as to how to benefit the younger workers in America.

While the first point is about Social Security, the last two are centered on him as leader and President. In his conclusion, Bush did not mention personal accounts at all. He did this because the lasting impression of the speech was not the policy itself, but himself as the one person committed to solving the problem. Bush developed an appeal based on his personal ethos so that the audience would support him even if they did not support the policy specifics. The sheer number of “I” statements made this clear. Thus, the goal of the speech became more about bolstering Bush in his efforts, and less about the efficacy of those efforts themselves.

Bush would go on to tour the country for several months with dozens of events and speeches similar to the North Dakota “conversation” described above in order to rally the public around his Social Security reform package. Unfortunately for him and his administration, this strategy was unsuccessful; Social Security reform did not pass (Galston, 2007). Despite Bush’s lack of success, President Obama would follow a similar strategy shortly after his re-election.

Manufacturing Support in Asheville 2013: Obama

In February 2013, President Obama began a three state tour after laying out an ambitious second term agenda in both his second Inaugural Address and State of the Union Address. He

travelled to Asheville, NC, Decatur, GA, and Chicago, IL to reemphasize several key components of his SOTU. His choice of location was interesting as he did not campaign in either Illinois or Georgia during the 2012 election, and he was only in North Carolina for the Democratic National Convention. However, Chicago had the highest number of murders in the United States and would be an ideal location to discuss the importance of gun control, a domestic policy initiative mentioned in his SOTU. Both Decatur, GA and Asheville, NC were both cities represented by Democratic Congressman in Republican states, thus there were political reasons for him to visit. Asheville was also well-suited for a discussion of manufacturing as manufacturing is its fourth largest industry, thus the official title of Obama's Asheville Speech was "Remarks by the President on Manufacturing—Asheville, NC" (Obama, 2013b). This descriptive analysis will isolate the themes of Obama's 2013 SOTU, show how the Asheville Speech related to these themes, and reveal the various rhetorical strategies Obama employed in the Asheville Speech.

In his 2013 State of the Union, the main theme was what Obama called, "our unfinished task" (Obama, 2013a). The "unfinished task" referred to initiatives or principles begun in the first term, but that must go even further in the second term. The policy suggestions were not new and fresh, but rather the next logical step. The purpose of each of these policies is to "reignite the true engine of America's economic growth—a rising, thriving middle class" (Obama, 2013a). The biggest of these policies included "making some basic decisions about our budget" and tax reform; both of which were policy fights that plagued Obama's first term. He also argued for concerted action on climate change, Medicare reform, higher education reform, gun control, and immigration reform. By its nature, the State of the Union was a speech filled with policy ideas, but one of his central priorities was what he called the "North Star;" a creation of a "growing

economy that creates good middle class jobs” (Obama, 2013a). It was the guiding metaphor of his speech. This “North Star...guides our efforts,” as Obama mentioned in the very beginning of this speech and then used to justify several of the aforementioned policies. Among the litany of proposals, Obama argued for “making America a magnet for new jobs and manufacturing,” strategic investments in preschool, infrastructure repair, and a minimum wage tied “to the cost of living, so that it finally becomes a wage you can live on” (Obama 2013a). It was these investments and these proposals that President Obama made the case for the very next afternoon in Asheville, NC. One of the “unfinished tasks” of any SOTU is following through on the policy promises made during the speech, and Obama began to make the public argument for those policies in the factory of Linamar Corporation, Asheville, NC.

After the customary introductory remarks to the crowd and dignitaries, Obama began the Asheville Speech by immediately tying this speech to the policies mentioned in the primetime address of the night prior. Obama noted that although “we’re seeing some signs of solid progress...we’re still a ways away from where we need to be” (Obama, 2013b). This of course was an allusion to the “unfinished work” of his administration’s first term. He added, “so we’ve got a lot of work to do;” but the “we” was not just those in his administration, but “everybody” (Obama, 2013b). The use of the inclusive pronoun implied that both Obama and the audience were stakeholders in the policies. The audience must be involved in the implementation of any proposal and any policy. Every policy suggestion included a variation of the phrase “we must do this.” The use of the inclusive pronoun will become a common technique.

