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Cascading simulation: A critical perspective on Barack Obama's foreign policy during the 2008 presidential election

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CASCADING SIMULATION: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON BARACK

OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE

2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

by

Ian Patrick Beier

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

Cascading Simulation: A Critical Perspective on Barack Obama's Foreign Policy During the 2008 Presidential Election

by

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Entering the 2008 presidential election, Barack Obama had little to no foreign policy experience. On face, this would seem to make Obama an unlikely choice for President. Yet, he was able to defeat Hilary Clinton and John McCain, the two candidates with significant foreign policy experience. My thesis examines Barack Obama's speech "A World That Stands as One" as a case study for understanding how simulation operates in the context of presidential campaigns. Using Robert Entman's theory of "cascading activation," I develop a theory of "cascading simulation," arguing that image construction descends downward from the president through the media. In order to make this argument, I examine the text of the speech itself, the *CNN* broadcast of the event, and then newspaper recounts of the event in the *New York Times* and *Agence France Presse*. As a result, these three levels of interpretation work together to simulate foreign policy experience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I finished writing the final draft of my thesis, I struggled for a moment to come up with something to write in this section. This is not a result of some academic arrogance on my part. Rather, I feel that my gratitude cannot be captured in a short section titled "acknowledgements." With that in mind, I searched the Internet for good acceptance speeches from credible speakers. As luck would have it, Barack Obama has given quite a few acceptance speeches in his short time in office. The following is an adaptation of Barack Obama's "acknowledgments" section of his December 10, 2009 Nobel Prize acceptance speech:

I complete my thesis with deep gratitude and great humility. A Masters in Communication Studies is an award that speaks to our highest aspirations – that for all the cruelty and hardship of our world, we are not mere prisoners of fate. Our language matters and can bend history in the direction of justice. And yet I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the considerable controversy that your generous decision has generated. In part, this is because I am at the beginning, and not the end, of my labors on the world stage. Compared to some of the giants of history who have received this prize – Dr. Joseph Valenzano, Dr. Jacob Thompson, Dr. Thomas Burkholder, Dr. David Dickens – my accomplishments are slight.[1]

Dr. Joseph Valenzano, for example, read over twenty-eight drafts throughout this process, correcting several grammatical gems that would make an English major cringe. For example, in a June 14th draft of my prospectus, I wrote: "the Obama camp quickly captured the minds of a significant portion of the youth vote by using the Internet and

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[1] Full text of Obama's speech is located at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize.

social-networking sites as a means to become incredibly popular among individuals from 18-25." Without his oversight, this thesis could have turned into a 120 page run-on sentence.

Dr. Jacob Thompson has also played a significant role in my academic development. Over the past six years, I have known Dr. Thompson as both a mentor and a supervisor who has offered me timely advice in both my professional and personal life. It is this very reason that I was more than willing to follow him from the University of Northern Iowa to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. There is little chance that I would have pursued higher education if it were not for his encouragement to do so.

Lastly, I would like to thank my committee members from the Department of Communication Studies. Dr. Jacob Thompson, Dr. Thomas Burkholder, and Dr. Joseph Valenzano all spent a significant amount of energy trying to maintain my focus on this project. I would still be working on the prospectus if it weren't for their "encouragement." No matter what obstacle I faced as a graduate student, I felt that these three always held my best interest in mind.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The 2008 election marked an important point in American history because of the

political climate, particularly within international affairs. The incoming president would

inherit a United States shaped by the "Bush Doctrine," tagged as one of the most

significant structural shifts in American foreign policy since the Truman administration.[1]

President George W. Bush left behind a world that contained military occupations in

Afghanistan and Iraq, a Global War on Terror, a receding economy and a general

dismissal of international accords in favor of unilateral action. Consequently, the foreign

policy credentials of the next president were particularly important.

For the Democrats, senators Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, and Barack

Obama were the frontrunners during their party's primaries. For the Republicans, Senator

John McCain, former governor of Arkansas Mike Huckabee and former Massachusetts

governor Mitt Romney lead the pack. On face, requisite foreign policy experience would

seemingly make John McCain or Hillary Clinton the favorites to win the White House

because of their previous experiences, however, both of these "foreign policy wonks" lost

to Barack Obama despite the stark contrast between Obama's lack of foreign policy

experience and their perceived familiarity with the topic.

As part of the strategy for overcoming this credibility gap, Barack Obama embarked

on an "international tour" during the campaign in June 2008 that included seven

countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Germany, France, and Great Britain.

Following the tour, media attitudes seemed to fundamentally change, ceding some level

of expertise to Obama that was previously nonexistent. International tours of reassurance

are nothing new for American presidents; George Bush embarked on a similar journey in February 2005, meeting with several key NATO members across Europe in order to galvanize support for the Iraq invasion.[2] However, this was the most prominent trip in recent memory prior to their actual election.[3] Whereas most candidates only speak about their *potential* relationship with allies, Obama seemingly *actualized* his commitments.

This perceptual transition from inexperience to expertise is an important event to study, especially since, according to communication scholar Jason Teven, "apart from campaign issues or stances on policy, a political candidate's characteristics and perceived credibility may be the most important issue in determining voter behavior."[4] One does not have to look far into history to understand that how a candidate presents themselves in public affects perceptions of their credibility. Howard Dean's infamous "scream" during the 2004 Democratic primaries demonstrates how damage to perceived credibility can cause a candidate's electability to plummet. Dean's actions were not frowned upon because he advocated the wrong policy. Rather, campaigns functionally simulate the presidency, and his seemingly impromptu yelp during the speech made some feel he lacked the experience and poise to lead the nation in 2004.

Understanding that presentation plays an important role in credibility, it is important to examine the transformation of Obama's authority as a candidate during his presidential campaign. As Keith Erickson notes, presentation is a critical element in presidential approval because images linger in the public's mind.[5] So much so that, even if nothing significant is occurring, images produce a spectacle that Erickson believes "symbolically [creates] among the citizenry the idea that agendas and exigencies are being addressed, constituted authority exercised, and matters of state attended to."[6] In this way, my thesis

looks at the spectacle of Barack Obama's speech entitled "A World That Stands Alone,"

the *CNN* broadcast of the event,[7] and the framing patterns from articles recounting the

event in the *New York Times*[8] and the *Agence France Presse*. Accordingly, these three

elements created a waterfall effect, where the original intent of the tour was transmitted

downwards through the media to the public. These three elements work together as an act

of political simulation that helped bolster his credibility on foreign policy issues. This

examination sheds light on the meaning of the rest of the international tour and serves as

a case study of how political simulations during presidential election campaigns can alter

perceptual deficits in the public's mind.

This chapter establishes the significance of my research. In order to do so, I divide it

into two sections. First, I explore the historical significance of the 2008 election, starting

with a description of the state of affairs that Obama inherited from the Bush

administration, looking at the Iraq war in particular. This discussion helps create an

understanding that foreign policy credentials were essential for a candidate to be viable.

Next, I discuss Obama's credentials prior to his formal announcement to enter the 2008

presidential race. This provides context to much of the criticism that Obama faced during

his presidential campaign.

The second section discusses what this project means for rhetorical scholarship. Here,

I briefly identify current scholarship on presidential campaign rhetoric. Afterwards, I

discuss how media operate to assist in the shaping of public perception of the candidate

in presidential campaigns. I argue that the relationship between candidate's presentation

and the media's re-presentation of the speech functions as a cascade of meaning, where

the image produced at the top trickles-downwards through the media and ultimately

reaches the public. This discussion of media's rhetorical power establishes a framework for my analysis of Obama's speech in later chapters. Additionally, this demonstrates how rhetorical presentation can alter perceptions, and ultimately substituting for reality.

The Moment in History

This section provides context to the events leading up to the 2008 presidential election. It is important to start by looking at the political climate leading up to the 2008 presidential campaign. At the time, public approval of the military occupation in Iraq was slowly diminishing in the face of an impending recession. Much of the public was growing tired of the Iraq occupation and had become increasingly doubtful of its success. This helps demonstrate why there was such a significant emphasis on the foreign policy credentials of the presidential candidates and also provides an understanding of McCain's credibility entering the election. Next, I look at Obama's credentials in relation to foreign policy. This highlights his political shortcomings prior to the election, making the international tour's strategic importance that much greater.

The Bush Legacy

The 2008 election occurred during one of the most turbulent times in American history because of the significance of the Bush Doctrine in foreign policy. According to Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, Bush "had set in motion a revolution in American foreign policy . . . [by discarding or redefining] many of the key principles governing the way the United States should act overseas."[9] As a consequence, whoever won the general election would inherit a Global War on Terror that reshaped American foreign policy, creating extensive military campaigns in both Iraq and Afghanistan that lacked near-term resolutions. In particular, the Iraq War stands out as a defining moment that characterized

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the 2008 campaign. As Denise Bostdorff notes, both McCain and Obama characterized the Iraq war as "the defining issue that reflected their respective leadership capabilities."[10] For each candidate, their approach to the issue represented a broader theme of how they would deal with a world increasingly faced with global threats.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 acted as a defining moment for the Bush administration's policy of preemption. Following the attacks, the Bush administration touted the importance of changing the way the U.S. understood security strategies in the face of new, non-state based threats. Vice-President Dick Cheney, for example, argued that:

> In a sense, 9/11 changed everything for us. 9/11 forced us to think in new ways about threats to the United States, about our vulnerabilities, about who our enemies were, about what kind of military strategy we needed in order to defend ourselves.[11]

In this way, it was important to face potential threats to the security of the United States before they actually occurred. This marked a fundamental shift in military strategy from the Cold War. While the Cold War was marked by the logic of mutually assured destruction and deterrence, the Bush Doctrine favored active intervention and the use of preventative force. Justifications for preemption were solidified in the *National Security Strategy* released in September 2002,[12] approximately six months prior to the initial invasion of Iraq.

Initially, this active response to the terrorist attacks yielded strong support from the public, topping out at close to 90% approval according to some *Associated Press* and *Gallup* polls.[13] This political support for preemption provided the initial groundwork for the Iraq War. The Bush administration had to "sell" the Iraq war to the public. In order to

do so, the Bush administration used the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction and terrorism as the two primary justifications for invading Iraq. As Andrew Calabrese notes:

> The principal arguments offered for why the United States and Great Britain should invade Iraq were twofold, one being that the regime of Saddam Hussein had continued to store, produce, and find ways to further develop the capacity to produce biological, chemical, and nuclear "weapons of mass destruction" (WMDs) and the other being that there were covert links between the Iraqi government and members of the al Qaeda network, perhaps even implicating Iraq in the terrorist attacks on U.S. targets on September 11, 2001.[14]

The Bush administration would also pitch these same ideas to the UN Security Council one month prior to the invasion of Iraq, pointing to satellite photos that implicated Saddam in the construction of WMDs and the maintenance of terrorist camps within Iraq's borders. In March 2003, the United States invaded Iraq.

Six years later, some political analysts considered Iraq a "quagmire" that requires far more attention than the public initially thought. According to the *National Priorities Project*, an organization that tracks Congressional funds allocated to military spending in Iraq and Afghanistan, the total cost of the war tops 700 billion dollars.[15] Similarly, David Senger, the White House correspondent for the *New York Times*, these costs, both monetary and diplomatic, associated with the Iraq war would be a heavy burden to bear for a fresh president.[16] This made Iraq an increasingly important issue during the 2008 election. Numerous studies belabor this point, arguing that, while other issues like the economy were lingered in the public's mind, Iraq was the tipping point for many voters in 2008.[17] As Alan Fram and Trevor Tompson noted, the recession was unlikely to turn

voters to one candidate or the other despite the fact that exit polls demonstrated a

majority of voters considered the economy their primary concern.[18] This point was

backed by similar polls throughout the primaries,[19] demonstrating that the Iraq War was

one of the only parts of the Bush Doctrine that was on people's minds during the election.

But the Bush Doctrine was not only limited to the context of the Iraq War. As Brian

Massumi explains, the logic of preemption behind the Bush Doctrine was "an operative

logic of power defining a political age in as infinitely space-filling and insiduously

infiltrating a way as the logic of 'deterrence' defined the Cold War era."[20] That is, the

logic of preemption was used to justify several controversial foreign policy decisions in

order to maintain and bolster U.S. sovereign authority, as demonstrated by President

Bush's seeming disregard for international law in Guantanamo Bay, withdrawal from the

Biological Weapons Convention in 2001, withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile

Treaty, and refusal to sign international treaties such as the Law of the Sea or the Kyoto

Protocol. Combined, each of these important foreign policy decisions would create

significant hurdles for Obama's campaign platform for a recommitment to

internationalism. He would have to overcome the suspicion and distrust created by

unilateralism.

The scope of Bush's foreign policy had many doubting Obama's ability to actualize

his campaign commitments.[21] As former chief speechwriter and policy advisor for U.S.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell Christian

Bose explains, Bush was so active in reshaping American politics that it may have been

politically impossible to make substantive changes even with a Democratically controlled

Congress following the 2008 elections.[22] While this was true for any of the potential

president-elects, this was especially true for Obama, whom political pundits believed lacked the foreign policy know-how to pragmatically meet his campaign goals.[23]

The doubt surrounding Obama's lofty campaign goals stood in stark contrast to the Republican frontrunner, John McCain. As Reid Wilson explains, "no Republican candidate running for president has the foreign policy experience and credentials McCain boasts."[24] According to a April 2008 Gallup Poll, 66% of those surveyed believed John McCain was a "war hero" for his military service in Vietnam and his five years as a prisoner of war.[25] This is particularly important, as 38% of those polled believed this would play a role in how they voted in the election.[26] This point is fairly significant on its own because it demonstrates that the public places some weight on personal experience.

Not only was McCain considered a "war hero," but his history in the Senate also demonstrated he had considerable experience in foreign relations. First, he served as a ranking member on the Senate Armed Forces Committee during his thirty years in the Senate,[27] demonstrating that he has experience in foreign policy decisions. Second, his criticism of the mismanagement of the Iraq war and emphasis on created the perception that he was tough on security.[28] The 2007 troop surge in Iraq provides a more recent example,[29] as it was credited with reducing the violence in some of the most turbulent regions in the country.[30]

As this section illustrates, September 11th significantly altered the direction of U.S. foreign policy from the doctrine of general deterrence to the doctrine of preemption. This shift in thinking was encapsulated in the *National Security Strategy*[31] and ultimately led to the invasion of Iraq. It appeared as if McCain was the candidate with the most experience, as his record demonstrated that he would alter the strategy in Iraq to make the

outcome more successful. In order to illustrate the differences between McCain and Obama, the next section will discuss in detail Obama's political credentials leading into the 2008 presidential election, paying particular attention to his lack of foreign policy experience.

<div align="center">Obama's Initial Credibility</div>

Before Obama's formal announcement to run for president, moments such as his keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention and his initial stance against the Iraq War made him popular amongst portions of the public.[32] Highlighting these events in addition to the public's initial response is important for a few reasons. First, these moments help explain his initial credibility prior to his decision to enter the race on January 17, 2007. Second, this presumed inexperience also gave credence to his claim that he was a "Washington outsider" who was above the political infighting common in congressional politics. Third, this foregrounds the analysis of his international tour in future chapters because it implicitly demonstrates the "credibility gap" between McCain and Obama on foreign policy.

Despite the fact that he had little foreign policy experience, he was still an overwhelmingly popular candidate. Much of his credibility at the start of the campaign came from Obama's keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, as the speech received such high praises that he quickly moved from obscurity to the limelight. Here, Obama's description of a culturally diverse, yet unified, America helped establish him as a credible speaker and popular figure within the Democratic Party. As Eli Saslow noted at the time, "Obama approached the lectern in Boston a virtual nobody . . . [h]e exited having set the course for an unprecedented political ascent, with the fortified self-

confidence that he could deliver when it mattered most."[33] Indeed, Obama's picture of a future that was beyond partisan politics was an ideal that many saw as the perfect alternative to the Bush administration.

Still, many thought he lacked the political fortitude to win a presidential election. Judy Keen, a political analyst for the *U.S.A Today*, even stated that his only political credentials were "two years in the U.S. Senate, seven years in the Illinois Senate, one loss in a primary election for the U.S. House of Representatives, one stirring keynote address at a Democratic National Convention, and two best-selling books."[34] Additionally, many thought that Obama's resolve during a national political race remained unproven because his 2004 Senate campaign was virtually uncontested.[35] As Marin Dupuis and Keith Boeckelman explain, while the Chicago press originally touted the 2004 race for the Senate seat as monumental, Obama either faced flawed opponents or, at times, no opponent at all, "rendering the outcome a foregone conclusion and lowering the level of issue debate."[36] The original Republican frontrunner, Jack Ryan, dropped out of the Senate race after his sealed divorce records went public. This left the Republicans scavenging for candidates, eventually settling on out-of-state libertarian economist Alan Keyes. Obama won the election in a landslide.[37]

Despite what some saw as political inexperience, the beginning stages of the 2008 presidential campaign demonstrated that Obama was still an incredibly popular choice within the Democratic Party. His ability to mobilize both grassroots support and solicit campaign funds from his short list of experiences demonstrated that he was an exceedingly popular candidate. The grassroots campaign was particularly strong among voters between the ages of 18 to 25 because of the Internet and social-networking sites.[38]

According to Albert Hunt, Obama also generated tremendous support from a Chicago operation known as "Camp Obamas," "where 50 twenty-something-year-olds are trained [to canvas and raise awareness on college campuses], and then fan out to important states."[39] As political rallies prior to his announcement demonstrated, the development of grassroots support allowed him to draw significantly large crowds of young and old voters alike.[40] This ability to draw crowds across ages was significant throughout the campaign.

This network of public support, coupled with residual popularity from his 2004 DNC speech, helped Obama raise massive amounts of money in a short period of time.[41] Starting with a little over 100,000 donors, Obama began the campaign with close to $74 million,[42] an amount that surpassed the funds of all other Democratic candidates except for Hillary Clinton and her $76 million.[43] This ability to fundraise helped Obama throughout the campaign, as his high levels of capital allowed him to attempt to control public and media perceptions of his candidacy.

