

Pacification Strategies and the American Dream: A Discourse and Cognitive Stylistic Analysis of Barack Obama's Speeches

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Abstract

The study examines the pacification strategies used to justify drone warfare as a crucial component of U.S. national security within counterterrorism strategy by critically analyzing Barack Obama's speeches from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It provides a theoretical framework for understanding how Obama's rhetoric influences public opinion and policy decisions and intertwines more general ideological concerns like nationalism and neoliberalism, particularly in discussions about the global environment.

The study identifies Obama's use of inclusive language, anecdotal storytelling, and metaphorical language to dehumanize targeted populations and defend military involvement under the pretense of national security by analyzing the macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure of his rhetoric. His Kenyan ancestry is used to negotiate intricate narratives of identity and citizenship, and the time framing of his statements corresponds with the pressure he experienced from international criticism of American military strategies.

The study demonstrates how language shapes social reality and power dynamics, and how Obama's rhetorical strategies are better understood and their consequences in light of Teun A. van Dijk's theoretical framework. The study identifies dominant themes, including the American dream, generational legacy, and collective action, and concludes on the effectiveness of Obama's pacification tactics in contemporary discourse. Lastly, this analysis highlights how Obama's speeches are not just persuasive instruments but also crucial in shaping public opinion and thought in policy-making at global and domestic levels.

Introduction

The first section of this paper provides the theoretical context for analyzing the pacification in Barack Obamas speeches, particularly at a time characterized by the redefinition of military and political discourse. This paper utilizes critical discourse analysis to unravel the rhetorical activities Obama, and together with his team of advisers, utilized in making the implementation of drone warfare a prime tool for national security under the fight against terrorism as can be evident in what (Oeser et al.) describes. Besides, the analysis is also carried out to the ideological bases that underlie these pacification narratives and their relation to more universal themes like neoliberalism and nationalism that exist in global climate discourse, as posited in (Söderlund et al.). Through an examination of the sophisticated language and pragmatic strategies employed in his speeches, this study attempts to provide a more nuanced understanding of the manner in which Obama shaped public opinion and policy through discourse, which in turn influenced domestic and international reactions to U.S. military intervention.

A. Overview of Discourse Analysis and its Relevance to Political Speeches

Discourse analysis is a valuable research framework that examines how language builds political narratives, particularly in the case of speeches from influential leaders like Barack Obama. By examining the linguistic choices and strategies employed in such speeches, researchers can trace back the ideologies and power dynamics involved in policy-making and public opinion. For instance, Obama's use of metaphorical language not only makes his administrations' military strategies attractive but also constructs sophisticated issues, such as drone warfare, in such a manner that citizens are more forgiving. It has been proven that such rhetorical strategies would dehumanize the targeted population and create fear, thus making activities justified under national security (Oeser et al.). Moreover, political elites like Obama will employ ideological frames linking ideas like economic growth and stability in speech, successfully framing public opinion of global matters like global warming (Söderlund et al.). These are the kinds of things that enable researchers to account for the ways language builds political pacification and consensus by subtle means.

II. Historical Background of Barack Obama's Discourses

The historical context of Barack Obama's speeches is crucial to understanding how he applied pacification tactics in his rhetoric. His time in office coincided with heightened international focus on national security and military intervention, notably through drone attacks carried out under his authority. This application of drone warfare, justified by a skillful narrative, is a drastic departure from American foreign policy founded on remote control as opposed to direct intervention military intervention. Increased reliance on drones not only reconfigured military strategy but also brought global disapproval, making his speeches attempt to legitimize such missions using discursive means that demonize opposition and appeal to fear in order to preclude regulatory oversight

(Oeser et al.). Additionally, Obama's own African heritage in Kenya and its

Histoire trouble use offers a context for him that informs his rhetoric. It

serves to highlight his son of the nation status, uniting individual biography

with broader issues of postcolonial domination and ethnic politics (Carotenuto et al.)

A. Major Events That Have Influenced Obama's Rhetoric

Throughout Barack Obama's political career, there have been a number of events that have influenced his rhetorical strategies, particularly those of pacification. Central to those strategies is his complex interweaving of Kenyan and American identities, much of which has often been set within a wider discussion of postcolonial nationhood and identity.

