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The Obama Doctrine: The LICI Foreign Policy Perspective

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors
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Honors Capstone Project in International Relations

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Abstract

Every U.S. President has maintained and crafted a prescriptive set of policies with which they conduct international affairs. All Presidents have left their historical mark- what they believe to be America's position in the world, and its commensurate role. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the world transformed as America achieved international hegemony as the sole superpower and subsequent victor of the Cold War. However, many today question U.S. primacy shifting the debate toward questioning *if* and *how* America should act in the world.

Barack Obama's foreign policy eludes the confines of a single political ideology and philosophy. After being elected President, Barack Obama was bequeathed several entrenched problems (e.g. the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Great Recession), and encountered new ones along the way (e.g. the Libyan intervention, Arab uprisings).

A rhetorical analysis of his major speeches, beginning with several of his campaign speeches and ending at the present time, elucidates that his foreign policy is largely shaped by three major International Relations philosophical frameworks. This Capstone thesis contends that Obama's rhetoric- i.e. speeches, foreign policy writings, books, addresses, and educational background- about America's position and subsequent role in the world today indicates that his foreign policy is a combination of Liberal Internationalism, Constructivism, and Institutionalism (LICI). They have overlapping features that reaffirm each other's validity, and all are substantiated further by several subcategories.

The subcategories this paper draws upon to illustrate how Obama's rhetoric reflects and, in many ways, constructs his foreign policy are: Pragmatism, Progressivism, Cosmopolitanism, Soft-power and global engagement, and multilateralism. Obama's rhetoric is indicative of what he believes America's role in the world could be, and should be.

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Advice to Future Honors Students

The Capstone project has been surprisingly revelatory. It was formative and gratifying, not just for what was produced, but what was learned along the way. Please choose something you love, something that opens your eyes in the morning grogginess and quickens your pace on your commute; because, I think, you'll probably derive more meaning from your efforts.

Words are important, words matter, and the implication that they don't, I think, diminishes how important it is to speak to the American people directly about making America as good as its promise.

—Barack Obama, February 21, 2008

What is the Obama Doctrine? And Where is the US Headed in the World?

Introduction and Background

January 20, 2009

On this wintry day in Washington D.C., the United States of America witnessed the inauguration of its first black president. At 48 years old, Barack Hussein Obama II, a Constitutional law professor and one-half term serving Senator from Illinois, was elected to the highest office in America. Pundits and commentators alike could not choose between their elations: George W. Bush's long awaited exit, or Barack Obama's imminent arrival. Regardless of the validity of their lamentations regarding the years between 2001 and 2008, commentators on virtually all sides of the spectrum were confronted with exactly what Obama campaigned on: "Change." The election itself, which took place on November 4th, 2008, saw a turnout of 131 million voters (out of a registered 146 million people) - roughly 64 percent of the age-eligible voting population. Of the total voters, self-identified "Blacks" and "Hispanics" provided record voting turnouts with their highest levels of all time. In 2008, the voting rate for non-Hispanic Whites was lower than in 2004, but higher than 2000 or 1996. Citizens aged 18-24 were the group most significantly

present with 49 percent having voted, thus constituting 12.5 percent of the total vote. Older groups decreased, but negligibly.¹

Many writers around the world began speculating on the implications of what some authors penned as the “Obama effect.” Some scholars- who even referred to his political presence as “a positive counter-stereotypic exemplar,”- conducted an NSF-funded psychological research project that concluded that explicit and consistent exposure to Obama had resulted in a widespread “decrease in implicit anti-Black prejudice among non-Black voters.” The study goes on to state further: “After exposure to negative exemplars, participants responded with heightened levels of anti-Black implicit prejudice more akin to pre-Obama levels of prejudice.”² Hendrik Hertzberg of *The New Yorker*’s definition of the “Obama effect” (with which he credits the surprising 2009 Lebanese parliamentary upsets where a moderate coalition of “pro-American” and “pro-Western” parties precluded Hezbollah from gaining control) was not so much of a definition as it was a feeling or a sentiment interpreted by writers like himself. He described Obama’s 2009 Cairo speech as an example of a “carefully constructed edifice of public diplomacy,” containing ‘cathartic’ elements of both of a “university lecture” and a “psychoanalytic session” that said aloud many things that were left unsaid- a statement that may be extrapolated and attributed to the whole swath of political writers. “A new mood,” Hertzberg defended Obama as having created, “is a prerequisite to progress.”³

Interpretive writers aside, public mood around the world did, in fact, change. According to a BBC World Poll, 15 out of 17 nations polled had averages of 67 percent of respondents believed that the election of Barack Obama would lead to improved relations around the globe. Steve Kull, Director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes presciently stated that “Familiarity with Obama seems to be breeding hope... But then again, he is starting from a low

baseline, following eight years of an unpopular US president. Maintaining this enthusiasm will be a challenge given the complexities he now faces.”⁴ *The New York Times* weekly contributor Nicholas Kristof wrote with trepidation about the expectations bestowed upon Obama: “Substance should always trump symbolism.” He then concluded that “if this election goes as the polls suggest, we may find a path to restore America’s global influence — and thus to achieve some of our international objectives — in part because the world is concluding that Americans can, after all, see beyond a person’s epidermis.”⁵ However, a 2009 WorldPublicOpinion.org poll found that although Barack Obama’s popularity soared abroad, many countries still remained skeptical and cynical about the United States’ foreign policy objectives and motivations. Many majorities in various countries around the world- both Western and non-Western, still maintained that the US coercively manipulates other countries by using its military might and prominent position of power.⁶ Taking office after eight years of an extremely unpopular presidency, Obama inherited a global disposition that reflected a decade-long-war-fatigued, world-weary cynicism that was exacerbated by the roiling of the financial markets that would come to define the Obama presidency and current reelection campaign.

Noting the changing domestic and international mood, Craig Hayden wrote that Obama’s early onslaught of international public diplomacy, as both a communication strategy and foreign policy imperative, was both “pivotal” and “energizing.” Acutely capturing and summarizing the remedial sense of Obama’s election, Hayden writes:

The Obama presidency symbolized a significant transition from the Bush administration and heralded the prospect of a more engaged global leader sensitive to public opinion and the historical

concerns of publics outside the United States. This expectation of change, encouraged and cultivated in campaign rhetoric and expressed in journalistic outlets around the world, expressed both a challenge to the foreign policy values perceived as intrinsic in the Bush administration's actions as much as revealed a wellspring of sentiment towards the possibilities of an Obama presidency. Put simply, the Obama election evidenced a latent potential for U.S. soft power catalyzed by the symbolic significance of the candidate. The ensuing months following the inauguration of Barack Obama, however, revealed concerns about the ability of a president to carry the supposed burdens of public diplomacy alone.

The imagery of an America on bended knee accurately depicts of the way in which Barack Obama entered his presidency; he and many other scholars considered his election a curative- a referendum on what many perceived as a self-interested United States unmindful of international opinion. Obama's campaign rhetoric rehashed notions of Woodrow Wilson's ideas of American support for self-determination and sovereignty of all nation-states. As Hayden suggests, "the narratives of hope and struggle expressed about the Obama administration in its first year are implicit arguments for an invigorated public diplomacy."⁷

Regardless of one's political orientation, it has become obvious that Obama's rhetoric and major campaigning efforts contained, as writer James Wolcott noted, "a salvational fervor;" an "idealistic zeal divorced from any particular policy or cause and chariot-driven by pure euphoria."⁸ Many political writers continue to critique Obama for his policy initiatives like the

vaunted Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, wryly coined “Obamacare.” But while his domestic policies have garnered him great amounts of criticism, his global perspective and vision of America continues to vex commentators and scholars alike.

While Conservative writers continue to harp on Obama’s “liberalism” (George Will wrote: “After blaming his predecessor for this and that... after firing all the arrows in liberalism’s quiver...”), many commentators on the left also continue to berate Obama for not having fulfilled enough of his campaign’s international pledges to the left.⁹ Despite the political tug-of-war between the commentators and skeptics, Obama’s vision has undergone a lot of scrutiny within the first two years of his presidency. Although he has completed many tasks abroad he campaigned on, and many others, his detractors admonish him for a plethora of different reasons and problems.

Has Obama’s vision of what America’s role in the world should be changed so drastically that the country would rally around a reactionary response as a form of retaliation? While writers like Charles Krauthammer continue to castigate Obama for “dithering” on global issues like Libya -“leading from behind”¹⁰ as *The New Yorker* political writer Ryan Lizza describes the president’s command over the Libyan intervention- many scholars continue to commend Obama for his global participation and collaborative willingness. His many overseas trips, swift rhetorical ease on post-partisanship, and articulation of a “new world order,”¹¹ have turned Obama into a Nobel Peace Prize winner and a conservative piñata for writers like ex-U.N. Ambassador John Bolton who have labeled Obama as America’s first “post-American President.”¹²

In 2006, the near-twilight of Bush’s presidential tenure, scholars and historians wrote about the negative ramifications of said administration’s foreign policy blunders and/or mistakes.

Princeton historian Sean Wilentz wrote in *Rolling Stone* that George W. Bush was on the verge of earning the title of “one of the worst presidents in US history,” claiming that his presidency appeared “headed toward colossal disgrace.”¹³ In 2009 author Sam Tanenhaus wrote a book entitled “The Death of Conservatism.” David S. Mason in “The End of the American Century” (a title rehashing Henry Luce’s pronouncement of the Twentieth Century) writes pessimistically (not to say almost eschatologically) that:

*Almost everywhere in the world now, including among populations of our closest allies, the influence of U.S. politics, economics, and culture is seen as a threat to peace, harmony, and national identity. The U.S. invasion of Iraq, in blatant disregard of both international law and the United Nations, extended that perception to America’s military as well and intensified anti-Americanism all around the globe. The American Century has clearly come to an end.*¹⁴

Professor Wilentz reminds us that no historian can responsibly predict the future on account of innumerable imponderables, and as such, one is left with more questions at this juncture regarding Obama’s foreign policy trajectory than ever. Clearly anti-Bush and anti-Republican/Conservative sentiments played an enormous role in Obama’s 2008 election, but has the situation reversed since then? Scholars like William Galston of the Brookings Institution wrote that although Obama may be unfairly blamed for that which he has not caused- i.e. the international economic downturn¹⁵- it is no longer plausible nor credible to simply write off the Conservative populism (e.g. the federated matrix known as the Tea Party) and the November

2010 election as a referendum on internal ‘Leftist’ policies, and/or liberalism alone, to which so many Conservative commentators and writers attributed it.

This is due, in part, to the fact that Obama shares more with his predecessor than many would care to believe. Regarding his foreign policy, and the potential nostalgia for Bush, Stephen Walt in *Foreign Policy* wrote: “Obama's efforts to clean up Bush's legacy may have been disappointing so far, but that's no reason to feel nostalgic for the man who created all these messes in the first place.”¹⁶

What then, is the state of America in the world today? Presupposing a need for an American ‘role’, many political scholars seek to answer such a question; and such is the focus of this paper.

Purpose

This essay will attempt to synthesize and interpret through rhetorical analysis, the vision of America Obama has propounded, and the foreign policy philosophies that have influenced his political output. By analyzing Obama's major foreign policy speeches and writings, we may better understand his view of what America's role in the world could be and should be. Beginning with the latter part of his 2008 campaign and his inaugural address, I will highlight the main points and phrases that I think Obama seeks to incorporate in his vision of America's international role. Aside from focusing on Obama's speeches, I will also incorporate many of his policies and initiatives taken while in office.

Barack Obama's foreign policy may be interpreted as an attempt at consolidating the International Relations theories of Liberal Internationalism, Constructivism, and Liberal Institutionalism. These three theoretical frameworks have been largely substantiated by both Obama's policy initiatives and rhetoric. Although many commentators have derided Obama's foreign policy doctrine as being inchoate, or even nonexistent, Obama has repeatedly proven to be grounded in viewing the United States of America as a willing participant in the "international community." It is precisely that Barack Obama may be more *unwilling* to act unilaterally that has shaped the growing body of political commentary that characterize his foreign policy competency as both inexperienced and naïve.

Disclaimer. There have been obvious instances where President Obama has passed policies and given speeches that contradict my central thesis and its derivative ideas. The first thing to note, and should not have to be reminded that he is a politician. His policies and speeches may not always align with this paper's following position. Second, this paper does not

address whether his foreign policy rhetoric/policies/agenda have succeeded, but rather what they are, and how they can be interpreted through International Relations theory. As an ex-college professor, author of two books, a lawyer, and a community organizer, that President Obama considers and appreciates the gravity of words is indubitable.

I will first outline the three main International Relations theories that Obama has portrayed through his rhetoric. I will then provide several thematic subcategories I believe derive and constitute the foreign policy web that Obama has created through his rhetoric and initiatives. His personal philosophy, education, and policy initiatives manifest themselves through his choice of words and actions and result in what I refer to as the Obama Doctrine. The speeches and writings that will be used are ones delivered both during and after his campaign. I will explain later the way in which I believe that Obama's rhetoric is an attempt at consolidating the three I.R. philosophies- with five central tenets that each contribute to the three (in no particular order): multilateralism, soft-power/engagement, Cosmopolitanism, Pragmatism and progressivism (the last two as evidenced through his formative years and governing experience). All of these combined make up what I will refer to hereafter as The Obama Doctrine, the LICCI foreign policy, etc.

