

The Rhetoric of Moderation in Deliberative Discourse: Barack Obama's December 1, 2009 Speech at West Point

La retórica de la moderación en el discurso deliberativo: El discurso de Barack Obama en diciembre 1 de 2009 en West Point

Adam Ellwanger

University of Houston – Downtown, Houston United States
ellwanger@uhd.edu

Mike Duncan

University of Houston – Downtown, Houston United States
duncanm@uhd.edu

Received: 20-11-2013 **Accepted:** 30-06-2014

Abstract: Since the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, U.S. presidents have increasingly explained their reasons for the overseas use of U.S. military force to the American public and the world. The appeal to moderation has since become a fixture in these justifications of American wars. It is in this apologetic genre that we place President Barack Obama's address to graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point on December 1st, 2009, in which he announced his decision to increase troop levels in Afghanistan by 30,000. This particular address features what we call a *rhetoric of moderation* that persuades by directly linking moderation with reason and virtue in such a way that it stands in for a missing key premise of the speech's thesis – in this case, why 30,000 troops were added (rather than some other figure). This rhetoric of moderation is a distinctive and recurrent persuasive tactic in contemporary U.S. political discourse, not just in Obama's speech.

Keywords: Argument, moderation, Obama, rhetoric, war.

Resumen: Desde los conflictos en Corea y Vietnam, los presidentes americanos han incrementadamente explicados sus razones por el uso de sus fuerzas militares en ul-

tramar al público americano y al mundo. La apelación a la moderación desde entonces ha llegado a ser una recurso en estas justificaciones de las guerras americanas. Es en este género apologético que el presidente Barack Obama posiciona su discurso a los graduados de la Academia Militar de los Estados Unidos en West Point el 1 de diciembre de 2009, en el que él anuncia su decisión de incrementar el nivel de tropas en Afganistán en 30.000 hombres. Este discurso en particular se caracteriza por lo que llamamos *la retórica de la moderación* que persuade a través de relacionar directamente la moderación con la razón y la virtud de la tal forma que se sujeta en una premisa clave extraviada de la tesis del discurso –en este caso, por qué 30.000 hombres fueron añadidos (antes que otra figura). Esta retórica de la moderación es una táctica persuasiva distintiva y recurrente en el discurso americano político contemporáneo, no sólo una del discurso de Obama.

Palabras clave: Argumento, guerra, moderación, Obama, retórica.

1. Introduction

Since the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, U.S. presidents have increasingly explained their reasons for the overseas use of U.S. military force to the American public and the world, and an appeal to moderation has become a fixture in these justifications of American wars. It is in this apologetic genre that we place President Barack Obama's address to graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point on December 1, 2009, in which he announced his decision to increase troop levels in Afghanistan by 30,000.¹ We choose this particular address for criticism as it features what we call a *rhetoric of moderation* that persuades by directly linking moderation with reason and virtue in such a way that the rhetoric stands in for a key premise of the speech's thesis – in this case, why 30,000 troops were added (rather than some other figure).

Despite the lengthy history of the association between moderation and reason in political philosophy, moderate decisions are not necessarily better or more logical decisions. Nevertheless, calling a rhetoric of moderation

¹ The President addressing West Point graduates is a long tradition, including recent addresses by Bush (2002), Clinton (1997), Bush (1993), and Reagan (1981). Foreign policy is an oft topic – the 2002 speech by Bush is oft cited as a statement of the so-called “Bush Doctrine” – but Obama is the first to use the occasion for announcing a troop increase, and thus shifts the genre.

fallacious is counterproductive; such a classification does not help to explain how it works argumentatively or why its rhetorical effects can escape the notice of the public. Obama's West Point speech represents a recent example of political discourse that demonstrates how an audience's ethical associations concerning moderate language enable a rhetoric of moderation. This tactic persuades in deliberative contexts without explicitly warranting debatable claims by providing rational evidence.

Although rhetorical theory often associates moderation with *logos*, moderation also has strong strategic connections to *ethos*. By constructing a moderate identity for the rhetor, the language and form of moderation actually lessens the degree to which persuasion depends upon explicit logical support for contentious claims. We use Obama's speech, counterpointed with Lyndon Johnson's 1965 press conference announcing a 50,000 troop increase in Vietnam, to explore how the rhetoric of moderation accomplishes this construction of *ethos* and substitution of key premises, and explore its ethical implications for political discourse.

Obama's West Point speech is purportedly about explaining why he, as Commander-in-Chief, has decided to send 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan. However, the speech contains no stated reason for sending that specific number. Obama does give a lengthy and elaborate explanation for why he is sending troops as a general enterprise, but he does not include why the specific 30,000 figure is necessary, as opposed to some other number, whether it be, say, 300, 3,000, or 300,000, with each of these numbers representing a very different level of engagement and national sacrifice.² We do not claim that the rhetoric of moderation is used *in order to mask* a missing premise, however; we are interested in the construction of the rhetoric. For our purposes here, the reason that the premise is absent is irrelevant; what is relevant for rhetorical theory is *how* moderation effectively replaces this missing premise.

² The absence of this information is curious, given that Obama and his team apparently debated extensively over the number of troops during a lengthy decision making process. The absence could be an attempt to smooth over the well-reported tension between the White House and the U.S. military, notably McChrystal, the current ranking commander in Afghanistan, who had called for as many as 80,000 troops in various public venues (Baker, 2009).

General Stanley McChrystal, then-Commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, had requested that the President send more than 30,000 troops (Baker, 2009), but Obama does not speak to what moved him to send fewer troops than the number suggested by McChrystal. Rather, he repeatedly references the extensive rational process that he used to make the decision, and notes how it will restore a variety of political and military balances that he claims have become unbalanced. Explaining the process by which a decision is made and how it will redress balances, however, is not tantamount to an explanation of how that decision is warranted on a probabilistic basis. Despite this observation, Obama's constant invocation of moderation needs no evidence to justify itself if the audience holds moderation as a value. The rhetoric of moderation also disables criticism of his decision: any critic of his policy would necessarily risk being perceived as an extremist by attacking what has been established as a moderate position. In other words, the rhetoric of moderation works to construct an *ethos* for Obama that identifies his voice and decision as the most reasonable – and the most moderate – in a crowd of special interests involved with the policy of the war.

The following analysis is not a critique of reason, moderation, Obama's decision, or of Obama himself. Rather, we wish to analyze the rhetorical link that the speech makes between reason, moderation, and virtue and how this link can work to conceal a missing premise. The rhetoric of moderation we describe here is a largely aesthetic form of argument in the sense that it favors form over content and substance, avoiding a proof of why a given situation calls for moderate action and how a particular proposal embodies moderation. Put differently, our study of Obama's speech outlines the limitations of aesthetics as *logos*: although form and figure alone can create the appearance an enthymematic proof, claims that rely solely on moderation for justification actually function much differently than they initially appear.