Before delving into specific policies, Obama outlined the philosophical underpinnings of these policies. For Obama, “our job as Americans is to restore the basic bargain that says if you work hard...you can get ahead. You can get ahead” (Obama, 2013b). As the official transcript

reports, he repeated “you can get ahead” for applause. He then recycled language from the SOTU stating “the true engine of America’s economic growth has always been our middle class” (Obama, 2013b). This further linked the speech with the SOTU, but also served to focus the speech on the middle class and “ordinary folks” not the “folks at the top” (Obama, 2013b). His use of the term ‘folks’ made his speech less formal, in contrast to the formality of the State of the Union address, helping Obama relate to the people in the audience.

Obama called the American Dream “the North Star that guides everything we do” (Obama, 2013b). By tying his political philosophy to the universal, albeit ambiguous, concept of the American Dream, Obama attempted to place his views and policies beyond argument. His beliefs were no longer ideological and political; rather, they become the embodiment of the ‘American Dream.’ By implying that the philosophical underpinnings of his policy was not ideological or partisan, but rather a part of the universal spirit of all Americans, Obama suggested that those who oppose these policies, Republicans in particular, were opposed to the ‘American Dream,’ and no politician wants to find themselves on the wrong side of the American people’s aspirations.

Obama then transitioned into specific policies by saying, for a second time, “as I said last night” (Obama, 2013b). He referenced the SOTU five times during the Asheville speech. Also, he repeated three questions he asked the night before as a way to make concrete the universal philosophy from the introduction. These questions were:

Number one -- how do we bring more jobs to America? Number two -- how do we equip people with the skills they need to do those jobs? And number three -- how do we make sure that once they have a job, it leads to a decent living (Obama, 2013b)?

He tackled the questions in reverse order. He answered the last question first by arguing that “we reward effort and determination with wages that allow working families to raise their kids and get ahead” (Obama, 2013b). Then the President reminded the crowd that the night before he also advocated “for an increase in the minimum wage” (Obama, 2013b). Unlike in the SOTU, he avoided specifics and merely stated, “If you work full time, you shouldn’t be in poverty” (Obama, 2013b). He did not refer to “workers” in the abstract, but made his appeal directly to the people in the audience by saying “you” should not be in poverty. Although the employees in the audience were ostensibly not in poverty, he wanted to identify his policies with them personally. He wanted to make them invested in his policies even if they would not necessarily personally benefit. The lack of third person in the majority of the speech further reinforced this appeal.

Obama answered the second question in the subsequent paragraph by suggesting three policies that he already “talked about” the night before. These were “making sure kids are getting an early childhood education, making sure that our high schools are preparing our children,” and “making sure that colleges are affordable and accessible to every single American” (Obama, 2013b). The repetition of “making sure” suggested that his policy measures were an effort in accountability. He did not suggest that kids *were not* getting early childhood education, and that high schools *were not* preparing kids, but mainly that we ought to ensure they do, if they were not already. This line of argumentation is similar to the mode employed when Obama discussed the “solid progress” in the economy earlier in the Asheville speech. The statement works by noting that things were good, but they must and can be better. At no point in the Asheville Speech or in the State of the Union is any aspect of America weak or bad. It merely can be better. The status of the United States is often considered as a reflection of the President and his

policies, thus if Obama were to suggest that aspects of America were weak, he would implicitly be stating that aspects of his administration were weak as well.

It was the answer to the first question, “how do we bring more jobs to America,” that Obama devoted the rest of the speech to. He stated “I believe in manufacturing. I think it makes our country stronger,” thus reaffirming his belief in, and identifying with, the manufacturing workers in his audience (Obama, 2013b). He wanted them to believe that his policies will strengthen their industry. As previously mentioned, manufacturing is the fourth largest industry in Asheville, NC; however, Asheville had seen a 33.2% decrease in manufacturing employment between 2000 and 2012 (Asheville Chamber of Commerce, 2013). It is ripe for rejuvenation, and his audience may have needed to hear that what they were doing was essential.