Prolegomena: International Relations Theory

Liberal Internationalism- Normative

Before beginning, it is extremely important to outline some of the key features comprising these theoretical frameworks. Liberal Internationalism has its roots in America in the early twentieth century. Woodrow Wilson's vision of "self-determination" of nation-states to govern themselves, making the world "safe for democracy," mesh with Kantian notions of democratic peace theory. The democratic peace theory is the idea that nations with representative governing bodies are less likely to go to war with one another. Born out of these, according to writer Michael Lind, "The ideal of liberal internationalism therefore is a world organized as a peaceful global society of sovereign, self-governing peoples, in which the great powers, rather than compete to carve out rival spheres of influence, cooperate to preserve international peace in the face of threats from aggressive states and terrorism."¹⁷ Contrary to the values and claims made by isolationism, realism, and non-interventionism, Liberal Internationalism (often derided as 'liberal interventionism') seeks to make full and thorough use of supranational organizations, like the U.N., before becoming involved in foreign affairs. The U.N.'s founding charter is generally regarded as the archetypal agreement delineating the typical values of Liberal Internationalism: global human rights, multilateralism, the primacy of diplomatic litigation, international peace/security, and cooperative multipolarity. It is important to note that although 'liberal' is a term often applied to Democrats and Leftists, Liberal Internationalism has never been specific to one political ideology. Albeit highly militarized, George W. Bush was often described as employing such a foreign policy ("armed Wilsonians").

In an essay entitled *Liberal Internationalism*, John MacMillan writes: “Within liberalism persons are not only the subject of moral discourse, but also regarded as key agents of historical and political change.” Clearly, this notion overlaps with the next IR theoretical framework. But MacMillan makes the point that despite many contradictions and limits, Liberal Internationalism should not “operate as it has in the past: grounded in an ethnocentric mode of thought that justifies universal moral and political claims from within its own particular philosophical discourse.” He further contends that at the normative level, liberalism benefits from the espousal of the principle of equality and civilizations, that the advocating of human rights and democracy as core universal values should remain at the top of the Liberal Internationalist structure; however, it should also be weary of self-referentiality, that is to say, skeptical of *who* and *what* formulates and interprets the content of human rights. Finally, MacMillan concludes: “Mainstream foreign policy debate in the United States is divided not over the question of American leadership, but over the question of whether this be unilateral or multilateral in character. That the latter in practice places greater emphasis upon ‘soft-power’ dovetails with traditional liberal internationalist approaches.”¹⁸ While often paired with Realism, Obama’s foreign policy significantly sways away from Realist assumptions and values. (These generally include, but are not limited to: an anarchic and antagonistic world with competing nation-states, incorrigible human imperfection, self-aggrandizement, balances of power, and the supremacy of states’ survival.) The debate about unilateralism versus multilateralism gets a lot of play when analyzing the Obama presidency as compared to the Bush’s.

Constructivism- Descriptive

Constructivism, as an IR theory, also places international cooperation and peace as its top values, but emphasizes different aspects of global affairs. That international relations is largely a social construction shaped by rhetoric, human nature, history, and culture is the definitive precept underlying Constructivism. It also highlights several other salient themes. First, Constructivism places emphasis on social construction's differences across borders (i.e. respective histories, cultures, languages, etc.), as opposed to a single historical Truths. Constructivism may be regarded as underlining more subjectivity and contingencies in its various explanations than its competing theories. Through processes of interaction, Constructivists argue, inter-state actors cooperatively engage in rhetoric and acts of performativity, whereby international politics becomes 'a world of our making.'¹⁹ Instead of viewing the limitations of structural constraints, Constructivism stresses 'norms' and 'shared understandings.'

While Constructivism may ostensibly be at bipolar odds with Liberal Internationalism, J. Samuel Barkin puts the argument differently to show how it is not so. Drawing upon the implicit methodological and ontological considerations of Constructivism, two aspects are most salient: intersubjectivity and co-constitution. Intersubjectivity, as Jennifer-Sterling Folker puts it, is defined as "collective knowledge and understandings."²⁰ Or as Emanuel Adler puts it, "knowledge that persists beyond the lives of individual social actors, embedded in social routines and practices as they are reproduced by interpreters who participate in their production and workings."²¹ Tacitly found within this concept of intersubjectivity is the assumption that there are, in fact, ideas and understandings commonly shared amongst peoples of all nations. The

second consideration, co-constitution, is defined as “people *and* society construct, or constitute, each other.” Barkin asserts that neither one is given ontological superiority, but rather viewed as being mutually constitutive.²⁰ Inter-subjectivity does not imply subjectivity, as it is possible to intersubjectively understand Objective reality.

K.M. Fierke writes that the “main point” of Constructivism theory “is that academic debate, no less than political, emerges in historically and culturally specific circumstances.” That this philosophical theory emphasizes interaction and diplomacy between civilizations, nations, peoples, there can be no doubt. Constructivism, Fierke argues, has been seen as being the ‘middle ground’ between the rationalist and poststructuralist schools of IR. Constructivism, as it translates into the policy arena of politics, would logically result in a more nuanced and deliberate consideration of speech acts, and the primacy of international diplomacy. Clearly certain norms, understandings, paradigms, and truths change over time with progress and human interaction. As Wittgenstein showed, language is not solely a mirror for which human actions and words are reflected, but rather a world in and of themselves. As some Constructivists have grounded their analyses in epistemological positivism, legitimating many of their claims, Constructivism’s emphasis on causality, hypothesis testing, results in political policies that attempt to be as expository and explanatory as possible. Obama’s superlative dedication to answering ‘how and why,’ and the ‘how possible’ questions that arise from distinct conflicts and circumstances (i.e. the Iraq war, the 2008 financial collapse) does not stem from his determination to identify ‘true’ causes, but rather the Constructivist style way of finding out the social causes and facts that brought them about. This elucidates the fragility and importance, both of which Obama recognizes, of public dialogue. Finally, engaging in public dialogue through speeches and addresses plays an international role as important as it is befuddling.

Trying to deconstruct the rhetoric of political speeches delivered abroad can be a bedeviling hermeneutical inquiry, the likes of which would take hundreds of pages to unpack. This essay focuses more on what is said, rather than what is implied.

Institutionalism- Performative

Institutionalism is another aspect of IR theory that holds that through an international cooperative framework, peace can be better established and thus maintained. With its historical roots in the inception of the supranational League of Nations of 1919, Institutionalism is based on the precept that Collective Security can best be established through voluntary and cooperative institutions such as NGOs, and non-profits. Although international cooperation, as scholar Robert Keohane posits, does not necessarily imply common or shared motives, values, and causes.²² Therefore, it becomes important to qualify the term “Institution” as *specific* -- established intercessors to which collective power, resources, and processes are delegated. Utilizing international institutions to address meta-challenges has been seen through NATO, the U.N., and the Red Cross. Oftentimes, as is the case with the United Nations, many of the existent international institutions are founded upon internationally agreed-upon charters, treatises, and treaties. One may conclude, however, that this is not anathema to the Realist precept of an anarchic global order with no overarching supervisory power, but that applying institutional frameworks like NGOs, conflict (and the Realist idea of self-aggrandizement) may be prevented. Institutionalism, as just defined, is somewhat antithetical to unilateralism.

(Despite not being the focus of this paper, the what-came-first-the-chicken-or-the-egg argument between multilateralism and institutionalism is a perennial one. For the sake of this

essay, let it be assumed that each facilitates the other, and both mutually reaffirm each other's need.)

The Obama Doctrine Elucidated Through Rhetoric

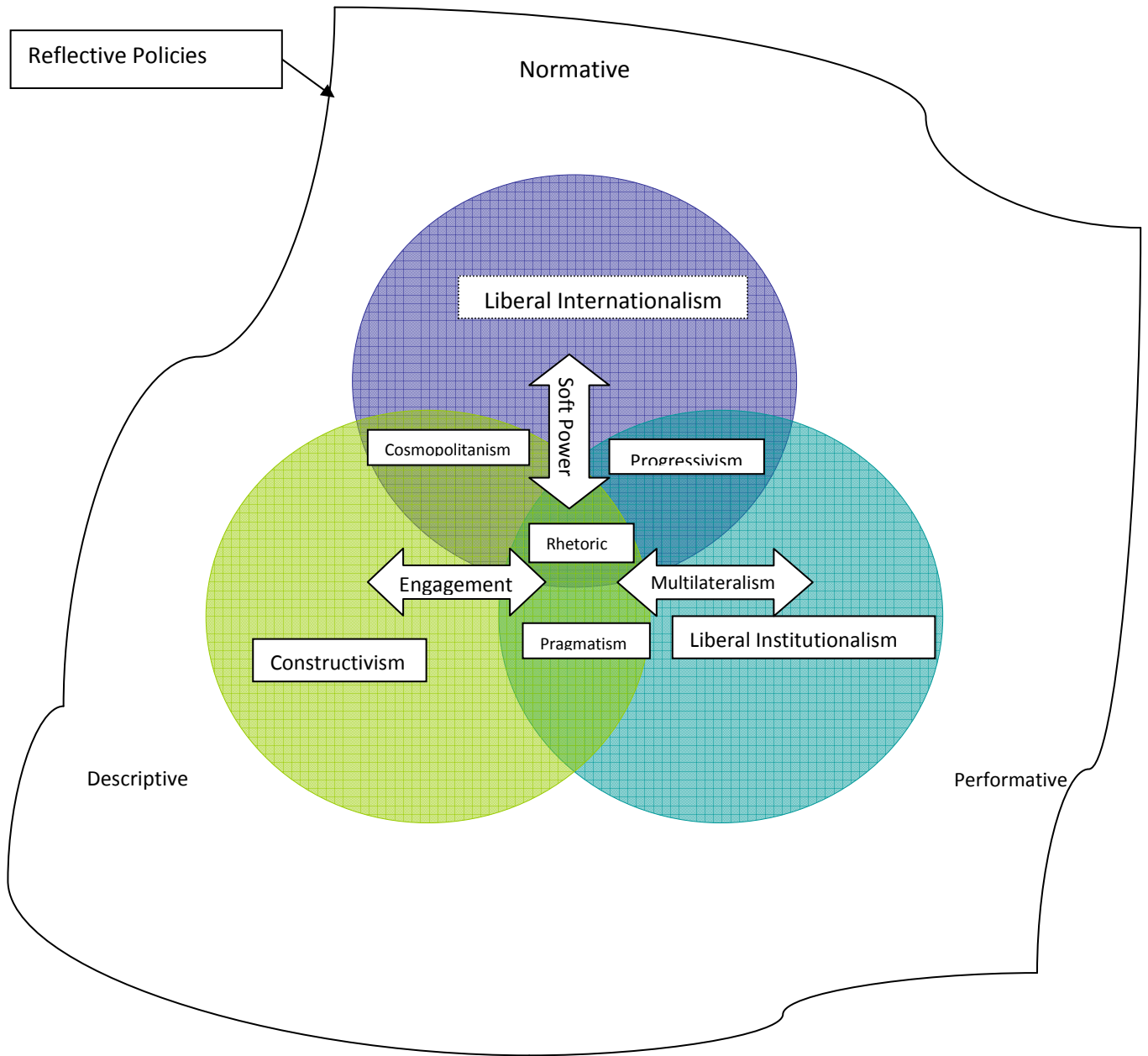
As seen in the diagram below, I have outlined several major areas in which Barack Obama has couched the conduct of his foreign policy. If Liberal Internationalism is the normative aspect, Constructivism the descriptive, and Institutionalism the performative, then his rhetoric is an attempt at reconciling and harmonizing these theories and practices, as well as their resultant categorical imperatives. Largely reparative in style, Obama's rhetoric has defied one political doctrine and encompasses the ones outlined here. While none of the subcategories I will extrapolate on are mutually exclusive, the diagram below shows the way in which Obama's three major I.R.-theories manifest themselves in both rhetoric and policies. This will ultimately lead to the following questions: Is Barack Obama's rhetoric indicative of his preconceived foreign policy conceptions? Or, does the foreign policy he employs reflect the rhetoric he has used in speeches? What is the connection between the three International Relations theories and the rhetoric he employs? And, what is the relationship between the three theories and the subcategories I have chosen and described later?

First, I believe that the rhetoric and his policies are mutually constitutive. The same goes for his rhetoric and philosophical beliefs regarding global politics. From my analyses later in this paper, I have drawn my own conclusions as to how all the ideas presented here fit together.

To avoid this paper becoming too nebulous, I will outline here how all of this ‘fits together.’ First, as previously stated, Obama’s rhetoric is reflective of the way in which he sees the world (Constructivist). It’s also reflective of the normative framework he ascribes to (Liberal internationalism) and the performative way in which he finds it most facile to achieve (Institutionalism). From these overarching frameworks, I have deduced that the personal philosophy Obama himself embodies most clearly is Cosmopolitanism. Given his background before the presidency, we start to see the influences Columbia University, Chicago-based community organization, and Harvard Law School had on him- resulting in Progressivism and Pragmatism. Throughout his first two years as president, his foreign policy has most profoundly displayed: multilateralism, soft power, and global engagement. His Pragmatism with regard to foreign policy situates itself (at least rhetorically) in between the descriptive and the performative- i.e. Constructivism and Institutionalism. Similarly, his Progressivism finds itself as a reconciliation between the normative and the performative, or Liberal Internationalism and Institutionalism. Then, as shown in the diagram, these all overlap resulting in a rhetoric that reflects both the way he sees the world, and the position America maintains within said world.