Before we explore the rhetoric of moderation through a close analysis of the West Point speech, we contextualize the topic of moderation through an exploration of its rhetorical function, as well as explain how Obama's speech fits into the tradition of moderation in presidential rhetoric concerning military action.

2. Ethos and the Meaning of Moderation

The Pythagoreans understood the universe as “a collection of agonistic relationships” that constituted a balanced and proportionate opposition that produced the unity of the cosmos. Empedocles’ idea of *dissoi logoi*, too, identifies a natural impulse toward moderation in its claim that “meaning is found through the synthesis of contradictory beliefs” (Carter, 1988, pp. 101-102). Plato and Aristotle argued that dialectic and rhetoric both depend on a keen sense of measure and right proportion, concepts that were important for understanding early definitions of *kairos*.³ Cicero and Quintilian connected moderation to *ethos* and the ethical figure of the ideal orator.⁴ Today, moderation remains tightly linked to reason, virtue, and the ability to persuade audiences in a variety of situations.

One of the problems inherent in exploring the rhetorical functions of moderation is that there is much debate about the formal definition of the term. In our analysis, we do not use the word to refer to anything esoteric. By *moderation*, we have in mind something akin to the definition of *prudence* offered by Hariman and Beer (1998), with its roots in the doctrine of the mean: a balancing of disparate interests or ideas that occurs within deliberative discourse with the goal of finding the appropriate response to a particular occasion. Nevertheless, in its actual usage, moderation can mean much more than this. The idea’s connotations are especially varied in political discourse where moderation may refer to an ethical orientation, an ideological position, or an activity (a sort of intervention or mediation). As it moves from context to context, moderation is capable of directing audience response in different ways: although commonly viewed as a positive force, it remains a nebulous concept.

Moderation’s apparent simplicity is what allows it to operate as what McGee refers to as an ideograph: a slogan or term that has a unique, ambiguous, but evocative character that grants it the rhetorical power to produce

³ See Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* Book 3, Chapter 7 in *Nich. Ethics* 1107a (Book II, Chap.7), and Plato, *Pheadrus*, p. 548, 271d.

⁴ See Cicero’s *On the Orator*, I.xlvi, 202, and Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*, vol. 4, x.vii, 8-9, xii.1.1.3.

(or re-wire) public opinion. He explains that ideographs are “easily mistaken for the technical terminology of political philosophy,” and to McGee’s examples such as *liberty* or *freedom of speech* (which mean different things to different people), we add the concept of *moderation*. Edelman (1993, p. 232) notes that such “[c]ategories are especially powerful as shapers of political beliefs, enthusiasms, fears, and antagonisms when they appear to be natural, self-evident, or simple description rather than devised as propaganda tools.”

There is perhaps no political idea that is more widely recognized as an inherent good than moderation.⁵ While there is a rich vein of scholarship explaining the operation of such terms, there is very little describing the trope of moderation in particular. Just as Edelman explains that these ambiguous categories retain their potency through their relations to other transmutational terms, it is the associations that moderation shares with other concepts that enable its rhetorical versatility. The implicit link between moderation, reason, and virtue is so strong that the three ideas sometimes seem synonymous in rhetorical studies, and in order to understand the persuasive capacities of moderation as a rhetorical tactic, we must describe its connections to logic and virtue.

Solving difficult problems often entails causing unforeseen consequences; thus, avoiding “extreme” solutions (which might have “extreme” effects) constitutes a kind of risk management. Furthermore, finding the middle way to solve a problem requires a weighing of possibilities and an anticipation of outcomes; in other words, identifying the moderate position requires the use of reason. This procedural caution, coupled with a will to reconcile disparate interests in pursuit of the middle way, can be held up as an ethical good, which in turn encourages an implicit relationship between extremism, irrationalism, and evil. The extreme (or immoderate) position/act is viewed as irrational – if it is not “evil,” then it is certainly “not good” – because of its increased risk. Thus, there is a tendency to judge an intermediate position to be inherently “good.”

⁵ In an essay on the use of the concept of evil to foster national unity during wartime, Bormann examines “significant rhetorical forms (recurring patterns of discourse) which cut across rhetorical visions” (1977, p. 130).

However, the middle way or moderate solution is not necessarily an effective solution to all difficult problems (take, for example, the growing Nazi aggression in the 1930s, or more recently, the economic crisis in the United States). Even more problematically, the very term “moderation” is inherently rhetorical – the “middle way” is always produced *post hoc* through the synthesis of two or more “extremes.” The middle does not exist *a priori*; moderation can be discovered anywhere, so long as the extremities are placed in advantageous places to serve a particular ideology. The performative construction of moderation implies much for rhetorical *praxis*: occupying the middle is a persuasive tactic, and occupying what is called “the middle” boils down to claiming that you occupy it.

To employ a rhetoric of moderation, then, is to construct a special kind of *ethos* that masquerades as *logos*. The performance of understanding what constitutes a measured or proportionate response to difficult problems is a way to signify virtue and/or good character. Therefore, rhetors can establish a given solution as a moderate one in order to provoke the audience into recalling the shared value of the middle way and recognizing the solution as inherently rational, and therefore, good, as it has been produced through an ethical individual’s guidance. This recognition establishes the rhetor as an authority; after all, he or she is clearly a rational individual who knows how to reconcile and balance extremes, regardless of how circular the establishment of that rationality was.

Again, this is not to say that a philosophy of moderation cannot produce good decisions, or that it does not tend to produce more good decisions than bad ones. Rather, we hold that the sustained presence of the language of the “middle way” alone can act as a means to persuade audiences of the rational and ethical basis of deliberative arguments. Because audiences can assume that proposals with a moderate label are inherently more rational than others, such claims effectively justify themselves. As a simple invocation of an inherent ethical good that *just seems reasonable*, it is this self-justification that establishes moderation as a virtue in the public mind. This hazy connection between moderation and reason points up the primary weakness of the “middle way” as a rhetorical strategy – it cannot justify its tactical superiority to another approach (Hariman and Beer, 1998, p. 303). Nevertheless, the perception that such arguments do not need explicit justification (because the audience already grasps the value of

moderation) creates an opportunity for rhetors to persuade while concealing the absence of stated rational grounds for action.