Obama then answered the unstated question of why he is in Asheville, NC to begin with. He stated:

[T]hat’s why I wanted to come down here to Asheville, because there’s a good story to tell here. I know that a few years ago, manufacturing comebacks in North Carolina, a manufacturing comeback in Asheville may not have seemed real likely, because Volvo had just left town... But then local officials started reaching out to companies, offering new incentives to take over this plant... And then, a year later, Linamar showed up... They saw the most promise in this workforce, so they chose to invest in Asheville, in North Carolina, in the United States of America (Obama, 2013b).

He was in Asheville because they were an example of manufacturing regeneration. Further, the source of this regeneration can be credited to local government officials who offered “new incentives” to companies to invest in their community (Obama, 2013b). Asheville was a

praiseworthy microcosm of the strategic investments that Obama wants to make nationally. He continued by stating “And the good news is what’s happening here is happening all around the country” (Obama, 2013b). America was becoming more competitive as it became “more expensive to do business” in China (Obama, 2013b). Obama stated that government incentives and strategic investments in the economy have been working. Additionally, America has become more competitive with China, a country frequently invoked as an outsourcing bogeyman.

In another recycled idea from the previous night, Obama (2013b) stated:

After shedding jobs for more than 10 years, our manufacturers have now added about 500,000 jobs over the past three years. And I mentioned this last night -- Caterpillar, which I know you guys supply, they're bringing jobs back from Japan. Ford is bringing jobs back from Mexico. After placing plants in other countries like China, Intel is opening its most advanced plant here in the United States. Apple is starting to make Macs in America again.

The purpose of these examples, both local and national, was to further demonstrate the efficacy of the policies that Obama was advocating. These examples were important because they were mostly major companies with national name recognition. Additionally, each company faces international competition. If the giants of industry can “in-source,” then other national companies ought to be able to as well. Obama was also asserting that, under his watch, the economy had rebounded and it would continue to do so. “And the reason [the economy will continue to rebound] is because America has got outstanding workers” such as those in the audience (Obama, 2013b). Additionally, America was not just producing more energy, but “more homegrown energy” (Obama, 2013b). He repeatedly emphasized what America has held and has produced domestically. He was generating pride in America, and also in the policies and

leadership that were beginning to make the United States “much more competitive” (Obama, 2013b). This is the unfinished task of restoring the economy; Obama had begun it, and the audience must help him with additional policies.

After raising hopes, Obama then lowered expectations by stating “I want to be honest with you. We’re not going to bring back every job” (Obama, 2013b). By lowering expectations, Obama hoped to reinforce his credibility with the audience and made the admission that these solutions were good, but not perfect. These were not panacea for all that is ill in the economy. He then stated, “some of the guys who were showing me their facilities...had been in manufacturing for 20 years, and they explained how things had changed” (Obama, 2013b). This line built credibility with the audience by demonstrating he had listened to those who gave him a tour and that they mattered. According to Obama, there were two trends occurring simultaneously. The first trend was the upward trend for manufacturing as a direct result of Obama’s policies. The second trend was the broader technological trend that technology is improving and working against the workers in the audience. More tasks currently requiring their labor will be done by machines, and thus fewer jobs. Obama then stated, “now you’ve got a computer and you’re punching in stuff. So it’s changed, and that means you can just produce a lot more with fewer people” (Obama, 2013b). The broader purpose of this statement was to demonstrate that there were headwinds in the economy. These headwinds were technological changes in manufacturing that make it possible to produce more but with fewer jobs. Even though manufacturing makes America stronger, and his policies were working, it is not enough. He justified the need for additional policies and additional government action, in general. Obama noted, though, “there are things we can do right now to accelerate the resurgence of American manufacturing” (Obama, 2013b). Manufacturing was already strong and already on its way back, but it needed to

be accelerated. This was the same line of thinking and the third time it has been addressed the speech; things are good, but things could be even better, done quicker, and made stronger. It is these things that Obama devotes the final third of his speech.

Obama proposed four policies in more depth than he did in the State of the Union. Instead of analyzing each policy individually, they need to be examined as a whole because each one follows a three-step pattern of argumentation. The first step was the introduction of the policy itself. The second was a local example of success or how it would empower local leaders. The third was the national scope of this policy. The pattern served to break down a perhaps hard to understand national policy into local terms. Further, by providing local examples, the audience could envision for themselves how the policy would positively change their own communities.