In the diagram below, and in practice, Obama’s foreign policies are not always consonant with the outline I have described, nor do they always match the rhetoric and vice versa. The way in which I go about explaining these issues is through extrapolation. That is to say, I have posited what I believe to be the three salient I.R. theories that compose the Obama Doctrine; I have also identified several thematic and political subcategories that make up the three frameworks. Epistemologically, I go about verifying and showing these assertions to be true through his rhetoric and several of the most illustrative policies that show my thesis to be true. Much of Barack Obama’s rhetoric, I contend, promulgates a vision of the world not as something totally

new, but rather different for that of a U.S. president to promote.



The Speeches

Candidacy and Pre-Presidency

While it is no secret that political speeches tend, more often than not, to be anodyne and circumspect, it is in fact possible to rhetorically analyze (chronologically) several of the major speeches given by a political figure in order to parse out major trends and themes. While trying to tease out much of the partisan populist vote-getting assertions designed to attract voters, it becomes clear that the four aforementioned frameworks influence Barack Obama's foreign policy standpoint, or 'Doctrine.' Obviously, pre-written speech transcripts are deliberate and calculated with a certain prescribed motive; therefore, many off-the-cuff remarks, such as responses to questions from audience members and the press, may be more elucidating, thus providing further insight into a politician's personal philosophical disposition.

Kevin Coe and Michael Rietzes write: "The campaign rhetoric of winning presidential candidates matters once they take office. As Quirk and Matheson point out, such rhetoric 'creates commitments that carry weight after the election' (2005, 133), expanding or limiting the ability of presidents to govern effectively."²³

President Obama declared his presidential candidacy on February 10th, 2007. Beginning with this date becomes important because it signifies Obama's nascent conceptualization of his future foreign policy outlook. 2,603 words long, his candidacy speech delivered in Springfield, Illinois is largely bereft of a nuanced foreign policy agenda, however, he does make mention of certain topics that are characteristic of both Liberal Internationalism and Constructivism. Aside from the Eric Hoffer-esque idealistic promise of a better, more prosperous tomorrow ("ending

poverty in America,” “freeing ourselves from the tyranny of oil,” “universal health care”)²⁴ he alludes to the successes of war and security as being one of collective and shared responsibility. The first mention he makes of what appears to be his foreign policy viewpoints, come when he states: “Let’s...confront the terrorists with everything we've got.” Obama then continues with: “We can work together to track terrorists down with a stronger military, we can tighten the net around their finances, and we can improve our intelligence capabilities. But let us also understand that ultimate victory against our enemies will come only by rebuilding our alliances and exporting those ideals that bring hope and opportunity to millions around the globe.” Foreign political inclusivity abounds throughout many of Obama’s speeches and can be seen here. Themes of Liberal Internationalism and Constructivism are obvious here with repetition of “we” (ostensibly pertaining to Americans), “work together,” “rebuilding alliances,” and “exporting those ideals,” may all be viewed as commensurate with a Liberal Internationalist approach reminiscent of Woodrow Wilson’s idealism that sought to export American ideals- ‘making the world safe for democracy.’ Obama’s call for “rebuilding alliances” within the context of “confronting the terrorists” may be viewed as a tacit approval of plurality in state action. One may further argue that when Obama spoke of “exporting those ideals that bring *hope* and *opportunity*” (italics mine), he purposely used these words in order to account for discrepant political regimes that may not acquiesce to an American presence or influence.

To this end, Obama goes on in the speech to contradict himself. As time, future speeches, and actions will prove, he cannot commit to what are contradictory condemnations of interventionism referenced in his candidacy speech. Calling for an end to the “tragic mistake” of the Iraq War, he states: “It’s time to admit that no amount of American lives can resolve the political disagreement that lies at the heart of someone else’s civil war.” Because of retrospective

analyses of his political speeches (e.g. Nobel acceptance speech) and policies (e.g. Libyan intervention), this denunciation of interventionism may be viewed as “epideictic” rhetoric, rather than “deliberative” rhetoric.

An epideictic, or ceremonial, style of rhetoric is one of three styles (the third being “forensic”) that strategically seeks to inject both praise and blame into a speech. As Coe and Reitzes report in their study of Obama’s campaign rhetoric, presidential candidates develop thematic appeals that become more epideictic than direct so as to not pigeonhole themselves on issues. However, they identified five major Policy Appeals for which he actually proffered specific proposals: economy, national security, healthcare, the environment, and education.²³ Examples of Obama’s use of epideictic rhetoric to remonstrate the previous administration’s unilateralism and unipolarity are copious, and demonstrably elucidate many policy and rhetorical contradictions.

Obama’s Personal Background and Philosophical Rearing

Before delving into conceptualizations and interpretations of the Obama Doctrine, as influenced and shaped by the abovementioned International Relations theoretical frameworks, it is important to understand Obama himself. His background and personal philosophies are insights into his Foreign Policy prerogatives and positions on international issues.

Barack Obama was born in Honolulu, Hawaii in 1961 to a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. Beginning a peripatetic life at the age of six, he relocated to Jakarta, Indonesia when his mother remarried with an Indonesian man. He returned to Hawaii a few years later to finish primary and secondary schools. He would go on to begin his first two years of

college at Occidental College in California, before transferring to Columbia University in New York City.²⁵ Upon graduating with his undergraduate degree, Obama would make his first trip to Kenya to see his biological, yet distant, family. After working as a community organizer on the south side of Chicago, he attended Harvard Law School where he was elected President of the Harvard Law Review. While at Harvard, as the *New York Times* biographical profile on him puts it, Obama “taught three courses, the most original of which was on racism and the law, a historical and political seminar as much as a legal one. He refined his public speaking style. He was wary of noble theories, his students said. He was, rather, a contextualist, willing to look past legal niceties to get results.”²⁶ Already, Barack Obama’s personal philosophy is beginning to formulate. One can see from his academic upbringing, he has a penchant for critically analyzing and judging scenarios based on a balanced, methodological approach.

While at Harvard, he wrote his first ‘quest-for-identity’ bildungsroman autobiography: *Dreams from My Father*. His nascent love of rhetoric and of words is no more obvious than when he writes of his solitary escape into literature and ideas as a pursuit for the construction (or, reconciliation) of his variegated identities and upbringings. On page 85 of *Dreams From My Father*, he writes that while attending school in Hawaii, he “gathered up books from the library—Baldwin, Ellison, Hughes, Wright, DuBois,” and at night would “close the door to my room...and there I would sit and wrestle with words, locked in suddenly desperate argument, trying to reconcile the world as I’d found it with the terms of my birth.”²⁶ Here, one can see Barack Obama’s internationalist upbringing converge with his ‘search for an identity,’ as well as his appreciation for a dialectical understanding of the perennial challenges that shape and construct the interpersonal relationships between peoples. Many of his pre-presidential speeches and remarks are peppered with his global perspectives on issues.

Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the ability to see what is possibly persuasive in every given case.” More contemporary scholars like Hausman, define rhetoric as the “the management of symbols to coordinate social action”; or Asante, whose definition of rhetoric is “the communication of ideas, values, opinions, and beliefs in an effort to elicit the approval or acceptance of others.” In an essay entitled “The Rhetoric of Hope and the American Dream,” author Deborah F. Atwater consolidates these three definitions of rhetoric in order to better concretize Barack Obama’s speech style at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. With his infusion of his internationalist background, with his emphasis on values, cultures, and norms, Obama clearly preeminates his foreign policy with Atwater’s termed “Rhetoric of Hope” in what is generally regarded as his breakthrough moment in American politics. “The Rhetoric of Hope,” as she defines it, is mostly persuasive: “the use of symbols to get Americans to care about this country, to want to believe in this country, to regain hope and faith in this country, and to believe that we are more alike than we are different with a common destiny and a core set of values.”²⁷ While this assertion may certainly be dubious, it raises some important ideas that will be discussed more extensively later.

“Out of Many, One,” the 2004 DNC keynote address begins with Obama’s patriotic celebration of his personal, archetypically American, rags-to-riches/overcoming-racism story. He begins: “Tonight is a particular honor for me because — let’s face it — my presence on this stage is pretty unlikely. My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. His father — my grandfather — was a cook, a domestic servant to the British.”²⁸ Highlighting his patchwork familial heritage was routine by the time he was elected to the Presidency. Regarding the latent internationalist and Constructivist traces in the address, Atwater writes that he deftly made the

audience, “and more importantly, the rest of the country a sense of belonging to a broader inclusive community.” Again, one sees Obama’s vision of a cooperative world with participatory nation-states as commensurable with their relations.

His second and final book, *The Audacity of Hope*, was written in 2006 and contains a plethora of statements that would illustrate his personal philosophy and divine his eventual foreign policy. In the book, he defines the Democratic Party as “this idea that our communal values, our sense of mutual responsibility and social solidarity should also be expressed through our government.”²⁹ Finally, drawing upon his experiences as a lad, he writes on page 279 that “Indonesia serves as a useful metaphor for the world beyond our borders - a world in which globalization and sectarianism, poverty and plenty, modernity and antiquity constantly collide.” At the end of *Dreams from My Father* he concludes that American law as the record of “a long-running conversation, a nation arguing with its conscience.”

Obviously Obama intones a vast respect toward other cultures and an understanding for a deeper dedication toward acknowledging the differences across borders- both “bright” and “blurred”- as Richard Alba termed the two types. Suffice it to say that his rhetoric is indicative of a Liberal (in the politico-ideological sense of the term) Progressive, one who feels that, generally, a government should at the very least attempt to balance the ‘public interest’ with ‘what interests the public.’ Progressivism has sought to consolidate that which is in the best interest of a country through policy measures and sweeping regulations. While this may be extremely difficult and idealistic even to a supreme statesman, we will see that Obama’s deeper philosophical grounding reflects this political ideology well, and, to a certain degree, combines his foreign policy rhetoric of Constructivism and Liberal Internationalism with uniquely American philosophical cornerstones of classical American thought.

James T. Kloppenberg, Warren professor of American History at Harvard and a specialist in the intellectual history of the United States and Europe, writes that Obama's writings and rhetoric are largely shaped by three unexamined themes. They are anti-foundationalism, historicism, and pragmatism. Kloppenberg writes: "As an anti-foundationalist, he questions the existence of universal truths. As a historicist, he doubts that any ideas transcend the particularity of time and culture. Finally, as a philosophical pragmatist he insists that all propositions, positions, and policies must be subjected to continuing critical scrutiny." These overarching philosophical influences, he contends, are subsumed by, and manifested outright through the political principles of civic republicanism and deliberative democracy.²⁹ However "pragmatic" Obama may be, it still does not quell the myriad of criticisms and global opprobrium regarding his foreign idealism. In *Reading Obama: Dreams, Hopes, and the American Political Tradition*, Kloppenberg draws attention to the Founding Fathers and thinkers that have helped shape Obama's thinking. Combining civic republicanism and deliberative democracy, as the Founding Fathers had tried to do, results in a continuous discussion of advancing the 'common good' while simultaneously ensuring freedom. Evidently influenced by James Madison, Obama writes in *The Audacity of Hope* that the Constitution and its framework are "designed to force us into a conversation," and that it engenders "a way by which we argue about our future." This is at great odds with those, like Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, who uphold notions of an intransigently "dead" Constitution whereby the meanings and language of what is actually written is not amorphous (and anthropogenic) over time, but rather static and unalterable. Kloppenberg writes that "Obama the law professor concedes that such a conception of the founding appeals to him because it encourages us to emphasize the contingency of the original document and to appreciate the contingencies that lie beneath our own invocations of high

principle.”³⁰ Obama’s budding metaphysical-legal philosophy can be seen as grounded in a dialectical skepticism, one that accounts for changes in time, culture, and epoch. As one can see, this lends itself very well to both Liberal Internationalism (cooperation and regard for others’ viewpoints and the limiting socio-historic-politico factors that come into play in international relations) and Constructivism (sedulously accounting for inter-subjective meanings in the believed absence of universal truths across borders).

Other philosophers Kloppenberg cites as having had an impact on Barack Obama’s formative years, besides the prolific Weber, Nietzsche, and Thoreau, are cultural theorist and anthropologist Clifford Geertz, political philosophers John Rawls and Hilary Putnam, historian Gordon Wood, and legal scholars Martha Minow and Cass Sunstein (the latter now an Obama appointee working as Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs). Regarding Obama’s foreign policy, Kloppenberg cites that Obama’s doughtiness on “the enduring power of our ideals,” as he stated after winning the race to the White House, signaled a “clear repudiation of the self-conscious tough-guy realism of the preceding eight years.” Taking Kloppenberg’s scholarship on Barack Obama’s intellectual burgeoning very seriously, one can clearly see the aforementioned thinkers’ impact on Barack Obama’s foreign policy and international theoretical conceptions more clearly, leading to an even more extensive philosophical corollary: Cosmopolitanism (which will be discussed in the proceeding paragraphs).