3. Presidential Moderation in Military Decisions

When President Thomas Jefferson dispatched three frigates and a schooner to deal with pirates from Tripoli in May 1801 – the first use of American military power overseas – he first consulted with his cabinet, but made no public statement other than to later report the action to Congress in his first annual address and note the appropriateness of his decision to the situation.⁶ Presidents after Jefferson justified declarations of war and other significant military actions to Congress and the public in official addresses. However, during the twentieth century, this pattern changed. Woodrow Wilson’s public construction of American neutrality prior to entry into World War I, or Harry Truman’s elaborate justification of General Douglas MacArthur’s firing at the height of the Korean conflict, could be considered forerunners, and Nixon’s “silent majority” speech a spiritual descendent,⁷ but it was not until Lyndon Johnson explained his decision to add 50,000 more troops to the Vietnam conflict (in a press conference on July 28, 1965) that an American president first publicly explained his reasoning for a specific troop increase in a time of war.

Johnson framed his statement as a response to “a letter from a woman in the Midwest,” who had asked him why her son was in Vietnam. While Johnson did not expressly say he had a moral duty to answer her question, the dramatic placement of the woman’s letter at the beginning of the statement suggests an overriding moral framework. Thus, it was Johnson who introduced a new presidential speech genre – the morality-tinged extended defense of (or apology for) troop usage – in which we would also place Obama’s speech. Although this genre is not perfectly congruent with *apologia*, it nonetheless has a distinctly defensive character. Further, while

⁶ Jefferson disliked public address; this message was read, not delivered orally.

⁷ See Hill (1972, p. 381) who notes Nixon’s skillful use of a moderate *ethos* in the speech, and Campbell (1972) who stresses the duty of the critic to expose such deceptive usage.

the presidential apology for troop usage does not respond to any particular charges of wrongdoing, it does preemptively address possible accusations from the public. As we will show, the preemptory character of the statement conditions audience response in important ways.

In justifying his decision to nearly double the commitment of U.S. troops in Vietnam, Johnson made much use of moderate language that emphasized the gravity of the situation, his measured rational process for deciding how to respond to it, and the United States' willingness to limit itself from exercising the full force of its military prowess. In a fashion that parallels Obama's style in 2011, Johnson opens with the claim that the U.S.'s military hand is forced, as America cannot stand idly by and allow a nefarious global threat to grow. He states that we must not

[...] mask the central fact that this is really war. It is guided by North Viet-Nam and it is spurred by Communist China. Its goal is to conquer the South, to defeat American power, and to extend the Asiatic dominion of communism. There are great stakes in the balance. Most of the non-Communist nations of Asia cannot, by themselves and alone, resist the growing might and the grasping ambition of Asian communism. (Johnson, 1965)

Johnson's mention of "great stakes" and his use of the Cold War metaphor of the "balance" to respond to this urgent situation are echoed later in the speech. After a "week of deliberations," he underscores that his solution is calibrated to create the least possible immediate burden for Americans: "I have concluded that it is not essential to order Reserve units into service now. If that necessity should later be indicated, I will give the matter most careful consideration and I will give the country--you--an adequate notice before taking such action, but only after full preparations." As the speech moves towards closure, he reminds us that his actions are "carefully measured" and reassures the nation of his moderate and benevolent exercise of American power, stating that, "We do not want an expanding struggle with consequences that no one can perceive, nor will we bluster or bully or flaunt our power, but we will not surrender and we will not retreat."

The 1965 press conference is also noteworthy, however, because of what it concealed: the launch of a full-scale war that by the end of 1965 would have close to 200,000 American troops deployed in Vietnam (and

over half a million by 1968), not just the 50,000 presented in the speech as requested by General Westmoreland. We are not asserting implicitly that Obama intended a similar escalation for Afghanistan, of course, or speak to Johnson's intent. Rather, we would note that such a naked, and by precedent, extreme display of presidential power was precipitated by an address that told Congress and the public as little as possible – only that 50,000 troops were being sent and that enlistments and draft calls would be extended and increased. The speech not only signals Johnson's assertion of control over what had been "Robert McNamara's war" (Goodwin, 1976, pp. 280-282), but shows the attractiveness of a rhetoric of moderation for dealing with the public when military matters are in question, and in Johnson's case, when support for parallel domestic programs could be under jeopardy.

Possible antecedents to this rhetoric of moderation in the presidency exist; Woodrow Wilson supported his refusal to act on certain military matters by expressing his reluctance to overextend presidential power.⁸ Restrained prudence suffuses Wilson's public remarks in the years prior to World War One, foregrounding his eventual move toward joining the war in Europe with a public record of refusing to engage out of principled restraint. Likewise, Johnson's presented himself as a reasonable leader who would only act, and act in appropriate measure, when the situation demanded it. This contradictory presidential portrait, where a leader is forced into action by outside forces and the burden of his personal convictions rather than shaping reality and policy himself, is central to the *ethos* of a rhetoric of moderation. The rhetor does not act independently; rather, he is compelled not just by circumstance, but by a moral standard governed by a moderate impulse. This conception of moderation as a constraining presidential responsibility remains, even though the powers of the executive branch have grown considerably since Wilson's time.

The reception of Barry Goldwater's acceptance speech at the 1964 Republican convention is particularly illustrative of the strength of the link between presidential decision making and moderation. Goldwater's fa-

⁸ See Hogan (2009, p. 47). Wilson's expansive view of the presidency must be tempered with his careful eye to public opinion.

mous declaration that “I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice! And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue!” displayed his conservative bona fides, but along with other impromptu remarks, it was used by Lyndon Johnson’s campaign to portray Goldwater as a unstable loose cannon that would likely prompt a nuclear exchange with the U.S.S.R. This successful reinterpretation of Goldwater’s language depends on the understanding of moderation as a universal virtue, and extremism as inherently undesirable. In fact, the caricatured extremes favored by opponents in U.S. presidential races – the temperamental, unpredictable hothead or the weak-willed, indecisive milquetoast – encourage a rhetoric of moderation that can be used regardless of the side of the aisle. To be placed near the fringe, as the contemporary Tea Party movement or the Democratic left as represented by Nancy Pelosi is often located – is to risk being seen as dangerous by a public that at least professes to hold moderation as a virtue.