For instance, as Matthew Carotenuto and Katherine Luongo note, efforts to label Obama as "son of the soil" for the Lake Victoria basin are an example of the politicized reconstructions of Kenedyas history in contemporary discourse. These accounts, usually condensed and charged with anticolonial undertones, have obscured the subtle dynamic Obama enjoys with Kenya and broader African contexts. This sheds important light on how his speeches employ pacification strategies for transcending cultural divisions and maintaining unity in diversity (Carotenuto et al.)(Carotenuto et al.). Therefore, such significant occurrences and their attendant discourses not only bring into view his rhetorical method but also come to interpret his greater goals within the building of global understanding.

III. Strategies of Pacification Adopted within Obama's Speeches

From a critical reading of the pacification strategies used in Barack Obama's speeches, it is evident that his rhetoric has a tendency to attempt to reconcile differences and diffuse tension in hostile environments. Through the use of metaphorical language, Obama is able to effectively dehumanize foes by framing military intervention as national security policies while simultaneously constructing a narrative that fosters citizens' unity. This is in the creation of the ethical implications of conduct by the military, i.e., the employment of drone attacks, which have been controversial during his tenure. As may be observed, employing drones as weapons is a departure from the conventional means of waging war, observing the complexities involved in legitimizing such a form of conduct in an umbrella form of maintaining peace and diplomacy (Oeser et al.). Moreover, Obama's association with Kenya witnesses to the manner in which people's personal narratives may inform larger political narratives and elicit identity- and heritage-related questions that appeal to citizens locally as well as internationally (Carotenuto et al.).

A. Analysis of Language Techniques Used to Foster Unity and Reconciliation

Successful speech that seeks to bring together and heal utilizes these types of language devices that focus on collective identity and shared experience. President Obama uses inclusive pronouns like we, for instance, as a habit. These create a sense of belonging together and shared responsibility among his listeners. This type of rhetoric is emulating the rhetorical strategies used in the speeches of the other political leaders, such as Mahmoud Abbas who also employs the inclusive we in making claims of agency and negotiation for his people (Yaseen et al.). Besides, through commissure speech acts, Obama conveys a promise of reconciliation and liberal conversation and thereby creates a narrative that appeals to the people's shared desire for his constituency. This is like broader discourses of history in which language is not only employed as a medium of communication but also as an agent of emancipative social solidarity in the face of adversity (Richter-Montpetit et al.).

Methodology

Model of analysis

Teun A. van Dijk: Framework for Analyzing Political Discourse

Teun A. van Dijk, one of the premier discourse analysis experts, offers a rational model for understanding the intricate power dynamic between politics and language. His work has a lot to teach us regarding what processes politicians like Barack Obama use to frame their message and speak to their audience.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Van Dijk is one of the major proponents of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a criticism of the manner in which discourse establishes and reflects power relations in society. His premise is that language is among the most powerful tools in the exertion of power in which individuals and institutions can establish social realities, identities, and ideologies. In examining Obama's speeches, CDA allows us to find out how language is utilized to express authority, to influence public opinion, and to manage issues in society.

Discourse and Power

At the core of Van Dijk's theory is an argument that discourse is not merely a means of communication; it is a vehicle through which power relations are created and replicated. His framework calls for an examination of how Obama's language use stems from his political objective and how it resonates with various audiences. Through rhetorical devices, Obama is capable of using discourse to create his authority, unify consensus, and mobilize support.

Cognitive Models

The second central concept in Van Dijk's book is the cognitive model. These are internal schemata and representations that individuals use to comprehend discourse and interpret social events and identities. Analyzing Obama's speeches from a cognitive model viewpoint offers the chance to discover more about how he defines problems, invokes collective memory, and shapes the audience's perception to broader themes of hope, change, and unity.

Analytical Framework: Macro and Micro Levels

Van Dijk confirms the importance of analyzing discourse at both macro and micro levels. The macro-level analysis takes into account the overall socio-political context of a speech being delivered, including historical context, audience, and cultural narratives. The micro-level analysis looks into the linguistic structures, rhetorical devices, and argumentation strategies employed in the speeches. In Obama's instance, this dual focus reveals how he navigates multi-scalar social landscapes through language that resonates vividly with his audience .