Despite the fact that the public was enamored with Obama, he still understood that the question surrounding his experience was an important one. He used his relative inexperience in government as a rallying point to bolster his credibility as a leader and candidate. He argued that his existence outside of the fray put him in a unique position among the Democratic presidential hopefuls. The idea that he was a "Washington outsider" would become a common theme throughout the campaign. As Obama noted in his speech officially announcing his presidential run:

> America's faced big problems before, but today our leaders in Washington seem
> incapable of working together in a practical, commonsense way. Politics has

become so bitter and partisan, so gummed up by money and influence, that we can't tackle the big problems that demand solutions. And that's what we have to change first. We have to change our politics, and come together around our common interests and concerns as Americans.[44]

Here, Obama presented the distance between himself and the "insider-trading" associated with congressional politics as beneficial and transformative. Rather than a predetermined agenda based on congressional favoritism, party lines, and fear of presidential reprisal, Obama described a return to deliberation in Congress that voted based on the wants and needs of the American citizen.

Obama's initial vocal opposition to the Iraq War acted as the epitome of this stance. As evidence came out about the Iraq War, a significant portion of the public believed that the government deliberately misled the public to justify invasion. With this frustration in mind, the American public saw Obama's stance as a refreshing change from congressional "politics as usual."[45] Constrained by tremendous political pressure from 9/11, Senators John Edwards, Hillary Clinton, and other 2008 presidential hopefuls provided nearly unanimous support for Bush's plan to invade Iraq on pretenses that would later turn out false. At the same time Obama, then a state senator from Illinois, spoke out against the invasion of Iraq, calling for UN inspections and punitive penalties rather than military force.

Without the fear of political repercussions or backlash from the public, Obama enjoyed considerable distance between himself and the political pressures associated with a congressional seat at the time, a luxury that his primary opponents did not have. This would later become a main thrust of foreign policy discussions and a tool for Obama. As

Stephen Zunes, professor of politics at the University of San Francisco, noted, "while [Obama's] current position on Iraq is not significantly different than that of Clinton or the other major challenger, former North Carolina Senator John Edwards, Obama's good judgment not to support the war five years ago has led millions of Democratic and independent voters to find him more trustworthy as a potential commander-in-chief."[46] This point demonstrates that Obama held moral convictions that superseded what many considered blind support of presidential power.

Once in the Senate, Obama's vocal opposition to the war significantly lessened. As a Senator in 2005 and 2006, he supported several initiatives that could be interpreted as falling in line with the congressional politics of the time. Most notably, he voted to increase funding for the Iraq War, to confirm of Condoleezza Rice as Secretary of State and voted against a timetable for the reduction of U.S. troops in Iraq.[47] Additionally, during the 2006 congressional primaries, he supported the reelection of a few prominent pro-war Democrats, such as Joe Lieberman.[48] Much of the public did not see any of these as significant political gaffes. Moreover, they represented the first foreign policy decisions for Senator Obama, demonstrating his unwillingness to break from the political majority at the time.

It was not until 2007 that Obama publicly returned to the antiwar front. Following the Iraq Study Group's findings that there were no weapons of mass destruction or ties between Iraq and Al Qaeda, Obama capitalized on public sentiment. In August 2007, he delivered a speech at the Wilson Center titled "The War We Need to Win," where he coupled the shortfalls of the Iraq War with the success of the Global War on Terror in order to garner support from conservatives who felt misled by the Bush administration.

The principles of this speech would later materialize in Congress. As Zunes notes, it was "only after Obama formed his presidential exploratory committee that he introduced legislation setting a date for troop withdrawal."[49] According to one CBS / New York Times poll, 64% of those polled at the time did not approve of the way Bush was handling the Iraq War,[50] indicating a desire for a change in policy. Here, Obama stayed in line with public opinion by only vocalizing his opposition to the Iraq War when it was unpopular, granting him the perception of an "unwavering position" on the Bush administration's Global War on Terror. Further, his ability to stay in line with public sentiment enhanced his popularity among voters.

Thus, Obama entered the 2008 general election campaign with two starkly contrasted identities. On the one hand, many thought that Obama lacked the foreign policy knowledge and political experience necessary to become the next president. Not only was his Senate seat virtually unchallenged, but his short time in the Senate did little to boost his resume. On the other hand, Obama was exceedingly popular among the public and his party, demonstrated by his 2004 DNC speech, his ability to mobilize large groups of supporters, and the fact that he was highly critical of unpopular elements of the Bush Doctrine.

As I have illustrated, whoever won the 2008 general election, would inherit the responsibility to answer some tough political questions with regards to Iraq and the Global War on Terror. Not only that, but the influence of the Bush Doctrine meant that the new president-elect could not simply "wish away" the Bush administration's near decade of foreign policy decisions. This meant that the next president, whether it be McCain or Obama, needed to demonstrate a great deal of foreign policy know-how in

order to ease the concerns of the public. On the surface, it appeared as if McCain should have been the favorite prior to Obama's international tour. While Obama had only made a few speeches against the war, McCain was seen as a "war hero," had served on the Senate Armed Forces Committee and made several efforts at pushing the Iraq War in a new direction, such as the 2007 Iraq troop surge.

Significance in Rhetorical Scholarship

Now that I have highlighted the historical significance of this moment in time, it is important to establish some key concepts that act as springboards for my method. This section foregrounds Chapter Three's discussion of "cascading simulation" in the context of presidential campaign rhetoric. First, this discussion begins with rhetorical understandings of campaign rhetoric. Scholars suggest that campaigns function as an ongoing conversation between the public and the politician, where the politician is constantly attempting to construct and reconstruct their image to fit the desires of the voter. Second, I outline the basic tenets of Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard's epistemological theory of simulation in the context of presidential rhetoric. Third, I provide a preview for my method of "cascading simulation."

Presidential Campaign Rhetoric

It is worth noting that the scope of political rhetoric is far-reaching, touching almost every aspect of life. Research has demonstrated that there are political components within discursive locations that may not seem on face political, such as cartoons or advertisements.[51] Likewise, almost any statement from the presidential candidate plays a role in shaping their identity and perception among the voters. In this sense, a presidential

campaign acts as an ongoing conversation between the candidate and the audience, where the candidate constantly attempts to find and fit the ideal image of the presidency.

This conversation involves an ongoing dialogue between the public's political concerns and the candidate's ability to provide adequate feedback to alleviate uncertainty. In this situation, media negotiate the conversation between the two parties. This frame helps determine how the audience comes to understand their campaigns messages and intent.[52] Michael Cornfield explains that this persona requires the president to constantly balance between two dichotomous identities: one that can speak to the public through the language of patriotism and entertainment, and one that can speak to the officials, through both constitutional and technostrategic discourse.[53]

This suggests a dual responsibility for political candidates. Communication scholar Thomas Clark suggests that it requires candidates to speak "decisively and intelligently on issues, while also focusing their speeches around images to which most of the voting members . . . will respond favorably."[54] Leaning too far one way or the other can make it extremely difficult to get elected, as both groups are important for an election. If too much time is afforded to the public value, experts become skeptical that the candidate can translate idealism into policy. On the other hand, if candidates afford too much time to the technical expertise of policy specialists, the public may misinterpret the candidate's intentions or see them as boring.

Looking back to the discussion of Obama and the 2008 campaign, much of the conversation between himself and the public began well before his formal announcement to enter the 2008 presidential race. By positioning himself as a "Washington outsider," he was able to delegitimize his opponents by calling into question their ability to think

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outside of presidential pressure. Additionally, his initial opposition to the Iraq War put him in good standing with the ideals of the American public. Outside of the foreign policy discussions, his mantra of change, which was born in his 2004 DNC speech and his formal announcement to enter the election, provided a heuristic for understanding his future positions during the campaign as markedly different from the Bush administration. This point would also please policy experts on some level, as many political analysts were calling for substantial refocus on the foreign policy front, most notably demonstrated by the Iraq Study Group's findings.

<div align="center">Spectacle</div>

The discussion of credibility suggests that presentation is an important component of speechmaking. This is particularly true in the context of presidential speeches, as the speech and its re-presentation through a medium alters the audience's interpretation of the event. This is most evident in analysis of voters during the 1960s presidential debates between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy. Here, research shows a fundamental difference in voter perception between those that listened to the debates on the radio versus those who watched it on television.[55] Clearly, then, it is important to understand that the presentation is just as important as the speech itself, if they can be separated at all. This section of the paper highlights rhetorical scholarship on visual imagery, focusing on Debord's concept of spectacle and its application in a mediated environment by the president.

The academic literature on the spectacle of representation has roots in the work of Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard. Both authors suggest that signifiers have replaced the signified in our understanding of reality. In other words, the spectacle is so encompassing

that the individual observer can no longer distinguish between reality and fiction. Here, the audience passively accepts representations and images of fantasy as a truth claim, which acts as a filter for conceptualizing identity and the ideal representation of the self. Jean Baudrillard calls these moments in time the "precession of simulacra,"[56] or hyperrealities. Rather than merely representing an event objectively, or (re)presenting a previous message, simulation precedes reality and acts as "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality."[57]

In this light, research suggests that politicians may have significant control over the re-presentation of their messages. Communication scholar Keith Erickson suggests that often times presidential travel takes on its own meaning that can often overshadow a lack of concrete political action.[58] Understandably, this analysis can be extended to presidential candidates, as their campaigns compose a large part of their identity.[59] In campaigns, spectacle can help candidates overcome particular shortcomings of their candidacy.

Erickson also notes that public perception can change based on the location of the speech, suggesting the site carries ideological implications that can enhance the power of the message.[60] For Obama, his speech at Victory Column in Germany held significant ideological power and heightened the significance and persuasive power of his speech. Put in context of his campaign, his "international tour" acted as a substitution for his lack of foreign policy experience. Here, the event itself and the seemingly positive response from the audience helped Obama overcome his critics' arguments that he does not understand how international relations operate.

This point of presumably positive coverage is a curious one. Anyone who remotely follows presidential campaigns will tell you that much of the media coverage of presidential candidates is far from positive. According to George Edwards and Stephen Wayne, recent trends in election coverage demonstrates that more than half of news coverage is negative, with that number steadily increasing based on the likelihood that the candidate will win the election.[61] As an example, they point to the 2000 election where "two out of three evaluations of George W. Bush were negative" despite his popularity in the polls.[62] Although he still won the election, the closeness of the race suggests a correlative potential between journalistic interpretation and the public's perception of a presidential candidate. Thus, the spectacle, or re-presentation of reality by the media can play a significant role in determining the outcome of an election. By placing rhetorical significance on particular aspects of a campaign, the media can alter the publics' interpretation of a candidate, at times altogether substituting fiction for reality.

Cascading Activation

The idea that the media can significantly alter the presidential candidates framing is worth further investigation, particularly in the context of the 2000 general election. While the negative press may suggest that there is a competition between the candidate and the media in determining public perception, the fact that Bush still won implies a potential sequencing behind the construction of spectacle because the media failed to debunk Bush's self representation of a leader tough on security. Instead, I argue presidential campaigns demonstrate that media simulation is most effective when it plays a role in enhancing, rather than denigrating, the message from the candidate. Meaning flows downwards from the top in a process Robert Entman calls "cascading activation," where

the message from the top funnels through various levels of government and nongovernmental outlets before it reaches the public.[63] Here, a particular frame of the ideal candidate determines how the presidential candidate campaigns, as well as how the media evaluates, that image. This rhetorical theory also helps resolve questions about criticism surrounding Bush's campaign. Because message transmission mirrors a waterfall, Entman explains that it is difficult to change or redirect the meaning at lower levels of the cascade.[64]

In this sense, the media can only create meaning out of something that already exists. In other words, there is nothing to report if nothing is happening. That is why presidential candidates carefully plan out the campaign trail months in advance, making sure to shake the right hands, say the right words, and kiss the right babies in front of the appropriate number of cameras, bloggers, and journalists. In the context of the Obama campaign, then, the timing of his international tour could not have been better. Coming off a victory in the Democratic primaries and with less than six months remaining in the election, it was important that he establish legitimacy in the international arena in order to counteract McCain's strength as a foreign policy expert.

Thus, I propose "cascading simulation" as a way to understand Obama's international tour. Here, public opinion provides a frame of the ideal candidate as someone with enough foreign policy experience to manage the world following the Bush administration. Obama's speech at Victory Column serves as the first level of simulation, where he attempts to ground his foreign policy vision within the context of strong leadership. Next, the broadcast media re-presents this speech, changing camera angles to

heighten the significance of particular points of the speech. Lastly, the newspaper media acts as a third level of simulation, as it evaluates the speech in the context of the presidency, rather than a presidential candidacy.

Method of Investigation

For my thesis, I investigate Barack Obama's speech at Victory Column in Berlin, Germany, the corresponding *CNN* broadcast, and written media accounts within the *New York Times* and *Agence France Presse* as a case study of cascading simulation in the context of presidential campaigns. Chapter Two provides an in-depth look at the context leading up to the speech itself. This chapter will highlight important components of the speech that the Obama campaign controlled in order to maximize the result. This breakdown will help establish the foundation for my analysis in the following chapter. Chapter Three provides an in-depth literature review of spectacle in presidential and media studies. At the end of this chapter, I use Entman's theory of "cascading activation" as a means to converge two seemingly divergent schools of thought. It is my argument that both the presentation of the speech and the media's re-presentation of the speech work together to co-produce an image of foreign policy expertise. Chapter Four provides an analysis of each level of the cascade, ultimately concluding that the speech acted as an amalgamation of the two characteristics of the political spectacle. This is demonstrated by the trickle-down of meaning between Obama and the media. Here, Obama's emphasis on the importance of the trans-Atlantic alliance in relation to the War on Terror works with the overwhelmingly positive media description to inoculate him from much of the negative coverage he received earlier in the election. Finally, the concluding chapter summarizes my argument and discusses how reading the 2008 Obama campaign as

cascading simulation provides important insight into the nature of presidential elections.

It will end with suggestions for future research in rhetorical scholarship.

Notes

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CHAPTER 2

THE CONTEXT OF OBAMA'S INTERNATIONAL TOUR

Obama entered the 2008 campaign with significant questions concerning his

electability. While he gained public attention from a few of his speeches, such as his

2002 speech at an anti-war rally in Chicago and keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic

National Convention, he was not known for his ability to win tough political campaigns

or for his foreign policy experience. He was a relatively fresh face in the Senate who ran

virtually unopposed, suggesting he could not win a tough campaign against McCain.

Once in the Senate, he did little to establish himself in foreign policy circles, sponsoring

few key pieces of foreign policy legislation[1] and serving on the Senate Foreign Relations

Committee for two years from 2004-2006.

There were significant concerns about whether Obama's political goals were realistic.

In particular, pundits were skeptical whether he had the political knowhow in light of the

Bush Doctrine and subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.[2] This was particularly

important in the context of the GOP frontrunner John McCain, who some saw as a war

hero with years of experience in foreign policy. Not only that, but McCain also wrapped

up the Republican primaries fairly quickly, giving him plenty of time to prepare for the

general election ahead. This chapter examines the context of Obama's journey to the

2008 general election.

In order to make my analysis more clear, I divide this chapter into four sections: the

Democratic primaries, the portion of Obama's international visit prior to Victory

Column, the stop in Berlin as well as the locations historical significance, and the context

of the speech itself. First, I look at the primaries and the criticisms that Democratic

frontrunners levied against the Obama campaign. This section highlights his credibility

gap, demonstrating the rhetorical problem leading into the international tour. Second, I

outline the international tour leading up to his speech at Victory Column in Berlin. Third,

I examine the location itself, discussing the historical significance of Victory Column.

Last, I examine the speech itself, paying particular attention to the moment in time, the

audience, and the speech itself.

The 2008 Democratic Primaries

Barack Obama faced a tough road during the 2008 primaries. There was a significant

foreign policy credibility gap between him and the other Democratic frontrunners.

Obama was several percentage points ahead of Democratic contenders Senator Joe Biden

and former vice-presidential candidate John Edwards, however, the race between Obama

and Senator Hillary Clinton remained close up until the Democratic National Convention.

According to Todd Lefko, Obama faced four significant obstacles to winning the

presidency: 1) polls showed a Clinton lead of 10 to 20 points in popular support; 2) as

Obama became more popular, there were more questions surrounding the substance of

his proposals rather than the style of his delivery; 3) a danger that Obama would split the

anti-Clinton votes among other Democratic candidates such as Edwards and Biden; and

4) whether the American public was ready to vote for a black man as president.[3] At

different points in time during the Democratic primaries, each of these points became

important strategic hurdles for Obama to overcome in his quest for presidential office.

These political hurdles were particularly evident in criticisms surrounding Obama's

position on engagement with hostile regimes. Citing a July 2007 televised debate, the

frontrunners called Obama's willingness to unconditionally meet with rogue leaders as

politically naïve and ignorant of real world diplomacy.[4] Biden, known for his off-the-

cuff and sometimes controversial remarks, referred to Obama's willingness to openly

negotiate with Iran and North Korea as a scenario of "political anarchy" that would

remove the incentives to abide by international norms and, therefore, green-light both

countries' nuclear programs.[5] The public needed a president that could demonstrate

strong international leadership because of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Obama

needed to demonstrate to the public that he could be tough on rogue states; otherwise he

would fail to shore up support from the voters on the issue of security.

Clinton used this political weakness as a mainstay for her campaign strategy. For

example, at the Iowa Jefferson-Jackson Dinner, Clinton bluntly attacked Obama's slogan

of "change," contrasting it with her own political experience. Clinton explains: "[C]hange

is just a word if you do not have the strength and experience to make it happen . . . we

must nominate a nominee who has been tested, and elect a president who is ready to lead

on day one."[6] She also suggested that the slogan itself was nothing but "mere rhetoric,"

as he had spent very little time in the Senate acting outside the party line to make tough,

politically unpopular decisions.[7] These arguments called into question his ability to

actualize his commitments as a "Washington outsider" and make tough political

decisions.

The criticism surrounding his willingness to engage totalitarian regimes and doubts

surrounding his ability to enact his mantra of change were important ones in the 2008

presidential campaigns. The public's interest in Iraq and the increasing dangers posed by

terrorism made leadership, both international and domestic, a critical factor in the

election. These attacks hit at the core of Obama's popularity because it was based on his

ability to act outside of congressional horse-trading while bringing a fresh approach to politics.