4. Obama’s December 1, 2009 Speech at West Point

Obama’s West Point address is inundated with language that repeatedly emphasizes the use of reason, the value of balance, the undesirability and immoderation of extreme positions, and the careful, moderate nature of Obama’s own decision-making process.⁹ The cumulative effect of this language is an ethical portrait of Obama – and by extension, the Executive Branch and the United States – as the most moderate and reasoned of the many interested parties in the Afghanistan conflict. Furthermore, and most importantly, the speech presents Obama’s decision to increase troop levels by 30,000 as the most moderate and reasoned decision of the options available. We begin this analysis by briefly analyzing the kairotic moment to which Obama responds; then, we attend to the themes by which Obama connects reason and moderation, as well as how Obama associates his *ethos* with these two concepts. It is only through a careful textual analysis

⁹ All the following quotes and paraphrases from Obama’s speech come from the transcript provided to the *New York Times* that day.

of the language of moderation that its pervasive and totalizing effect on Obama's *ethos* can be understood.

Shortly after Obama's election, Afghanistan became a crisis again after having simmered on the back burner during the Iraqi insurgency and the subsequent U.S. military "surge," which Obama had vigorously opposed during his presidential campaign. This new crisis lent itself to many possible courses of action, each having both pragmatic and political implications. Before he was elected, in his biography, Obama had expressed his desire to be "a blank screen on which people of vastly different political stripes project their own views." (Obama, 2008, *Audacity*, 15). Making concrete policy decisions with real consequences as President, however, required that he take on an *ethos*: the Afghanistan speech was an opportunity to bolster public support for his decision, but it was also a chance for Obama to rhetorically guide the *ethos* that was rapidly forming in the public imagination.

As the rhetoric of moderation in the West Point speech shows, there is always a middle way that can be presented as an idea that rises above ideological concerns and negotiates the interests of many disparate groups. But Obama's "moderate" role is only another *ethos*, and one that comes with specific costs and gains. This particular identity is structured through four oppositional thematic frames that constitute the rhetoric of moderation in the speech. By balancing these themes and advocating the use of reason in finding the balance, Obama identifies himself as the sole moderator, a good man who reasons well.

The first and second themes of the speech are opposed to one another: irrational extremism vs. reasoned moderation. The first, irrational extremism, is used to describe the nature of America's enemies: immoderate, unreasoned, and extremist. Al-Qaeda is not just a terrorist group but "a group of extremists who have distorted and defiled Islam."¹⁰ Permutations of the word "extreme" are used again and again. Obama condemns "al-Qaeda and its extremist allies," locates Afghanistan and Pakistan as the "epicenter of violent extremism practiced by al-Qaeda," reminds us that "we have appre-

¹⁰ Afsaruddin (2007) demonstrates the historical tendency of Islam to locate its value in its status as a "moderate" religion which reconciles the reciprocal extremisms of Christianity and Judaism.

hended extremists within our borders,” and that many are seeking nuclear weapons. There is the “struggle against extremism” in Pakistan, too, and a more global “struggle against violent extremism” late in the speech. In all these characterizations, there is no moderation or reasoned thought in al-Qaeda or anyone associated with it. The Taliban receive a similar treatment: they are a “ruthless, repressive and radical movement.” Both groups seem to belong to the vague “dark cloud of tyranny” referenced in the end of the speech.

The second thematic frame, reasoned moderation, is the reverse of the first; it is used to describe the nature of Obama’s moderate decision-making process, and it is contrasted not only with the immoderate and unreasoned actions of al-Qaeda and the Taliban, but also with other immoderate positions taken by unnamed parties on troop levels in Iraq and Afghanistan. After “extraordinary costs” (by definition immoderate), Obama says he intends to bring the war to “a responsible end.” This “responsibility” signifies recognition of duty and obligation, concepts that require individuals to reconcile self-interest with the needs of others. When characterizing his early shift in war strategy when taking office, Obama notes that he “set a goal that was narrowly defined,” as opposed to a broad, immoderate one. After the Afghan election, he “insisted on a thorough review of our strategy” that allowed him to “ask the hard questions,” in particular, that would allow him to “explore all the different options,” a rational procedure that is a prerequisite for moderate action. His decision was also not made “lightly,” for he believes “we must exercise restraint in the use of military force and consider the long-term consequences of our actions.” All of this language reinforces an image of Obama as a leader who makes careful, responsible, reasoned, and moderate decisions, and even influences others to make similar decisions.

The third and fourth themes, fragmentary imbalance and corrupted unity, also have important differences. Fragmentary imbalance describes the situation in Afghanistan as a currently unbalanced system that has been thrown out of an earlier state of balance. The situation has “deteriorated.” The government there is “hampered.” Afghanistan has “moved backwards.” The war has come with an “enormous cost in lives and resources.” The military has “already borne the heaviest of all burdens.” There is an imbalance at home, too; discussion of the conflict, even, is characterized as “highly

polarized and partisan,” and Obama characterizes the other possible solutions as immoderate, and therefore evidence of public disunity. In short, everything about the current situation is unbalanced and immoderate, and in need of a steady hand.

The fourth theme, corrupted unity, is antithetical to the third. The idea of unity is used to describe the recovery and growth of al-Qaeda and the Taliban from an earlier state of disarray. However, this unity is perverse – the extremists are united only in their totalitarian pursuit of immoderate policy and their desire for global discord. Put differently, the united front posed by the Taliban and al-Qaeda is, for Obama, an ironic sign of a growing, nefarious imbalance in international politics. The Taliban “seek an overthrow” of the existing government, they “have begun to control additional swaths of territory” and are “engaging in increasingly brazen and devastating attacks of terrorism.” Overall, they have “gained momentum.” The danger is also immediate: Obama explains that “new attacks are being plotted as [he] speak[s],” and “the danger will only grow if the region slides backwards.” The central claim of this fourth theme is the blunt statement, one-third through the speech, that “the status quo is not sustainable.” Obama, as the impartial evaluator, perceives the current instability of the situation and recognizes an immediate need for a different solution.

Together, these four patterns of the speech depict an unstable, unbalanced situation that needs not just action, but reasoned and moderate action that restores balance.¹¹ The opposing thematic patterns build an *ethos* for Obama that is constructed around the use of reason, over and against the immoderation represented by al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Again and again, his language reflects this desired rapid restoration of balance. He talks about having “stepped up the pressure on al-Qaeda” and, later, how “we must keep the pressure on al-Qaeda.” Right after he announces the troop increase, he speaks to how it will “allow us to seize the initiative,” which, later, involves the “increase of the stability and capacity of our partners in the region,” and how “we must strengthen the capacity of

¹¹ It is important to note, however, that this is an imbalance defined by Obama, not his generals; he mentions the current commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, only once in his speech, just before the “status quo” line, despite, (or perhaps because of) the general’s frequent media appearances as an advocate for a significant troop increase, starting in September 2009 (Rich, 2010).