Take, for example, what Obama said about high-tech manufacturing. First, he introduced the policy. Obama stated, “Number one—we can create more centers for high tech manufacturing” (Obama, 2013b). He then used a localized example, which is the second part of the pattern, by stating, “In Youngstown, OH...you have a once shuttered warehouse—it’s now a state of the art lab where new workers are mastering what’s called 3D printing, which has the potential to revolutionize the way we make everything. That’s the future” (Obama, 2013b). The localized example established where the policy is already working and thriving. Finally, when Obama stated that this would, “revolutionize the way we make everything” he also demonstrated that this policy can have dramatic results for manufacturing at the national level (Obama, 2013b). It is “the future” suggesting an inevitability, which justifies these investments not only in Ohio but across the country. He really made the point when he stated, “So last night, I announced the launch of three more institutes. And I’m calling on Congress to help us set up 15 institutes”

(Obama, 2013b). By presenting the national policy, Obama reminded the audience of the national purpose of this speech and national policy goals.

This organizational pattern was repeated two more times; however, there was one exception to the pattern. When talking about the tax code, Obama did not utilize a localized example. He simply stated, “the second thing we need to do is make our tax code more competitive. Right now, companies get all kinds of tax-breaks for moving jobs and profits overseas” (Obama, 2013b). He did not pick a local example of outsourcing or call out a certain company in his discussion of tax code abuse. Perhaps it would be unwise to alienate a specific corporation for using loopholes in the tax system, especially if the biggest offenders, Apple, had already been praised (Duhigg & Kocieniewski, 2012). Obama had just stated, “so what I’m proposing is that we reform our tax code, stop rewarding business that ship jobs overseas, reward companies that are creating jobs...in the United States of America” (Obama, 2013b). As observed above, where the US can only be stronger, weaknesses were only acknowledged as opportunities. Thus, Obama did not call out any towns for losing jobs or companies for taking them; he just stated what he would do to make it better.

In Obama’s discussion of local partnerships and job training programs, all three components were included. Obama stated, “I want to partner with local leaders to help you attract new investment” (Obama, 2013b). Again Obama made use of the second person. He wanted to apply this policy nationally so that any “community that was knocked down” would soon be “getting back up, and... attracting new manufacturers who want to come and expand and hire” (Obama, 2013b). Obama cited the local example of Asheville last, presumably to provide additional emphasis. He stated, “when Asheville lost the Volvo plant, we’ve got to come in here real quick and help them figure it out” (Obama, 2013b). This policy, which was very abstract

and lacked detail was made more concrete by the local example of Asheville. Obama invoked the audience's own community to convince them of this policy.

Obama dedicated the most time to re-training workers. Obama introduced a policy to give workers additional training by stating “we’ve got to help our workers get the training to compete for the industries of tomorrow” (Obama, 2013b). He stated that “a couple of the guys I had a chance to meet” were examples of how training could help workers find jobs after being “out of work” (Obama, 2013b). He added that they could afford training because “we,” as in the Obama Administration, “kept unemployment insurance in place so folks could get back on their feet” (Obama, 2013b). Again, Obama invoked past action as justification for expanded future action. He then stated the national purpose; “No job in America should go unfilled because somebody doesn’t have the right skills to get the job—nobody” (Obama, 2013b). This policy is not just for some lucky few, but for all in America. He stated, “that’s why I’m proposing a national goal of training 2 million Americans with skills that will lead directly to a job” (Obama, 2013b). Obama then returned to the local example of Asheville to describe how such training would work: “And we know this works. After Linamar came to town, they started working with AB-Tech, one of the community colleges here in Asheville” (Obama, 2013b). This policy will not only work, Obama argued, but there were those in the audience who were a success story and trendsetters for the rest of the country. Obama continued, “And AB-Tech and Linamar teamed up to do something that is really smart...what you do is customize the class to train people so they can come and work at the plant” (Obama, 2013b). The workers and management in the office should be proud. He returned to the third step, the national impact of the local policy, when he stated that this training was “good for the community...good for Linamar...good for the folks going to the community college...it’s good for the economy as a whole” (Obama, 2013b). The

policy worked at the local level and should be applied to the “economy as a whole” (Obama, 2013b). In his concluding statement about this policy, he completed the pattern of argumentation.