Application to Barack Obama's Speeches

When Van Dijk's framework is applied to Barack Obama's speeches, some of the prominent themes that emerge include:

Rhetorical Strategies: Obama's use of metaphor and storytelling both conveys his messages effectively and builds him as an approachable leader. For instance, his frequent reference to the "American Dream" is a shared metaphor that appeals to diverse audiences.

Persuasion Devices: Obama's narratives often combine the personal and the general social issues, which allows him to establish emotional connections with listeners. His address employs inclusive language, with the purpose of closing divisions and creating a feeling of being together.

Identity and Representation: By analyzing how Obama navigates the issues of race, class, and national identity, one finds the strategic choices he makes in an effort to forge a viable political identity. His speeches routinely address the contested character of American identity, both the struggles and the ideals.

Teun A. van Dijk's model of analysis offers a comprehensive framework for deciphering the multi-layered meaning of political discourse. Through this, Obama's speeches can be analyzed not only in content but also in their broader social meaning and role in public discourse. This provides richness to the analysis of his rhetorical devices and the efficacy of his message in the political process.

On behalf of the great state of Illinois, (CHEERS) crossroads of a nation, Land of Lincoln, (Already he refers to Lincoln, a highly respected former President famous for the Gettysburg

Address) But my grandfather had larger dreams for his son. Through hard work and perseverance my father got a scholarship to study in a magical place, America, that shone as a beacon of freedom and opportunity to so many who had come before. (Note the use of contrast – the contrast of the basic Kenyan life and the life in America. Also note the use of a metaphor of a beacon, playing to the audience's conceptions of America being a shining light to the rest of the world and the imagery of the Statue of Liberty) Back home, my grandmother raised a baby and went to work on a bomber assembly line. After the war, they studied on the G.I. Bill, bought a house through F.H.A., and later moved west all the way to Hawaii in search of opportunity. (The further use of the shared/all- American history, setting the scene to portray himself as part of the "American dream" and casting out any doubt about his heritage – well, other than the need for a birth certificate!) And they, too, had big dreams for their daughter. A common dream, born of two continents. (A nice conclusion to this section of contrasts by stating common elements – something which reflects Obama's subsequent style of being conciliatory) They imagined me going to the best schools in the land, even though they weren't rich, because in a generous America you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential. (again a contrast with a negative beginning and a positive end. This is far more effective in obtaining the approval of the public and getting applause than if he had said something like "Because they knew you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential, they imagined me going to the best schools even though they weren't rich" – you'll note that there was a long pause to allow for the message to sink in – and the message was not that he was from a poor background, but that America is a place of opportunity.) We gather to affirm the greatness of our nation-- not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy. (The comment sets up a contrast and also creates a question-answer conundrum that keeps the audience interested to hear the revelation of the greatness of their nation) we are called to reaffirm our values and our commitments, to hold them against a hard reality and see how we're measuring up to the legacy of our forbearers and the promise of future generations. (This ties in the historical and constitutional references) And fellow Americans, democrats, republicans, independents, I say to you tonight: we have more work to do - (The term "more work" becomes a recurring phrase through the following section of the speech. The choice of the words "more work" is less confrontational than a frontal attack on the record of the republicans but has the same effect. It allows him to attack their record without attacking them personally) Now, don't get me wrong. The people I meet in small towns and big cities, in diners and office parks they don't expect government to solve all their problems. They know they have to work hard to get ahead, and they want to. (He is heading off the criticism that could be levelled at those that seek "protectionist" or social welfare measures that those that seek them are asking for the state to solve all their ills. If you address the opposition not only do you come across as even-handed as you appear to have considered the other side's arguments. you also get the opportunity to frame the opposition's arguments) You know, a while back -- awhile back I met a young man named Shamus in a V.F.W. Hall in East Moline, Illinois. (Obama loves the use of small anecdotes. They are a good way of creating a bond to the overall message and are