Afghanistan's security forces and government." Taken together, these three statements show Obama as a man who apprehends and acts on opportunities in a moderate – and therefore reasonable – fashion.¹²

These four mutually reinforcing strategies, particularly effective in developing Obama's moderate *ethos*, take the place of the missing premise of his larger thesis – the reason for the particular troop increase. The four themes discussed so far, however, are not the only means by which Obama attempts to convey his moderation in the speech and replace this missing premise. For example, Obama's "stakes" gambling metaphor, present also in Johnson's Cold War rhetoric, which advances an *ethos* of risk-management, is prevalent when referencing al-Qaeda's desire for nuclear weapons, and also to describe the international threat of violent extremism.¹³ Obama also establishes his moderate status by offering a frank historical reading of America's legacy to the world that demonstrates his awareness of the potential fallibility of American judgment, and emphasizes the necessity of recovering national unity through the virtue of moderation.¹⁴ However, Obama also uses far more explicit means than this to construct his *ethos*.

Earlier, we mentioned that Lyndon Johnson's 1965 speech introduced the idea of a presidential duty to explain military actions to the public. While the concept of obligation was far more implicit in Johnson's address, Obama directly and unambiguously references this duty when he addresses the cadets:

¹² As Thurow (2006) has noted, an audience's perception of a president's character as being "prudent, virtuous, and [having] good will toward them" – whether the president actually has these qualities or not – is essential to presidential persuasion.

¹³ The language of economics and gambling assists Obama in portraying himself as risk-aware and one who carefully weighs potential losses and gains. He also uses more explicit financial language to show how his solutions to problems mitigate the possible costs of action: "The days of providing a blank check are over," he declares, when speaking of the Karzai government in Afghanistan. Inefficiency and corruption will be "held accountable." The language here is identical to the language Obama has used since his presidential campaign when criticizing corporations and Wall Street; a metaphorical checkbook needs responsible balancing after an excess of blank checks.

¹⁴ Obama offers an apology to the world in his acknowledgements that "we have at times made mistakes" and that "As a country we are not as young – and perhaps not as innocent" as we used to be. Despite the potential costs of acknowledging culpability, this balancing of American identity also contributes credence to viewing his Afghanistan decision as a moderate one. By demonstrating his awareness of the potential fallibility of American judgment, Obama continues to shape an *ethos* that implies that his plan, rather, must have been carefully considered.

As cadets, you volunteered for service during this time of danger. Some of you fought in Afghanistan. Some of you will deploy there. As your Commander-in-Chief, I owe you a mission that is clearly defined, and worthy of your service. And that's why, after the Afghan voting was completed, I insisted on a thorough review of our strategy.

Although he does not directly reference moderation here, Obama does link a concept of duty to the moderate decision-making process. He is compelled by ethical constraints (which he metaphorically constructs as an economic debt by “owe”) to be moderate and rational about military actions. In this maneuver, he portrays himself as both fully responsible for the decision (as Commander-in-Chief) and not quite responsible for it (as he is compelled by the duties of the office of the Presidency, which almost takes on its own agency here); the mantle of office and the man who bears it often blur together in the speech, obscuring the source of moderation.¹⁵ An added debt caveat emphasizes the demands of duty: “And given the stakes involved, I owed the American people – and our troops – no less.” The “less” invokes how the ethical pressure toward moderation is even direr in high-stakes situations such as military actions. Finally, Obama’s “insist[ence]” that a “thorough review” be conducted suggests that there was significant resistance to a reconsideration of the war policy – he is apparently alone in his desire to carefully weigh the available options.

Some may suggest that using the moderate *ethos* is such an established precedent in presidential oratory that Obama did not have another choice, and that for this reason, identifying moderation as the overriding theme is unremarkable. After all, there is little persuasive power is being seen as immoderate. However, recent presidential history suggests otherwise: compare Obama’s self-fashioned *ethos* with the “active leader” (another common type in political discourse). Throughout his discourse regarding military affairs, George W. Bush eschewed a moderate *ethos*; for example, he often emphasized the independent nature of his decisions, referring to himself as “the decider.”¹⁶ The rhetorical avoidance of moderation is also

¹⁵ Obama repeatedly says “As your President” or “As your Commander-in-Chief” to signal difficult or important actions in the speech, such as the initial review of strategy, the action of ordering more troops, and the signing of letters of condolence.

¹⁶ This is not to say that a “decider” like Bush cannot also be moderate when deciding, but we argue the label is meant to distance Bush from an apparent decision-by-committee

evidenced through the names of military operations. The “shock and awe” that marked the opening of the Iraq War is an outright rejection of restraint and propriety in armed conflicts, much like the later “surge” signals the desirability of a temporary imbalance.

In contrast, Obama’s conception of moderate and balanced risk-management is most visible when Obama declares in the speech what appears to be a formal presidential philosophy of moderation. He presents himself as a stern master of *kairos* – not in the sense of timing, but in his mastery of measure. He cloaks himself in the mantle of his office once again to describe his protocol in meeting any given situation:

As President, I refuse to set goals that go beyond our responsibility, our means, or our interests. And I must weigh all of the challenges that our nation faces. I don’t have the luxury of committing to just one. Indeed, I’m mindful of the words of President Eisenhower, who – in discussing our national security – said, “Each proposal must be weighed in the light of a broader consideration: the need to maintain balance in and among national programs.”

From this point forward, the language of cost takes over the speech. A moderate (he is without “luxury”) concept of “balance” is linked to and necessitated by a “cost” that is as simultaneously abstract, metaphorical, and literal as the “balance” it governs. “We have lost that balance,” Obama declares in the next paragraph, referencing Eisenhower’s quote. Economic difficulties faced by Americans make it so that we cannot “simply afford to ignore the price of these wars,” a line which manages to work cost in twice, through the verb “afford” and the noun “price,” as well as a sense of economic irresponsibility. As such, Obama states that he will take control of this budgetary imbalance. This precedes a portrait of a balanced, responsible America in which economic success is welded directly to moderate foreign policy.

Obama’s discussion and rejection of three conventional military options for Afghanistan is a paean to his philosophy of moderation, beginning with a reinforcement of his innate reasonableness: “I recognize there

ethos of moderation. Note in the last paragraph how Obama attempts to evoke both advised moderation and the lone leader simultaneously.

are a range of concerns about our approach. So let me briefly address a few of the more prominent arguments that I've heard, and which I take very seriously." The first option, full withdrawal, "depends on a false reading of history" and creates additional, unacceptable risks. The second, staying the present course, "would simply maintain a status quo in which we muddle through, and permit a slow deterioration of conditions there" that would "ultimately prove more costly." The final option, providing an unlimited supply of troops, is rejected because "it sets goals that are beyond what can be achieved at a reasonable cost." Whereas each of these solutions is presented as immoderate or unwise in one way or another, Obama represents his decision as a hybrid solution – one where we stay in Afghanistan, send a smaller amount of troops, but also set a specific timeline for withdrawal. It is this reconciliation of the apparently irreconcilable that signifies the rational and ethical dimensions of himself, and by extension, his plan. Obama's use of this rhetorical strategy is not limited to the justification of U.S. policy in Afghanistan; in his speech on March 28th, 2011, Obama justified U.S. military intervention in Libya by describing a "false choice" between complete inaction and an unlimited engagement designed to depose Gaddafi.