Obama eventually overcame these assaults and captured the Democratic nomination in June.[8] However, the Democratic primaries raised several questions about Obama's credibility. Many thought he could not appeal to Clinton supporters in the general election because in-party attacks from the Clinton camp did not let up until the very end of the primary.[9] One Gallup Poll taken in March suggested that the race was so polarizing that nearly one-third of Clinton supporters would vote for McCain.[10] Other polls expressed similar uneasiness among the public, as a June 4 Rasmussen Reports daily presidential tracking poll reported a three way split between undecided voters, Obama supporters, and McCain supporters where foreign policy could be the deciding factor for those on the fence.[11]

The McCain camp capitalized on this uneasiness among the Democratic base, running campaign ads that quoted many of Obama's critics during the Democratic primaries. On top of that, McCain suggested that Obama did not truly understand the situation in Iraq because he had not been back to Iraq since 2006 and, therefore, had not seen the progress made in the country.[12] In light of this political speculation, it was important that Obama answer his critics and prove that he had the political leadership necessary to be the next president-elect. He decided that, before the general election began, he needed to travel abroad as a means of bolstering his credibility and countering the attack by McCain.

The First Leg of the International Tour: Peace in the Middle East

After numerically wrapping up the Democratic nomination in June, Barack Obama

embarked on an international tour. During the trip, Obama focused his efforts on key

allies in the Middle East and Europe, visiting eight locations: Kuwait, Afghanistan, Iraq,

Jordan, Israel, Germany, France, and United Kingdom. While the Obama camp insisted

that this was not a campaign move,[13] political spectators such as Dan Balz of the

Washington Post suggested that the trip was "designed to deepen his foreign policy

credentials, confront questions at home about his readiness to be commander in chief, and

signal the possibility of a new era in U.S. relations with the rest of the world."[14] Forty

journalists exclusively from U.S. media outlets followed Obama throughout the trip,[15]

including three anchors from major broadcast networks: *CBS*'s Katie Couric in Jordan,

ABC's Charles Gibson in Israel, and *NBC*'s Brian Williams in Germany.[16]

The fact that so many journalists accompanied Obama on the trip was particularly

significant. Republican strategist Vin Weber stated "the reward is potentially very big:

that he substantially closes the very large, and only large, gap he has with John McCain

and establishes a foreign policy credential."[17] As such, his trip had the potential for both

extreme risk and extreme reward because the large media contingent would cover any

misstep. This section focuses on the Middle East portion of the trip leading up to the

speech at Victory Column in Berlin, Germany. I identify key points of emphasis, looking

at where Obama went, with whom he met, and with whom he traveled at each stop.

<u>First Stop: Camp Arifjan in Kuwait</u>

Before meeting with political leaders in the Middle East, Obama began his tour by

making a secret stop[18] at the military base, Camp Arifjan, in Kuwait. According to Mike

Allen, staff writer at *Politico*, the meeting was so secret that a "blogger briefly posted word Friday that Obama was in Kuwait, but the campaign refused to confirm it and the post was removed."[19] This portion of the trip was not disclosed to the media until after the event, when senior campaign advisor Robert Gibbs sent out an email to reporters at 3:30 am.[20]

<div align="center">Second Stop: Afghanistan</div>

That same day Obama flew to Kabul, Afghanistan where he met with a congressional delegation that intended to assess the conditions of the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. The delegation was led by Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) and Senator Chuck Hagel (R-NE).[21] The only campaign staff member to accompany Obama on this portion of the trip was Mark Lippert, Obama's foreign policy advisor in the Senate, who had finished a tour in Iraq as a Navy reservist the previous year.[22] He also had eight secret service members with him as well as two U.S. journalists, John McCormick from the *Chicago Tribune* and Glen Johnson of *The Associated Press*.[23] Obama's group was so small because it was part of a congressional delegation and not part of the campaign. Nonetheless, it provided the opportunity for free coverage of the candidate touring foreign countries.

During this portion of the trip, the congressional delegation met with Afghan officials at Jalalabad Airfield and U.S. troops at Bagram Air Base in Eastern Afghanistan. Although Obama made no public statements while in Afghanistan, political analysts still speculated that it was an important part of the trip.[24] According to *New York Times* reporters Carlotta Gall and Jeff Zeleny, by "selecting Afghanistan as an early stop . . . [Obama] was seeking to highlight what he says is the central front in the fight against terrorism."[25] Towards the end of the stop in Afghanistan, the delegation met with Afghan

President Hamid Karzai in a two hour closed-door session to emphasize these sentiments, later releasing a signed statement relaying the topics of discussion.[26]

<p style="text-align:center">Third Stop: Iraq</p>

After the one day stop in Afghanistan, the delegation left for Iraq. Obama talked with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, and the Iraqi National Security Adviser Mowaffak al-Rubaie in order to discuss the future of Iraq. These meetings were particularly promising, as both sides reached a consensus on a 16-month withdrawal of U.S. military in the area.[27] While some military officials were hesitant to accept a specific timetable, they agreed with the general frame of the withdrawal discussed at that meeting. This visit did two things. First, it helped Obama make significant headway in improving the perception that he understood the nuances of foreign policy regarding Iraq, and it demonstrated an initial transformation in Obama's perceived credibility.

This changing perception of expertise did not go without notice by either the media or the current administration. As one *Time Magazine* article reported:

It wasn't only that the Iraqi government seemed to take Obama's side in the debate over when U.S. forces should leave (sooner rather than later). McCain was being undermined in Washington as well, by his old pal George W. Bush, who seemed to take Obama's side in the debate about whether to talk to Iran. Bush sent a ranking U.S. diplomat to negotiate with the Iranians on nuclear issues — and also let it be known that a U.S. Interests Section could soon be established in Tehran, the first U.S. diplomatic presence on Iranian soil since the 1979 hostage crisis. McCain's greatest claim to the presidency — his overseas expertise — now seems squandered.[28]

President Bush's apparent shift in foreign policy provided significant gravitas to Obama's positions on both the withdrawal from Iraq, and Obama's insistence on establishing diplomatic contact with Iran. These two events gave teeth to Obama's pre-Senate and Senate stances on the war, and the visit received quite a bit of support from the Iraqi public, despite their concerns surrounding withdrawal.

Fourth Stop: Jordan

Following Obama's visit to Iraq, he traveled to Amman, Jordan, where he met with King Abdullah bin al-Hussein II. According to the *Jordan Times*, this was a closed door meeting where the two discussed Jordan's role in the Middle East peace process and the future of a Palestinian state. The meeting was short and provided a backdrop for his first press conference in front of the traveling press corps.[29] Held at the Temple of Hercules, the speech opened with statements from Senators Jack Reed and Chuck Hagel, who both gave statements supporting troop withdrawal in Iraq.[30] At the time, there was considerable speculation that both Reed and Hagel were possible vice-presidential options for Obama.[31]

During the speech, Obama summarized his trip to Afghanistan and Iraq, noting that he received a positive message from military and ranking officials in both countries. He used this to reiterate his faith in his own foreign policy credentials, noting:

> I don't have doubts about my ability to apply sound judgment to the major national security problems that we face. These are difficult questions and, you know, I don't think that anybody believes they have the perfect formula for solving some of these very difficult foreign policy problems . . . But I feel very confident in my worldview

and my ability to shape a discussion that takes all arguments and facts into consideration, and then come up with the best answer.[32]

This was particularly true in the context of doctrinal changes within the Bush administration.[33] Following the speech, Obama answered two questions on the Israeli-Palestinian issue "from people who appeared to be local reporters."[34] While he did not go into a great amount of detail, he did emphasize the important role that the U.S. played as a mediating actor in the peace process,[35] recognizing that it was important to address both Israel's military security and Palestine's economic security to ensure a peaceful resolution.[36] This created an important backdrop for his two day stay in Israel.[37]

Fifth Stop: Israel

The trip to Israel marked an important transition in Obama's overseas visits. As *Associated Press* writer Herb Keinon notes, "While Obama's trip to Afghanistan and Iraq were congressional delegation trips paid for by the U.S. government to allow lawmakers to get a firsthand look at issues, his trip to Israel and then to Europe is being paid for by his campaign."[38] Obama arrived with a media entourage and a few of his foreign policy advisors, including former Middle East envoy Dennis Ross and former U.S. ambassador to Israel Dan Kurtzer.[39] These two days in Israel were the first opportunity for Obama to demonstrate credibility as a leader that supported one of the U.S.'s key allies in the Middle East.

Washington Times writer Joshua Mitnick described this portion of the trip as "a whirlwind day of meetings, photo opportunities and briefings that stretched from Jerusalem and Ramallah in the West Bank to a helicopter flight southward toward Gaza."[40] Almost immediately following his arrival, Obama was immersed first-hand into

the center of the conflict "when a Palestinian man driving a front-end loader went on a rampage, overturning cars and ramming a bus just a few hundred metres [sic] from the [King David Hotel] where Mr. Obama was supposed to spend the night."[41] Although this had no significant effect on his travel plans, there was a possibility that this controlled the tone for the remainder of the trip.

Once Obama arrived in Israel, he had a series of closed door meetings with Israeli President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Defence Minister Ehud Barak, and opposition leader Benjamin Netenyahu,[42] where Obama gave security assurances against Iran, Syria, and Palestine.[43] Following these conferences, Obama stopped in Sderot, a conflict torn Israeli border town near the Gaza Strip. Here he held a press conference at the local police station with "three senior Cabinet ministers, the national police chief and the mayor by his side, Mrs. Livni"[44] while "standing in front of a pile of exploded rocket shells that have rained down." [45] During the speech, Obama expressed empathy with Israel's unwillingness to engage Hamas.[46] He also spoke briefly about a nuclear Iran, noting that no option was "off the table" in dealing with the threat. Both of these points were critical, as there was serious fear among political organizations, such as the American Israel Public Affairs Commission (AIPAC) or Israeli officials, that Obama would abandon ties to Israel.[47]

Following this conference, Obama crossed West Bank roadblocks to Ramallah, where he met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salaam Fayad. These meetings were also closed door. However, media reports suggest a positive reaction from both the Palestinian public and Palestinian leadership, who saw his speech in Amman as a signal that Obama would offer them a fair shake in the peace process.[48]

In all, Obama visited five countries (six including the West Bank) throughout the

Middle East in four days. The visit demonstrates the appearance of concern about the

most pressing issues in the region: the conflict in Iraq, the conflict in Afghanistan, and

the Middle East peace process. At each stop, Obama met with high ranking diplomats

from the country to discuss future security trends. Marked by visits to U.S. military bases,

the initial stops were part of a congressional delegation that assessed the wars in

Afghanistan and Iraq. Once he left Iraq, Obama continued on to Jordan, Israel and the

West Bank, where he met with many of his campaign strategists and a larger media

convoy.

The beginning of the campaign portion of his visit began in Jordan, where Obama

held his first press conference during the international tour. During this speech, he

summarized his earlier visits and suggested that the positive response demonstrated

significant foreign policy knowledge. After the speech, he left for Israel where he made

several stops throughout the country to get a firsthand account of the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict. Here, he carefully balanced his message between support of Israel and the

promise of future engagement with Palestine. Obama understood that, if he were to win

the 2008 election, it was important that he demonstrate a general coherence on the most

pressing issues linked to terrorism. This establishes a solid backdrop for Obama's

European stops and his keynote speech on trans-Atlantic relations in Berlin, Germany.

Obama's Stop in Berlin

While much of the diplomacy during the Middle East portion of the tour occurred

behind closed doors, the European leg of the international tour was quite a bit more

public. Here, Obama made three stops. First, he stopped in Germany to meet with

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and delivered a speech at Victory Column in Berlin. Second, he stopped in Paris to meet with French President Nicholas Sarkozy. Finally, Obama concluded his tour with a stop in London, where he met with former Prime Minister Tony Blair and current Prime Minister Gordon Brown. While the latter two visits were important, the speech at Victory Column is a key point of emphasis. In an article published in the *Kuwait Times* freelance writer Steven Holland described the event as Obama's attempt "to convince Americans that he is not a foreign policy lightweight [and] to inoculate himself against McCain's charge that he is naive and inexperienced."[49] This was Obama's largest crowd during the campaign up to this point.[50] This section discusses the controversy surrounding the speech location, focusing on the last minute switch from Brandenburg Gate to Victory Column, as well as the historical significance of both locations.

Even before Obama's arrival, this portion of the tour created more of a stir than any other part of the trip because of the planned location of the speech. While the Obama camp considered a number of locations, they originally selected Brandenburg Gate for its historical significance.[51] Dating back to its construction in 1791, the gate has been a major symbol of German authority, most notably during the Nazi's ascension to power and as a symbol of freedom after the fall of the Berlin Wall.[52]

Additionally, because the wall acted as a division between East and West Berlin during the Cold War, Berlin held an important place in American history. The city represents the symbolic victory of American democracy over Soviet communism. [53] As Leonard Doyle notes, only three presidents had spoken at the Brandenburg gate in the past:[54] John F. Kennedy in his 1963 "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech, Ronald Reagan in his

1987 "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" speech, and Bill Clinton in a 1994 speech addressing peace between nations immediately following the fall of the U.S.S.R.

This selection was rife with controversy among German politicians, particularly German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Berlin Mayor Klaus Wowereit and Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier. On one side, Merkel thought that the location was inappropriate. According to Dan Balz, "Merkel earlier criticized the senator for considering holding the event at the Brandenburg Gate, calling it inappropriate for a U.S. presidential candidate to use the historic site for the equivalent of a political rally."[55] Additionally, according to a story by Gregor Peter Schmitz, German government spokesman Thomas Steg saw the selection of the non-partisan symbol of Brandenburg Gate as inappropriate because the speech was part of "partisan electioneering" on Obama's behalf,[56] likening it to Merkel using the National Mall or Red Square in Moscow.[57] This clearly demonstrated that people saw the speech as a symbolic act.

Not only was this reaction based on the symbolic value of Brandenberg Gate, but some reports from German media outlets suggest that it was also out of respect for President Bush and Republican candidate John McCain. According to a report in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a member of Bush's delegation at the G-8 summit approached Christoph Heusgen, Merkel's foreign policy advisor, to discuss Obama's speech.[58] Additionally, *Der Spiegel* reporter Gregor Scmitz suggests that it was out of respect for McCain, "who has long enjoyed strong ties to Germany and good personal relationships with a number of high-level government officials in Berlin."[59] Here, Germany did not want to appear to favor one candidate over the other, particularly in such a close election.

On the other side, supporters of the Brandenburg location, primarily Wowereit and Steinmeier, suggested that the selection of Brandenburg Gate was more than appropriate given the historical relationship between the two countries. Quoted in a report that appeared in the German newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Steinmeier stated "The Americans contributed decisively to saving the city of Berlin, and that is why we should make historic sites such as the Brandenburg Gate available to them."[60] Wowereit also responded to the charge that Obama was "electioneering," suggesting that Merkel had done the same thing when she was running for Chancellor.[61] Both of these positions were summarily dismissed as political jockeying by Wowereit and Steinmeier,[62] but it still demonstrated that there was considerable controversy and symbolism surrounding the location of Obama's speech.

Ultimately, the Obama camp chose to switch locations, noting that there was a miscommunication between the campaign, who thought Germany would see the gesture as a compliment,[63] and Merkel. This foreign policy audible was an important one. Obama could have spoiled the entire trip by looking incredibly arrogant if he ignored the wishes of the highest elected German official. As Schmitz reported:

[T]he tumult in Berlin also underscores a bit of foreign policy naivité on the part of Obama's travel planners. Merkel's clear choice of words may be surprising, but it wouldn't have been difficult to imagine that the German government would give a tepid response to his plan to hold a speech at such a highly symbolic historical location.[64]

The possibility that Merkel would blast Obama for speaking at Brandenberg was certainly possible, especially in the context of strong relations between McCain and

Merkel. Instead, Obama's planners chose Victory Column as an alternate location for the speech on trans-Atlantic relations.

Victory Column had its own historical significance. Originally erected in 1864 to commemorate the Prussian victory in the Danish-Prussian War, the Nazis moved the monument into the center of Berlin in 1939. As such, there was still some controversy surrounding its selection for Obama's speech. As Andreas Borcholte noted, its selection was questionable given the fact that much of the German public saw Victory Column as symbol of Nazi power.[65] Pelosi, as well as others on Obama's campaign team, defended the selection, arguing that the monument's place in world history provided an appropriate venue to discuss the restoration of the U.S. image abroad.[66] Additionally, Andreas Borcholte, staff writer for *Der Spiegel*, noted that the historical landscape of the monument had already begun a process of evolution, as Victory Column had become a site in Germany symbolized by political progressivism,[67] including the Love Parade,[68] the endpoint of the Christopher Street Day Parade,[69] and a name adopted by a German LGBT magazine.

Ultimately, the location that Obama chose to deliver the speech held political significance. Originally scheduled for Brandenburg Gate, important players in German politics, such as Chancellor Merkel, raised major objections due to its historical significance where "partisan electioneering" was deemed inappropriate. Prior to Obama's arrival on July 22, the two sides agreed that Victory Column would be a better location. While this site also had its own historical significance that sparked controversy, it recently emerged as a symbol for political progressivism in Germany, which made it an

appropriate site to deliver Obama's message of change and unity against violent forces. Now that I have discussed the historical significance of the site, this next section discusses the context of the speech itself.

<div align="center">Contextual Analysis of the Victory Column Speech</div>

On July 24, 2008 Obama delivered a speech entitled "A World that Stands as One" at Victory Column in Berlin, Germany. This speech on trans-Atlantic relations was the most significant public portion of his international tour, as it was one of the most covered campaign speeches in the 2008 presidential race. As White House correspondent for the *Huffington Post* Christina Bellantoni notes, the Obama camp received over "1,300 requests for press credentials from reporters" who wanted to cover the speech.[70] Given this fact, it is important to examine this particular moment in time. This final section examines the speech itself in detail. This analysis begins with a look at the audience, followed by a description of the speech itself.

Obama's popularity was enormous in Germany. As cited by *Der Spiegel*, German pollster Emnid "found that 74 percent of Germans said that if they could cast a ballot in the U.S. election, they would vote for the presumptive Democratic Party nominee. Only 11 percent said they would vote for his Republican Party contender, John McCain."[71] City officials initially estimated that up to a million people would be in attendance or watching a televised version of the speech in city centers throughout Berlin.[72] While actual estimates put the crowd closer to two-hundred thousand, the size of the audience was still significant. Up until then, Obama's largest live venue was the 2004 Democratic National Convention, which was no more than a tenth of the size. These numbers demonstrate Obama was exceedingly popular in Europe, particularly in Germany. This

support was evident during the speech; a barrage of applause met almost every mention of "freedom." While the camera focuses on Obama the majority of the time, it changes focus during every moment of applause, either changing to a camera on German citizens cheering and holding American flags (which were provided by the campaign)[73] or another camera overlooking the top of Victory Column.[74]

During this speech, Obama called for a renewal of U.S. ties with the international community in an effort to reunify global allies against terrorism, nuclear proliferation and other issues. [75] In order to demonstrate the importance of this partnership, Obama maintained the historical ties between the U.S. and Germany, linking the struggle for freedom in Cold War Berlin to the effort against terrorism. Here, Obama noted that, much like communism in Berlin, the problem of terrorism was not an isolated problem. Rather, both issues had global consequences that require coordination to adequately deal with the issues at hand.[76] After characterizing the status quo as a world wrought with problems, Obama noted that Europe and the U.S. needed to overlook their differences in an effort to work together in the future.