a good way of changing pace in the speech). He was a good-looking kid -- six two, six three, clear eyed, with an easy smile. He told me he'd joined the Marines and was heading to Iraq the following week. (Note that he does not give too much detail – just enough to paint a general mental picture. If you give too much detail then it ruins the effect. He wants it to be YOUR depiction of Shamus. Think about how disappointed you are sometimes by the casting of a film version of a favourite book – the actor is not how YOU imagined the character to be, and the magic is ruined). Tonight, if you feel the same energy that I do, if you feel the same urgency that I do, if you feel the same passion that I do, if you feel the same hopefulness that I do if we do what we must do, (Lots of repetition here, delivered very quickly. Note that “feel” is a strongly aspirated word and so is forceful and really pushes the conclusion) then I have no doubt that all across the country, from Florida to Oregon, from Washington to Maine, the people will rise up in November, and John Kerry will be sworn in as President, and John Edwards will be sworn in as Vice President, and this country will reclaim its promise, and out of this long political darkness a brighter day will come. (The repetition at the end adds to cadence and crescendo. The voice is getting faster and more powerful, adding to the feeling of a rousing crescendo

These addresses not only appeal for collective action against climate change by communities; they also mark an ideological stance that couples economic development with environmental responsibility, reiterating the belief that climate initiatives provide potential for market expansion and resource management (Söderlund et al). In addition, as the geopolitics shift, calls for a fresh transatlantic partnership—apartnership calling for enhanced burden-sharing from allies—are filling increasingly center stage in Obamas rhetoric, calling for an appeal for maturity in international affairs (Hallams et al.). Accordingly, his speeches are not only constructing persuasive arguments, but are effective tools in constructing public opinion and policy rhetoric.

B. Reflection on the Effectiveness of Obama's Pacification Strategies in Contemporary Discourse

In examining Barack Obama's pacification strategies in contemporary discourse, one has to take into consideration the consequences of his employing drone war as a policy of national security. The successor failure of these policies is not just measured in terms of quantifiable outcomes but also by the discursive construction whereby they are legitimated. As explained in (Oeser et al.), Obama's regime sold drone attacks as a targeted method of assassination of imminent threats, deploying imagery that dehumanized the target and projecting an image of necessity and precision. The discourse, however, attracted huge international criticism, contending that the seeming success of such operation was washed away with ethical concerns regarding civilian casualties and sovereignty. Similarly, (ARCHAMBAULT et al.) identifies the way in which the history of air warfare meets these new modern tactics, with an emphasis that

remoteness achieved through drones is a strategically produced construct based on strategic decisions. Ultimately, the construction of these discursive approaches articulates not only the description of Obamas foreign policy but also the broader implications for the way modern war looks and gets legitimized.

A. Summary of Barack Obama's 2004 DNC Speech and its significance in American political rhetoric

Barack Obama's 2004 Democratic National Convention keynote speech was a turning point in America's political discourse, with its thematic cohesion and calculated speechifying. Being the first African American to deliver the speech, Obama defied prevailing race narratives, positioning himself as a reconciling force among different socio-political groups. His appeal to a shared American identity, followed by personal stories, powerfully illustrated his vision for a less polarized future. It was one that worked not just with the convention attendees but also captured the imagination of a broader national audience and held out the hope of collective progress beyond partisan divides. The significance of Obama's speech is emphasized by critical reports that discuss how it set the stage for future political rhetoric and action, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of America's issues then, as revealed in and articulated in terms of contemporary political communication issues debated in (Benkler et al.) and (Benkler et al.).

Element	Description	Impact	Significance
Theme	Unity and shared American values	Bridged political divides	Established Obama as a unifying figure
Personal narrative	Emphasized diverse background	Humanized Obama and made him relatable	Positioned Obama as embodiment of American dream
Rhetoric	Optimistic and inspirational tone	Energized Democratic base	Launched Obama's national political career
Policy focus	Broad vision rather than specific proposals	Appealed to wide audience	Set stage for future presidential campaign

Delivery	Confident and Captivated audience	Established Obama's
	charismatic speaking and media	oratorical skills
	style	

The first section of this essay provides the theoretical context for analyzing the pacification moves in Barack Obama's speeches, particularly at a time characterized by the redefinition of military and political discourse. This article utilizes critical discourse analysis to unravel the rhetorical activities Obama, and together with his team of advisers, utilized in making the implementation of drone warfare a prime tool for national security under the fight against terrorism as can be evident in what (Oeser et al.) describes. Besides, the analysis is also carried out to the ideological bases that underlie these pacification narratives and their relation to more universal themes like neoliberalism and nationalism that exist in global climate discourse, as posited in (Söderlund et al.). Through an examination of the sophisticated language and pragmatic strategies employed in his speeches, this study attempts to provide a more nuanced understanding of the manner in which Obama shaped public opinion and policy through discourse, which in turn influenced domestic and international reactions to U.S. military intervention.