The consequences implied by a rhetoric of moderation are evidenced in the 2009 speech's immediate reception by prominent politicians and members of the U.S Congress. Obama's oratory allowed him to show the merits of his decision, but the lack of explicit justification for the proposed course of action left few completely satisfied. The performance of the virtue of moderation did, however, stifle strong, open criticism of the plan, as in questioning the effectiveness of a moderate plan, one risks a charge of immoderation.

In particular, Obama's speech pressured Congressional Republicans to support the war policy of a president who they had made a practice of not supporting throughout 2009, and pressured Democrats opposing the war to support their President. Prominent Republican leaders, including Michael Steele (then the Republican National Committee Chairman), Senator Mitch McConnell (the Senate minority leader), and Senator John McCain (Obama's opponent in the 2008 presidential election) all gave short, cautiously supportive responses on December 1 that reflected their

earlier support of McChrystal's request for more troops.¹⁷ However, they expressed much concern over the presence of the exit strategy. McCain was the most critical; while he still backed Obama's overall plan, he noted that "Success is what dictates dates for withdrawal and if we don't have that success and we only set an arbitrary date, it emboldens our enemies and dispirits our friends."

On the other side of the aisle, Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic Speaker of the House, noted that while Obama had "articulated a way out of this war," she added that Congress and the American public "would now have an opportunity to examine this [Obama's] strategy," an uncertain response that resisted any affirmation of the plan's capacity to achieve the desired ends and effectively said, "We'll see." Senator Russ Feingold was far blunter: "I do not support the president's decision to send additional troops to fight a war in Afghanistan that is no longer in our national security interest," describing it further as an "expensive gamble." Feingold's gambling metaphor suggests that he sees the moderate decision as one that incurs unnecessary risk – ironic, given that mitigating risk is a primary function of the middle way.

Taken together, the initial responses from both parties were remarkably unpartisan, especially given the deepening of the ideological divide since Obama's election. This shows that even the rhetoric of moderation entails a serious rhetorical risk: compromising two or more opposing positions usually ensures that no one ends up happy. The reception of the speech by lawmakers was marked by a tepidity and general lack of enthusiasm that seemed to be a necessary by-product of splitting the difference between perceived extremes. Put differently, moderation would seem to breed more moderation, and a modicum of support for military action jeopardizes the success of the operation at large.

¹⁷ Brian Montopoli, "Obama Afghanistan Speech: Early Reaction." December 1, 2009. http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-5857630-503544.html. Accessed August 13, 2010.

5. Moderation, Argument, and the Military

As we mentioned earlier, all of this moderation has a special argumentative function: throughout the speech, it conceals the absence of a clear reason why 30,000 troops, and not some other number, are being sent. Obama does offer an apt discussion of the work these troops will do, but he never hints at why 30,000 is a proper number to accomplish that work. Given his focus on “cost” in the speech, which would conceivably involve human lives, this absence is notable. However, the moderation that inundates the speech takes the place of such an explanation, rendering the absence of a key premise to his main claim nearly invisible. Put differently, 30,000 becomes an *appropriate* (though not necessarily pragmatic) number because Obama immerses it in a rhetoric of moderation. Obama’s West Point speech, therefore, shows the enigmatic character of such a rhetoric: it is a strategy that appears to strive for transparency in deliberation and communication, but it often tactically avoids the very lucidity that it promises. Still, one might ask whether there was a more informative option available to Obama in his construction of the speech.

Somewhat paradoxically, we argue that a more transparent explanation of the military action might have dwelled much less on the rational process that led to the decision. While it is the framing of three separate choices in Afghanistan that allows Obama to configure the middle option as the moderate one, it is also the framing of choices that demands a justification for the choosing of one option among others. The moderate choice is always moderate *in comparison* to some alternative, and only when one concedes the existence of alternative courses of action does one take on some duty to prove the superiority of the moderate choice. Edelman characterizes the “social world” as “a chameleon, a kaleidoscope of potential realities, any of which can be readily evoked by altering the ways in which observations are framed and categorized” (1993, p. 232). Framing one particular potential reality for the war as moderate action preempted criticism and called for national unity regarding his decision.

This preemptive nature of Obama’s speech is another reason that it ultimately does not warrant its central premise. The heavy emphasis on the deliberative process for the decision and the careful consideration of a set of choices are devices that have the potential to silence detractors. But these

two frames (both signifiers of a moderate *ethos*) so saturate the speech that it becomes reactive rather than proactive in character. Thus, the hard irony is that a more informative engagement with the American people might have minimized the decision-making process, resisted describing alternative courses of action (which are no longer options for the people anyway), and not allowed the content of the speech to be determined by the response it anticipates. In other words, Obama could have told his audience: *Here is what I have decided. Here is why.* However, we cannot deny that pursuing this mode of engagement would have disabled Obama's claim to a moderate *ethos*.¹⁸

A potential objection to this argument might be that Obama's reasons for not disclosing a firm reason for the particular number are not only sound, but obvious; namely, to be more exact would reveal a measure of military intelligence that could aid al-Qaida and the Taliban. However, we note that Johnson's address on Vietnam, unlike Obama's on Afghanistan, justifies a troop increase simply by referencing General Westmoreland's request and stating Johnson's willingness to provide whatever his general asks for. While there is a rhetoric of moderation present in Johnson's speech as he describes the special care with which he made his decision, the rhetoric of moderation does not replace the premise of his argument, which rests on Westmoreland's military authority. Ultimately, Johnson's stated reason for sending more troops is because Westmoreland told him that they were needed – not the moderate nature of his decision-making.

