

Name: Sebastian Schmidt Nielsen

Student Number: 20 11 47 18

Masters: Culture Communication & Globalization

10th Semester - Masters: Thesis

January 2021

Supervisor: Julia Zhukova Klausen

Introduction

There is something inherently fascinating about the idea of an American president who had an 8 year tenure of a historically significant presidency finally making his final farewell address to the nation and exploring the speech and what we can uncover. Quite fundamentally we would wonder what things would the speech be about, what would he focus on and why? The basis of this thesis is to perform Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) on the official farewell speech from Obama as president which took place in Chicago on January 10th, 2017, a mere 10 days before he officially left office and was replaced by Donald Trump. Farewell speech or not, American presidential speeches appear ripe with opportunity for insight and reflections when we perform CDA as large scale and largely influential political speeches are exactly the kind of thing, we can use very well to provide CDA inquiry and gain fruitful understanding of the power and influence of Discourse.

CDA as an approach to speeches or any other kind of Discourse be it in the form of text or spoken word, movies, advertisements etc. is a kind of analysis approach that deals with identifying power structures and power relations in the use of linguistics or language. CDA theory also has much to say about how language/Discourse of various kinds can profoundly affect society and the customs and

norms instilled in culture. In that sense CDA has an anthropological dimension to its proceedings and its fundamental approach and curiosity. Barack Obama while he was the president of the United States of America of course embodies in an ultimate way an authoritative power figure making him a very fitting choice for CDA style analysis. We will be analyzing this farewell address which represents a significant transition period in American politics and serves as an appropriate piece of data for properly applying the method of CDA conceivably leading us to very fascinating findings. When it comes to applying CDA - its most central aim is essentially to explore the intricate ways in which language holds within it much potential for expressing and maintaining ideologies, hierarchies and more broadly power. So, to put it simply CDA views language as not innocent and ripe with opportunity for deception and the pursuit of the interests of the speaker and also the larger order of the powerful in a society that the speaker sometimes represents and certainly this is the case in the content we will deal with in this particular case.

This speech that we will be delving into from then American President Barack Obama is a very far-reaching and important political address to analyze with a number of intercultural and international implications and dimensions. Obama indeed is addressing mainly the American citizens yes but any large scale speech from the American president with much attention given to it has international if not global interest as America of course is recognized as a superpower and the most powerful and wealthy country in the world by many standards. Indeed, Obama also covers international issues and goes into problematic considerations related to international relations and the military actions of America. So in other words this speech; of course, like almost any speech by an American President throughout history might very well be aimed primarily at the American citizens mostly at least in terms of how Obama

delivers the speech, however there is much interest, significance and implications for the international community. The United States of America as a global superpower with considerable and multifaceted impacts on the international stage is never to be ignored for anyone interested in keeping a finger on the pulse of international relations and developments in that area.

The speech in question took place on January 10th so 10 days before Obama was officially no longer president and Donald Trump replaced him on January 20th, 2017. Therefore, in the analysis as much as we are aware and cognizant of the fact that he is transitioning away from his time as president and even positions himself as being a citizen of the country like everyone else henceforth, he still nonetheless is technically the acting president for at least 10 more days after this speech and so in the analysis we deal with the speech as coming from the American president, albeit at the very end of his tenure.

During this speech Obama covers a variety of subjects but as part of how the CDA style analysis will be carried out, we will be pinpointing some key central themes and reoccurring tendencies throughout. This will be explored more later in the thesis. We will mostly be trying to keep a relative degree of focus and thus be able to more selectively aim our attention to find the most attention worthy attributes of the speech, so in other words this CDA analysis does not seek out to be all-encompassing. Indeed, part of what CDA allows for is to approach given material like a speech with different levels of magnification relating to the kind of things one wishes to discover and point out. So, the analysis will be somewhat shaped by this kind of understanding and not every single statement he makes in the speech will be analyzed, rather a selected and restricted number of quotes will be focused on and explored.

To provide a bit of overall context on the general subject of language and the potential issues related to the possible manipulative power of it, I will refer to a certain classic book on the matter which was not particularly about CDA as the book precedes the discipline, but the book dealt more broadly with the power and manipulative potential that makes language a dangerous force in human organization and affairs. Some may be familiar with this rather infamous book written all the way back in 1938 called *Tyranny of words* by Stuart Chase. Chase, a social theorist and writer gets to the heart of the issue of language in the context of semantics, semantics is the study of meaning in language, thus a subcategory, if you will, of linguistics. Linguistics which is, more generally and broadly, the study of how language is structured.