A. Overview of Discourse Analysis and its Relevance to Political Speeches

Discourse analysis is a significant approach that is employed in research about the way in which language frames political narratives, particularly in addresses made by influential leaders like Barack Obama. Analyzing the language choices and rhetorical techniques employed in these addresses will help researchers to follow the implied ideologies and the dynamics of power and influence during policy-making and opinion-making. For instance, Obama's use of figurative language not only makes his governments military strategy attractive but also explains complex issues, such as drone warfare, in a manner that makes the citizens more tolerable. According to research, such rhetorical devices have been shown to dehumanize the group being targeted and create fear and therefore legitimize action in national security terms (Oeser et al.). Besides, political leaders like Obama will use ideological frames, connecting concepts like economic growth and stability in their speeches, ultimately shaping public perception regarding issues like global warming (Söderlund et al.). These are the kinds of understandings that enable researchers to explain how language achieves political pacification and consensus through subtle means.

II. Historical Context of Barack Obama's Speeches

The historical setting of Barack Obama's speeches is vital to understanding how he employed pacification tactics in his rhetoric. His leadership coincided with heightened international focus

on national security and the military intervention, particularly through drone attacks conducted under his administration. This application of drone warfare, defended by a carefully constructed narrative, is a significant departure from American foreign policy characterized by remote control and not direct military action. Increased deployment of drones not only transformed war policy but also drew foreign ire, making his speeches a step towards legitimizing such actions through discursive tools that dehumanize dissent and resort to fear in order to preemptive regulatory intervention (Oeser et al.). Obama's politics of Kenya and its complex history also offer a context that informs his rhetorical position. It serves to underscore his son of the nation position, bridging personal past and broader issues of postcolonial domination and ethnic politics (Carotenuto et al.).

A. Major Events That Have Shaped Obama's Rhetoric

Throughout Barack Obama's political career, there have been numerous incidents that have influenced his rhetorical strategies, particularly those of pacification. At the base of those strategies is his rich interweaving of Kenyan and American identities, much of which has routinely been put within the broader context of postcolonial nationhood and identity.

II. Contextual Background

The contextual background of Barack Obama's 2004 Democratic National Convention speech is key to understanding the pacification strategies inherent in his rhetoric. Delivered at a time of heightened political polarization and social unrest in the United States, Obama's speech addressed not only the call for unity but also the call to heal a fractured electorate. This backdrop amplified his messages of hope and shared responsibility that resonated with a hungry audience for reconciliation in the midst of volatile national sentiment. Scholars have uncovered that the issues generated by neoliberal policies and structural disparities, such as those outlined in recent critiques of public schooling ((Scott et al.)), have echoes in the sentiments that fueled Obama's appeal to seek common ground. Also, as discussed in the analysis of illegal trafficking and poaching consequences ((Estrada G et al.)), the broader implications of institutional instability find echo in the significance of Obama's call for change and solidarity by underscoring the interconnectivity of such discourses. The image which strongly finds echo in this context is, symbolizing the central discourse of racial reconciliation in Obama's speech, lending structural support to the analysis.

A. Political and historical background to the 2004 Democratic National Convention

The 2004 Democratic National Convention occurred amidst acute political polarization and global tensions, most notably the post-September 11 context and the war in Afghanistan as well as the war in Iraq. Since the Democratic Party was trying to unify and present a unifying image, the emergence of Barack Obama as a keynote speaker was a new narrative built on hope and unity as opposed to the rhetoric of division from the incumbent. His comments resonated not

only within American political discussion but also in more universal worldwide conversation about nationalism and identity, and particularly as regards postcolonial pushback against leadership targets like Obama. This entwinement of the local and the global gives rise to the complexities of ethnicity as scholars such as Matthew Carotenuto and Katherine Luongo describe how Obama's connection to Kenya has been used in various narratives of American and Kenyan national identities (Carotenuto et al.)(Carotenuto et al.). In addition, the political significance of Obamas speech is captured in discourse such as examined in, which illustrates the rhetorical strategies that succeeded in reconciling conflict among the audience.