Obama received an overwhelmingly positive response from the German public as the international community saw the presentation as a symbolic shift in American foreign policy away from both Bush and McCain.[77] According to *New York Times* writers Jeff Zeleny and Nicholas Kulish, the response was so positive that the German foreign minister, Karsten Voigt, conducted a series of interviews with German media outlets reminding people that, "if elected, Obama would have to support positions unpopular with the German public,"[78] such as calling for increased troop presence in Afghanistan. Still, reports throughout Europe reflected strong support of Obama. In one Gallup Poll,

64 percent of those surveyed in France, 62 percent in Germany and 60 percent in Britain all preferred Obama over McCain for the American presidency.[79] Another poll indicated that 90 percent of the French people would vote for Obama if they could participate in the U.S. election.[80] Obama even won over Merkel, as she saw it as a positive speech that promised genuine cooperation in the future.[81]

As a result, Obama's overwhelming popularity characterized much of the speech and the remainder of his European visit. Both the U.S. press and European citizens alike seemed entranced by the speech, as there were record numbers of both that wanted to be present at the speech. Polls both before and after the speech demonstrated that the German public strongly supported Obama, and this was evident during the speech. The applause that accompanied much of the speech created the image of strong support from the German public, acting as a demonstration of foreign policy competence that many thought he lacked prior to the trip.

Concluding Remarks

Although there was no immediate change in the polls (Obama was favored by six points before and after the tour)[82] there was a possibility that the international tour acted as a strong preemptive measure that inoculated Obama against McCain's attacks in the future. Many Republican strategists, including John McCain's former top political advisor, saw the entire trip as a significant win for Obama, as the success of the trip "acquitted him[self] overseas."[83] Indeed, some spectators saw the overwhelming success of the European tour as a victory lap for Obama's presidential campaign, noting that the imagery of the campaign conveyed strong leadership and popularity abroad.[84]

Indeed, the appearance of the trip made it seem as if Obama had already won the presidency, or at the very least answered much of the criticism surrounding his foreign policy background.

In a press conference following the tour, Obama recognized that the benefits would not be immediate, as he stated: "I'm not sure there's any short-term [political gain] . . . The value to me of this trip is, hopefully, it gives voters a sense that I can in fact . . . operate effectively on the international stage. That may not be decisive for the average voter right now, given our economic troubles, but it's knowledge they can store in the back of their minds for when they go into the polling place later."[85] The press conference was a fitting conclusion to the tour, as it demonstrated not only a more realistic understanding of foreign policy, but it also demonstrated an understanding of American politics beyond the most up-to-date poll numbers. As the economy became the primary issue in the head of the American citizen, Obama's foreign policy tour marked an effort to demonstrate that domestic and international concerns do not have to compete against each other. Instead, they are often complimentary forces that could be addressed in tandem. He looked competent on foreign policy now, which buoyed him when domestic issues took center stage.

In all, Obama came out of the Democratic primaries with the appearance of being battered and beaten. Clinton's polarizing campaign had given McCain plenty of ammunition leading into the general election, causing Obama to take an international tour where he visited combat zones in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as major allies in both the Middle East and Europe. The most significant part of this trip was his stop in Berlin, where he delivered a keynote speech on the future of trans-Atlantic relations.

Originally scheduled for Brandenburg Gate, political opposition from Germany's leadership, particularly Chancellor Merkel, forced him to change the location to Victory Column. The speech itself was met with overwhelming support by the German public. While it did not immediately translate into a difference in polling data, many political pundits, including Republican strategists close to McCain, believe that the trip addressed several of Obama's shortfalls coming into the general election. Chapter 3 will analyze the presentation of speech itself, arguing that the presentation and re-presentation acted as a simulation of foreign policy experience that inoculated Obama against foreign policy criticism. In order to illustrate my case, I will look at both paper and video media accounts of the speech as well as the speech itself.

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CHAPTER 3

CASCADING SIMULATION AS A METHOD

A picture is worth a thousand words because of the ideological symbolism behind the image. Neo-Marxist Guy Debord argued that the representational power propagated by capitalism's emphasis on consumption defined reality during the 1960's, noting that "the spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images."[1] In this sense, an individual's ability to negotiate their identity in terms of excess ultimately defined their value to society. Scholars across disciplines have taken note of this point, arguing that citizens and critics should be wary of the power of visual imagery. This point is perhaps best illustrated by voter analysis during the 1960s presidential debates between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy. Research shows a fundamental difference in voter perception between those that listened to the debates on the radio versus those who watched it on television.[2]

Some members of the media even recognized this trend during Obama's international tour. Carrie Budoff Brown, a correspondent for the website *Politico*, suggested that the entire trip looked like a victory lap for Obama's presidential campaign:

If Barack Obama wanted to present the aura of a president during his overseas tour, the visuals alone seemed to accomplish part of the task. He flew in a helicopter over Iraq with the chief American military commander in the region. Heads of state at his side, he gripped and grinned his way through two continents. And he placed himself against grand and gritty backdrops, from royal palaces and towering monuments to military base gymnasiums and dusty Middle Eastern landscapes.[3]

The fact that Brown noted that "the visuals alone seemed to accomplish part of the task" of appearing presidential speaks to the justification for a rigorous analysis of the trip. This suggests that people thought the Obama campaign carefully orchestrated each element of the international tour, from the "grand and gritty backdrops" to the appearances with "heads of state at his side," in order to highlight Obama's appeal as a viable presidential candidate in the 2008 election. At each stop, he presented himself not as someone who lacked foreign policy experience, but as someone who had been there before.

Every time Obama did anything during the trip, from give a speech to shake a hand, he created moments that invited the media to positively report on his trip. He stopped at U.S. military bases in Afghanistan and Iraq so that the media would report a commitment to U.S. interests in the region. He toured the border of the Gaza Strip and spoke diligently about the Israel-Palestine conflict so that his message would reach pro-Jewish lobbies like AIPAC. In a similar vein, he met with senior officials in Iraq, Jordan, Israel, the West Bank, Germany, France, and Great Britain so that the media would report he understood the modus operandi of diplomacy. He selected historically significant speech locations so that the media would take notice of his understanding of the U.S.'s role in world politics. All of this helped to insulate him from attacks on his foreign policy credibility.

Brown's re-presentation, as well as others, demonstrates that the rhetorical power surrounding Obama's visual artifice influenced the public's overall interpretation of his candidacy in 2008. The spectacle of the trip not only provided credence to his speech at Victory Column, but it also influenced how others interpreted his foreign policy

experience. Even the McCain camp took note of the potential influence of the spectacle, redirecting their television ads to criticize Obama's international tour as celebrity hype that excessively focused on popularity rather than policy.[4] In the context of the presidential campaign, both Obama and the media have mutually reinforcing roles in constructing the spectacle of presidential experience.

This chapter outlines the methodological foundations for my analysis of Obama's speech at Victory Column. In order to do so, I take an in-depth look at the theory of spectacle, noting there are two diverging schools of thought in spectacle that differentiate the actor within spectacle. Some scholars believe that media plays a central role in the creation of spectacle. Others believe that politicians create spectacle. While both theories are plausible, I argue that these two methods of spectacle occur in sequence, with the media re-interpreting the political simulation in order to heighten its rhetorical power. After providing a convergence between political and media spectacle, I provide a preview of Chapter Four.

<div align="center">Method and Literature Review</div>

This section of the paper establishes my method for analyzing Obama's speech. I argue that media critics and rhetorical critics understand spectacle in an incomplete way, particularly in the case of presidential campaigns. In both cases, academics appear to take a near-totalizing approach to their research, arguing that *either* media, in particular television, acts as a universal filter that controls public perception, *or* the presidency controls the message by manipulating the media.[5] Spectacle, however, is not restricted to either media control or presidential control of the message; rather, spectacle is the result of a cascade of meaning downward from the candidate's message and the media's re-

<div align="center">58</div>

presentation of that message. Put simply, the media cannot report if there is no story and acts as the key medium for transmitting the message to the public. I look at scholarship from both ends of this academic spectrum, highlighting this middle road to understanding political and presidential spectacles. In order to do so, I briefly discuss the traditional roots of spectacle, followed by its application in media studies and presidential discourse. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of "cascading activation" as a way of understanding the interaction between the multiple levels of simulation, describing a new mode of analysis that I refer to as "cascading simulation."

<div align="center">Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard: The Roots of Spectacle</div>

The theory of spectacle emerges from Guy Debord's 1960's "situationist" manifesto entitled *Society of the Spectacle*, which critiques advanced capitalism's ability to shape our view of the world only in terms of its market value.[6] According to Debord, "the whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that was once directly lived has become mere representation."[7] Capitalism reproduces the reality that defines a person's lived experience through a "self-portrait of power"[8] in terms of goals toward accumulation. Within the relationship between the public and capitalism the audience passively accepts representations and images of fantasy as truth claims, which act as a filter for conceptualizing identity and the ideal representation of the self. The consumers' self-worth is defined as a system of itemized capital, where the system of capitalism reorients want-based goods into need-based goods. Inherent in Debord's understanding of the spectacle, likely a result of its Marxist roots, is the concept of morality. Here, the empowered create the spectacle as a means to control and alienate the disempowered.

At the same time as Debord's neo-Marxist critique of capitalism, French scholar Jean Baudrillard developed a much more postmodern approach to spectacle, suggesting that the proliferation of media creates an excess of information that has the potential to destabilize the distinctions between "reality" and "appearance." In his initial essays published in the book *Simulation*, Baudrillard posits that there are three levels of simulation: first-order, where the re-presentation of the real is observably an artificial representation; second-order, where the re-presentation "blurs the boundaries between reality and representation;"[9] and third-order, where representations become re-presentations because they exist as "generation[s] [of reality] by models of a real without origin or reality."[10] Within third-order simulation, events play out based on a preprogrammed logic that scripts interpretation based on a predestined end.

I am most concerned with the third-order, which Baudrillard argues is the only form of representation that exists in a world of constant exposure to media and technology. Here, society is stuck in a "precession of simulacra"[11] or "hyperreality"[12] where a non-represented reality is nonexistent and the description "of the real [acts as a substitution for] the real itself."[13] Put another way, the simulation substitute's reality with its own set of referential signs that fundamentally alters the meaning of a particular event. Culture is so engrained in the flow of information that mediation through news reports plays an integral part in shaping meaning, often times substituting for reality itself while "dominating almost every aspect of our public and private lives."[14] This is a point that has shown up in movies such as *Apocalypse Now*, *Network*, *Wag the Dog*, and most notably the *Matrix* where a fictitious narrative replaces reality in order to alter the audiences' perception of news or conflict.[15]

Similarities between Baudrillard and Debord certainly exist, as they both take note of the spectacle created by representation. Further, Baudrillard's initial method of deconstruction further demonstrates a similarity, as he employed a combination of "semiological and neo-Marxist perspectives"[16] to disengage from simulation. Still, significant differences exist between the two scholars in their characterization of the spectacle.

Baudrillard's main contention is that you cannot escape the simulacra. As Richard Lane notes, Baudrillard rejects Debord's ethical characterizations of the spectacle, arguing that it is not necessarily "a 'fake' existence in the sense of the representation blurring with the real" to create repression, but instead "is another type of 'reality,' and that is how the subject experiences it."[17] Indeed, Debord's theory of the spectacle assumes space where there is an *inside* (the have-nots) and an *outside* (the haves) within the simulation. However, Baudrillard argues that there is no outside of simulation, making a genuine or true understanding of reality impossible.

In this sense, the hierarchical space between the spectator and the spectacle that creates exclusion is nonexistent. As Iain Thomson explained in a lecture connecting Debord to Baudrillard:

> There is thus no longer any exteriority to the spectacle, no uncontaminated standpoint outside the spectacle from which we could call it into question. This ubiquitous spread of the spectacle means that critique can only be imminent, taking place from within, and that the cultural critic is at best like a participant observer in a madhouse, or (as Nietzsche put it), a cultural physician treating an illness from which he or she suffers as well.[18]

For Baudrillard, then, the subject can never fully experience reality outside of re-presentation. Not only does it shape the way the public interprets status quo politics, but it also determines the nature of appropriate strategies used to change it. Ultimately, this leads Baudrillard to dismiss Debord's theory as a "radical fiction," arguing that "the proliferation of images, information [and] signs . . . overshadows production."[19] In other words, Baudrillard believes that technological processing has replaced capital in the political economy as the critical signifier within society.

In all, theories of spectacle argue that representational force supersedes reality. For Debord, this spectacle representation is value-laden and creates systems of alienation and repression along the productive values defined by capitalism. For Baudrillard, this system is somewhat value-neutral and engulfs all experience. This point is particularly important, as it highlights a key difference between the two theorists. Baudrillard does not recognize Marxist-types of exclusion because it is impossible to exist outside of spectacle. In other words, while individuals may be able to provide direction to how others perceive the simulation, these individuals are not just actors but also objects of simulation because the simulation itself is what calls the original action into being.

<div align="center">Spectacle in the Media</div>

Baudrillard's theories of simulation and hypperreality have significantly influenced the study of spectacle in media criticism. Today, many scholars in the area attribute their analysis to his descriptions of technology as a tool of mediation that ultimately defines how individuals interpret reality. Here, scholars suggest that the media's re-presentation of the event contains an ideological charge that "evokes a dramatic setting" for evaluating political leaders' efforts to deal with "external and internal enemies" to the stability of the

polity.[20] This portion of the theoretical foundations highlights these trends in scholarship, looking at the works of media critics who draw from Baudrillard's theories on simulation in their analysis of media report.

For postmodern media critics, the 1980s acts as a key turning point in how the media operates in society because of the proliferation of technology. As Mark Poster notes:

Until the late 1980s technical constraints limited the media's ability [to transmit information] . . . The great limitation, then, of the first electronic media age is that images could only be transmitted from a small number of centers to a large number of receivers . . . [This scarcity of senders] encouraged and justified, without much thought or consideration, the capitalist or nation-state exploitation of image transmission.[21]

The government, or a few large media conglomerates, could centralize and monopolize media messages because they were the only ones that had the capacity to "deliver the news."[22] This meant that there was little space for alternative viewpoints outside of those sanctioned by those in power, often times resulting in a spectacle that supports the status quo.

However, with the advent of the Internet and proliferation of "independent" media outlets, accessibility for both the creator and consumer to particular types of information greatly expanded, granting the media greater control over the message and the ability to present the information in "real-time."[23] Kevin Glynn notes:

As we proliferate ever more and finer mediating technologies for live, real-time, hyperspeed information delivery, as the old television adage 'you are there' is taken to the -nth degree, and as we ramp up our immersive apparatuses of sound and image

perfection, all of which claim to take us closer and closer to the reality of the event

itself, that reality paradoxically recedes into hyperrealistic simulation.[24]

Media reports attempt to place the public as close to the event as possible by maximizing

accessibility of information. This assessment acts as a simulation that disrupts temporal

reality. Rather than allowing the event to linearly play out, this evaluation suspends the

event in time and provides a pre-evaluation for how the event plays out. Events no longer

take place in a vacuum, but instead are subject to a constant mediated repackaging to suit

the particular demands of the moment or "pre-set mediated frames."[25] Thus, the speaker's

intent is irrelevant to what frame the media deems appropriate for evaluation. For

example, if the media frames diplomacy with rogue nations in the context of the Global

War on Terror, they would argue that the negotiations fail because the other countries'

regimes support terrorism or the foundations of radical Islam. As a result, the public may

respond negatively by pushing for a more hardline response from the administration.

This process of re-presentation within predetermined frames is particularly important

in the context of the interaction between political leaders and the media because "it is

through television that the discoursal nature of major political events is played out."[26] As

Douglas Kellner notes:

> [P]olitics is . . . becoming a mode of spectacle in which the codes of media culture
>
> determine the form, style, and appearance of presidential politics, and party politics in
>
> turn becomes more cinematic and spectacular. . . . Consequently, U.S. presidential
>
> politics . . . can be perceived as media spectacles, in which media politics becomes a
>
> major constituent of presidential elections, governance, and political success or
>
> failure.[27]

Indeed, providing a particular frame to a political process becomes a means of legitimation in the public's eye. As Murray Edelman notes, "everyday reporting of the political spectacle systematically reinforces the assumption that leaders are critical to the courses of governmental action. News accounts highlight the talk and actions of leaders and of high officials and upon policy differences and agreements."[28] The ability of the media to control the public's interpretation of political events constitutes a counter-hegemonic move that disrupts government control of the message, in turn making the media a potent player in politics.

This is particularly true in the context of television media, which has "the ability to absorb and transform other major social institutions . . . by turning them into entertainment and popular culture."[29] In the context of a presidential campaign, the media transforms an informative deliberative process into a system characterized as a competitive race. The media uses competitive discourse to describe poll numbers, speeches and the ability to capture constituents as proverbial steps closer to the finish-line.

Most significant, perhaps, is media's ability to lull the public into passivity. Postmodern media critics argue that media messages contain rhetorical power that keeps the public docile; ultimately preventing public interrogation because "individuals are always vulnerable and usually can do little more than react, chiefly by keeping abreast of the news that concerns them and by acquiescing in the realities it creates."[30] Spectacle, then, is staged upon social anxieties of uncertainty where the media's prescribed way forward, whether they are accepting or rejecting the political leadership of the status quo, is the only way to maintain stability and security. This is important in relation to the

argument regarding television as a site that transforms culture into forms of entertainment, as the public can exist only as a spectator, not a participant, in a race.