Martha Minow, in her seminal book, *Making All the Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion, and American Law*, writes that when different groups collide on certain issues, “differences” (in the sociological-political sense of the word) can best be resolved through “dialogue.” On page 217 she writes: “The challenge is to maintain a steady inquiry into the interpersonal and political

relationships between the known and the knower; a concern for the relations between wholes and parts; a suspicion of abstractions, which are likely to hide under claims of universality...and a respect for particularity, concreteness, reflection on experience, and dialogue.” Emphasizing a “relational approach” to solve the “dilemmas of difference” involves “contextual judgments and acknowledgement of the mutual dependence of people in the construction of their identities.” These ideas abound in the construction of Obama’s foreign policy rhetoric and the respect he pays to both his own influences, and those influences’ effects on his internationalist philosophy. These ideas, which clearly helped shape Obama’s thinking, also open themselves up to vulnerability and many paradoxes haunt these ways of thinking. One example of this contradiction is the self-referencing act of democracy promotion and the dictation of ideals and values. Barack Obama often references America’s “ideals” and “values” as well as his promotion of international human rights (obviously constructed by what some perceive as ‘the Powerful’). In the typical light of Post-modernism, Obama’s “incredulity toward the meta-narrative,” as Jean-François Lyotard penned, as well as his incredulity toward static international relations and social constructions, can certainly be seen through his international speeches as we will see. Martha Minow’s renouncement of univocal solutions to larger problems plays right into Obama’s own politico-philosophical pragmatism that extends itself into his dedicated efforts at international deliberation regarding global quagmires that, as Minow states, “resist solution by category.”³¹

In an essay entitled “Minow’s Social-Relations Approach to Difference” by Katharine T. Bartlett, she draws attention to scholar William E. Connolly’s conception of “agonistic democracy.” This idea posits that “This ideal politics is built on a commitment to the diversity, the interdependency, and the contingency of being, a commitment that structures democratic

strife as a necessary and productive series of respectful engagements.”³² Clearly, the indeterminacy of social relations between peoples lends itself to how Barack Obama views his presidency. Looking to bridge the perceived gap between America and the rest of the world (e.g. us and them, the West and the Rest, the Other) Obama’s eschewal of certain phrases like “the War on Terror” show that he maintains an assiduous respect for the avoidance of generalities and absolutes.

In his first year as a law student, Barack Obama was asked to serve as a research assistant for his constitutional law professor and renowned legal scholar Lawrence Tribe. Together they worked on an essay entitled “The Curvature of Constitutional Space: What Lawyers Can Learn From Modern Physics” that would eventually be published in the *Harvard Law Review* in 1989. In it, Tribe credits Barack Obama, among others, “for their analytic and research assistance.” “The Curvature of Constitutional Space” looks into how and why the notions of Thomas Kuhn’s scientific paradigmatic shifts that effect and create social relations should lend themselves to corresponding revisions in jurisprudence. Insightfully, Professor Tribe shows how modern physics transmuted scientific thought from a belief that the universe was comprised of isolated objects that act on one another from distances only determined by scientific laws, society and culture, too, are shaped by an ineluctable connectedness. And the dearth of scholarship and literature devoted to understanding how legality and states construct social identities and social relations is obvious; and shows Barack Obama’s preconceived Constructivist influences. Like Obama, Tribe abjures constitutional originalism for historicism, as a way to bring new ideas into light, under shifting paradigms, creating a “conversation” as Obama penned. Finally, the article draws upon the Rawlsian pragmatic “veil of ignorance” whereby, as Tribe concludes, “the fundamental fairness of a society is best judged by an examination of its treatment of the least

advantaged.”³³ Many of Barack Obama’s speeches and foreign policy initiatives reflect this notion of “dignity promotion” as Craig Hayden suggests. “The Curvature” also makes numerous references to another Obama influencer Clifford Geertz. (Geertz, the vanguard of “symbolic anthropology” semiotically defined “culture,” in 1973, as “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life.”³⁴) Tribe, similar to Obama, eschews and conventional wisdom and absolutes while paying respect to differences across borders by stating: no culture can ever be studied in its ‘pristine’ state since the very presence of an anthropologist is bound to have a significant impact on the way of life of the people being studied.” Obama’s rhetoric and writings echo these very sentiments especially when he invokes anecdotal vignettes of his own experiences growing up as a young boy in Indonesia. In his book, James T. Kloppenberg quotes Geertz’ influences on Obama summarily stating: “Lawyers, Geertz wrote, must explore the ‘*social meaning* of what the state has done,’ because ‘the state enacts an image of order’ that is coercive...it inevitably curves the space around it.”

Barack Obama’s personal un-essentialized identity, cultural understanding, and personal journey through the international and legal pathways have allowed him to develop a critical and discerning understanding of the challenges associated with many political issues. His own writing and upbringing portrays an intellectual relentlessly searching for common ground with both sides of contentious problems. His determination to reach a Hegelian impasse on seemingly irreducible philosophical problems lends itself well to the rhetoric and global engagement he exudes through his foreign policy. Obama redoundingly displays what writer David Foster Wallace calls the “Democratic Spirit.” The Democratic Spirit, according to Wallace, is “one that

combines rigor and humility, i.e., passionate conviction plus a sedulous respect for the convictions of others.”³⁵ Even Kloppenberg likens Obama’s “knack for conflict resolution” as a form of chicanery. It is not surprising that Barack Obama’s internationalist and American pragmatism influences his thoughts on global affairs. From his earliest days as a college student, to his political and local ascendancies in Chicago that would eventually lead to the White House, Obama has carefully, which is not to say artfully, crafted a politically syncretic vision for the United States of America as a more thoughtful and compassionate country open to new ideas, policies, and motivations. Obama still regards America as a beacon on a hill, and his internal political activism of deliberative democracy and civic republicanism have extended into his actions abroad- an attempt at galvanizing and transforming abroad an infrangibly intransigent status quo into a more peaceful and productive ‘world of our own.’ As we will see, his intellectual and political tendencies may help, interpret, and analyze the rhetoric that shapes Obama’s foreign policy.

Rhetoric

In a 2010 interview for *The Politic*, James T. Kloppenberg was asked the following question: “How does he fit into the age of the sound bite?” Citing Obama’s ability to see the complexities of certain problems and his jettisoning of absolutisms for a more consilient approach, he stated- “taking into account different points of view and deep cultural differences among Americans” he fits “Very, very poorly.”³⁶ While this may be an apology for Obama’s difficulties in navigating through the political jungle of Washington D.C., it certainly merits consideration nonetheless.

Aristotle's legendary aphorism in *The Politics* stated quite pithily: "man is by nature a political animal." In the mid-twentieth century, political philosopher Hannah Arendt echoed a similar sentiment when she wrote that "To be political, to live in a polis, meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence."

In *Communicating Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, author Karen Sanders outlines three dimensions of communicating that demand mention as they apply to Obama's use of rhetoric (the last word to be defined).

That language is an articulated system of signs- *syntaxis*- which must be used correctly.

That language is a vehicle of meaning -*semantics*- which implies a commitment to the notion that it can tell us about truth or, if preferred, reality.

That language has a practical dimension- *rhetoric*- which is about knowing how to communicate in such a way that we achieve the desired effect in our audience.

The last dimension is not trivial; it reflects both the character and style of each human being and also the fact that human beings' experience of reality is not straightforward.³⁷

Barack Obama understands the preceding outline of the importance of rhetoric. On February 21, 2008, well into the throes of his campaign, he stated that "Words are important,

words matter, and the implication that they don't, I think, diminishes how important it is to speak to the American people directly about making America as good as its promise.” He understands the power and influence of rhetoric as both a tool, and in the aforementioned Geertzian fashion of semiotic cultural symbolism, the ability of words to create, structure, and delineate a set of ideals that take into account deep philosophical assumptions, save certain inherent contradictions in his foreign policy. To this end, there are several central tenets to Barack Obama’s foreign policy rhetoric that combine his assiduous drive to change America’s role and image on the world stage. Combining his philosophical pragmatism, his artful word-craft, and complex understanding of contextuality and the historical indeterminism of the American and international tradition- all subsumed by his own identity formation and internationalist upbringing, one sees that Barack Obama’s foreign policy is shaped by several salient themes. While none are mutually exclusive, they all help to bolster, not only the aforesaid Liberal Internationalist-Constructivist-Institutionalism foreign policy, but his personal intellectual development and outlook on life. Obama’s political onslaught of international public diplomacy represents both his views on global politics, and an effective way to communicate his vision.

Cosmopolitanism

A central, yet often unnoticed aspect of Barack Obama’s foreign policy construction and philosophical corollary to his domestic political understanding is his Cosmopolitanism.

John Atkinson Hobson of Great Britain, an iconoclastic and prolific writer, journalist, political activist, anti-colonialist and staunch liberal of the early twentieth century, is now widely regarded as the preeminent founder of what David Long refers to as ‘a new liberal

internationalism.’ This formulated theory suggested that international relations and the world as a whole is shifting away from isolated individualism (or, ‘rugged individualism,’ a classic, American-birther concept), as well as *laissez-faire* Capitalism, and instead heading toward greater collectivism and increased social organization. While this may collide with classic notions of a Liberal Internationalism that seeks to promote free trade, open markets, market harmonization etc., one sees that this may not be the case in fact, but rather toward a more participatory role by the government. Some other important assumptions in Hobson’s theory of twentieth century Liberal Internationalism that Barack Obama shares are human rationality and the resiliency of science and reason as more apt to deal with mankind’s progression. In Barack Obama’s inaugural address, he states that “We’ll restore science to its rightful place” intimating that science and reason were unjustly subordinated by a more conservative federal administration. Hobson’s “instrumentalist approach” to science, however, brought with it an Obama-like air of relativism and the fallibility in the dogmatism of “pure disinterestedness and value-freedom in scientific investigations.” Just as Obama disabuses his philosophical understanding of the world from absolutes, J.A. Hobson, too, disavowed meta-narratives that transcended both time and frontiers.

As mentioned before, Barack Obama’s domestic historical understanding is displayed when he states in his inaugural address that America must “choose our better history”- ultimately heeding to the dialectical historical relativism underlying many of our nation’s most persistent problems. Finally, and this is where Barack Obama’s Cosmopolitanism will be scrutinized more extensively, Hobson’s ideas divine modern day concepts of globalization. Globalization, broadly defined, may be regarded as the imminent worldwide integration and development of cultures,

markets, and political systems. Hobson's ideas reflected the idea that "we both are and should be part of a broader community than that of the state." Hobson wrote:

Internationalism, as a policy of peace and progress, demands that the individual feelings of goodwill which give substance to the smaller groupings, from family to nation, shall be so extended that the single citizen of England, America, Germany, France, Russia, shall supersede the governments of these countries as units of internationalism.

Although Barack Obama may not fully reject a completely state-centric approach to international relations, as he has stated numerous times that America as a nation would be a leader, he certainly reflects Hobson's position on international relations being regarded as organic; internationalism, he posits, is characterized by "peaceful relations of states regularized in intergovernmental organizations and by transnational relations of groups and individuals." As Professor Long puts it simply, "the international realm is an integral part of social life and cannot be understood apart from it." In Obama's inaugural address, he states: "And so, to all the other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born, know that America is a friend of each nation, and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity." This reaching out to other nations and peoples signifies a stark change in Obama's view of the world as compared with past presidents. As more rhetoric appears throughout his presidential tenure, it becomes clear that he believes, as Hobson argued, that: "everyone lives in a series of concentric circles of association which affect

him in general as a human being. Such are the home, the neighborhood (village or town), his class, his country, the world.”³⁸

It is also important to conclude that Hobson was a staunch opponent of the way in which he regarded Cosmopolitanism: the atomization of humanity as a global society in which every human is an isolated individual. This is not what Barack Obama’s Cosmopolitanism is. Obama’s Cosmopolitanism may be viewed as a consolidation of Institutional Cosmopolitanism and Political Cosmopolitanism, as Richard Beardsworth defines them. The first, Institutional Cosmopolitanism, builds upon the Rawlsian ideas of global distributive justice. Rawls, a previously discussed major influence on Obama’s political thoughts and minimalist when addressing ideas on justice across borders, differentiated between first- and second-order principles of justice. This extends itself to a “global culture” he felt lays the groundwork for: non-aggression, the popular consent of a people to a representative government, and, at the very least, verbal defense of the Lockean: life, liberty, and property. Disagreeing with Rawls, but a good point to make here nonetheless, is that Nagel and Miller argue that international principles of justice can only work within a system of cooperation- i.e. NGOs, alliances. The second form, Political Cosmopolitanism, draws upon the renowned work of ‘cosmopolitan democracy’ by Danielle Archibugi and David Held. Following the philosophical foundation set forth by Jürgen Habermas, Archibugi and Held argue that Political Cosmopolitans (like Barack Obama) must 1. Define their perception of Cosmopolitanism and concretize it in the practice of democracy, 2. Reduce the hypocrisy of nation-states, and 3. Democracy should be practiced and promoted in a globalized world at as many levels of governance as possible.³⁹ Merging with a foreign policy such as the Obama’s administration that promotes LICI, one can see how the themes of

globalization and ways in which America deals with its associated challenges (e.g. poverty, human rights) manifest themselves in Obama's rhetoric.