III. Discourse Strategies

When observing Barack Obamas application of discourse strategies in the 2004 Democratic National Convention, it becomes evident that his rhetorical choice-making was paramount in establishing a story of pacification and unity. By intertwining personal narratives with national ideals, Obama effectively bridged numerous political and social chasms. His intentional use of inclusive pronouns created a collective identity that resonated with multiple audiences, reiterating a common purpose. As noted, Obamas discourse strategies during his 2004 DNC keynote address included the use of personal narrative, metaphor, and inclusive pronouns to construct a vision of national unity. This move not only deflected tension but also invited people to envision a more harmonized America, one that was above partisanship. Through this complex dance of story and identity, Obama positioned himself as a figure of unity who could mend a broken political landscape (Carotenuto et al.).

A. Analysis of rhetorical devices used by Obama to bring about unity and hope

In his historic 2004 Democratic National Convention speech, Barack Obama effectively employed rhetorical devices to convey a sense of unity and hope to his audience. By appealing to common ideals and shared memory, he lent personal accounts a broader demand for national unity, thus resonating both the emotions and the intellect of hearers.

The employment of metaphors, specifically the image of an uncompromising American spirit, enabled Obama to rise above racial and political differences and to stress that "we are more similar than we are different." This rhetorical tactic successfully established a narrative of inclusivity by reaffirming the faith in a shared future. As discussed in the analysis of his speeches, Obamas rhetoric naturally recognizes America's complex racial history, theorizing a vision of redemption that aligns closely with the aspirations of a multicultural citizenry (Chirindo et al.)(MARSHALL C). Through these actions, Obama's rhetoric not only placated but also inspired his audience, redefining fear as a narrative of hope.

A. Discussion of the power of Obama's policies of pacification and their impact on political discourse

Barack Obama's policies of pacification, represented by his emphasis on healing and unity, played a major role in rebuilding political discourse at a highly polarized moment. His oratory at the 2004 Democratic National Convention embodied this approach, whereby he adeptly navigated difficult racial and social equations to advance an ethos of inclusion. In describing a shared set of values, Obama readily transcended exclusionary identities as defined in dominant advocacy literature emphasizing the importance of significant messages in mobilizing diverse constituents to enhance overall communicative power through his oratory (Nylen et al.). The ability to bridge varied perspectives, as seen in Palestinian statehood and democratization discourses, once again locates the importance of strategic communication in political activism (N/A). Obamas strategy hence not only closed gaps among constituencies but also redrew parameters of public discourse, with a lasting legacy in the realm of American political discourse. These strategies can also be examined through, which offers a model of how the effects of healing rhetoric can be explained in political communication.

IV. Conclusion

Overall, Barack Obama's speeches at the 2004 Democratic National Convention are an excellent case of applying rhetorical strategies for pacification through common values and articulation of collective identity. His approach depicts a carefully framed narrative of assurance to his audience of racial healing and advancement through situating himself as a uniting symbol despite dominating societal tensions. The revolutionary power of Obamas rhetoric not only sought to inspire hope but also subtly danced around race and its complexities in America, noted by Carotenuto and Luongo as they argue over politicized uses of Kenyas history in contemporary contexts. This is symptomatic of Obamas recognition of his own mixed identity and the way that he expertly employs it to appeal to divided constituencies. As one observer has said, Obamas 2004 DNC speech was a virtuoso performance of racial reassurance, encapsulating his role as a bridge builder at a turning point in American politics "Obama's 2004 DNC speech was a virtuoso performance of racial reassurance. He presented himself as a racial healer, a bridge builder, even as he reasserted the fantasy that America had come a long way in overcoming racism and that the doors of opportunity had finally opened to all." (Michelle Alexander). The rhetorical power of such speeches continues to be felt, demonstrating the long-lasting influence of carefully arranged narratives in shaping public opinion.

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