¹⁸ As Beasley (2010) has observed, the U.S. president's ability to execute policy has typically been viewed in one of two ways – through public rhetoric that seeks consensus (the “rhetorical presidency” model) or through private rhetoric by the use of the Constitutional powers given to the executive branch (the “unitary executive” model). It is more useful, however, to view presidential activity through both *ethos* simultaneously. Tellingly, as Obama critiques the launch of the Iraq war in his speech, he may be seen as contrasting his policies with Bush's unitary model of the presidency. Overall, though, we feel Obama's speech balances both models; the speech's existence indicates a heavy dependence on rhetoric and a recognition of the need for public consensus, but the avoidance of a clear reason for the specific troop increase is highly suggestive of the unitary executive. The models, and by extension the speech, thus contradict each other and this contradiction suggests that this discursive micro-genre (deliberative presidential speeches regarding military engagements) is uniquely apologetic in character – such speeches simultaneously defend *and* express a measure of regret for executive military action.

Obama, however, never states a reason for sending the particular number of troops – the rhetoric of moderation, rather than being a secondary element of his thesis, becomes the sole, load-bearing warrant for the troop increase.

We must stress that the cloaking effects of the rhetoric of moderation in Obama's speech are remarkably strong – so strong, in fact, that we have pointed out the lack of a warrant for the number of troops to others who are familiar with the speech and received immediate and reflexive denials of the absence of a reason. It must be there, surely – but it is not. Two passages from the speech in particular have been quoted to us as proof of Obama's warrant. The first is in reference to the 30,000 figure:

These are the resources that we need to seize the initiative, while building the Afghan capacity that can allow for a responsible transition of our forces out of Afghanistan.

The second passage again describes the mission that the troops will undertake, but not why 30,000 is the ideal number to accomplish this mission:

The 30,000 additional troops that I'm announcing tonight will deploy in the first part of 2010 – the fastest possible pace – so that they can target the insurgency and secure key population centers. They'll increase our ability to train competent Afghan security forces, and to partner with them so that more Afghans can get into the fight. And they will help create the conditions for the United States to transfer responsibility to the Afghans.

These passages, as well as the rest of the speech, fail to specify why a particular number of troops is required. However, the speech does repeatedly advance the implicit claim that the number of troops is an appropriate number because it is a moderate number. Obama does offer persuasive reasons for the action of sending more troops, but the number itself is unsupported by any warrant, and this undercuts the justification for action: the ultimate answer to the question of why 30,000 troops are needed is, tautologically, that what is needed is 30,000 troops.

Historically, the military has judged troop levels to be peripheral to

their primary objective of winning a given conflict,¹⁹ but the rhetoric of moderation is present in military discourse as well. When McChrystal submitted his formal request for troops to the Defense department and the Pentagon on September 25, 2009, he offered three troop options - 80,000, 40,000, or 10-15,000, with the three-option structure intended to highlight the middle option as the best, and also, to imply that no troop increase was unworkable.

McChrystal's spread of numbers adds to the notion that moderation is a social construction, but it is not necessarily a stable one. When the President and his staff reviewed these options, one anonymous White House official was surprised that there was no middle figure between 10,000-15,000 and 40,000, before realizing that "it would be too tempting." This suggests that Obama and his advisors had expressed a preference for a middle option in that range even before the report was submitted, and raises the question of the necessity of the military advice in the first place. The eventual figure of 30,000 (initially dubbed "Option 2A," and later ironically referred to as "Max Leverage") was conceived in the weeks before the speech as a compromise figure that was more acceptable than the budget-stretching 40,000 (Baker, 2009). Instead of embracing McChrystal's constructed "middle way," Obama conceived of his own: he reset the two extremes and located the middle anew at 30,000.

It is important to note here, as we discuss these numbers, that the difference between 30,000 and 40,000 is the population of a small city. Obama's speech attempts to separate the decision to send the troops from the number, treating them as distinct and distant entities on political and military lines, and thus further obscures the human meaning of the number.

Johnson's 1965 speech was precipitated by a July memo from the Defense Department that, like McChrystal's in 2009, outlined three options: "cut our losses and withdraw," "continue at about the present level," or "expand promptly and substantially the U.S. military pressure against

¹⁹ MacArthur's speech before Congress on April 19, 1951 contains a particularly dramatic statement of this philosophy of war (McCullough, 1992, pp. 852-854).

the Viet Cong.” The situation was painted as an extreme one that required extreme action, and clearly worded with “preference for the third option” (Goodwin, pp. 280-281). Also, in parallel to McChrystal, Westmoreland had not asked for the 50,000 troops mentioned in the speech – he asked for 100,000, and Defense had made clear to Johnson that many more than that, up to 300,000, were going to be needed (Felice, 2009, p. 38-39).

A *Rolling Stone* article, featuring criticism of Obama and his diplomatic team from McChrystal and members of his staff (Hastings, 2010), was the most prominent of a batch of media reports that publicized the tension between the White House and the military. This tension climaxed in the dramatic firing/resignation of General McChrystal seven months after the West Point speech²⁰. It is from these reports that we infer the 30,000 was likely a compromise between what McChrystal wanted and what Obama was willing to offer. Whether continuing to peel the onion through archival research ultimately finds an argumentative center beyond the invocation of moderation is irrelevant: if there is another justification for the number, it is concealed by the rhetoric of the speech. If there is not any other warrant, the result is the same – it appears that the value of moderation itself is the primary determinant of the war policy, and public trust in that value, demonstrated through the president’s moderate *ethos*, is its support.

6. Further Implications

It is of no surprise that presidential rhetoric often hinges on the construction of the president’s *ethos*, and neither is it new to suggest that politicians make appeals to the moderate public or treat military and political decisions as distinct rather than inseparable entities. However, this close analysis of Obama’s speech clarifies how a rhetoric of moderation works, in particular how it substitutes itself for rational grounds. We chose this speech as an artifact for criticism because of how heavily it depends on the American public’s acceptance of moderation as reasoning for a military deployment in the tens of thousands. We cannot help but wonder further as to its ethical implications for deliberative speech in a democratic republic.

²⁰ See Waterman (2010).

In the ongoing polarization of American politics, the identity of the moderate occupies a powerful position in public policy debates. This power is dependent upon a rhetoric of moderation – it demands that speakers signify the mood, demeanor, and language of the middle, whether or not their policy is, subjectively speaking, moderate. The conceptual association of moderate action with reason and virtue is so strong that this persuasive tactic can be used to eschew the same rational impulses that it champions. Obama’s Afghanistan speech is important not only because its missing premise exemplifies this recurring contradiction in political rhetoric, but also because the war in Afghanistan and U.S. involvement in the Middle East remains a critical topic of public debate. The elaborate construction of a moderate, reasoned decision-making process takes the place of explaining why 30,000 troops is an ideal number for accomplishing the President’s expressed goals in the war.