In all, media critics argue that the advent of new media technologies in the latter half of the twentieth century allowed them to monopolize control of the message, thereby making them the ultimate arbiters of intent behind political speech. This interpretation is displaced from temporal reality and ultimately evaluated by the media in a nonlinear fashion that is based on predetermined frameworks rather than actual outcomes. This is particularly important in relation to presidential campaigns, where the media reframes the deliberative elements of the campaign into entertainment, thereby removing the participatory elements implicit within democratic institutions. In order to demonstrate this trend, critics examine how the media's selection of camera angles and alterations in the video re-presentation during the speech represent conscious choices that influence the perception of the event itself. Additionally, the accessibility of newspapers extends spectacle to textual re-presentations, as written media can reinterpret events based on what they choose to highlight. This illustrates the power of media in spectacle construction.

Spectacle in the Presidency

On the other side of the debate over agency in spectacle, critics argue that the politician controls the meaning behind events. This school of thought is heavily influenced by previous scholarship on presidential speech and campaigns. Much of this research assumes a direct, unmitigated transaction between the speaker and the audience. In these studies the receiver (public) is a passive participant that the speaker (president) acts upon, rather than interacts with, through dialogue. In this relationship the media

merely act as a transmitter, rather than interpreter, of information. This section looks at the development of political spectacle, which argues that the speaker, namely the president or other high-ranking government officials, creates the simulation. This analysis will briefly discuss rhetorical scholarship on presidential speech, followed by a discussion of how these scholarly influences alter how critics see spectacle.

Previous studies demonstrate that the nature of the presidency is largely rhetorical, as the scope and power of the position is ultimately shaped by how the president defines their leadership role in relation to particular exigencies.[31] As a result, George Edwards and Desmond King suggest that the legitimacy of presidential power is largely rhetorical because "both politics and policy revolve around the presidents' attempts to garner public support, for both themselves and their policies."[32] A large part of this rhetorical maneuvering revolves around the president's ability to construct an image of leadership through the use of ideologically charged discourses that appeal to easily recognizable principles,[33] generally defined in terms of nationalism, which the public can rally behind as justifications for political decisions.[34]

This is essential because, as Edelman notes, "regardless of the consequences of officials' actions, which contemporaries cannot know, the ability to create oneself as the ideal type [of candidate] maintains followings [among the public]."[35] If successful, presidential rhetoric has an opportunity to "define political reality"[36] because "the presidential definition is stipulated, offered as if it were natural and uncontroversial rather than chosen and contestable."[37] In many ways, this ability to define reality comes from a presumption of truth implicit within presidential speech. Here, the public tends to defer to presidential characterizations because the average citizen assumes the president has

access to better information and expertise, allowing them to make the best available decision.[38] This area of scholarship suggests a naming function implicit within the presidency that dictates the public's understanding of the world through ideological "half-truths"[39] that act as an epistemological paradigm.

The definitional feature of presidential rhetoric is particularly important in the context of election campaigns because the candidate's speeches serve as "a potentially manipulable set of meanings attached by voters to seeker or holder of political office."[40] As Bruce Gronbeck explains, the ability of a candidate to successfully fit the public's mold of presidential leadership is essential for determining whether the voter casts a ballot for or against the candidate. Michael Leff and G. P. Mohrmann describe this as a process of "ingratiation."[41] Here, the candidate uses deliberative means for epideictic ends, whereby their political position on domestic and international issues acts as a technique to enhance their ethos, and ultimately their chances of winning an election.

Part of this ingratiation process involves delegitimization in order to enhance the speaker's credibility. Forbes Hill identifies this aspect of political rhetoric as a system of implicit exclusions, where the speaker both isolates and alters opposing viewpoints to make them seem impractical.[42] Phillip Wander explains that these types of appeals attempt to remove alternative viewpoints from the conversation altogether.[43] This rhetorical strategy of denigration is not solely limited to the opposing candidate; rather, this process attempts to capture undecided voters by making the opponent's arguments appear impractical or unappealing. In order to do so, candidates construct what Edwin Black calls the "ideal audience," where the speaker displaces political differences by

appealing to commonly held values.[44] Typically, these seemingly "universal" appeals are situated within dualisms that heighten issue-specific differences between the candidates.

This universal frame helps determine how the audience comes to understand their campaign's platforms because voters find value-laden claims more persuasive than pragmatic considerations.[45] This exclusionary function is an important component of political rhetoric because it reveals one of the most important traits of persuasion. That is, it is easiest to influence the opinion of others when they perceive that there are no viable alternatives.

Rhetorical scholar Keith Erickson's piece "Presidential Spectacles: Political Illusionism and the Rhetoric of Travel" is a prime example of presidential rhetoric as spectacle. For Erickson, travel spectacle should be analyzed differently because the *presentation* is what grants the speech act rhetorical power, not the *content* of the speech itself. Robert Schmull suggests visually absorbing images capture the public's imagination better than lengthy speeches, making it much more likely that the audience remembers what they saw rather than what they heard.[46] Here, the travel spectacle is the text or rhetorical artifact. In this sense, Erickson suggests that form supersedes content, as the images of the presentation function as "ideological forms of pictorial power that possess the capacity to persuade, deceive, or otherwise influence spectators . . . to justify and maintain certain forms of collective conduct."[47]

Understanding spectacle as primarily presentational rhetoric is quite significant to rhetorical scholarship on presidential address and presidential campaigns. If speeches are only given to heighten the rhetorical power of the image, then the words used in these speeches only retain rhetorical significance when they add to the public's collective

memory of the speech. Thus, presidential addresses, even when discussing particular policies, are largely ceremonial in nature because "reliance on images, as opposed to informed dialogue, discourse, or debate enables administrations to side-step the public forum, avoid interactive decision making, and to address spectators epideictically."[48] The speaker is merely attempting to align themselves with the values of the audience rather than call them to action through active deliberation, as "travel spectacles merely gratify affectively; in general, they do not resolve issues because their reassurances are but substitutes for achievement."[49] The idea that travel merely glosses over controversy is particularly important in the context of presidential campaigns, as it further signifies the notion that campaign orations are a hybrid of deliberative means and epideictic ends.

Obviously, the idea that spectacle creates rhetorical opportunities for manipulation pays homage to media criticism. However, Erickson's work is important because it demonstrates how presidential scholarship reverses the presumptive agent-object relationship between the media and the president prevalent in Baudrillard's analysis. For Erickson, the president is the *agent* rather than the *object* of manipulation.

Indeed, there is quite a bit of doubt among rhetorical critics who question whether the media truly interrogates the content of its reports, as media pundits see "travel spectacles [as] not only 'newsworthy' but functionally convenient, cost-effective visual attention-getters that simplify complex political information."[50] In essence, the travel spectacle does the leg work of constructing the story for the media. Here, the media "coverage [of the travel spectacle] . . . fails to interpret or identify nascent signs of White House manipulation"[51] because correspondents are rarely invested in the story enough to "sit around Air Force One asking why they're writing these stories."[52] Recent scholarship on

the Bush administration demonstrates this claim, arguing that the passivity of the media allows outright manipulation. As Kellner notes, "in addition to cultivating right-wing media that broadcast their messages of the day and intimidating the mainstream corporate media, the Bush administration has created fake media and bought conservative commentators to push their policies."[53] Examples include the administration's distribution of videos that are presented as local broadcasting[54] and the administration's planting of fake reporters who asked loaded questions at White House Press Conferences.[55]

Limiting the text to include only the presentation of the speaker and their attempts to frame media coverage ignores the fact that the media does not simply replicate the event. On its own, Erickson's method does not account for the dynamic relationship between the public, the media, and the candidate during a presidential campaign because it presumes a static media that merely regurgitates the entirety of the event as directed by the candidate. Taken to its logical extreme, this would mean that every media account would represent every picture and a full transcript of the entire speech. However, there is no "universalized media conglomerate."[56] Newspapers and reporters have political preferences that, no matter how hard they try, appear in the way that they "report the news." In effect, the idea that the public receives the entirety of the message is bizarrely incomplete because the only part of the public that has a "pure representation" of the event are those taking the pictures and writing the stories. Not only is this a dangerously myopic way to view travel spectacle in presidential speeches, but it becomes far less applicable in the context of campaign rhetoric where there is an active and ongoing discursive exchange between the public and the candidate. In presidential campaigns the

candidate's attention is on persuading the public to vote for them. In this discussion, the media acts as a mediator between the two parties and not the primary target of rhetorical influence.

As a result of what Erickson sees as the media's inability to interrogate its own messages, he suggests that it is up to the rhetorical critic to reveal the inadequacies of travel spectacle whenever they emerge in order to limit presidential abuses of power and sustain a constructive relationship between the public and the president.[57] While I do not find Erickson's demand that critics enact their research as social actors particularly compelling, his comments are still insightful because they highlight readily observable elements of travel spectacle that critics should be able to identify. Erickson suggests there are five core elements of the travel spectacle that are worthy of interrogation, arguing that critics should examine how spectacles: favor visual over verbal eloquence, simplify complex political issues, narratively interpret presidential agendas, synoptically reify presidential personae, and construct political realities.

In all, political spectacle emerges from scholarship that sees the presidency as a rhetorically powerful position that can control public opinion through defining political reality in terms of common beliefs and values. These appeals are largely metaphorical in nature, where the persuasive value of presidential speech is largely determined by the speaker's ability to align their position within historical narratives that denote leadership. This is particularly important in the context of presidential campaigns, as candidates utilize these deliberative arguments as an ingratiation strategy based on potentialities that appeal to voter perceptions. Often times, this simulation of presidential leadership acts as a substitution for the candidate's actual experience because the visual enactment

resonates within the mind of the public. Within this interaction between the candidate and the public, the media acts as a passive transmitter of messages that the candidate can manipulate in order to maximize their appeal. Thus, the "sound-byte" culture creates an rhetorical environment where the candidates framing of the issue invites criticism and interpretation. The next section outlines a rhetorical hybrid between media and political spectacle grounded in the idea that both have significant roles in creating meaning in contemporary political culture.

<div align="center">Cascading Activation</div>

In order to establish a method for analysis, it is important to look for theories that address the influence of multiple actors on a given text. Cascading activation is one theory that attempts to reconcile the relationship between various players behind the construction of meaning. Cascading activation relies on the analysis of frames for understanding a particular text. According to Robert Entman, "framing entails selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation and/or solution."[58] This is similar to the discussion of epistemic frames in Baudrillard's theory of simulation or Kenneth Burke's discussion of terministic screens.[59] In each, interpretations of an event are based on preconceived notions of reality.

By analyzing framing devices, cascading activation "is designed to help explain how thoroughly the thoughts and feelings that support a frame extend down from the White House through the rest of the system."[60] In this sense, rhetorical meaning is distributed downwards through various mediating actors. Entman likens this process to that of a waterfall, where "each level in the metaphorical cascade makes its own contribution to

the mix and flow."[61] And because the frame sets "the parameters of the story,"[62] cascading activation recognizes that this evaluation occurs based on a set of predetermined criteria established at the top of the waterfall to promote "a particular interpretation of perceived reality."[63]

Much like a game of telephone, each level of analysis represents an interpretation of the previous message within the given frame. According to Entman, cascading activation occurs on five separate levels.[64] At the first level, heads of state act as the originators of the message. At the second stage, other elites, such as members of Congress, ex-officials, and policy experts interpret the message. Following this stage, the media interprets the actions of the elites in order to transmit the message to the public. The fourth level of the waterfall is the images and words that ultimately summarize the position for the public. In the final stage, the public receives the message, generally understood in the context of opinion polls that provide data on things like approval rating.

Cascading Simulation: A Critical Perspective

While Entman's theory of cascading activation provides a good framework for understanding the transmission of messages, my discussion of simulation demonstrates that Entman's utility can be expanded to include the simulation of the image. In my study, then, the waterfall begins with the frame of foreign policy legitimacy for presidential candidates. Obama represents the first level of the cascade, serving as the originator of meaning. As the top of the cascade, Obama is able to frame interpretation of the trip by setting the tone for civic debate surrounding his campaign.[65] In order to prove his competence, Obama presents his foreign policy vision of strengthening the trans-Atlantic alliance in the face of global dangers. In the next level, the broadcast media

frames the speech with corresponding images of cheering crowds and historical monuments to heighten Obama's conviction of leadership. In the final level of the waterfall, the written media evaluate the event against the backdrop of presidential legitimacy, providing causal justifications from the speech and scene that seemingly demonstrate leadership qualities.

In this sense, it is important to understand that critics cannot bracket rhetorical texts to include the message on its own. Instead, discussions of travel spectacle demonstrate that the imagery of the event is intertwined with the spoken word, demanding that critics expand what constitutes the rhetorical text in travel spectacle in order to take into account the entirety of the presentation. As postmodern theorist Roland Barthes explains in his work on literary criticism, text exists as "a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres [sic] of culture"[66] that extends beyond what is written precisely because original thought has ceased to exist. Instead, new rhetorical texts emerge as a convergence of previous utterances, making the speech act a re-presentation in itself that requires an investigation into both the written and performative elements of the text. This includes the text of the speech itself, the video re-presentation of the speech, and newspaper re-presentations of the speech. By including all three elements, critics can respond to the issues raised by both postmodern theory surrounding media influence, and traditional rhetorical criticism concerning presidential rhetoric.

Much of what is said about presidential rhetoric holds equal importance in evaluating campaign rhetoric because presidential campaigns are themselves a simulation of the presidency, serving as the initial actors within cascading simulation. By speaking on various political positions, engaging in public debates, and meeting with various leaders

the candidate enacts the various roles of the presidency. With this understanding of campaigns, voters are ultimately judging whether or not the candidate adequately meets predefined roles and expectations of a good president.

In the context of presidential campaigns this becomes consequential, as a majority of the public never interacts face to face with the presidential candidates themselves. In 2000 the average length of a quotation from the candidates on national news was 7.8 seconds.[67] This means that the presidential hopefuls must choose their words carefully in order to heighten the effect of their speech. In campaigns, then, Erickson suggests the spectacle of travel in its totality can greatly enhance the message because "they often unrealistically elevate[s] a president's image to lofty, mythic heights"[68] by enabling "the president rhetorically to upstage critics, capture media headlines, and diffuse the public's awareness of bad news and competing visuals."[69] Ultimately, campaigns can inoculate themselves against future criticism through spectacle events that invite positive media coverage. Thus, spectacle works by heightening the rhetorical power of the presentation to the point that supersedes Obama's lack of foreign policy expertise, thereby defining political reality through speech and how the speech is re-presented in the media.

It is important to note that there are recent attempts in media criticism that highlight a similar concept to cascading simulation in presidential campaigns, namely Kevin Glynn's article entitled "The 2004 Election Did Not Take Place: Bush, Spectacle, and the Media Nonevent." Here, Glynn juxtaposes spectacle's construction of meaning through the use of "fragmented" visuality with the political narrative's "sense making in terms of subject-centered agency," arguing that "the two mutually animate one another"[70] within the media's re-presentation of the event. Glynn notes:

> [T]he relationship between narrative and spectacle . . . is locked into a kind of
>
> permanent dynamic tension whereby the two mutually animate one another: Narrative
>
> strives to domesticate and contain the range of potential meanings that may be
>
> ascribed or attached to spectacle, while spectacle threatens to exceed and outstrip
>
> narrative's capacities to impose closure and indeed continually offers itself as a
>
> potential host to a range of different narratives and discourses. Because such
>
> narratives and discourses are grounded in sociality and in the particular circumstances
>
> and interests of different groups, formations, and alliances, the struggle between
>
> competing narratives for authority over a given spectacle has a fundamentally
>
> political dimension. Moreover, the permanent instabilities that characterize the
>
> relationship between narrative and spectacle carry the potential to catalyze rapid,
>
> spectacular reversals of meaning.[71]

In other words, spectacle is not inherently meaningful. Instead, it receives its meaning

through hegemonic ordering of various narrative interpretations, or framing devices, from

social actors. For Glynn, this hierarchy is based on each narrative's persuasive value

within the public. If the public begins to question the dominant narrative interpretation,

counter-narratives become more legitimate.

According to Glynn, spectacle is always open to disruption because no matter how

"preprogrammed and technologically sophisticated may be [spectacle's] apparatus, [it]

remains permanently amenable to hijacking by insurgent narratives and discourses."[72]

While spectacle may create opportunity for change in political spectacle generally, I

believe that travel spectacles during presidential campaigns mark a unique rhetorical

situation where counter-narratives become less relevant. In this way, I defer to

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Baudrillard's notion of third-order simulation, where simulation acts as a complete substitution for reality, rather than second-order simulation, where the critic can find inconsistencies, or points of rupture, between the simulation and reality. It seems intuitive to assume that the simulation of reality within spectacle only becomes stronger if the definition of the media's re-presentation and the president's presentation coincide. That is, if both actors in interpretation see the issue in the same way, there is no space for a counter-narrative to emerge. This suggests, perhaps, that both presidential spectacle and media spectacle function as second-order simulation by themselves, but when they are combined the spectacle becomes so strong that it becomes a type of third-order simulation. Even if there are portions of the public that interrogate the spectacle, media's "seduction"[73] of society would make it very hard to spread and maintain this counter-narrative nationwide before the election in November.

The inability to offer up persuasive counter-narratives seems particularly true in the context of cascading activation. Since meaning is understood as a "top-down" process, "moving downward in a cascade is relatively easy, but spreading ideas higher, from lower levels to upper, requires extra energy."[74] Here, interpretations from presidential candidates are given more credence than the public, requiring a very strong consensus from either the public or the media to counteract the dominant viewpoint. Baudrillard shares this view, noting that:

> Conjunction of the system and of its extreme alternative like the two sides of a curved mirror, a "vicious" curvature of a political space that is henceforth magnetized, circularized, reversibilized from the right to the left . . . It is always a question of moving the real through the imaginary, proving truth through scandal, proving the

law through transgression, proving work through striking, proving the system through crisis, and capital through revolution.[75]

Here, criticism acts as a legitimating process because no space exists outside of the simulation. For Baudrillard, a thesis must exist in order for there to be an antithesis. Thus, criticisms of the spectacle only serve as recognition of the spectacle's existence.

Studies in presidential campaigns on voting behavior seem to belabor this point. During elections, voters look to campaigns as a way to resolve their uncertainty about the candidates through both the media and the candidate's respective presentations. Ideally, voters would be "critical consumers" of the information they collect from both sources. However, the public rarely interrogates a candidate's political stances beyond how the media represents them.[76] Further, studies suggest that one of the primary indicators of voter behavior, and implicitly perhaps the only category that the majority of the public independently interrogates, is the trustworthiness or ethos of the candidate.[77] This is particularly evident in later stages of presidential campaigns, as the public becomes increasingly dismissive of campaign ads as contrite and irritating, rather than informative.[78] Thus, even if the counter-narrative reaches them, it is unlikely to affect the voter's judgment of the candidate unless this new discursive frame revolves around the candidate's believability, such as a scandal.