According to Obama, these policies were “four common-sense steps,” they were not some “magic bullet” but just “some common-sense stuff” for the national economy (Obama, 2013b). The implication is that anyone who is opposed is defying common sense. He implied that there should be no argument and no controversy, just acceptance of his policies. In the same way he lowered expectations at the beginning of the speech, he stated “People still have to work hard. Companies like Linamar still have to make good products” but over time we will start “rebuilding our manufacturing base in a way that strengthens the economy as a whole” (Obama, 2013b). This line emphasized the value of hard work and served to preempt Republican arguments that these policies were handouts. While he has used local examples, his purpose is clear: completing the unfinished task of strengthening the economy.

All of this led to Obama’s conclusion where he used the rhetorical trope of synecdoche; using the example of one to illustrate the larger whole. In fact, it followed a similar pattern to his conclusion from the previous night. In the SOTU, he utilized the story of Congresswoman Giffords being shot and the story of Hadiya Pendleton’s death to highlight the need for gun control measures (Obama, 2013a). In Asheville, he used the story of Jeff Brower who is a machine operator at Linamar. Brower was a diesel mechanic in the trucking industry who “got laid off...[who] decided it was time for him to change careers” (Obama, 2013b). He got “some new skills” from AB-Tech and now has a job at Linamar. Brower’s story is important because, first, he was a local example. Second, he illustrated Obama’s narrative. He was someone who lost his job and found no alternative employment; however, he went back to the local tech school to

receive additional job training and within a week of graduation was hired. His job is an example of a job that came back, and demonstrated the efficacy of additional funding for job training.

Third, Brower's story was inspirational. As Obama stated, Brower's story is "our story. That's the American story. We don't give up. We get up. We innovate. We adapt. We learn new skills. We keep going" (Obama, 2013b). Obama used the inclusive pronoun again, and links that we with what he individually is attempting to do. He stated:

And I just want everybody here to know at this plant, but everybody in Asheville, everybody in North Carolina and everybody all across the country -- I want you to know as long as you're out here fighting every day to better your lives and to better the lives of your children, then I'll be back in Washington fighting for you. (Applause.) I will be back there fighting for you -- because there's nothing we can't do and no possibilities we can't reach when we're working together. We just have to work together (Obama, 2013b).

His concluding thoughts reinforced the collective energies of the previous paragraphs. While he is fighting, "we" are fighting too. If "we work together," it will help him in Washington. His last substantive statement brings us back from the abstract and national idea of Washington, to the local energies of Asheville, NC. He stated, "Let's just focus on the same kind of common sense and cooperation that we're seeing at this plant and we see all across the country" (Obama, 2013b). If we use the example of Asheville for national policy, the rest of the country will see success. In a sense, the parting thought speaks to the entire purpose of the speech: highlight local ideas to be used for national policy, gain local support to build a national coalition.

Discussion

After a close-textual analysis of Bush's and Obama's speeches, it is important to return to the research questions set out at the beginning of this analysis and contextualize the findings. The guiding research questions that this analysis set out to answer were:

RQ1: How is the rhetorical presidency expressed through the post-State of the Union tour that has developed in the presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack H. Obama?

RQ2: What are the central elements of the post-State of the Union tour, and what arguments and rhetorical forms are employed in these speeches?

RQ1 focused on a broad vision of these speeches, examining the larger themes of the post-SOTU tour speech, whereas RQ2 sought to understand the particular details and patterns of such speeches and their interaction.