Barack Obama's "A World That Stands As One" speech is the hallmark of his Cosmopolitanism. Addressing a large crowd at Brandenburg Gate in Berlin on July 24th, 2008, Obama declared: "I speak ... as a fellow citizen of the world." This statement was reminiscent of both John F. Kennedy's "Ich bin ein Berliner" West Berlin speech in 1963, and Martin Luther King Jr.'s Riverside Church address where he stated: "I speak as a citizen of the world." In *The Audacity of Hope*, Barack Obama writes that we live in "an era of globalization and dizzying technological change." In an article by Linda F. Selzer of Penn State University, she states that "By drawing on his own body to develop the twin concepts of cosmopolitan democracy and democratic cosmopolitanism, he also contributes to the larger cultural moment's project of forging a revitalized cosmopolitan ethic."⁴⁰ His Berlin speech underscores almost all of the aforementioned philosophical underpinnings. To begin, he writes in *Audacity* that "We can try to slow globalization, but we can't stop it." One may argue that his ideas of Cosmopolitanism are an attempt to Pragmatically reconcile an intertwined "Destiny" he references so much. "While the 20th century taught us that we share a common destiny, the 21st has revealed a world more intertwined than at any time in human history." He addresses the crowd at Berlin declaiming again: "People of the world – look at Berlin, where a wall came down, a continent came together, and history proved that there is no challenge too great for a world that stands as one." Referencing others as "people of the world," Obama seeks to reiterate that we as human beings all belong to a somewhat abstract conception of a global community. In sum, Obama's iconicism- often drawing upon his own multi-racial background, as Selzer posits, "Obama's understanding of cosmopolitan democracy is, therefore, one that emphasizes the

diversity of the nation's citizens, recognizes difference in history or present circumstance, and appeals to shared values and interests as regulative ideals for the nation's unrealized future.” Obama’s acknowledgement of the unalterable interconnectedness of global relations today portrays his deep understanding of the imperiling problems of modern democracy.

According to Richard Beardsworth, Held and Archibugi, though emphasizing different aspects of democracy, their meta-principles of collective and individual autonomy underpin political responses to the interconnectedness between nations today. The five principles are (as written in *Cosmopolitanism and International Relations*):

1. *Moral egalitarianism* (dignity of the person).

[(As Craig Hayden suggested, notwithstanding Obama’s substantiation of, “dignity promotion” has been a major facet to his foreign policy. In Berlin, Obama rhetorically posed: “Will we extend our hand to the people in forgotten corners of the world who yearn for lives marked by dignity and opportunity?”)]

2. *Self-affection*: those significantly affected by processes and decisions should participate in the decision-making procedures by which such processes are addressed and such decisions are made.

[(One can see here this principle align itself with Barack Obama’s deliberative democracy influences.)]

3. *Subsidiarity*: the making and implementation of decisions belong to the political order- municipal, national, regional, global-

at which both effectiveness and legitimacy are achieved together (see also Cabrera, 2004).

[(One can see here can see here that this principle aligns itself with Obama's Liberal Internationalist "concentric circles of association" that may conclude with the final allegiance, or association, being a supranational Institution like the UN.)]

4. *Symmetry and reciprocity*: all behavior and action between agents (at whatever level) work on the basis of the symmetry of decision-makers and the reciprocity of responsibilities and duties.

[("Now is the time to join together, through constant cooperation, strong institutions, shared sacrifice, and a global commitment to progress, to meet the challenges of the 21st century." We will see this becoming a greater aspect to Obama's foreign policy when he calls upon other nations to work in concert to combat certain global issues.)]

5. *Sustainability*: the present moral duty towards future generations to provide them with a planet upon which they can achieve dignity of life.³⁹

[(Befitting this principle, Obama's remarks stated: "This is the moment when we must come together to save this planet. Let us resolve that we will not leave our children a world where the oceans rise and famine spreads and terrible storms devastate our

lands. Let us resolve that all nations - including my own - will act with the same seriousness of purpose as has your nation, and reduce the carbon we send into our atmosphere.”)]

Repeatedly alluding to his own heritage, as well as drawing upon a call for, what Linda Selzer refers to as a “New Cosmopolitan ethic,” Obama constantly fuses his vision of the world into a diplomatic message that conveys the United States as more receptive, eager, and willing to work collaboratively with other countries, nations, and peoples. By using his own narrative and understanding of history, culture, and time, he is able to construct a foreign policy rhetoric of LICI that underscores calls for both a new beginning, and state-awareness (i.e. self-referencing faults, mistakes, etc.), resulting in a new American role abroad. Obama’s self-identified Cosmopolitanism ethic seeks to foster conversation across numerous axes, while using words to sensitize people to the fragile differences across borders. He applies rhetoric of proactive, constructive description. Questions of whether Obama’s rhetoric are the vessels on which he voices his ideas, visions, insights, and declarations, obsolesce when placed in the light of just his presence alone in front of a given audience. His personal identity- as a ‘post-ethnically’ internationalist ‘citizen of the world,’ bespeaks his own rhetoric. Ironically, contradictions within his own post-modern understanding of truths and history, aside from his personal narrative, as shown through his books and through the works of scholars and writers alike, had crafted an image and semiotic presence of Obama that symbolized more than the vision of what America ‘should be.’ A major, yet often overlooked, component of Obama’s foreign addresses is an attempt at reconciling the recurrent foreign policy conundrum of *is/ought*. Making numerous references to America’s willingness to accept its faults, and yet look passed them when

“defending America’s interests”, contributes to the atmosphere: balanced. A compassionate yet resolute stance Obama’s Pragmatic Cosmopolitanism constructs.

The next major speech that elucidates, not only his philosophical outlook and foreign policy framework, but the critical and symbolic reputation he engendered, was delivered in Cairo in June of 2009. Entitled, “A New Beginning,” this speech was arguably his most profound, popular, and well-received around, not only the Muslim world, but the Western one as well. Despite minor trepidation in several polls conducted prior to Obama’s arrival, his international popularity skyrocketed afterward. Statistically, based on many similar polls, George Bush’s popularity was scant one year prior to Obama’s arrival in the Middle East. Despite the reluctance on the part of many Middle Eastern nations to believe that Obama could galvanize and reshape a Middle Eastern perception of America’s foreign policy different than that of the entrenched, democracy-promoting Bush doctrine of the preceding years, Obama did change perceptions; albeit for a short while.

Obama begins his Cairo speech with an emissary-like admiration, bringing with him a “feeling of goodwill of the American people, and a greeting of peace from Muslim communities in my country: Assalaamu alaykum.” He extols Egypt as “representing the harmony between tradition and progress.” One may argue that, throughout his sentiments, he attempts to liken Egypt to America- maintaining his Cosmopolitan rhetoric of constructed self-identity, and change, as he promoted cooperative conversation through diplomacy- without ever stating it. In the Richard Rorty Pragmatist style of rhetoric, Obama lauded Egypt and America similarly- maintaining pride in his own country, while calling for a “new” beginning. Using his Constructivism foreign policy rhetoric, he combined both the Isocratic and Aristotelian rhetoric by lauding Egypt (in the Liberal Internationalist tradition of scientific praise and understanding).

As a student of history, I also know civilization's debt to Islam. It was Islam -- at places like Al-Azhar -- that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment. It was innovation in Muslim communities; it was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra; our magnetic compass and tools of navigation; our mastery of pens and printing; our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed. Islamic culture has given us majestic arches and soaring spires; timeless poetry and cherished music; elegant calligraphy and places of peaceful contemplation. And throughout history, Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality.

He doesn't just celebrate Islamic traditions, he states that humanity is indebted to Islam's secular achievements, and even credits the progress of science and mathematics (-arguably, Reason) with the overarching theme of a factual, yet overlooked global interconnectedness. By crediting and praising typically Western ideals and values demonstrably shown through Islamic reformation, like "religious tolerance" and "racial equality," he creates an Americanized form of appreciation toward the Middle East. While referencing the hostile and tenuous history between Islam and the West, he advisedly eschews the term "War on Terror," and reaffirms this avoidance by declaring "that America is not -- and never will be -- at war with Islam." This

certainly speaks to the implied view that the Bush administration considered Islam to be inherently hostile to the West. While many around the world believed that the Bush administration conflated “Terror” with Muslims and Islam. His dedication to his LICI foreign policy promulgates a redefined image of America, yet still dedicated to the espousal of a democratic cosmopolitanism, and all articulated through his being a “citizen of the world.” In defending America as being a new form of cosmopolitan democracy- one that is both conscious and cooperative with other nations, he touts this as being the exemplar for democratic cosmopolitanism globally, by stating: affirming his commitment to "governments that reflect the will of the people," he states his “unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed, confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice, government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people, the freedom to live as you choose.” Intertwining his own personal narrative with the narrative of America, he is able to reconstruct an image of America and the role of a new Cosmopolitan ethic whereby America is the leader and defender of such a premise.

Throughout his 2008 campaign, Obama’s political rhetoric, his racial hybridity, and unique philosophical and educational background, all contributed to the stark distinction between Obama and every other president America has ever elected. Because he did not fit the typical mold of politician (racially, ethnically, and patronymically), it was difficult for many commentators and writers to pin him down to a single political Doctrine. By using a form of rhetoric that appealed to peoples of all nations, he was able to concretize a foreign policy rhetoric that draws upon his education, his politico-philosophical thought, and his reinvigorated LICI foreign policy. Remaking America as a cosmopolitan democracy, he espouses calls on other nations to embrace democratic cosmopolitanism- not because it is the most idealistic form of

political thought, but rather because it is the most practical form of contemporary thought in a systemically globalizing world. Because he feels that globalization is unavoidable, this line of thinking he calls for in his Cosmopolitan rhetorical diplomacy asks other nations to be conscious of the world themselves. Obviously, one can see that he does not feel that isolationism is the proper response, but rather (as a Liberal Internationalist would think) a fraternal bond between humanity. He states: ^{40, 41}

We have learned from recent experience that when a financial system weakens in one country, prosperity is hurt everywhere. When a new flu infects one human being, all are at risk. When one nation pursues a nuclear weapon, the risk of nuclear attack rises for all nations. When violent extremists operate in one stretch of mountains, people are endangered across an ocean. When innocents in Bosnia and Darfur are slaughtered, that is a stain on our collective conscience.

By associating a global responsibility with concurrent problems like terrorism, illnesses, and economic disaster, he turns political responsibility into a moral one. Avoiding material interests and obligations, he keeps his rhetoric abstract and states that all human beings share a “collective conscience.” He concludes with: “That is what it means to share this world in the twenty-first century. That is the responsibility we have to one another as human beings.” By claiming that we are all citizens of the world, Obama envisages a new way for America to act in the world, but also respectfully requests that other nations, too, step up to the task because the world, as he sees it, ‘is all in this together.’ Again, this is not because it is Obama’s quixotic foreign policy, but rather a carefully deliberated, modernly Pragmatic way of addressing

challenges that are both real and divisive. In his Cairo speech, though, he also asserts to the world what America expects of it in return (i.e. symmetry and reciprocity- see above) for becoming a more cooperative, and friendly, ally to other nations: “We must say openly the things we hold in our hearts and that too often are said only behind closed doors. There must be sustained effort to listen to each other, to learn from each other, to respect one another, and to seek common ground.” Obama conveys a desire for constructive change while seeking to utilize his mediation abilities toward a dialectical discourse in order to find unapparent answers to major questions in international affairs.

These speeches show, as other scholars have noted, that Obama permits himself the words and rhetoric applicable to a foreign policy based on LICI. Discourse, dialogue, and appeal are all apart of the rhetoric that goes into Obama’s vision of a new American role in the world. As Carlin Romano of the University of Pennsylvania states, “Over all, though, Obama's most singular philosophical breakthrough was to artfully project the cosmopolitan idea that the U.S. president must care about non-Americans... to an extraordinary extent, Obama effectively announced that the U.S. president, because of the United States' effect on and involvement with the rest of the world, must think of other global citizens as constituents...” Referring to Obama as America’s first and only “Philosopher in Chief,” Romano successfully captures the essence of Obama’s vision, the ensuing foreign policy rhetoric that attempts to expound on it. He concludes that “Obama, like no president before him, has notified the rest of the world that the United States will continue to export its philosophy, ethos, and political theory -- but through conversation, not declamation, seeking free adoption, not grudging acquiescence.”⁴¹ Unlike his predecessor who is often associated with Liberal Internationalism and making the world safe for democracy by any means necessary, Obama seeks to rhetorically promote the ideas of abstract

concepts like freedom, representation, liberties, non-violence, through ethical appeals to Reason, thought, discourse, ideas, and humanitarian-like dignity promotion.

Soft-Power and Global Engagement

This is the part of the paper that, while still focusing on Obama's rhetoric that highlights and underscore the LICI influenced foreign policy the Obama administration has promulgated, this section will also seek to incorporate how certain policy initiatives have also substantiated these IR philosophies.

Joseph R. Nye coined the term "soft power" in an essay published in *Foreign Policy* in 1990. At the time, the Soviet Union had fallen and many scholars were attempting to make sense of the state of the world and the U.S.' position in it. Francis Fukuyama wrote about "the end of history" in which he concluded that the primacy of liberal capitalist democracies would ascend as the primary establishmentarianism form of governmental organization. Realists who propounded Statecraft and *Realpolitik* policies began scrambling to make sense of the new global power dynamic and hegemonic superiority of the United States. Even Henry Kissinger in 1975, before the fall of the Berlin Wall, stated that "we are entering a new era. Old international patterns are crumbling... The world has become interdependent in economics, in communications, in human aspirations." In his aforementioned 2008 speech at Brandenburg Gate "A World That Stands as One," Obama echoed a similar sentiment:

This is the moment when every nation in Europe must have the chance to choose its own tomorrow free from the shadows of yesterday. In this century, we need a strong European Union that deepens the security and prosperity of this continent, while

*extending a hand abroad. In this century – in this city of all cities – we must reject the Cold War mind-set of the past, and resolve to work with Russia when we can, to stand up for our values when we must, and to seek a partnership that extends across this entire continent.*¹¹

Clearly Obama's conception of world politics differs greatly than that of many intellectual predecessors like Henry Kissinger and Francis Fukuyama who extolled the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent fall of the U.S.S.R. as a supreme vindication of the impossibility of a Communist state and its paternalistic accompaniment. While some, like Samuel Huntington, who in 1993 foresaw the unipolarity of the United States as predating a future "Clash of Civilizations" where most future conflicts would be a result of cultural conflicts, Obama's view of the world today may be regarded as not unipolar, but rather as a world community of coequal nations that could and should work in concert with one another to combat the ills of globalization. ("People of the world – look at Berlin, where a wall came down, a continent came together, and history proved that there is no challenge too great for a world that stands as one."). This clearly is a starkly different interpretation of twentieth-century history. Obama states:

In this new world, such dangerous currents have swept along faster than our efforts to contain them. That is why we cannot afford to be divided. No one nation, no matter how large or powerful, can defeat such challenges alone. None of us can deny these threats, or escape responsibility in meeting them. Yet, in the absence of Soviet tanks and a terrible wall, it has become easy to forget this truth. And if we're honest with each other, we know that

sometimes, on both sides of the Atlantic, we have drifted apart, and forgotten our shared destiny.