Concluding Remarks

In sum, scholars argue that that both politicians and the media play controlling roles in the construction of simulation. Depending on the particular school of thought, most research tends to relegate influence over the message to one camp or the other. However, due to the unique nature of the relationship between the candidate and the media in

constructing an image of presidential leadership, it is important to examine these two forces as mutually reinforcing components of meaning rather than sole proprietors of the message.

With this in mind, cascading activation provides an excellent device for understanding this relationship in simulation. Through framing analysis, critics evaluate texts within preconceived notions of reality that offer predictive understandings of appropriate language and action. In the context of presidential campaigns, the candidate attempts to control the image by appealing to the visualization of common values and competence. In turn, the media chooses how to interpret these appeals against the backdrop of ideal candidacy, ultimately granting legitimacy to the overall project.

In the following chapter I begin my analysis of Obama's speech at Victory Column. Since both the president and media play an active role in constructing spectacle, Chapter 4 looks at both the text of the speech itself as well as media re-presentations. My examination of the text highlights the various rhetorical strategies used by Obama to simulate presidential leadership. Afterwards, I look at how both visual and written media portray the speech, arguing that the re-presentation alters the trajectory of meaning in the speech. In sum, this should demonstrate a cascading affect in the meaning making process of the 2008 presidential campaign, highlighting how Obama's speech and the media's respective interpretations of that speech reinforce have mutually-reinforcing roles in simulating foreign policy experience.

Notes

[1] Guy Debord. *The Society of the Spectacle*, (Australia: Black & Red, 1983), 29.

[2] Alexander Burns. "Kennedy vs. Nixon, Round One: An Upset," September 9, 2005,

http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/web/20050926-kennedy-jfk-nixon-

presidential-debates-gerald-ford-jimmy-carter-television.shtml.

[3] Carrie Budoff Brown. "Impact of Obama's Grand Voyage." *Politico*, July 27, 2008,

http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0708/12082.html.

[4] As an example, the McCain camp ran an ad that likens the Obama campaign to

international celebrities Paris Hilton and Britney Spears. The ad can be found at

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHXYsw_ZDXg. While McCain's previous attacks

suggested that Obama's ability to run a successful campaign overshadowed his foreign

policy inequities, these new attacks suggested that Obama's focus on enacting

presidential leadership (or popularity as a global symbol of the West) overshadowed his

ineptitude in running a presidential campaign.

[5] In this case, the emphasis is on the presidential candidate and not the presidency itself.

[6] Yiannis Gabriel. "Spectacles of Resistance and Resistance of Spectacles." *Management

Communication Quarterly, 21*, (2008), 314.

[7] Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle,* 12.

[8] Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle,* 19.

[9] Richard J. Lane, "Simulations and the Hyperreal." *Jean Baudrillard*, (New York:

Routledge, 2000), 86.

[10] Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra." *Simulacra and Simulation*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 2.

[11] Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra." 1.

[12] Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra." 6.

[13] Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra." 2.

[14] Gabriel. "Spectacles of Resistance and Resistance of Spectacles." 315.

[15] Gabriel. "Spectacles of Resistance and Resistance of Spectacles." 11.

[16] Douglas Kellner, "Introduction: Jean Baudrillard in the Fin-De-Millenium." In *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 2.

[17] Lane, "Simulations and the Hyperreal."100.

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[37] Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition." 612.

[38] Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition." 615.

[39] Mary Dietz, "Working in Half-Truths: Some Premodern Reflections on Discourse Ethics in Politics." In *Political Theory and Partisan Politics,* eds., Edward Ports, Adolf Gunderson and Ruth Shively (Albany, NY: State of University of New York Press, 2000), 129-30.

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[46] Robert Schmuhl, *Statecraft and Stagecraft: American Political Life in the Age of Personality*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 32.

[47] Erickson, "Presidential Spectacles." 142.

[48] Erickson, "Presidential Spectacles." 144.

[49] Erickson, "Presidential Spectacles." 145.

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[51] Erickson, "Presidential Spectacles." 143.

[52] Hertsgaard. *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency*, (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1988), 56.

[53] Kellner,"Introduction." 18.

[54] David Barstow and Robin Stein, "Under Bush, a New Age of Prepackaged News." *New York Times*, March 13, 2005.

[55] Frank Rich, "The White House Stages Its 'Daily Show.'" *New York Times*, February 20, 2005.

[56] It is worth noting that, while there is no "universalized media conglomerate," there are news agencies like the Associated Press that sell and distribute their stories to various newspapers and television media outlets.

[57] According to Erickson, rhetorical critics should "evaluate the extent to which travel spectacles: 1) exhibit leadership or speech-act gestures; 2) encourage or suppress citizen political participation; 3) engage or bypass the public forum; 4) clarify or mystify political reality; 5) reflect democratic values or exercise hegemonic power; 6) direct or divert attention to issues and exigencies; 7) assert reasoned or emotional / aesthetic appeals; 8) reveal or construct a president's persona; 9) serve partisan or nonpartisan purposes; 10) rhetorically or randomly appropriate images of iconic, historic, or significant sites, events, and audiences" (151).

[58] Robert Entman, "Cascading Activation: Contesting the White House's Frame After 9/11." *Political Communication, 20*, (2003), 417.

[59] Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra." 5.

[60] Entman, "Cascading Activation." 419.

[61] Entman, "Cascading Activation." 420.

[62] Joseph M. Valenzano, "Framing the War on Terror in Canadian Newspapers: Cascading Activation, Canadian Leaders, and Newspapers." *Southern Communication Journal, 74*, (2009), 175.

[63] Valenzano, "Framing the War on Terror in Canadian Newspapers." 175.

[64] Entman, "Cascading Activation." 419.

[65] Amos Kiewe. "Framing Memory Through Eulogy: Ronald Reagan's Long Good-bye." In *Framing Public Memory*, eds. Kendall Phillips, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press), 251.

[66] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author." In *Image, Music, Text* translated by Stephen Heath, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 146.

[67] George C. Edwards and Stephen J. Wayne. "The Presidential Election." *Presidential Leadership* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 76.

[68] Erickson. "Presidential Spectacles." 149.

[69] Erickson. "Presidential Spectacles." 146.

[70] Glynn. "The 2004 Election Did Not Take Place." 226.

[71] Glynn. "The 2004 Election Did Not Take Place." 226.

[72] Glynn. "The 2004 Election Did Not Take Place." 241.

[73] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations.* 14.

[74] Entman, "Cascading Activation." 420.

[75] Baudrillard, *Simulations and Simulacra*. 18.

[76] Erickson. "Presidential Spectacles." 152.

[77] Jason J. Teven. "An Examination of Perceived Credibility of the 2008 Presidential Candidates: Relationships with Believability, Likeability, and Deceptiveness." *Human Communication, 11*, (2008), 394.

[78] Memphis Vaughan. "Negative Campaign Ads: Effective or Offensive to Informed Voters?" *Associated Content*, October 26, 2008, http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/75085/negative_campaign_ads_effective_or_p g2.html.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF OBAMA'S SPEECH

Readings of presidential rhetoric predominantly focus on either the power of the presidency or the power of the media as the sole proprietors of interpretation. In each area of study, researchers understand meaning through hegemonic forces that control the trajectory of the rhetorical text, where one or the other dominates the public's understanding of the message. However, my research in Chapter Three suggests that neither the media nor the candidate act as sole instigators of knowledge but instead work together in framing presidential candidates within the image of a credible leader. In this sense, the candidate and the media are co-creators of meaning, necessitating a broader understanding of what constitutes a rhetorical text. This includes both the original presentation as well as it's re-presentation in the media. By themselves, I argue that each of these methods of simulation represent what Jean Baudrillard refers to as second-order simulation, where the lines between reality and re-presentation are blurred but still exist. However, when these facets of second-order simulation sequentially build off of one another, simulation becomes third-order, where the spectacle becomes a substitution for reality and eliminates space for counter-narratives to form.

I term this process cascading simulation. Building off of Robert Entman's theory of cascading activation, I argue that the simulation of the message in presidential campaigns is disseminated downwards from the candidate to the public through the media. In this model of analysis, meaning flows from the top, similar to a waterfall, where the frame controls the speech act and the corresponding coverage of the event. While the media has the ability to determine whether it covers the event, how it covers it is largely determined

by fixed characteristics that define the particular set of circumstances. In this sense, media coverage of the event, whether positive or negative, grants legitimacy to the candidate's attempt at fitting the mold of a suitable choice for future president.

This chapter analyzes this moment of spectacle, looking at the Victory Column speech as a case study on how simulation cascades downwards in the context of presidential campaigns. As I discussed in Chapter 3, this point is critical for understanding campaigns. Coupled with the decision-making process of the American voter, the short time period associated with presidential campaigns makes the possibility of counter-framing unlikely because the public selects candidates based on value judgments rather than policy. Thus, if the framework for evaluating a campaign's legitimacy is determined by value judgments, such as trustworthiness and feelings of security, voters are likely to follow images that project consensus and support rather than specific policy proposals.

With this in mind, my investigation is divided into three levels of cascading simulation. The first section is devoted to Obama's role in shaping simulation. Here, I begin with the text of Obama's "A World that Stands as One" speech. In this analysis, I draw out key patterns in the text to demonstrate how Obama attempted to establish himself as a foreign policy "wonk." During the second section, I look at important changes in the video re-presentation of the speech, highlighting important visual and audio cues that heighten the rhetorical power of particular parts of the speech for the audience watching the speech on television. In the third section, my analysis looks at newspaper accounts of the presentation from both the *New York Times* and the *Agence France Presse*. For this portion of the rhetorical text, I selected the *New York Times*

because it is an objective nationally-recognized newspaper that covers international news. I chose the *Agence France Presse* as a representative of international coverage of the Victory Column speech because it is printed in English and sells its stories to American newspapers, suggesting that the American public would have access to many of these stories. This analysis will pay careful attention to how reporters engage the event, looking at whether they place the speech in the broader context of the entire trip, what parts they chose to quote, what parts they chose to summarize, how they described the scene, and whether they used it to make predictions about the outcome of the 2008 campaign.

<center>Obama's Speech</center>

Michael Leff and Gerald Mohrmann note that ingratiation is a core component of an effective presidential campaign,[1] largely in part because campaigns act as a framing mechanism for understanding the candidate's identity. As such, the speaker engages in a process of identification that supersedes the particulars of policy proposals. As noted in Chapter Three, this results in a simplification of policies, as the means become far less important than the ends that they justify. In this sense, so long as the candidate can demonstrate that they are in line with core values, such as freedom and democracy, the paths that lead there are far less important. Thus, successful candidates can do well to pay careful attention to enhancing their ethos on the campaign trail.

In the context of travel spectacle, the scene of the speech predominates this form of ethos construction. Keith Erickson explains that "travel spectacles serve symbolically to create among the citizenry the idea that agendas and exigencies are being addressed, constituted authority exercised, and matters of state attended to."[2] Not only does it act as a visual framing device for spectators, but candidates also use it as a springboard for

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conceptualizing many of the important concepts in their speech because these are points

that the media picks up on and reports. Effective campaign speeches, then, evoke

leadership qualities that demonstrate how the candidate would address issues in the

future.

The idea that imagery plays an important role in constituting the ethos of a

presidential candidate provides an excellent frame for understanding the text of the

speech itself and Obama's attempt to frame his foreign policy vision in terms of a

suitable president-elect. In order to do so, Obama chooses to align his narrative within the

context of presidential history while also disengaging himself from the Bush

administration.

<u>The Use of Historical Narrative</u>

The first major strategy in Obama's speech is his use of historical narrative to

enhance his credibility. Rhetorical scholar Bruce Gronbeck calls this use of historical

narrative an "analogical argument" that "references a whole family of arguments that

assert similar or dissimilar relationships . . . in order to support a disputable proposition."[3]

Similar to the use of precedent in judicial proceedings, speakers appropriate history by

drawing parallels between the past and present to enhance the justifications for their

proposal.[4]

It is within this understanding of history that Obama references the Berlin Wall to

contextualize his foreign policy position. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, Berlin has

been a historic site that many American presidents of the past, most notably Ronald

Reagan and John F. Kennedy, used as a political platform during the Cold War. Obama is

quick to frame his speech in the context of this rich history, noting that, "I come to Berlin

as so many of my countrymen have come before" and, "I know that I don't look like the Americans who've previously spoken in this great city."[5] Obama is able to enhance his ethos by paying homage to presidential figures that were known for their leadership qualities.

Although these lines are brief, the allusion to past presidents is significant in framing Obama's historical narrative of democracy in Berlin, which acts as a central theme throughout the speech. By taking note of powerful leaders in American history, Obama is able to set up his retelling of Cold War Berlin, where American leadership played a central role in preventing the rise of communism. Obama noted:

> Ours is a partnership that truly began sixty years ago this summer, on the day when the first American plane touched down at Templehof . . . This is where the two sides met. And on the twenty-fourth of June, 1948, the Communists chose to blockade the western part of the city. They cut off food and supplies to more than two million Germans in an effort to extinguish the last flame of freedom in Berlin . . . The size of our forces was no match for the much larger Soviet Army. And yet retreat would have allowed Communism to march across Europe. Where the last war had ended, another World War could have easily begun. All that stood in the way was Berlin . . . where the determination of a people met the generosity of the Marshall Plan and created a German miracle.[6]

Obama's retelling of Cold War Berlin further extends the theme of presidential leadership as a core principle to maintaining security. By framing Cold War Berlin for the audience, Obama reminds the viewer of a past where strong leadership was necessary in the face of an existential threat to American values at home and abroad. Not only that, but this

historical narrative also contains references to shared values that bond groups of people together. According to Obama, the pursuit of American values, particularly in the context of the Marshall Plan, helped prevent a Communist takeover in Berlin despite overwhelming odds. According to this narrative, the American airlift was able to sustain a politics of hope among the German people by keeping the pathway to freedom open.

This framing helps the audience understand how Obama envisions the role of the president in a global society. Implicit within this narrative is the president's role as a moral leader of the West who aims at protecting the ideals of freedom and democracy from external threats. It is here where Obama calls for a recommitment to these shared values in the face of new, emerging global threats, such as global warming, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, Afghanistan, and Iraq. In this sense, his proposed foreign policy changes presume he has already won the presidency. At the very least, there is an obligatory sense to electing Obama because his foreign policy vision follows a historical progression of great American leaders.

<div align="center">The Use of Change</div>

The second major premise in Obama's speech is change. For a candidate to succeed, they must demonstrate an ability to preserve American values while defining their own political identity that is distinct from the current administration. This is particularly in instances where the present administration is decidedly unpopular among the general public, which was the case during the 2008 campaign. As such, Obama saw Berlin as a platform for establishing this identity in the context of foreign policy. While discussing the prospects and necessities to strengthen cooperation between the U.S. and its European allies, Obama separates himself from the Bush administration by saying:

I know my country has not perfected itself. At times, we've struggled to keep the promise of liberty and equality for all of our people. We've made our share of mistakes, and there are times when our actions around the world have not lived up to our best intentions.[7]

In this quotation, Obama sought to create a clear division between his vision of the world and the unipolarity of the last eight years. In his view, this political viewpoint is the root cause of political disagreement between the U.S. and its European allies. Rather than isolating global problems as regional threats, Obama emphasizes a need to reinvest in the cooperation that characterized the West during the Cold War. By unifying behind commonly held values, Obama recasts the world as a global community that requires strong U.S. leadership, rather than sets of regional actors. This narrative of interconnectedness gives further credence to his foreign policy competence, as it demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of global politics that many believed was decidedly lacking during the Bush administration.

In all, Obama's construction of presidential leadership rests on both the ability to align himself within the broader historical narrative of U.S. foreign policy while separating himself from the unpopular politics from the Bush administration. In order to do so, Obama appropriates the historical significance of Berlin, arguing that the U.S. must shift its policies towards cooperation to continue securing itself against future threats.

The Broadcast's Re-presentation

The second level of cascading simulation is the broadcast of the speech. According to Linda Scott, the visual aspect of a speech is just as important as the spoken word because

it provides context for understanding the reality of the situation[8] by "shaping our unconscious response."[9] Critical media studies belabor this point, suggesting that the visual image has become more important than the spoken word because images are easier to remember.

Rhetorical scholars have taken note of this trend. Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell suggest that "the camera has a point of view; it becomes a viewer."[10] Others have extended this point to presidential speech, looking specifically at debates during presidential campaigns. During the 1976 presidential debates, for example, Robert Tiemens suggests that Gerald Ford's inability to make eye contact with the appropriate camera angle made the candidate appear grim and intolerant during his debate with Jimmy Carter.[11]

Tiemens' study suggests that camera angles play an important role in how the audience interprets presidential speech. Communication scholar and internationally renowned photographer Dennis Dunleavy suggests that the ability of the camera to alter the observers line-of-sight can enhance or delegitimize a speech.[12] Media scholar Herbert Zetti traces the development of this point, noting:

> For some time, kings, school teachers, preachers, judges, and gods knew that sitting up high had very important effects . . . This physical elevation has strong psychological implications. It immediately distinguishes between inferior and superior . . . The camera can do the same thing. When we look up with the camera, the object or event seems more important, more powerful, more authoritative than when we look at it straight on or even look down on it. When we look down with the

camera, the object usually loses somewhat in significance; it becomes less powerful, less important than we we look at it straight on or from below.[13]

In this way, angles that look up at monuments or show speakers overlooking large crowds can demonstrate strength. By contrasting the candidate with images of power, the camera angle can lend significant credibility to the speaker's message.

In this section, I highlight trends in *CNN*'s coverage of the event, paying particular attention to its use of different camera angles to heighten the credibility of particular points during the speech. By cutting to a cheering crowd or an image of Victory Column, the broadcast visually represents particular points of Obama's speech. This process creates associative cues in the viewer's mind that connects the speech's points to the image of credibility.