Stuart Chase's book argues that much of the language commonly used is so inherently clouded with ambiguity, vagueness and uses of metaphors subject to interpretation that language becomes potentially destructive. This notion of language resulting in tyranny is perhaps best exemplified by political language or discourse, which arguably by necessity due to its need to appeal to the mainstream is generally very cloaked, vague and non-specific. "What exactly does he mean when he says that?" You might often wonder when listening to political discourse and with good reason. These ostensibly obvious and seemingly pre-supposed and accepted values and concepts like "freedom" and "liberty" and "good prevailing over evil" and of course "we" are the good guys, and "they" are the bad guys etc. are examples undoubtedly of a type of communication that is not exactly characterized by subtle nuances and in-depth elaborations. Often times a politician pushes his intent through overly simplistic and highly nondescript language, which is quite common within political discourse and thus it is generally accepted and unquestioned, even expected. This of course opens the door to a range of

interpretations, which is particularly dangerous when people are primed with their own subjective contexts and bias, looking for confirmation of their own beliefs or viewpoints somewhere within the general ambiguity of political discourse.

The book *Tyranny of words* by Stuart Chase is brought up here in the introduction because it is thought of by many as a classic piece of literature which I would argue fits perfectly as an addition and extension of the general theory behind CDA which then later developed. Stuart Chase arguably had the mindset, the attitude and the approach to language which then later became developed further into a more formally devised body of theory known as CDA. It is important to realize that a general scepticism and healthy respect towards the manipulative power of language and its role in maintaining societal norms or even to a certain extent creating them is something that many thinkers have been aware of and discussed long before CDA was established. There are many poignant quotes to refer to in the book but one example which highlights potential issues with language more specifically within the political sphere can be seen here. It deals with the issue of words having numerous possible interpretations by people. Thus, Chase argues there is an inherent problem with frivolously throwing around many broad terms and concepts which lack general firm consensus about the actual tangible meaning of them:

Well, what does “fascism” mean? (...) More important than trying to find meaning in vague abstraction is an analysis of what people believe it means. Do they agree? Are they thinking about the same referent when they the term or use it? (Chase, 1938, P. 131)

Chase then lists many responses he gathered from people about what came to mind when they heard the word fascism. He received incredibly varied responses very much confirming his suspicion that these abstract concepts elicit a great variety of interpretations, which is problematic. He then continues:

Further comment is really unnecessary. It is safe to say that kindred abstractions such as “democracy,” “communism,” “totalitarianism,” would show a like reaction. The persons interviewed showed a dislike of “fascism” but there was little agreement as to what it meant. (Chase, 1938, P. 132)

Now, to relate this to the speech we will be handling in this thesis, Obama not unlike other politicians or more specifically American presidents employs liberal use of these type of concepts and words, which as Chase points out can undoubtedly be problematic in the sense that especially a country like America with such a multicultural population will result in various multitudes of interpretation. Then again, just as the word fascism had varying interpretations, it did however garner the kind of response which was likely sought after. That is to say it was met with a negative connotation. So, words like democracy and liberty etc. may well be interpreted differently to an extent, however perhaps the

main thing is that those words are linked with positive reactions and associations in the vast majority of Americans. Similarly, in terms of the modern day, words like terror, climate change and extremists which are words Obama uses as 'bad' words symbolizing bad things essentially to put it simply – likely also has uniformity for the most part at least in the sense that there is general agreement that those things are indeed bad. Therefore, it is important to remember, realize and perhaps admit that political language is generally characterized by vague and broad speech or 'Discourse'. Obama's speech does not differ in this regard which is unsurprising.

This thesis is centred around CDA methodology and we will be delving more into detail about this method the next part of this thesis but very shortly a good summary in a small section can be observed here which points to some of the inherent assumptions and scepticism towards Discourse that is involved in CDA and therefor also influences how we proceed.