Using his rhetoric to try and sway people across the world in order to promote dignity, ideals, and ideas, his foreign policy whether it be on purpose or inadvertent, incorporates notions and identifications with soft power. Joseph Nye wrote in that same article, “In general, power is becoming less transferable, less coercive, and less tangible. Modern trends and changes in political issues are having significant effects on the nature of power and the resources that produce it. Co-optive power-getting others to want what you want-and soft power resources-cultural attraction, ideology, and international institutions-are not new... Various trends today are making co-optive behavior and soft power resources relatively more important.” With hard power being less associated with liberalism, and focused more on military strength, economic might, and governmental coercion, soft power plays a role more conducive to and relying greatly upon public diplomacy.⁴² In 2008, Joseph Nye wrote that “it is difficult to think of any single act that would do more to restore America’s soft power than the election of Obama to the presidency.” Although he wrote this in 2008, his sentiment did not stay with him up to this time. Having extolled the Obama administration for engaging in what Hillary Clinton referred to as a new “smart power” strategy- incorporating both hard and soft power resources to advance American ideals- Nye soon began lamenting that current budget shortfalls and policy initiatives the Obama administration promoted did not live up to all the rhetoric. However, the changing climate in Congress was not enough to deter the Obama administration’s soft power promotion.⁴³

In 2008 Clarence Lusane wrote that “The emphasis on “soft power” articulated often by Obama is seen as a salve to heal the militarism, unilateralism, and bellicosity of the Bush years.”

In 2007, Obama's emphasis on soft power maintained notions of his nascent LICI foreign policy construction along with its Cosmopolitanism corollary. Lusane states that while Obama may wax more to the left than any of his predecessors, and Hillary Clinton, his focus on Third World development, human rights, poverty reduction, and climate change gives attention to what Lusane characterizes as "second-order effects"; namely, human rights. This, in his opinion, not only sways from the Bush administrations paltry focus on these issues, but rather re-brands and redefines U.S. hegemony in a post-Soviet world. This is where Obama's Constructivist foreign policy initiatives take shape. By articulating through rhetoric and policy initiatives, what America is and ought to be, he is able to re-envision a role for America on the international stage.⁴⁴

His 2007 Foreign Policy missive "Renewing American Leadership" articulates the tone with which he seeks to shape his foreign policy. The subtitle states: "Common Security for our Common Humanity." Again, notions of a global community where ideas, and values, all transported linguistically to its respective citizens of the world come into play as Obama formulates his LICI foreign policy framework. Referencing throughout his piece Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and John F. Kennedy, he lauds the historic circumstances and conditions that gave rise to distinctly soft-power programs like F.D.R.'s "Four Freedoms," the Marshall Plan, and the Peace Corps and the Alliance for Progress. All of which, with paired military enhancements, he credits with helping to "secure the peace and well-being of nations around the world." He then begins by extrapolating on his title with the topic sentence: "Today, we are again called to provide visionary leadership." Using this phrase, he makes it clear that "visionary leadership" is both symbolic and metaphorical. He further goes on to appease his more hawkish detractors, stating that only through renewed and reinvested alliances abroad can

we (as a global community) defeat ‘murderously nihilistic’ terrorists, and combat “rogue states” who “could challenge both America and the international foundation of liberal democracy.” This is a very bold assertion. This statement, and the subsequent ones, vividly shapes the way in which Barack Obama views the world and America’s role in it. Referring to the Bush administration’s policy actions and rhetoric as “conventional thinking of the past,” Obama’s adumbrated conclusion for which he calls for a new “visionary leadership” is simply: “the world has lost trust in our purposes and our principles.” While he may not have been ready to “cede leadership,” Obama articulates very clearly, the role for America in world affairs, summarizing perfectly his Liberal Internationalist Constructivism Institutionalism foreign policy.

Such leadership demands that we retrieve a fundamental insight of Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy—one that is truer now than ever before: the security and well-being of each and every American depend on the security and well-being of those who live beyond our borders. The mission of the United States is to provide global leadership grounded in the understanding that the world shares a common security and a common humanity.

The American moment is not over, but it must be seized anew. To see American power in terminal decline is to ignore America's great promise and historic purpose in the world...⁴⁵

Evading declarative, indeterminate prerogatives such as ‘American interests,’ as seen throughout the Bush years, ideas of ‘unilateralism,’ ‘America-first,’ ‘American Exceptionalism’ (in the neo-/Conservative aspect of the term implying Superiority), and nationalism (which,

arguably, subsumes all the prior) are largely avoided, if not completely absent. For further proof that he, at the very least, does not share the familiar understanding of “American Exceptionalism,” one must turn to a response he gave in Strasbourg, France on April 4th, 2009. When asked if he believed in “American Exceptionalism,” he replied: “I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism.” At a G20 summit in London in the same year, Obama also stated: “We exercise our leadership best when we are listening . . . when we lead by example, when we show some element of humility and recognize that we may not always have the best answer.” However, he did qualify his now infamous remark on “American Exceptionalism” by stating: “I see no contradiction between believing that America has a continued extraordinary role in leading the world towards peace and prosperity and recognizing that that leadership is incumbent, depends on, our ability to create partnerships because we can't solve these problems alone.”⁴⁶

While scholars like Lusane contend that while ineffective policies, incompetence, and arrogance, all played a role in the Bush administration’s foreign policy- with little to no emphasis placed on soft power-promoting tendencies (e.g. an almost complete disregard to international institutions like the Geneva Convention and the U.N.)- the intrinsic goals of America to promote and perpetuate hegemony and “neo-liberal economic dictates,” would ultimately rely upon the subordination of soft-power to hard power. Obviously Bush and Obama’s notions of U.S. primacy, or hegemony, would clash, one thing is clear: they promote the same things but differ on the means of achieving them. Where Bush sought to make the world safe for liberal democracy through nation building, militarized conflict, and democratic interventionism, Obama seeks to make the world safe for democracy through idea promotion, global engagement, and

soft power (i.e. the marketing of U.S. ideals to the world while leading through example). Soft power is a central tenet to a foreign policy based around the principles of LICI.

(Obviously, there is a growing body of literature on the incalculable contradictions and arguments put forth by Realists and political writers who claim that Obama has failed in terms of advancing soft power in favor of a more hard-line approach to international conflicts and challenges. What should be argued here is that, while there have certainly been speeches and incidents where Obama's administration has acted unilaterally- i.e. 2009 troop surge in Afghanistan, North Waziristan drone strikes that killed two American 'citizens,' and even the killing of Osama bin-Laden, one can make the defense that this happened for three reasons. The first being that he was acting in national self-defense which is commensurate with any administration irrespective of foreign policy, political ideology, or doctrine. That, owing to the dearth of national security information pertaining to the imminence of threats/violence/fanaticism/extremism/etc. by the average American citizen and even the most privy scholars, privacy takes primacy. Essentially, one must cede that the President is in a position to weigh and calculate certain prospective actions commensurate with top-level information. This can also be interpreted as a morally Pragmatic move- that an administration's actions are not presented to Congress is a result of an administration's cost-benefit analysis that ultimately favors perceived beneficial outcomes for the U.S.

The second, which is more applicable to his speeches, is political pandering and detractor appeasement. Upon winning the Nobel Peace prize for example, many people around the world may have viewed Obama as dovish, and possibly, passive. Obviously not wanting to appear plaintive or weak, Obama's Nobel speech prize was dedicated to the defense of "just wars" as a catalyst to peace. Suffice it to say many people were bemused by his choice of rhetoric at this

time. Again, this paper's focus is not an indictment of the gaps between Obama's rhetoric and policies, for which many today continue to impugn him, but rather an attempt at understanding the foreign policy Obama envisions for the United States. In fact, Mark Lagon, International Relations and Security Chair at Georgetown University's Master of Science in Foreign Program, has written that Obama's inefficacy in his soft power approach is not so much the act itself, but rather the doubt of "America's moral standing to project it.)"⁴⁷

While much of his Presidential and campaign rhetoric focused heavily on the use of soft power in restoring America's image, rebuilding alliances, and changing peoples' minds about America, many of his enacted policies were very reliant upon soft power. Rhetoric and speeches artfully crafted to win over peoples' 'hearts and minds' may only lead a President so far. Many of his administration's workings with the State Department portray, at the very least, a strong desire to engage with the world on a level largely different than that of his predecessors.

In his May 2010 National Security Strategy, Obama prefaces the grand document by reemphasizing the principles that will eventually shape the rhetoric and policies of his LICI based foreign policy doctrine. He begins by stating, in his Constructivist tradition, that historically speaking, America has always "risen to meet- and shape- moments of transition." He then goes on to state that present challenges like global terrorism, globalization, economic tumult, and international warfare have become so systemic that, although America should lead by example, the interconnectedness of the democratic international political order essentially precludes unilateralism. ("The burdens of a young century cannot fall on America's shoulders alone."). He also mentions promoting: human rights, human dignity, global hunger/poverty alleviation, science and research, and global education. Stating that our "shared interests" with other countries around the world cannot be bolstered by hard power and military might alone, he

states: “Our security also depends upon diplomats who can act in every corner of the world...and work seamlessly with other countries.” This emphasis on soft power will be seen extrapolated through his policy initiatives, as well as the way in which he conducts his foreign travels. It should also be mentioned that Obama’s National Security Strategy emphasizes the “strengthening,” “respect,” and “enforcing” of “international norms” over fourteen different times throughout the entire document.⁴⁸

As writer Craig Hayden posits, the Obama administration’s popularity was perceived as an implicit call for a reinvigorated foreign policy replete with newly installed public diplomacy mechanisms. His domestic and international popularity shows that Obama the candidate was deeply interested in being a president who, using “reparative overtures would convey that the United States respects the conventions and norms of the international community.” Clearly Obama had many qualms with the Bush administration’s dearth of public diplomacy tools and strategies. In a 2008 Washington post article, it was stated that Obama renounced the Bush Doctrine of hard power, and instead would make it clear that Obama would, at the very least, try to “increase foreign assistance.” Hayden himself states that “the perceived qualities of an Obama administration, its attitudes towards international norms, the rule of law, and respect for diversity and cultural history represent assets for the administration in its attempts to achieve policy objectives.” An arduous and ambitious plan indeed, Obama’s reanimated vision for a foreign policy based more on communication was, in fact, bolstered by several salient policies. But, as Hayden reminds us, Presidential rhetoric provides a foundation for definitional goals and persuasive ends in a campaign of public engagement—it is not necessarily the campaign in itself.”

Prior to his inauguration, Obama's initial plans for a new public diplomacy strategy included the creation of "America Houses" in the Arab world, complete with "Internet libraries, English lessons and stories about Muslims in America." There was also a proposal for a \$2 billion Global Education Fund to provide primary education to under-funded peoples around the world. While these proposals may not have come to fruition, the Obama administration managed to create the Global Engagement Directive to "leverage diplomacy, communications, international development" directly from the White House. This was not without detractors, however. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen warned in an adumbrated declaration that, "To put it simply, we need to worry a lot less about how to communicate our actions and much more about what our actions communicate."⁷ Soft power has its discontents, but this speaks to a larger problem that Obama has, and will continue to face over the next year or so. This will be addressed at the end of the essay.

Abe Greenwald presents the connection between Joseph Nye's definition of soft power and its relation to Obama's vision of the power schemas present in today's world. At the end of the Cold War, as scholars and academics were seeking to make sense of international politics-articulating a role and purpose for America in a unipolar world, Joseph Nye wrote: "Increasingly, the issues today do not pit one state against another; instead, they are issues in which all states try to control nonstate transnational actors. The solutions to many current issues of transnational interdependence will require collective action and international cooperation." In 2009 at a U.N. General Assembly meeting, Obama echoed a similar sentiment: In an era when our destiny is shared, power is no longer a zero-sum game. "No one nation can or should try to dominate another nation. No world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will succeed. No balance of power among nations will hold. The traditional division between nations

of the south and north makes no sense in an interconnected world. Nor do alignments of nations rooted in the cleavages of a long gone Cold War.”⁴⁹

Obama’s nascent attempt at emphasizing soft power strategies (self-evidently) should not be misconstrued with a replacement of, or, at the very least, a de-emphasis of hard power and military might. That assertion would be counterfactual and very misleading. However, there have been several cases where Obama has both attempted to, and accomplished policies that have worked against military build up, and have highlighted soft power concretely and rhetorically. The most salient of these examples (since his inauguration) have been (in no specific order): ordering the closing of Guantanamo Bay detention center; abjuring the phrase “War on Terror;” ending both wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) with Russia; creation of the interagency Atrocities Prevention Board; prohibition of torture; established a new “U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue”; Free Trade Agreements with Columbia, Panama, and South Korea; and engagement with U.S. adversaries (i.e. Iran). While some of these may clearly overlap with hard power interests, many of them seek to recreate new ways of interacting with the international sphere and the United States.