Rhetorical scholarship has broached the subject in the past, but until recently much of this analysis assumes the media plays a passive role external to the text, rather than an active role in shaping the text. As noted in Chapter Three, the imagery plays an important role in altering the audiences' interpretation of the speech. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, for example, notes that images are particularly important in understanding presidential speeches because they enhance the political power of messages.[14] This level is particularly important to my study, as television functions as a primary source for election coverage among the general population.[15] As an example of the visual text, I selected the *CNN* video broadcast,[16] primarily because it does not include commentary from pundits during the speech. It is interesting to note, however, that throughout the speech the ticker at the bottom of the screen selects particular parts of the speech to quote or summarize for the audience. This suggests another level of simulation outside of the

purely visual within televised re-presentation. By highlighting portions of the speech, the broadcast creates a captioning effect that links the new camera angles to particular parts of the text. This helps the audience link the visual of cheering crowds to Obama's words, further enhancing Obama's original leadership image through the power of the televised simulation.

Throughout the video re-presentation, the audience of 200,000 Germans greets Obama's words with cheers and applause. Each time the crowd makes noise, *CNN* changes the camera viewpoint away from Obama's face in order to capture the audiences' reaction. During the broadcast, *CNN* appeared to use five different cameras: a close up of Obama's face, a viewpoint from behind Obama that includes the immediate audience, a camera that focused on specific parts of the audience, an on the ground angle that highlights the faces of one or two audience members, and a camera that overlooks the top of Victory Column. Camera angles that are closer to the audience typically provided images of people holding American paraphernalia to further demonstrate support, such as flags or Pro-Obama signs. This section includes a detailed examination of how the camera angle changes the scene by selecting one of these frames, describing how the camera angles function as calculated rhetorical choices that heighten the rhetorical significance of particular moments in the speech.

Initially, *CNN* uses broader camera angles to capture the audience during the beginning of the speech. Most commonly, the broadcast returns to this viewpoint whenever the audience responds. When Obama is thanking the German public for its warm reception at 00:37, for example, the camera takes a wide-angle of the public during the applause.[17] From this viewpoint, the television audience sees Obama facing a crowd

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waving several American flags. This camera angle provides the viewer with an image of public adoration. More importantly, however, the fact that there is a crowd of foreign citizens cheering for Obama aligns this speech with both Kennedy and Reagan, who were both similarly greeted at their respective speeches. This demonstrates a successful trickle-down of Obama's attempt to demonstrate international leadership.

CNN uses this angle as a primer for almost every camera change because it serves as a reaction shot that captures the audience's positive response. For example, at 02:32, when Obama is discussing the historical significance of Berlin, the camera changes from a broader view of the audience, to a close up of a group holding American flags, to the top of Victory Column.[18] These sequential images heighten the rhetorical power of Obama's narrative. By capturing the image of applause, the camera simulates an image of approval from the international public. For the audience at home, the applause gives the appearance of a foreign policy platform in line with our allies abroad. When the camera changes to the monuments, the viewing audience is left with a visualization of the hardships that plagued Berlin during the Cold War. These images resonate with much of the American public, as citizens either lived through or have learned about the insecurities of the Cold War. By accompanying these images with the sounds of applause, the visual re-presentation suggests that the German public see Obama's historical narrative as accurate, lending him credibility understanding international relations.

One of the only camera angles that changes is the viewpoint from the top of Victory Column. From this position, *CNN* either uses a still-frame that focused on the monument or refocuses the image on different locations throughout the city. At the 02:37 mark when

Obama says "this city of all cities knows the dream of freedom," the camera focuses only on the statue of Victoria at the top of Victory Column, highlighting the progressive symbolism that the monument represents.[19] This image of progressivism heightens both the historicity of the location as well as Obama's mantra of changing the guard.

At other times, *CNN* uses this viewpoint to look at Brandenburg Gate. For example, when Obama concludes his historical narrative of Cold War Berlin by saying "history proved no challenge too great for a world that stands as one"[20] at 06:59, the camera starts on Brandenburg Gate before zooming out to its original position.[21] This rhetorical choice to highlight this monument during Obama's Cold War narrative magnifies the rhetorical power of the speech, as the imagery of the gate projects the ability to overcome even the strongest political and ideological barriers between parties.

Finally, *CNN* uses this angle to overlook the entire city at the 22:30 mark before returning to the image of Victory Column. At this point in the speech, Obama concludes with a series of rhetorical questions that he posed to the world as global citizens.[22] This angle promotes the perception of cooperation between countries leading to substantial progress and development with him as president. Progress could only occur once the wall came down and only with the help of the U.S. While this image does not implicitly speak to the Obama's historical narrative, it does lend itself to his call for cooperation and provides a level of authenticity to his recommitment to the trans-Atlantic alliance.

In all, by changing the camera angles *CNN* attempted to heighten the rhetorical significance of particular moments of the speech. By showing an audience holding American flags and cheering, the visual portion of the simulation suggests that Obama is a credible speaker in the eyes of the international public. Further, *CNN* used images of

historical monuments, such as Brandenburg Gate and Victory Column, to remind the television audience of the strife created by the Cold War. Thus, the television broadcast simulated the appearance of support and exigence.

The Newspaper Re-Presentation

In the third level of cascading simulation, my analysis looks at how newspaper media covered Obama's Victory Column. As texts, I use articles from both the *New York Times* and the *Agence France Presse* between the dates July 24, 2008 and July 26, 2008. In all, this search produced eleven different articles that covered the speech. I broke this section into three different parts in order to demonstrate how the media extended Obama's simulation of foreign policy expertise. First, I start with how the articles appropriate the image of the German audience to construct a transition between Bush to Obama. Second, I look at how the media interprets the historic location of the event as a place to compare Obama to past presidents rather than presidential candidates. Lastly, I look at how even articles that are critical of the speech legitimate the simulation of the presidency by evaluating the speech in terms of diplomacy, rather than as a foreign policy platform.

<u>Recognition of the Audience</u>

An analysis of the audience is one of the most prominent discussions throughout these articles. For some, the audience becomes so important that they extend their coverage beyond the speech itself. *Agence France Presse* writer Deborah Cole notes that "Obama encountered fans wherever he went as he moved by car around the city earlier in the day."[23] Further, many of the articles in the *Agence France Presse* included poll numbers that demonstrated approval ratings for Obama well above sixty percent. Ten of the eleven articles discuss the audience at length. Each of these articles describes this

group in a positive manner, using terms like an "adoring crowd,"[24] a "staggering crowd,"[25] a "feverish welcome,"[26] a "carnival atmosphere,"[27] a crowd toting a "surprising number of Yankees hats"[28] where Obama's "soaring rhetoric [was] frequently interrupted by applause."[29] Some commentators even cast Obama as a celebrity, noting that he got "so much applause it was as if Robbie Williams, Herbert Groenemeyer, and the Rolling Stones were all on stage together."[30] This characterization of the 200,000 in attendance rests on a powerful image of international approval, thus boosting Obama's credibility on foreign policy by visualizing worldwide support for his foreign policy platform.

Some of these articles use this positive response to make claims about the American presidency, juxtaposing the positive response with the following quotation from the speech:

> I know my country has not perfected itself. We've made our share of mistakes, and there are times when our actions around the world have not lived up to our best intentions. But I also know how much I love America . . . No one nation, no matter how large or powerful, can defeat such challenges alone.[31]

These lines appear in half of the articles that discuss the audience. As I mentioned in the analysis of the speech itself, these lines do not explicitly criticize the Bush administration.

Still, many authors use this portion of the speech as a means for evaluating Obama's popularity. *New York Times* columnist Steven Erlanger, for example, notes the positive response from the public:

> Europeans admire Mr. Obama's political skills, and welcome his apparent readiness to respect opposing points of view. For many here, that raises the prospect of a sharp

break with the policies of the Bush administration, especially in its first term, when the United States chose to ignore the Geneva Conventions at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, rejected the Kyoto accord on global warming and invaded Iraq, starting a war that some of America's European allies opposed.[32]

Here, Erlanger makes an assumptive claim about the German public's applause that could resonate with the American voter's weariness with the Bush administration. Rather than reading the applause as part of the German public's general adoration for Obama, Erlanger supplied a particular causal reading to the applause. Indeed, nowhere in the speech does Obama directly criticize any of these policies beyond a general claim that the U.S. must have a greater hand in cooperation. By asserting a justification for this applause, he appropriated the cheers and thus enhanced Obama's perceived credibility.

Erlanger goes a step further when he discusses Obama's reflection on European values and the "shared sovereignty" of the EU. After quoting a passage from Obama, Erlanger suggests that this reflection on European values is distinct from the Bush administration, "which has often sought to recruit individual European countries, like Britain and Poland, to support its policies, while doing less to cultivate ties to the broader European Union. Washington views the European Union as being dominated by France and Germany and less eager to follow America's foreign policy."[33] Again, Erlanger reads a comparison into the speech that is not explicitly present, presuming that Obama's worldview is distinct from the Bush administration's seeming cultural shallowness.

This anti-Bush sentiment is a common theme throughout the media's coverage of the speech,[34] suggesting that "Obama was well received because he is not Mr. Bush, who is unpopular in Germany."[35] Even the criticisms of the speech in the *Agence France Presse*

lend credence to this point by including polls of the German public that show a seventy-two percent disapproval among of Bush.[36] By providing a link to the positive response from the German public, reporters frame the Victory Column speech as a transition in American foreign policy that is already occurring, rather than a potential consequence of electing Obama president.

<div align="center">Recognition of the History</div>

Half of these articles spend a great deal of time highlighting the significance of the scene. In many of the articles discussing the audience, the authors go one step further, paying particular attention to the historical significance of the view. In their discussion of the crowd, *New York Times* columnists Jeff Zeleny and Nicholas Kulish characterize the scene as Obama standing "before a sea of cheering admirers . . . on a perch steeped in history."[37] For them, the "adoring [German] public" offered "precisely the visual message that Mr. Obama's aides wanted to beam back home: a candidate who could restore the world's faith in strong American leadership and idealism,"[38] ultimately concluding that "the setting of the speech, as well as the size of the crowd, seemed to place Mr. Obama among a litany of American leaders who have stood before him, even though he is simply a first-term United States senator."[39] Here, the authors re-present the setting as greatly enhancing Obama's ethos as a speaker. By presenting the speech in the context of a powerful crowd in a historical location, this discussion removes Obama from his location as a candidate. Rather than making comparisons in terms of other presidential hopefuls, the article makes comparisons to leaders who had already won the presidency.

Agence France Presse writer Stephen Collinson echoes this focus on history, noting that the speech took place "near the footprint of the old Berlin Wall"[40] where "former

U.S. president Ronald Reagan's call to then Soviet leader Mikhael Gorbachev in Berlin in 1987 to "tear down this wall," before the fall of Communism."[41] By giving the scene historical context, Collinson places Obama among strong leaders of the past and categorizes him as a U.S. president and world leader.

Not only did many authors do their own brief synopsis of Berlin's historical significance, but many extended this observation to the speech itself. These authors pay particular attention to the ways in which the symbolic metaphor of Cold War Berlin helps characterize Obama's foreign policy vision. Collinson, for example, notes that Obama "used Berlin's triumph over division and totalitarianism as a metaphor for the world he hoped to forge."[42] Others argued that the symbolism behind the message acted as a sign of a new beginning for American politics.[43] Again, this point is an important one because it characterizes the speech as an actual transition rather than a potential one. Instead of discussing this as a possible future in American politics, many of the articles discussing the symbolic value of the scene are imbued with an optimism that presumes an Obama victory. Thus, the inevitability of an Obama victory demonstrates a successful cascading of Obama's self-representation as a credible leader.

<u>Recognition of the Tension</u>

While it is true that some journalists interpreted the speech as an attack against George Bush, each of these articles, some at great length, discuss points of conflict between the U.S. and Europe in his foreign policies. This is an interesting pattern, as it demonstrates how even Obama's critics get caught in the legitimation process. Rather than interpreting the speech as a foreign policy platform, the articles discuss the speech as a diplomatic move, highlighting possible successes and failures of particular parts.

Erlanger, for example, notes that, despite the adoration from the public, many German government officials were skeptical of the visit and the genuine nature of the call for cooperation.[44] Some articles cast the speech as a vague disappointment that didn't signal a true shift in American foreign policy, particularly in the context of Afghanistan and free trade.

Indeed, this was a point of contention throughout many of the articles from the foreign press. Deborah Cole, for example, observes that one of the only places where the audience remains silent is during Obama's call for greater European involvement in Afghanistan.[45] Stephen Collinson all but dismisses this portion of the speech, suggesting that the German government would not budge on increasing troop support.[46] By debating the efficacy of small portions of the speech, these articles view his positions as actual presidential decisions and not candidate statements.

Steven Erlanger goes further into this European skepticism by citing government officials. Quoting Eberhard Sandachneider, member of the German Council on Foreign Relations, Erlanger notes "the Obama who spoke tonight did not put all his cards on the table . . . between the lines he said very clearly that Europe needs to do more, especially on Afghanistan and Iraq."[47] By providing additional speculation from German officials, Erlanger evaluates the speech as a diplomatic endeavor that requires the viewpoint of parties on the other side of a negotiation process.

The second criticism emerged from Obama's brief mention of fair trade even though it takes up no more than a paragraph of his speech. Quoting a line from the speech, Erlanger notes that Obama "said he wanted to 'build on the wealth that open markets have created' but only if trade agreements were 'free and fair for all.'"[48] For Erlanger, the

second half of this line is particularly interesting, as he suggests that this language is riddled with skepticism about current trade negotiations that are bogged down by protectionism.

Further, a few journalists use these diplomatic disagreements to criticize Obama's inexperience, arguing that "his words drift far from reality,"[49] representing a "Disneyland" approach to politics.[50] *New York Times* columnist Susan Neiman suggested the speech failed to recognize the fact that much of the hype surrounding the speech was ironic mockery.[51] Another *New York Times* columnist, conservative David Brooks, characterized the speech as dangerous optimism that rests on the illusion that global politics can change "if only people mystically come together,"[52] ultimately arguing that "it will take politics and power to address these challenges, the two factors that dare not speak their name in Obama's lofty peroration."[53] Brooks also used this to respond to Obama's comparisons to Kennedy, arguing that there was inadequate linkage between the two because Kennedy grounded his optimistic rhetoric in pragmatic policies.

Still, much of this discussion was truncated by the amount of space devoted to the descriptions of Obama's popularity. Even in her criticism of the speech, Deborah Cole, for example, takes time to mention the fact that many within the German government responded warmly, despite disagreements in the current political climate. Cole provides a quote from Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman:

The priorities [Obama] set are also those of the German government: resolving the world's conflicts together, working together to fight climate change, starting a clear initiative on nuclear non-proliferation, combating the challenges of international terrorism together. These questions can no longer be faced by one country alone.[54]

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This point helps add to Obama's competence, as it demonstrates that his lofty goals are in line with those of European allies. Further, it adds to the simulation by drawing in external reports to rebut what many saw as a shortcoming of the speech itself.

In all, the media picked up on at least two common themes in Obama's speech at Victory Column. Many of the reports provided substantial descriptions of the scene, discussing either the atmosphere of the audience or the historical value of the site. Within each grouping, the journalists selected particular parts of the speeches that assisted in their claims. For those focusing on the cheers from the audience, journalists looked for places where Obama attempted to separate himself from the Bush administration. For those discussing the political history of Berlin, the authors quoted Obama's references to past presidents and paid careful attention to the metaphorical use of the Berlin Wall. In both sets, the vagueness of the speech itself limited media coverage of the content. However, some reports still picked up on points of contention, noting that Obama failed to address disagreements over Afghanistan and trade. While none of these articles make an explicit prediction about the outcome of the election, a majority of these articles carry an optimistic tone to the ways in which they discuss the speech.

<div align="center">Implications</div>

As this chapter demonstrates, Obama and the media had equally important roles in constructing the spectacle of foreign policy experience. Here, the cascading simulation manifests itself between the speech and the media's interpretation of the speech. By speaking as though he understood international politics and the importance of alliances, Obama simulated foreign policy experience. In order to do so, he played off of the

expectations of the immediate audience, both in terms of the historic location and his call for change in American politics.

Both broadcast and newspaper media picked up on these trends in the second and third levels of cascading simulation. In the *CNN* broadcast of the speech, the news used several different camera angles to heighten the rhetorical significance of particular points during the speech. By showing clips of the audience cheering and waving American flags, the broadcast appropriated the scene as a means to enhance Obama's credibility. Newspaper media followed suit in a similar fashion. Much of the written accounts of the event presumed that he had already won the presidency.

Three trends demonstrate this point. First, authors framed the response from the audience as a signal of support for a transition to a new foreign policy ideal. Second, the authors highlighted the historical significance of the event, choosing to compare Obama to past presidents rather than other presidential candidates. Third, criticisms of the speech evaluated it in terms of effective policy proposals, framing the speech as an act of diplomacy rather than a campaign moment.

Although poll numbers did not immediately change following the speech, there is some indication that the simulation had already resonated with the public a few days after the speech. In response to David Brooks' article criticizing the speech as vacuous optimism, the *New York Times* received five letters to the editor that were highly critical of his interpretation. In each of them, American voters are quick to argue that Brooks' "misses the point"[55] of the speech entirely that "reveals just how far our national mind-set has sunk into the dark dichotomies of the Bush administration."[56] These letters argue that the speech represented a welcomed shift in the strategic vision of American diplomacy.

Patrick Jenkins, for example, notes that "we fail to reach these goals because we refuse to envision them,"[57] not because of a lack of pragmatic proposals.

Indeed, even those that recognize the speech as overly optimistic still see the speech as a success. Marian Lubinsky writes:

> Without a vision, change cannot become reality . . . without President Lyndon B.
> Johnson, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 would not have been passed. That does not
> make the contribution of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. any less significant.
> Without Dr. King's optimistic vision of a different world, no Civil Rights Act would
> have been proposed. Do I expect to be disappointed if Mr. Obama is elected? Of
> course. He won't be able to heal the world in four years. Given a choice between
> optimism and more of the same, however, the choice is clear.[58]

This letter is interesting for a couple of reasons. First, the author uses historical examples to demonstrate how optimism can change reality. Second, by linking Barack Obama to Martin Luther King Jr. and Lyndon Johnson, the author asserts leadership qualities from public figures of the past onto Obama. This point demonstrates the final level of the cascade downwards, indicating that the simulated image of foreign policy credibility had reached the public.

These letters demonstrate the rhetorical power of the spectacle. At least for these five voters, the call for optimistic diplomacy represented a competent understanding of foreign policy that was able to subvert the possibility of counter-narrative. In each of them, the writers ignore what Brooks calls "political realities,"[59] choosing to replace his historical examples of pragmatism with examples of their own. For these particular

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voters, the image of a foreign public applauding Obama was strong enough to overwhelm criticisms of the speech.

