Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and the Use of Presidential Surrogacy in Foreign Policy Discourse

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In December of 2009, nearing the end of its first year in office, the Obama Administration faced criticism for failing to establish a firm position concerning human rights. President Obama detailed some elements of the administration’s human rights agenda in his Nobel Lecture on December 10, 2009. However, in an address delivered on December 14, 2009, Clinton responded to this criticism in more detail by laying out the administration’s Human Rights Agenda for the 21st Century. Although both scholarly and popular critics agreed that the Nobel Lecture was a noteworthy rhetorical moment in Obama’s first year in office, when coupled with Clinton’s address, analysis reveals the value of investigating the rhetoric of presidential surrogates in concert with presidential discourse.

**CONCLUSION**

In *Post Realism*, Beer and Hariman called for increased attention towards foreign policy discourse. Even though several scholars answered this call in the last two or three decades, most investigations focused on the American president or other foreign leaders. Although an essential foundation for an analysis of an administration’s foreign policy rhetoric, the president’s discourse is not the only data that merits attention. For foreign policy rhetoric, this essay elucidates both the importance and utility of examining the discourse of Obama and Clinton together, rather than in isolation. Based on this analysis, it is reasonable to contend that Clinton’s “human rights drama” operated *within* Obama’s “war and peace drama,” rather than competed with it for acceptance, and the two speakers utilized similar tactics in terms of drawing on audience values and utilizing mode of argument to support the cases they presented.