While many commentators have been reluctant to define the “Obama Doctrine,” *Foreign Policy*’s David Rothkopf wrote- adroitly capturing the Obama administrations new global engagement strategy- The Obama Doctrine, while grounded in the idea that we must exhaust every other means of advancing our national interest, is responding to the lessons of a different unpopular war, in this case, Iraq. It is a reaction against the use of "overwhelming force" to achieve rather narrow (not to mention dubious) goals. It is an antidote to "shock and awe," "three trillion dollar wars" and unilateral conventional invasions if they can possibly be avoided.”⁵⁰ In

2009, the Nobel Committee awarded Barack Obama the Peace Prize with a press release that attributed his selection

“...For his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples. The Committee has attached special importance to Obama's vision of and work for a world without nuclear weapons. Obama has as President created a new climate in international politics. Multilateral diplomacy has regained a central position, with emphasis on the role that the United Nations and other international institutions can play. Dialogue and negotiations are preferred as instruments for resolving even the most difficult international conflicts. The vision of a world free from nuclear arms has powerfully stimulated disarmament and arms control negotiations. Thanks to Obama's initiative, the USA is now playing a more constructive role in meeting the great climatic challenges the world is confronting. Democracy and human rights are to be strengthened.

Only very rarely has a person to the same extent as Obama captured the world's attention and given its people hope for a better future. His diplomacy is founded in the concept that those who are to lead the world must do so on the basis of values and attitudes that are shared by the majority of the world's population.

For 108 years, the Norwegian Nobel Committee has sought to stimulate precisely that international policy and those attitudes for which Obama is now the world's leading spokesman. The Committee endorses Obama's appeal that "Now is the time for all of us to take our share of responsibility for a global response to global challenges"⁵¹

Whether or not he deserved it aside, his dedication to public diplomacy and leveraging a new role for America in the world was certainly well received. Obama's personal narrative, as well as his Pragmatism and Cosmopolitanism, have manifested themselves into a LICI foreign policy that, at least in the beginning, reform American international maneuverings. In dealing with other nations, Obama seeks to treat other allied nations with mutual respect and assurance, through the vessel of public diplomacy. Obama looks past the United States to be the sole spreader of democracy and liberal values. Although his administration's attempts at becoming a more willing and engaging international actor, it was certainly not without detractors.

Amitai Etzioni, in 2010, wrote that Obama's substantive theme was summed up in one of his inaugural address lines: "To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist." He contends that what such a statement implied was a spinelessness that, in effect, stated "as long as [American adversaries] forgo violence, whether or not you democratize or honor human rights, we will consider you a member in good standing of the international community." While Obama does tend to garner criticisms from many for being perceived as weak toward adversarial nations, he has nonetheless repeatedly

stated that American interests are not to be subordinated to aggressor nations. Etzioni also posits that Obama jettisons Samuel P. Huntington's theory of a "clash of civilizations" for a lower baseline for "good citizenship in the global community: non-violence." Non-violence plays a major role in Obama's rhetoric, like in the Cairo speech. While writing about the change in tone and rhetoric, Etzioni states: "President Obama himself has been highly successful in changing the way the United States defines its position in the world and redefines what it expects from others...I am referring not to the change in tone (from assertive and unilateral to conciliatory and cooperative) but to a major change in substance-the case the United States is making about its role in the world and about the evolving global architecture it envisions." Echoing the aforementioned criticism of misguided emphasis on communication rather than action, Etzioni thinks that Obama fails in terms of better articulating value-judgments.⁵²

To conclude this section, and highlight Obama's LICI foreign policy with respect to global engagement and soft power, this extract taken from a West Point Commencement address captures perfectly the combination of hard and soft power- i.e. "smart power," Obama has tended to articulate throughout his tenure:

So we have to shape an international order that can meet the challenges of our generation. We will be steadfast in strengthening those old alliances that have served us so well, including those who will serve by your side in Afghanistan and around the globe. As influence extends to more countries and capitals, we also have to build new partnerships, and shape stronger international standards and institutions.

*This engagement is not an end in itself. The international order we seek is one that can resolve the challenges of our times -- countering violent extremism and insurgency; stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and securing nuclear materials; combating a changing climate and sustaining global growth; helping countries feed themselves and care for their sick; preventing conflict and healing wounds. If we are successful in these tasks, that will lessen conflicts around the world. It will be supportive of our efforts by our military to secure our country.*⁵³

“Shape,” “international standards,” “engagement,” “helping”- all of these words portray an idea of an America that is deferential, extensive, and self-reflective in its scope and use of power. By proclaiming (to the United States’ armed forces no less) that one of the major responsibilities of the U.S. is to provide humanitarian relief and aid, and further, that these are mere tools through which peace will be fostered, ethically bifurcates from those of George W. Bush. Whether or not these goals were carried out, and to what extent they did or did not fail, is not the issue at heart. The issue at heart becomes one of ethical choice. The commander-in-chief, as the civilian leader of the army, makes pertinent and crucial decisions regarding foreign policy and understanding such a person’s background makes it easier to comprehend the way in which they view both the world and America’s role in that world. Being a ‘willing partner,’ or even mentioning those types of words evinces a certain emotional atmosphere in publics and other international leaders of both greater expectations and reformation. The main point of contention however, is the gap between rhetoric and policy. While this is nothing new, the artfully skilled

orator that Obama is may make the challenge of changing attitudes and policies, or winning the 'hearts and minds' of others, disillusioning. What may explain the current protests from both the left and right amongst today's youth, may not be as ideological as one is first led to believe, but more of a supreme disenfranchisement, or even disconnect between the political establishment and the younger generations that was thought to be non-existent with the election of Obama. That Obama has rhetorically emphasized a new vision of America- one that seeks to increase soft power (albeit bolstered by hard power), and maintain better respect for allies whose interests coincide with those of the U.S.

Multilateralism

Heavily based on both rhetoric *and* policy, the Obama Doctrine relies upon multilateralism to help aid in the fight against global challenges. Upon entering office, Obama was confronted with two major issues deeply ingrained in American politics as a result of the prior administration. Suffice it to say that each and every President in the history of the United States has inherited many problems stemming from a previous administration; however, compared to incumbents, newly inaugurated Presidents begin with a *carte blanche* through which they are able to appoint officials as well as other members of a cabinet to form a government commensurate with the goals and aims of the campaign. Although this is the way in which an accountable government should work, many presidents adhere to their party lines, ideology, to name a few, and unexpected circumstances. As Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense in the Bush administration made famous, there are three types of dangers regarding national security and foreign policy: "known-knowns" (the threats that an administration's

intelligence is aware of), “known-unknowns” (the threats that may occur based on past experience and reasonable/feasible potentialities), and “unknown-unknowns” (actions and threats beyond the scope of conceptual prevention and understanding). Every President (one hopes) seeks to avoid all possible areas of American destruction like attacks at home, American troops killed abroad, international terrorist attacks and other such events. However, regarding foreign policy, many events outside the direct control of an administration are left to be handled at the discretion of the governing administration. Keeping in line with Obama’s LICI foreign policy, and its emphasis on rationality, international decisions are weighed and applied so that the potential costs anticipated become as internecine as possible. The Obama administration’s most salient and timely example of an international conundrum that left it beholden to straightforward decision-making and American force application was the NATO-led Libyan intervention.

Underscoring Obama’s foreign policy, thus far, I have outlined that rhetorically and policy-wise, his espousal of Liberal Internationalist values, the cultural boundaries that delimit a populace, and the diplomatic tools necessary to, at least, attempt to convey and communicate a new Cosmopolitan ethic- subsequently elucidating America’s new role in this world. His own personal narrative becomes infused and extrapolative when he articulates his view of a patchwork world interconnected in the fight against pandemic challenges like globalization, terrorism, and climate change, to name a few. As many have already suggested, in a world where America promotes the sovereignty of a polity to establish and create a functional government, this may, and certainly has, led to the construction of unrepresentative governments and totalitarian regimes. While America may have been in the business of explicit regime change in the Middle East, especially regarding Iraq and Afghanistan under the Bush administration, Obama’s approach to the self-dismantling and internal demise of the Arab uprisings in Tunisia,

Egypt and Libya was largely non-committal in scope, until intervention was determined to be humanitarian in character, deemed appropriate by international institutions. This is where Obama may best be viewed as an “institutionalist” (in the Robert Keohane sense of the word). As mentioned before, international collaboration need not imply univocal motives, causes, or determinants. Obama’s belated rhetorical acknowledgement toward the Arab uprisings that took place in Algeria, Bahrain, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria, among many others, received a lot of domestic and international opprobrium ultimately until he eventually addressed the revolutions, thus ceasing to “dither” and declaratively commit the United States to a stance regarding regime change within those countries.

At his Nobel acceptance ceremony, Obama spoke of “just wars”- ones in which violent means are necessary to achieve reconciliation between idealism and pragmatism. Beginning his speech with calls for a stronger international engagement, he lauded the Marshall Plan, U.N., and other “mechanisms to govern the waging of war, treaties to protect human rights, prevent genocide, and restrict the most dangerous weapons.” Putting all notions of pacifism to rest, without exhorting indiscriminate warfare, he states:

I face the world as it is and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people...For make no mistake: evil does exist in the world. A non-violent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al-Qaeda's leaders to lay down their arms. To say that force is sometimes necessary is not a call to cynicism--it is a recognition of history, the imperfections of man and the limits of reason.

Finally, and probably the most explicit call for multilateralism within the speech comes when he states that “...if we want a lasting peace, then the words of the international community must mean something. Those regimes that break the rules must be held accountable. Sanctions must exact a real price. Intransigence must be met with increased pressure--and such pressure only exists when the world stands together as one.” Through this declaration he not only valorizes the maneuverings of multilateral institutionalism, but justifies its utilization as being the best available opportunity in the wake of global threats that confound more than just the United States. While the Nobel Prize decoration was seen by many as both presumptuous and premature, it also makes perfect sense that this display of approbation for “multilateral diplomacy,” strengthening “international diplomacy and cooperation,” and the “emphasis on the role that the United Nations and other international institutions can play” came from Sweden- a Scandinavian country.⁵⁴ Historically, the Scandinavian countries have been largely multilateral and collaborative politically, dating back to the Treaty of Roskilde.

Egypt’s first major demonstration came on January 25th, 2011 when a social network-coordinated protest witnessed thousands taking to the streets of Cairo demanding the immediate resignation of then-President Hosni Mubarak. It was only after precipitous growth and international attention that President Obama responded to the uprising on February 10th announcing that “The Egyptian government must put forward a credible, concrete and unequivocal path toward genuine democracy, and they have not yet seized that opportunity.” Declarative and unambiguous, the Obama administration verbally supported the uproarious demand of the Egyptian populace for governmental reform and accountability.⁵⁵

Amid the growing unrest around other Arab countries early in 2011, the first major protest in Libya took place on February 16th, 2011 after the arrest of a human rights activist. The

anti-Gaddafi protesters were attacked by fellow pro-governmental protesters. As protests started becoming violent, and eventually reaching the capital city of Tripoli, the U.N. Security Council voted in approval of Resolution 1973 on March 18th, implementing an immediate ceasefire, a no-fly zone over Libya, and corresponding air strikes on Gaddafi's forces. Facing increasing pressure to address the nation following the U.S.' nascent operations in Libya, Obama delivered a speech addressing what American involvement in the NATO-led Libyan intervention would entail. At the National Defense University in Washington D.C., he begins the justification for intervention based on being "in our interests," calling Gaddafi a "tyrant" who squandered wealth, ruled despotically, killed Americans, and attacked his own people. Referring to this issue as antagonistic to American interests, Obama stated that the mutual promulgation of violence in Libya between Gaddafi and the protesters had put American "interests and values at risk."

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

Not that this would be the first time a U.S. President would refer to a military operation as acting in our interests, Obama goes on to phrase this issue as being a humanitarian cause. Claiming that direct and unilateral intervention would not yield the most auspicious outcomes, Obama injects that a military mission to include regime change would be a mistake. To be blunt,

we went down that road in Iraq.” He states that “We had a unique ability to stop that violence: an international mandate for action, a broad coalition prepared to join us, the support of Arab countries, and a plea for help from the Libyan people themselves.” As a President who vociferously adulates the role multilateralism plays, Obama, while understanding the fine line between cultural relativism and human rights, decided to act in spreading Western values and interests. He appeals to emotion when he states that “To brush aside America’s responsibility as a leader and – more profoundly– our responsibilities to our fellow human beings under such circumstances would have been a betrayal of who we are. Some nations may be able to turn a blind eye to atrocities in other countries. The United States of America is different. And as President, I refused to wait for the images of slaughter and mass graves before taking action.”⁵⁶ Again, his rhetoric here reverts back to an outstretched hand willing and morally responsible for helping other civilizations in need. While Gaddafi may have posed a threat larger than what the general public is led to believe (due to the preclusion of top secret administrative information etc.), this is in effect, a strategy akin to that of George W. Bush, albeit to a much lesser degree.