Notes

[1] Michael Leff and G. P. Mohrmann, "Lincoln at Cooper Union: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Text." *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 60*, (1974), 348.

[2] Keith V. Erickson, "Presidential Spectacles: Political Illusionism and the Rhetoric of Travel." *Communication Monographs, 65*, (1998), 142.

[3] Bruce E. Gronbeck, "The Rhetorics of the Past: History, Argument and Collective Memory." In *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Causes*, eds., by K. J. Turner, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 55.

[4] Gronbeck, "The Rhetorics of the Past." 54.

[5] Barack Obama. "A World that Stands as One: Barack Obama's Remarks at Berlin's Victory Column." *Council on Foreign Relations,* July 24, 2008, http://www.cfr.org/publication/16853/.

[6] Obama. "A World that Stands as One."

[7] Obama. "A World that Stands as One."

[8] Linda M. Scott, "Images in Advertising: The Need for a Theory of Visual Rhetoric." *Journal of Consumer Research*, *21*, (1994), 252.

[9] Bernard Timberg, 135.

[10] Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *The Interplay of Influence*. (Belmont, Ca.: Wadsworth, 1983), 46.

[11] Robert K. Tiemens, "Televisions Portrayal of the 1976 Presidential Debates: An Analysis of Visual Content." *Communication Monographs, 45,* (1978), 367.

[12] Dennis Dunleavy, "Play by Play: The Social Function of News Images." *Digital Days,* February 18, 2008,

http://ddunleavy.typepad.com/the_big_picture/visual_rhetoric_and_metaphor/.

[13] Herbert Zetti. *Sight, Sound, Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics*. (Belmont, CA: Wadworth, 1973), 227.

[14] Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. "Introduction: The Rhetorical Presidency." *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words*, (University of Chicago Press; Chicago, 2008), 12.

[15] Todd M. Schaefer, "Persuading and Persuaders: Presidential Speeches and Editorial Opinion." *Political Communication, 14,* (1997), 98.

[16] The CNN broadcast of the speech can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-9ry38AhbU.

[17] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-9ry38AhbU.

[18] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-9ry38AhbU.

[19] Borcholte, "Sieg der Saule." *Der Spiegel,* July 24, 2008.

[20] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-9ry38AhbU.

[21] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-9ry38AhbU.

[22] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-9ry38AhbU.

[23] Deborah Cole, "200,000 Cheer 'Statesman' Obama in Berlin." *Agence France Presse*, July 24, 2008.

[24] Jeff Zeleny and Nicholas Kulish, "Obama, in Berlin, Calls for Renewal of Ties With Allies." *New York Times*, July 25, 2008, A019.

[25] Cole, "200,000 Cheer 'Statesman' Obama in Berlin."

[26] Cole, "200,000 Cheer 'Statesman' Obama in Berlin."

[27] Arnaud Bouvier, "Berlin Toasts Barack 'Kennedy' Obama." *Agence France Presse*, July 24, 2008.

[28] David Brooks, "Playing Innocent Abroad." *New York Times*, July 25, 2008, A021.

[29] Cole, "200,000 Cheer 'Statesman' Obama in Berlin."

[30] Cole, "200,000 Cheer 'Statesman' Obama in Berlin."

[31] Obama. "A World That Stands as One."

[32] Steven Erlanger, "Obama, Vague on Issues, Is a Crowd-Pleaser in Europe." *New York Times*, July 25, 2008, A01.

[33] Erlanger, "Obama, Vague on Issues, Is a Crowd-Pleaser in Europe." A01.

[34] It is worth noting that George Bush gave a very similar speech one day prior to this speech. According to Jeff Zeleny and Nicholas Kulish, Bush covered almost the exact same topics, including the call to revive the cooperative spirit of NATO, the historical reference to the Marshall Plan and the Berlin Airlift, and the call for expanding humanitarian efforts to combat totalitarianism in countries like Darfur. However, this speech was not televised.

[35] Jeff Zeleny and Nicholas Kulish, "Obama, in Berlin, Calls for Renewal of Ties With Allies." *New York Times*, July 25, 2008, A019.

[36] Deborah Cole, "Germany Basks in Obama Afterglow." *Agence France Presse*, July 24, 2008.

[37] Zeleny and Kulish, "Obama, in Berlin, Calls for Renewal of Ties With Allies."

[38] Zeleny and Kulish, "Obama, in Berlin, Calls for Renewal of Ties With Allies."

[39] Zeleny and Kulish, "Obama, in Berlin, Calls for Renewal of Ties With Allies."

[40] Stephen Collinson, "Obama Rocks 200,000 in Berlin." *Agence France Presse*, July, 24, 2008.

[41] Collinson, "Obama Rocks 200,000 in Berlin."

[42] Collinson, "Obama Rocks 200,000 in Berlin."

[43] Cole, "Germany Basks in Obama Afterglow."

[44] Erlanger, "Obama, Vague on Issues, Is a Crowd-Pleaser in Europe."

[45] Cole, "200,000 Cheer 'Statesman' Obama in Berlin."

[46] Stephen Collinson, "Obama in Berlin Looks To Restore Transatlantic Ties." *Agence France Presse*, July 24, 2008.

[47] Collinson, "Obama in Berlin Looks To Restore Transatlantic Ties."

[48] Collinson, "Obama in Berlin Looks To Restore Transatlantic Ties."

[49] Brooks, "Playing Innocent Abroad."

[50] Brooks, "Playing Innocent Abroad."

[51] Susan Neiman, "Change Germans Can't Believe In." *New York Times*, July 26, 2008, A017.

[52] Brooks, "Playing Innocent Abroad."

[53] Brooks, "Playing Innocent Abroad."

[54] Cole, "Germany Basks in Obama Afterglow."

[55] Norman Abelson, "Letters to the Editor." *New York Times*, July 26, 2008, A016.

[56] McKay Stangler, "Letters to the Editor." *New York Times*, July 26, 2008, A016.

[57] Patrick B. Jenkins, "Letters to the Editor." *New York Times*, July 26, 2008, A016.

[58] Marian S. Lubinsky, "Letters to the Editor." *New York Times,* July 26, 2008, A016.

[59] Brooks, "Playing Innocent Abroad."

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Barack Obama's ability to create the image of foreign policy expertise in Berlin played an important role in the 2008 presidential campaign. The warm reception from the international community is best demonstrated by German newspapers following the speech. The German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* even put Obama on its cover under the heading "Germany Meets the Superstar," suggesting that the German public "awaited [Obama] like a magician who can clear away the clouds of a troubled world."[1] With this in mind, it is no wonder that there was so much positive response from the German media. In the July 24, 2008 edition of *Spiegel Online*, for example, the title of one opinion column reads "No. 44 Has Spoken." In this article, German journalist Gerhard Spörl recounts Obama's speech with adoration, writing that "[Obama] will become the 44th president of the United States" and "the president of the world."[2] Throughout his description of the event, Spörl uses terms like "stupendous ride" to describe the speech and "passionate politician" to describe Obama.[3] Although this is only the opinion of one journalist, it demonstrates the rhetorical power of Obama's Victory Column address on the 2008 presidential campaign. This encapsulates my argument, as it demonstrates how many spectators evaluated Obama as a president rather than a presidential candidate.

In my concluding chapter, I provide a summary of my thesis. Following this synopsis, I spend time examining what my analysis of development of cascading simulation means to the field of communication as well as theories on campaign rhetoric and political simulation. The chapter ends with a discussion of future areas of research.

Summary

The 2008 presidential election acts as an interesting window into American politics. No doubt historians will record its outcome as the election of the first African-American president. While this is surely important, I provide a different lens for evaluating Barack Obama's campaign. In effect, my analysis of the 2008 presidential campaign as an instance where "cascading simulation" provides a much more in-depth understanding of the relationship between the candidate and the public. Rather than functioning as "mere rhetoric," I argue that speeches similar to the one delivered at Victory Column have vast political implications. This analysis serves as a case study for understanding how presidential candidates attempt to simulate the expectations of their constituents.   This analysis builds off of Robert Entman's "cascading activation." However, rather than just limiting this analysis to the transference of messages, I looked at the image construction behind those messages. In this way, a rhetorical text is beyond its immediate referent, and also includes presentation and re-presentation of the event.

This emphasis on imagery as persuasion is an important theme for both rhetorical scholarship and critical media studies. As my analysis demonstrates, no re-presentation of the event exists outside of simulation because the ideal image of a presidential candidate is what calls the event into being. A candidate on the campaign trail adapts to the image of an ideal president. Likewise, media coverage contrasts the two, ultimately determining whether the candidate fits the mold. In this sense, the imagery frames the candidate's simulation and its corresponding evaluation from the media because it provides a comparative base to measure the presentation and re-presentation. While others suggest that this opens up space for counter-narratives, I ultimately conclude that presidential

campaigns are unique points in politics that subsume the possibility of overcoming the

simulation. Research suggests that voters simply do not care enough to interrogate the

candidate's credentials in the short period of time offered by the campaign.

I argued that, in this particular instance, Obama utilized Victory Column to recast his

campaign along the lineage of strong past presidents. Both the speech location and the

themes of alliance building gave credence to Obama's perceived credibility. The 200,000

in the audience helped as well, as the images of a cheering crowd during the television

broadcast provided a powerful image of German support. The print media regurgitated

much of this, where news-writers highlighted the successes of the event rather than the

shallowness of the policies.

<p align="center">Significance Within Rhetorical Scholarship</p>

As I suggested towards the end of Chapter Three, my thesis suggests that a rhetorical

artifact in presidential campaign speeches extends beyond a textual representation to

include several mediating elements. In order to appropriately assess this particular genre

of speech, it is important to include elements of public opinion, idealistic constructions of

a president, how the candidate attempts to meet these constraints, and how the media

ultimately transmits that message onto the public. In this sense, the interaction between

the three actors in the process demands that rhetorical scholars engage these textual sites

as parts of an ongoing conversation rather than isolated incidents. Since a majority of the

public is limited to the refereed and re-transmitted images of the campaign trail, it would

seem insufficient to analyze only the text of the speech.

Some scholars have recognized this trend and argue that it is important to isolate

these levels of analysis in order to fracture the simulation. In her piece on gender norms

in campaign speeches, Mary Banwart, for example, suggests that the responsibility rests on the rhetor's language choices.[4] Others, such as Keith Erickson, suggest that the public should hold the media accountable for simply reprocessing idealistic messages from government officials.[5] While both of these arguments certainly hold their own merit, they are insufficient tools for investigating the relationship between the actors in constructing spectacle.

This is particularly true in the context of Baudrillard's theory of simulation. If nothing can truly exist outside of the simulation, then it is unlikely that a myopic view of a single text can reveal the true pattern of cascading simulation. Consider Branwart's claim for a moment. If gendered norms function as the overarching frame for evaluation, altering the language choices would be insufficient for changing the means of evaluation because there are always two levels of image construction: that which is seen, and that which is heard. These same gender biases would continue to exist based on media evaluations alone, even if gender balance can occur through language. This point seems quite evident in Hillary Clinton's attempt to create a gender balance during her candidacy for the 2008 Democratic primaries. When she attempted to assert herself as a strong leader, the media interpreted her assertive character as angry or condescending.[6] On the other hand, her attempts to show compassion were interpreted as disingenuous and too fickle for a future president.

<div align="center">Possible Avenues of Research</div>

Future research in the area should be mindful of the somewhat circular relationship between the public, media and the politician, as it suggests that the imagery behind the simulation can circumvent attempts to break from the mold even when those actions

occur from the top of the waterfall. This section discusses two possibilities for conducting future research in the area of cascading simulation within presidential campaigns. First, I suggest that it is important to further examine the relationship between the media and the candidate in order to understand the power differentials in meaning making. Second, I suggest that the opposing campaign functions as another level of cascading simulation within the rhetorical text.

<p style="text-align:center;">Vagueness as a Determinant of Hierarchy in Meaning</p>

One possible avenue of research into the interaction of language and image construction could focus on the issue of vagueness. Erickson recognizes this trend in relation to the political meaning behind images of two diplomats shaking hands,[7] but it could also serve as a way to understand how the candidate can direct the course of media re-presentation of the message.

The concept of vagueness emerges from the articles I selected in the *New York Times* and the *Agence France Presse*. In eight of the eleven articles, the journalists note that very little of the content of the speech is worth covering because the speech fails to move beyond "radical optimism,"[8] ultimately relegating a majority of the content to a short summary. In many cases, the "global hotspots" that Obama describes are given only one sentence. *New York Times* columnists Jeff Zeleny and Nicholas Kulish, for example, summarize the speech into one paragraph:

> Mr. Obama said it was time to reprise the spirit that conquered communism, and use it to heal divisions and forge closer partnerships to deal with nuclear proliferation, global warming, poverty and genocide. Without naming President Bush or going into detail about European disenchantment with the Iraq war and other policies of the

current administration, he suggested the United States would become a better partner, but called on European countries to uphold their responsibilities.[9]

 This is important given the fact that many of these same articles still pick up on the intent of the speech by labeling it as an attempt "to showcase the senator as a potential commander in chief and leader of U.S. foreign policy."[10] This emerging pattern in the newspaper texts suggests a core component of how the speaker can control the media's re-presentation of the speech. In order to evaluate the speech's ability to simulate effective leadership, the press must find a criterion for judgment. As such, a lack of concrete discussions of policy may insulate the president's message from criticism in the media, thereby forcing journalists to look elsewhere for evaluation. Thus, audience analysis, or how the German public responds to the symbolism of the speech, becomes the primary method through which the media can interpret the speech.

This notion falls in line with much of the rhetorical scholarship on presidential campaigns. As I noted in Chapter 3, a successful candidate must focus their discussions on aligning the shared values of the public with their political platform in order to secure votes. This makes concrete policy far less important in determining the persuasive power of the message. So long as the candidate can demonstrate a general understanding of the process, the public generally accepts them as competent. This is particularly true in the context of travel spectacles, where the acceptance from abroad holds a mystifying function that minimizes public doubt. In this sense, coverage of the "Obamamania" within the scene of the speech simulates foreign policy experience in the eyes of the voters. If this correlation holds true in other instances, this pattern suggests that the presidential candidate has a much stronger role in cascading simulation than the media.

<u>John McCain's Campaign as an Additional Layer of Cascading Simulation</u>

As of now, it is unclear whether the relationship between Obama's overseas tour and the McCain campaign is complimentary, or whether it just demonstrates how counter-simulation fails during presidential campaigns. Anyone who noticed Barack Obama overseas trip during the 2008 campaign probably would have also noticed McCain's responses to the entire trip. Not only did McCain liken the entire trip to a celebrity tour, but he also parodied the trip in the U.S. While Obama was speaking in Germany, McCain was eating a German bratwurst and calling Obama's trip presumptive, noting that he would "love to give a speech in Germany, but [he'd] much prefer to do it as President.[11] This shift in campaign strategy to focus on the event rather than continue the press on Obama's credentials suggests that the opposing campaign may play a role in the construction of simulation, as it interacts with the rhetor's message.

In addition, my research suggests that Obama's overseas visit also effected how the media interpreted McCain's campaign. While looking for articles about the Victory Column speech, I came across two articles that were written about McCain in the *New York Times.* In the first article, Elisabeth Bumiller discussed McCain's attempt to visit an offshore oil rig as an attempt to "steal attention" from Obama's speech in Berlin.[12] In the second article the following day, Bumiller characterizes the speech as a failure for McCain, calling McCain's attempts to counter the event half-hearted.[13] Not only does Bumiller cite campaign experts to add credence to this claim, but she also says Obama destroyed McCain's ability to take a lead, noting that "At every stop that was supposed to be about the economy, energy or health care, Mr. McCain faced questions about Mr. Obama's foreign trip and spent as much time reacting to his opponent as pushing his own

domestic plans."[14] At the very least, this point suggests that campaign strategies of the opponent could act as strong correlative markers for evaluating the effectiveness of political simulation in the future.

As this section suggests, it may be important to expand what constitutes a rhetorical artifact in regards to presidential campaigns. This expanded definition should include the public, the media, and the president as meaning makers behind any speech. While recognition of this trend is important for the field, it also asks important questions about the nature of this interaction. Future research should investigate the relationship between the media and the candidate in order to come up with a more conclusive understanding of the relationship between the two transmitters of meaning. As some of the newspaper articles suggested, the ability to remain vague during a campaign speech may give the speaker the ability to manipulate media transmission. Research on gender roles supports this claim. In addition, a broadening of the rhetorical text opens up further space for enclosure, including the opposing political campaign. While it is unclear whether this relationship is co-productive or counter-productive, articles written on the same date as the Victory Column speech suggests that there is a possible correlation between the two.

This is particularly interesting in relation to studies on the decision calculus of voters. As I suggested in Chapter 3, there is a significant amount of research that suggests voters pay more attention to the perceived credibility than the policy stances of presidential candidates. This point suggests that one possible consequence of a successful cascading simulation is the inoculation of the candidate from future criticism. If spectacle affects the candidate's perceived credibility positively, voters may insulate their judgment of candidates from critics. This suggests that spectacle flips, or at the very least heightens,

the burden of proof onto the critics rather than the candidate for the issue in question. This would act as a significant roadblock to the development of any future attacks from McCain, which is particularly important given the time constraints of a presidential campaign. The dominant spectacle need only maintain its authority until after the November election, at which point counter-narratives are largely irrelevant because they cannot alter the outcome of the campaign.

It is also unclear whether this same type of analysis applies to situations outside of presidential campaigns. The relationship between George W. Bush and the public over Iraq suggests that counter-simulations emerge over time to debunk the dominant frame. However, it is unclear where these new narratives emerge. If the process of disproving simulation is slow going, than the rhetorical scholar can do little to change the outcome prior to the election. Still, cascading simulation acts as an important tool for understanding the development of meaning during presidential campaigns.

Notes

[1] Deborah Cole, "'Obamamania' Hits Berlin." *Agence France Presse,* July 24, 2008.

[2] Gerhard Spörl, "No. 44 Has Spoken." *Spiegel Online*, July 24, 2008,

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[3] Spörl, "No. 44 Has Spoken."

[4] Mary Christine Banwart, "Constructing Images in Presidential Primaries: An Analysis

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[7] Erickson, "Presidential Spectacles." 142.

[8] David Brooks, "Playing Innocent Abroad." *New York Times*, July 25, 2008, A021.

[9] Jeff Zeleny and Nicholas Kulish, "Obama, in Berlin, Calls for Renewal of Ties With

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