While examining Bush and Obama's post-SOTU speeches in regards to RQ1, some trends in how the rhetorical presidency is expressed can be seen. Stuckey (2010), describing the consensus of Tulis (1987) and others, wrote, "presidents in the contemporary era are quite willing to go over the heads of Congress and to attempt to mobilize the public as a routine means of governance" (p. 40). The post-SOTU tours of Bush and Obama were examples of this attempt to mobilize. The SOTU has become a platform to launch a going public campaign. It is the only constitutionally mandated communication between the President and Congress. The Constitution mandated that "He [the President of the United States] shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient" (U.S. Constitution). Historically, and in current times, it is a platform for president's to present their priorities, in particular, their legislative priorities for the next year. Thus, the SOTU is perhaps *the* de-facto speech of

governance. Yet while its purpose is to govern, both Bush and Obama have used it as the launch of a campaign. For President Bush, he began a tour through North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, etc., in the first seven days after his 2005 SOTU. For Obama, he presented his arguments for his second term agenda in North Carolina, Georgia, and Chicago. The post-SOTU tour speeches clearly indicate an effort to use rhetoric, instead of policy, as the vehicle of governance.

Additionally, the rhetorical presidency was expressed in the post-SOTU tour in the Bush and Obama presidencies, as both immediately left the White House for public speeches/rallies across the country. Tulis (1987) stated that the rhetorical presidency could be seen to be a “subverter of the routines of governance” (p. 147). For example, presidents by going public essentially have excluded Congress from the deliberative process of policy-making. Bimes (2009) amended this view by stating, “presidents are simultaneously expected to be the head of state representing a stable constitutional order and a popular politician swaying the public to support new initiatives” (p. 211). This dual role is exemplified by the post-SOTU tour. The President performs his Constitutional duty by communicating with Congress through the official State of the Union; however, by jettisoning DC the day after the event to give campaign-like speeches, both President Bush and Obama attempted to sway public opinion on their initiatives. By attempting to do both, perhaps President Bush and Obama sacrificed their duty in Washington DC in favor of the demands of the rhetorical presidency. For example, Minority Leader Harry Reid stated the day after President Bush’s 2005 SOTU: While counter-factuals can never be proved, the fact is President Bush took his case to the road instead of collaborating with Members of Congress to get votes. He attempted to cajole, if not coerce, the votes in Congress through their constituents. One is left to wonder what would have happened if Bush spent less time on the road and more time in DC; if he had not excluded Congress in order to pressure

them. For legislative initiatives, the votes of elected officials are the only ones that can affect change; the opinions of voters are delayed until the next election cycle. Yet at that point in his second term, the president has largely spent his political capital.

It is too soon to assess the success of Obama's legislative push for increased investments in the economy, but they are not likely to pass given recent history. The dual role of the rhetorical presidency with its "divergent sets of expectations" have made the "contemporary presidency a dysfunctional office" (Bimes, 2009, p. 211). The post-SOTU tour is a symptom of both the evolution and dysfunction of the rhetorical presidency. As a symptom of the evolution, it is a demonstration to scholars and the public that both Presidents Bush and Obama attempted to continue the stratagem of going public with the tact of using the SOTU as the launching off point for the public campaign; governance and going public all in one. Perhaps for the first time, the dual role that Bimes (2009) discussed has been merged in the post-SOTU tour. As a symptom of the dysfunction, it is a clear example of the exclusion of Congress that Tulis (1987) discussed. Bush and Obama went over Congress' heads with the tour, and used the very address designed to facilitate the communication between the Congress and the Executive Branch to do so. Both failed to achieve their policy goals, pushing off reform, and suggesting that perhaps DC is not merely politically dysfunctional, but structurally.

After analyzing the components of Bush's North Dakota speech and Obama's Asheville speech, several commonalities emerge from their post-State of the Union speeches to answer RQ2. First, the speeches prove to not only use the same themes, but even the same language as the SOTU's they followed. These themes for Bush included; Bush versus Congress, status quo versus reform. For Obama, the themes included; successful economic resurgence, Obama versus Congress, and increased government investments. Second, both speeches' primary concern was

domestic policy, which offered some insights into presidential priorities in the first months of a second term. Third, in both speeches Bush and Obama emphasized ethos appeals.