Phrases like “responsibilities to our fellow human beings” and “human freedom” again, harkens back to notions of moral egalitarianism and Cosmopolitanism. Obama tends to view the world as populated by interconnected peoples with shared destinies, common interests, and the rest of the Liberal Internationalist roil. Mentioning the term “coalition” ten times throughout the address, Obama’s highlighting of institutionalism is most displayed most clearly when he says that when “confronted by this brutal repression and a looming humanitarian crisis” the U.S. was able to galvanize the “international community” (a phrase he uses five times), but would “play a supporting role.” This contradiction in rhetoric would come to serve as a major sticking point for

the media and other analysts who greatly derided the Obama administration for not taking prominence in the effort, and his resultant ‘dithering.’

One commentator sardonically called the international Libyan intervention reluctantly not led (*prima facie*) by the United States as the “Professor’s War.” This “model of international cooperation” included but was not limited to “All the necessary paperwork. Arab League backing. A Security Council resolution.” Written sarcastically, it still contains factual evidence-ideology aside.⁵⁷

On October 20th, 2010, news reports surface alerting the world of Gaddafi’s death. Immediately thereafter, writers around the world began speculating anew ideas about the “Obama Doctrine.” Heralding his multilateralism and international cooperation, the Left began to commend his resoluteness not to deploy ground troops but instead rely on airstrikes. The Right chastised him for his resoluteness not to act unilaterally (or receive Congressional sanction, citing the 1973 War Powers Act). Regardless, whatever ideological interpretations were engendered by the final outcome, an important point to make here is how we may interpret Obama’s rhetoric on international institutionalism.

In *The National Interest*, Richard K. Betts’ April 2011 review of John Ikenberry’s then-new book “Institutional Imperialism” provides important points that really direct the current debate regarding Obama’s foreign policy practice. Referring to George W. Bush’s unpopular perception of being “the embodiment of brazen international-order-ruining unilateralism,” Ikenberry reveals that neither Clinton, nor Obama are very different. “What unites rather than differentiates Bush, Clinton and Obama is not the desire for multilateralism but the unwillingness to subordinate the substance of policy to the form of its implementation. For most statesmen, multilateralism is a means; in *Liberal Leviathan* it is an end in itself.” A generally negative

review, Betts excoriates Ikenberry for ‘tiptoeing’ “around what is really at issue: the permission slip” to act, and for stating that Western countries like the United States should aim to avoid “interventions or brute exercises of force that end up . . . making the liberal order less legitimate.” To this, Betts rhetorically questions: Does that mean refraining from a successful humanitarian intervention that saves thousands of lives if it is not endorsed by some multilateral organ? Or that invading Iraq is wrong if done without a permission slip from the UN but okay if we have one? That we should or should not intervene in Darfur, Libya or Congo?”

John Ikenberry’s conceit (which may in fact be an expansion of Fukuyama’s “The End of History” idea) that the ascension of a global, liberal order for which America is the ‘supreme legitimate authority’ is a side effect of America’s international hegemony. The world’s Leviathan- the United States- “arising out of power politics yet generating peaceful and profitable cooperation, shaping and managing a system of international institutions, norms and rules according to liberal principles. This global order is for the benefit of all, but the United States has a special place of privilege, ruling in a fashion, yet subject to the rules itself.” Ikenberry posits that the U.S., while still adhering to “international norms” can actually “lead through rules.”⁵⁸

In an article in *Commentary Magazine*, authors Douglas J. Feith and Seth Cropsley write that Obama’s foreign policy doctrine is largely “animated” by two encompassing ideas:

“The first is that America’s role in world affairs for more than a century has been, more often than not, aggressive rather than constrained, wasteful rather than communal, and arrogant in promoting democracy, despite our own democratic shortcomings.

Accordingly, America has much to apologize for, including failure to understand others, refusal to defer sufficiently to others, selfishness in pursuing U.S. interests as opposed to global interests, and showing far too much concern for U.S. sovereignty, independence, and freedom of action. The second idea is that multilateral institutions offer the best hope for restraining U.S. power and moderating our national assertiveness.”⁵⁹

In an article entitled “The Consequentialist: How the Arab Spring remade Obama’s foreign policy,” Ryan Lizza of *The New Yorker* wrote in May that the Obama Doctrine that appeared to be forming was a syncretic admission of American leadership, American decline, and American revulsion around the world: “Leading from behind.” Although now the phrase’s origins are contested (Obama stated on his most recent appearance on the Jay Leno show that it was “a phrase the media picked up on”; while Lizza still maintains that it was “one of [Obama’s] advisors), nevertheless, it represents a profound shift in the Obama foreign policy that has come to define his presidency over the past three years.⁶⁰

After the death of Gaddafi, Obama delivered a five minute address from the Rose Garden of the White House during which he lauded the Gaddafi’s ousting, and offered an adumbrated message to the Libyan people and their burgeoning government. Halfway through, Obama states: “We’re under no illusions -- Libya will travel a long and winding road to full democracy. There will be difficult days ahead. But the United States, together with the international community, is committed to the Libyan people. You have won your revolution. And now, we will be a partner as you forge a future that provides dignity, freedom and opportunity.” Obama commends the “international community” for working together to help bring down an authoritarian regime.

Valorizing the Arab youth around the world, Obama reflects on the aforementioned values- dignity, representation, human rights, etc.- that he has always (at least) rhetorically emphasized. Throughout the address, he applauds the “coalition” of NATO allies and Arab states for collectively defeating and championing Western values, ideas, and humanitarian action. He states that “working in Libya with friends and allies, we’ve demonstrated what collective action can achieve in the 21st century.”⁶¹

David Bosco’s journal article “Course Corrections: The Obama Administration at the United Nations” highlights the Obama administration’s change and continuity with one of the world’s most salient international institutions. This article offers a prodigious list of the numerous reforms and differences in policy toward international institutions as compared with those of the Bush administration. At Obama’s first UN General Assembly address, Obama spoke of a ‘reengagement’ with the UN, and was heralded even before then by then-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for ‘looking at the world the same way we do.’ Bosco claims that the Obama administration has seen the UN “more as a tool than as a rehabilitation project” as compared with the Bush administration. This elucidates the Obama administration’s willingness to work with and accept the UN’s mandates and decision making processes. However, even Bosco points out that while the U.S. throughout the Obama presidency has acted unilaterally regarding certain renegade enemies like bin Laden- often relying upon a broad but vague doctrine of self-defense rather than specific Security Council authorization as the legal basis for these operations,” on international humanitarian crises like Libya, the Obama administration has sought the UNSC’s unambiguous permission.⁶²

(Plus, as was argued above, the decision to go after militantly nihilistic human beings who are undyingly committed to the indeterminate destruction of innocent human beings is not a

partisan, or policy-based, position. It is a pragmatic and necessary moral-ethical choice. To claim that the killing of an Osama bin Laden was a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ thing, or a ‘hawkish’ or ‘murderous’ plot, is to ultimately fail to see the Evil he represented to the world. Preposterous arrogations claiming that Obama is a ‘war hawk,’ or ‘failing to live up to the expectations bequeathed unto him by the international community not to act without international and public approval’ are not just intellectually dishonest, but dangerous, and need no further explanation here. One hopes that any U.S. President, when given the clear, defined opportunity to expunge the world of a murderous villain, would carry out that procedure proudly and unabashedly-paying absolutely no attention to ‘public opinion.’)

Obama also presided over and chaired for the first time in American history a Security Council meeting. There he brought America into a self-reflective light regarding nuclear proliferation and disarmament. Obama also sought to pay off the arrears that accumulated in the second term of the Bush presidency. With regards to another international institution, the International Criminal Court, the Obama administration, while still domestically constrained, has sought a more participative and reformative role inside the organization. United States-led UN sanctions toward Iran and North Korea, while another staple of continuity from the previous presidency, represent a committed institutionalist approach to which Obama and his administration have inveterately displayed.

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Summary of Capstone Project

Every U.S. President has maintained a set of policies toward the international sphere. Historically, America has run the gamut of foreign policy prescriptions like The Monroe Doctrine, the Good Neighbor Policy, Isolationism, Containment, and Détente to name a few. Many Presidents of the past have had their foreign policy prescriptions coined as a ‘Doctrine,’ like the “Truman Doctrine” or the “Reagan Doctrine.” This paper seeks to analyze, interpret, and conceptualize the Obama Doctrine as evidenced through President Obama’s rhetoric. By analyzing his speeches, addresses, writings, and education, his foreign policy aligns itself with three International Relations theoretical frameworks, substantiated further by several subcategories. Essentially, this paper seeks to formulate Barack Obama’s understanding of three fundamentally exigent questions: Where are we in the world? What should we do? How should we do it?

In 2008 Barack Obama was elected the President of the United States. Entering a position that was regarded with great unpopularity, Obama inherited a spate of problems that he campaigned on reforming, and the public sought to address (e.g. unilateralism, disregard for the international community, etc.). Credited for his articulate and fluid oration, Obama’s rhetoric provides insight into the way in which he views the world, and what America’s role should be in this world. This thesis analyzes Obama’s major campaign speeches, book passages, foreign policy missives, international speeches, and national addresses in order to conceptualize the Obama Doctrine. Diverging greatly from a Realist interpretation (another school of International Relations thought that stresses power politics and the primacy of nation-states, among other

tenets) the Obama administration has tried harder to reach out and gain a stronger foothold in the global arena.

This paper's contends that Obama's foreign policy, as rhetorically evidenced (and substantiated further by his policies) is that his foreign policy prescription is based on the three International Relations theoretical frameworks: Liberal Internationalism, Constructivism, and Institutionalism (LICI). While all three of these philosophies are not mutually exclusive, they do contain specific assumptions and criteria that distinguish each of them. When writing about what Obama's foreign policy agenda is, many scholars and political scientists have conceded that there is none, or if it does exist, it is amorphous and not worth defining. Analyzing Obama's rhetoric shows that his administration does commit itself to a definable foreign policy, and that he is committed to certain principles (whether or not his administration carries them out is not the focus of this paper).

The paper begins with an introduction designed to introduce the reader to many domestic and international interpretations of both Obama's presidential entrance and Bush's leave. Avoiding commentary, the introduction attempts to capture both public opinion at the atmosphere with which Obama carried into the White House. The paper then extrapolates on its purpose before three introductory paragraphs on Liberal Internationalism, Constructivism, and Institutionalism. Each attempts to succinctly explain the core set of values and beliefs each maintains, and how they would manifest themselves in practice. Following a chart of how each of the I.R. theories overlap and the intersections created by the rhetoric. Before explaining how rhetoric is defined and how Obama uses it to advance his Doctrine, an investigation of Obama's philosophical rearing and educational upbringing provides a foundation for his intellectual prowess, providing for a more illustrative interpretation of his rhetoric afterward.

The next major section is Cosmopolitanism. As a philosophical school of thought, Obama portrays Cosmopolitan-based ideas in his rhetoric that shape his vision of the world. Drawing upon current and previous policy scholars, this section seeks to unearth an overlooked philosophical corollary to Obama's intellectual development. As a self-referred "citizen of the world," Obama repeatedly calls for a new ethic that calls for greater responsibilities on many in positions of power and capability. Constantly claiming that everyone in the world has a shared destiny, many of his detractors fail to see this aspect of Obama's personal philosophy and instead they mischaracterize him as "post-American."

This paper also contends that Obama's LICI foreign policy, and its reflective rhetoric, seek to reconcile normativity, description, and performativity. Liberal Internationalism- the normative (relating to an ideal standard or abstract model) has a certain set of values and belief systems consonant and dissonant with Constructivism. Constructivism- the descriptive, is largely the way in which Obama interprets the world through cultural difference, personal narrative personification, and historical analysis/interpretation. Institutionalism- the performative, is how Obama views America should conduct its interest-promotion and global politics. All three of these I.R. theories overlap, but produce several thematic consistencies Obama employs throughout his rhetoric. After establishing that these three frameworks are what instructs Obama's foreign policy, the paper goes on to provide rhetorical evidence shown through several subcategories.

The analysis shows the influences growing up internationally, attending Columbia University and Harvard Law School, as well as working as a community organizer have had on his perspective. His younger background shows that he was influenced by Pragmatism and Progressivism, two political philosophies that remained with him into his presidential tenure. The

paper then outlines the following themes that best exemplify Obama's LICI foreign policy: Cosmopolitanism, Soft power and global engagement, and multilateralism. Throughout many of his speeches and other public gestures, Obama tends to make remarks that subsume the subcategories, thus justifying and supporting the argument that his foreign policy is made up of the three aforementioned frameworks.

Throughout the paper, I reiterate that Obama may be regarded as neither a war hawk, nor dove. That he shares more with President George W. Bush than many would care to believe. The major changes Obama has made for the United States, I argue, are based on achieving a more cooperative world that addresses universal problems as collaboratively as possible. This claim is put forth devoid of value-judgments- such are for the reader to conclude.

This paper- one hopes- leaves the reader with questions they may answer after reading it. Has Obama's vision of the world taken hold? How effective has Obama's articulation of American values/ideas/power been translated? And what are their effects? Also, is Obama's understanding of the United States unique in any way (if at all). I purposely avoid these questions because I was mostly concerned with understanding a president who constantly confounds many scholars. By proffering my own interpretation of Barack Obama's foreign policy conception and the ways he has articulated them inters deeper philosophical and political questions and problems. Today, questions of U.S. hegemony, or international primacy, are best answered directly without any sort of obfuscation. Does America have any responsibility to the outside world? If so, what does this responsibility entail? At this moment, I could not think of questions timelier, more important, and more overlooked.