The appeal of the moderate position is dependent on a rational basis for decision-making; taken to its extreme, this strategy ends up replacing the rational impulse and concealing its absence. The rhetoric of moderation must rely upon the persuasive power of aesthetics, as the ideal of balance ultimately resides there. But when the things being “balanced” are competing ideas, the act of moderation becomes logical as well as aesthetic (if only because the act of compromise is a means to mitigate unnecessary risk). Thus, the rhetoric of moderation posits aesthetics *as logos* in order to avoid justifying or admitting to the precarious link between reason, ethics, and the middle way.

While analyzing the rhetorical function of moderation recalls the persuasive force of style, we would also note that it exposes a subtle form of deception. As a purportedly rationalistic mode, the rhetoric of moderation prides itself on content rather than form and substance rather than style. Even so, it operates as a style that enables speakers to drop reason out of the argumentative equation. Employing reason, in fact, is the one thing that the rhetoric of rational moderation refuses to do. In this way, the dynamic of moderation can metonymically stand for the ends of persuasion at large: rhetorical strategies “either augment or replace [...] a process [of deliberation and action] that human beings typically engage in, by way of their own rational capacities, without any art whatsoever. This augmentation or replacement, it would seem, is part of the function of rhetoric”

(Allard-Nelson, 2001, p. 250). In disabling the rational faculties of audiences, strategic moderation renders impossible what is perhaps the ideal end of deliberative discourse: sound, informed, collaborative decision-making.

We do not think that a rhetoric of moderation is fundamentally incompatible with representative democracy at large, but in a political system where the legal power of the people is limited to electing other citizens to make policy decisions on their behalf, maintaining an informed electorate is uniquely dependent upon the degree of transparency of the decision-making process at the highest levels of government; otherwise, citizens cannot independently and reliably evaluate the decision-making expertise of their representatives. As the rhetoric of moderation eschews transparency for an opaque style that conceals the reasoning of the rhetor, any informative role is severely limited, as many of its judgments – and the evidence that compels them – can be freely omitted in the execution of the style.²¹

Acknowledgements: The authors wish to thank John Banks Smither for his preliminary research on moderation and deliberation.

Works cited

- Afsaruddin, Asma. "Exegeses of 'Moderation': Negotiating the Boundaries of Pluralism and Exclusion." *The Good Society* 16 (2) (2007): 1-9.
- Allard-Nelson, Susan K. "Virtue in Aristotle's Rhetoric: A Metaphysical and Ethical Capacity." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 34 (2001): 245-259.
- Aristotle. *On Rhetoric*. Trans. George Kennedy. New York: Oxford UP, 2007.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Terence Irwin. Indianapolis, Hackett, 1999.
- Baker, Peter. "How Obama Came to Plan for 'Surge' in Afghanistan." *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved August 13, 2010 from <http://www.ny-times.com/2009/12/06/world/asia/06reconstruct.html>, (2009, Dec. 9).
- Beasley, Vanessa B. "The Rhetorical Presidency Meets the Unitary Executive:

²¹ In 2010, thousands of classified battlefield reports from Afghanistan were made public by WikiLeaks, further complicating Obama's rhetorical construction of his Afghanistan strategy.

- Implications for Presidential Rhetoric on Public Policy." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 13 (1) (2010): 7-35.
- Bormann, Ernest G. "Fetching Good Out of Evil: A Rhetorical Use of Calamity." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 63 (2) (1977): 130-139.
- Campbell, Karlyn. "Conventional Wisdom – Traditional Form – A Rejoinder." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58 (1972): 451-54.
- Carter, Michael. "Stasis + Kairos: Principles of Social Construction in Classical Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Review* 7 (1988): 97-112.
- Cicero. *On the Orator: Books I and II*. Trans. E.W. Sutton and H. Rackham. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001.
- Edelman, Murray. "Contestable Categories and Public Opinion." *Political Communication* 10 (1993): 231-242.
- Felice, William. *How Do I Save My Honor?: War, Moral Integrity, and Principled Resignation*. Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.
- Goldwater, Barry. "Speech Accepting Republican Presidential Nomination." American Rhetoric. Retrieved June 4, 2011 from <http://www.american-rhetoric.com/speeches/barrygoldwater1964rnc.htm>, (1964, July 16).
- Goodwin, Dolores K. *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*. New York, NY: St. Martin's, 1976.
- Hariman, R. & Beer, F. "What Would Be Prudent? Forms of Reasoning in World Politics." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 1 (3) (1998): 299-330.
- Hastings, Michael. The Runaway General. *Rolling Stone*. Retrieved August 13, 2010 from <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/17390/119236>, (2010, June 22).
- Hill, Forbes. "Conventional Wisdom – Traditional Form – The President's Message of November 3, 1969". *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58 (4) (1972): 373-386.
- Hogan, Michael. *Woodrow Wilson's Western Tour: Rhetoric, Public Opinion, and the League of Nations*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M UP, 2006.
- Jefferson, Thomas. "First Annual Message to Congress." The Avalon Project. Retrieved August 13, 2010 from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/jeffmes1.asp, (1801).
- Johnson, Lyndon B. "Lyndon B. Johnson: The President's Press Conference, July 28, 1965." The American Presidency Project. Retrieved August 13, 2010 from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=27116>, (1965, July 28).
- McCullough, David. *Truman*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992.
- McGee, Michael C. "The "Ideograph": A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1) (1980): 1-16.
- Obama, Barack. *Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*. New York, New York: Vintage, 2008.
- Obama, Barack. "Speech at West Point." *The New York Times*. Retrieved August

- 13, 2010 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/02/world/asia/02prexy.text.html>, (2009, Dec. 1).
- Obama, Barack. "Speech to the American People on Libya, National Defense University, Washington, D.C." American Rhetoric. Retrieved May 26, 2011 at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/barackobamaspeeches.htm/>, (2011, March 28).
- Plato. *Phaedrus*. Trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff. In John M. Cooper (Ed.), *Plato: Complete Works* (pp. 506-576). Indianapolis, Hackett, 1997.
- Quintilian. *Institutio Oratoria (Volume 4, Loeb Classical Library)*. Trans. H.E. Butler. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1980.
- Rich, Frank. "The 36 Hours That Shook Washington. *The New York Times*." Retrieved on August 13, 2010 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/27/opinion/27rich.html?src=me&ref=general>, (2010, June 25).
- Thurow, Glen E. "Dimensions of Presidential Character." In M. Medhurst (Ed.), *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency* (pp. 15-16). College Station, TX: Texas A&M UP, 1996.
- Waterman, Shaun. "McChrystal resigns Afghan command. *The Washington Times*." Retrieved August 13, 2010 from <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jun/23/mcchrystal-leaves-white-house-war-meeting/>, (2010, June 23).