As has been demonstrated, there are several instances where Obama and Bush recycle language. For instance in Bush's SOTU (2005a), he stated

Thirteen years from now, in 2018, Social Security will be paying out more than it takes in. And every year afterward will bring a new shortfall, bigger than the year before. For example, in the year 2027, the government will somehow have to come up with an extra \$200 billion to keep the system afloat. And by 2033, the annual shortfall would be more than \$300 billion. By the year 2042, the entire system would be exhausted and bankrupt.

In North Dakota Bush (2005b) stated,

...Starting in the year 2018, more money goes out of Social Security than comes in...a bunch of baby boomers who are going to live longer and have been promised greater benefits are fixing to retire. And so the system goes into the red. And it goes into the red -- that means negative, that means losing money -- quite dramatically. In the year 2027, it will be \$200 billion in the red -- \$200 billion for one year alone. And in 3032 [sic], it's like \$300 billion. And in 20 -- I mean, 2032. And in 2042, it's bust.

Bush made the exact same argument with very similar phrasing. One of the significant differences is the increased informality of the rhetoric in North Dakota. The same tendency holds true for Obama. In his SOTU (2013a), he stated:

A growing economy that creates good, middle-class jobs -- that must be the North Star that guides our efforts. (Applause.) Every day, we should ask ourselves three

questions as a nation: How do we attract more jobs to our shores? How do we equip our people with the skills they need to get those jobs? And how do we make sure that hard work leads to a decent living?

In Asheville, Obama (2013b) stated,

...That's the American Dream. That's what we got to fight for. That has to be the North Star that guides everything we do. And as I said last night, we should be asking ourselves three questions every single day... Wherever we are, three things we should be asking. Number one -- how do we bring more jobs to America? Number two -- how do we equip people with the skills they need to do those jobs? And number three -- how do we make sure that once they have a job, it leads to a decent living?

Additionally, President Bush stated “last night” nine times and President Obama stated, “last night” five times (Bush 2005b, Obama 2013b). The above quotes serve to reinforce that these speeches can only be understood within the context of the SOTU that preceded them. They are not independent speeches, but rather directly framed by the national speech with similar themes and recycled words. As dependent speeches, the post-SOTU speech represents specific instances of the merger between governance and going public. The governing speech, the SOTU, now has been extended into campaign rally speeches over the next several days. Analysis of SOTUs in the future ought to consider that the SOTU is not a single occasion, but rather the first event that could extend for a week setting up both a governing agenda and a public opinion agenda.

Although the SOTU is wide-ranging, expansive policy speech, these post-SOTU speeches focused almost exclusively on the SOTU’s domestic priorities using very similar language. Both Bush and Obama were in the first month of their second term. Their time in office and their political capital was limited and constrained by Congress’ future election

concerns. While significant adjustments in foreign policy can be made within the Executive Branch, the President needs the support of members of Congress to pass sweeping domestic policy reforms. Both Bush and Obama attempted to rally public support through their Post-State of the Union speeches to pressure Members of Congress. Further, the speeches allowed both Bush and Obama to hone in on particular parts of their policy agendas and localize them. By doing so, the audience perhaps is more likely to be invested into those speeches and pressure their Members of Congress. For example, Bush began his discussion with some snippets about rural healthcare, an issue of importance to the audience that he did not discuss at all in the SOTU. The efficacy of this approach merits further analysis as Bush's Social Security effort was defeated, and as of this date, Obama's push for greater investments into the economy has yet to gain traction.

Finally, Bush and Obama both consistently make arguments that trade on ethos; both an ethos based on past policy successes and an ethos based on their own personal popularity. First, each President established credibility with the audience by touting their own policy successes. In order to develop his credibility for pursuing Social Security reform, Bush discussed the successes of his foreign policy. He attributed "the vote in the Ukraine that elected a new president...[the] vote in the Palestinian Territories" and the elections in Iraq to his successful foreign initiatives (Bush 2005b). He added, "thank you for letting me share that with you. I'm---as you can tell, I'm upbeat about where we're headed. And so the subject at hand is Social Security" (Bush 2005b). Bush established his credibility with foreign policy and hoped that the audience would be upbeat too. The goal would be to transfer that upbeat attitude the Social Security reforms Bush proposed.

Obama also utilized a pattern of ethos argumentation to establish credibility in his Asheville speech. First, Obama presented what he had done. Second, he demonstrated it was successful, and then third argued for additional and expanded action based on past results. For example, Obama stated “last year, my administration created our first manufacturing innovation institute. We put it in Youngstown Ohio” (Obama 2013b). He then demonstrated its successes, “and now you have a once-shuttered warehouse—it’s now a state-of-the art lab” (Obama 2013b). After establishing his credibility, he then argued for its expansions “there’s no reason that those same kinds of projects can’t take root in other cities and towns. So last night, I announced the launch of three more institutes” (Obama 2013b). By establishing his ethos on past policy successes, Obama hoped to push forward an expansion of his policies. The message was “trust me, because it worked before.”

Both Bush and Obama also traded on their popularity to develop a personal ethos. The most strident example of the personal ethos comes in both of their conclusions. Bush (2005b) stated:

I want to work with Congress on the idea...I want the people, as I travel around this country, to know, one there’s a problem; two, I’m willing to work with members of both parties to come up with a solution; and three, I’ve got an innovative idea.

The extensive use of the first person and what he would do established that he was fighting for the audience. The policy didn’t matter as much as the impression that Bush was on their side. The goal was for Bush’s personal popularity to carry through the policy even if the policy specifics were viewed less favorably. The assertion being that the audience could state that they might not agree with or fully understand the policy, but they support the President in his efforts with Congress regardless.

Obama used very similar language in his conclusion. He stated:

And I just want everybody here to know at this plant, but (sic) everybody in Asheville, everybody in North Carolina and everybody all across the country, I want you to know as long as you're out here fighting everyday to better your lives and to better the lives of you're children, then I'll be back in Washington fighting for you. I will be back there fighting for you (Obama 2013b).

Again Obama is trading on his personal popularity as Bush had done eight years prior.

Additionally, he made clear his true purpose: for everyone to know he was fighting for them. The specific policy is once again subordinated by the impression that Obama is in the arena for the American people.

As with all studies, there are limitations to the above analysis. First, the study does not address all instances of speeches that could be construed as "post-SOTU." It does not exhaust the compendium of presidential rhetoric. Second, this study did not address all of the speeches in the various tours, but instead chose to utilize an example from each to present evidence. This examples were not random, but rather both were the very first speech of the tour and thereby closest chronologically to the SOTU. Perhaps if more extensive analysis were done with the rest of the tour, the conclusions may have been altered. Third, this study chose to use close-textual analysis. While the arguments are made to justify the choice of that methodology, the analysis may have attained additional rigor by using more data driven content analysis tools and other computer based analyses. Such an analysis would not undermine the results of this study, but rather only serve to strengthen it.

In regards to future research, there are several analyses that ought to be undertaken by scholars. Future studies ought to consider not only how the SOTU frames the post-SOTU tour

and those speeches, but also the public speeches over the course of the year or term. Is the SOTU truly agenda setting or is its impact ephemeral? Data driven analysis may be key to such an extensive study. Additionally, the post-SOTU tour ought to be reconsidered when the next President is elected. It might be important to determine whether or not the post-SOTU tour will become a fixture of the 21st century presidency or merely a passing political ploy.

After each delivered his State of the Union Address, Bush and Obama adopted similar strategies of touring the country to convince the public of their policy priorities. This strategy of is a further evolution of the rhetorical presidency, going public, and perhaps indicative of a perceived dysfunction of the office itself. Additionally, both used recycled language and themes from the SOTU, focused almost exclusively on domestic policy, and traded on personal popularity in their persuasive appeals.

Conclusion

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, the American public has been inundated with political communication to a level never before experienced. From 24-hour cable news networks to Twitter, the words of politicians and political operatives are read, repeated, and dissected. This limitless scrutiny applies even more so to the statements of the President of the United States. Yet with the increasing rapidity of communication and the flood of rhetoric, it can be difficult to sift through the words and get to the meaning and context of the President's statements. In a world constantly reacting and repeating, it remains essential to reflect especially on political discourse and the long form speeches Presidents continue to give. While this analysis is but a small contribution to the study of presidential rhetoric, hopefully it will generate further understanding and appreciation of the high and complex office.

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