A critical approach to discourse typically analyses news texts, advertisements, political interviews and speeches (...) or other so-called 'unequal encounters'. These encounters often employ strategies that appear normal or neutral on the surface; strategies which are naturalized but which may in fact be ideologically invested. (Simpson & Mayr, 2010, P. 51)

Theory & Method

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a methodology that allows for a unique insight review of what lies behind the use of spoken/written language or even other types of audio or visual based communication styles, referred to as discourse mostly from here on out. (Simpson & Mayr, 2010, P. 50) This is particularly the case in terms uncovering and exposing possible agendas, motivations and not least power dynamics which are always being expressed either directly or subtly, certainly so when it comes to political discourse. There are many ways to approach an analysis of this kind but there is a common thread where we ultimately are looking to expose the power and ideology embedded within the discourse. Various forms of communication, not least political forms of communication are always to be considered in their wider social and political context for keen insight to properly be arrived at which is a rather important differentiating aspect of this kind of CDA approach. Language is not viewed as innocent and without possibly social and political implications and impact. Politicians for example do not simply objectively report on things in society or in the world at large, rather they also tend to infuse ideological meaning into their statements. This has the power to severely affect perceptions and ultimately be a central part of creating social norms and culturally accepted views of normality. The term discourse refers to a variety of ways in which communication is achieved between people, this is a pretty inclusive term and discourse expresses itself in a host of different mediums.

In this thesis we are dealing with a transcript of an American presidential political speech and thus it behooves us to quickly give an overview of the concept of a register and by extension the somewhat similar concept of a genre within discourse:

A register is a specialized code or variety of language associated with a specific social practice and designed to serve a specific goal. It consists of distinctive linguistic patterns (vocabulary, grammar, phonology etc.) which have become conventionalized and are relatively durable.

(Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 113)

So, to use a very well-known example in terms of a conventionalized and durable custom in the linguistic patterns of an American presidential speech which is rather distinctive we can point to the “may God bless the United States of America” cliché which is so recognizable. ‘Genre’ and register are sometimes used somewhat interchangeably but a genre loosely refers to a distinct way of controlling and setting up the style of discourse and how it is framed, and political speeches usually exemplify this kind of controlled and distinct style of speech. The existence of genres and having formal manners and traditions of how to go about communication in for example a political speech environment is important because this provides a basic framework for the audience or in this case the citizens receiving the discourse and thus be better able to comprehend the communication, recognizing a certain style of dialogue. So, a 'register' to sum up in simple terms could be described as the styles of Discourse which are reliably used for a distinct purpose, in a particular social setting such as a political speech like we are dealing with in this case. (Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 113)

When we consider discourse and its implications on society and human culture, language should not be judged strictly in isolation; instead, discourses often include some degree of intertextuality. (Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 62 This word refers to the fact that often times discourse is understood best with reference to other related discourses. A president may either directly or indirectly refer to another text

like the bible or perhaps the constitution to help make his point or it could be subtle and indirect where it is not outright expressed that the speaker is referring to another text.

Critical discourse analysis is ultimately a nuanced and multifaceted tool and approach to language that can help us examine the content of important examples of discourse and be better able to interpret what is being communicated to a wide and possibly largely unaware or naive audience. When we perform CDA we are probing into what the discourse is achieving and what some of the potential reasoning behind this could involve which brings us on to the element of inductive reasoning which also characterizes this approach to language.

By critical discourse analysis, I mean analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between

(a) discursive practices, events and texts, and

(b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes;

to investigate how such practices, events, and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power, and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

(Amoussou & Allegbe, 2018, p. 13)

Another simple way to describe CDA can be seen here: “Unlike many other forms of linguistic analysis, CDA is not only concerned with words on a page but also involves examining social context –

for example, asking how and why the words came to be written or spoken (...)” (Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 26) This short description fittingly introduces of the very crucial and initial contentions that define CDA which is that language or to be more precise in our terminology: Discourse, contributes quite strongly to both creating and maintaining a given society and it’s culturally accepted norms as a whole. Anywhere in the world that Discourse is presented, particularly in the realm of politics, views and norms are shaped and we need to pay attention to power and ideologically driven messages. (Simpson & Mayr, 2010, P. 53) This entire body of theory which then informs a methodology also is not very old and developed officially and formally speaking in the early 90’s at least in the sense of it being funny identified and labelled as CDA. Some key noteworthy scholars in the field especially perhaps Teun van Dijk and Norman Fairclough are often referred to as ‘the founders’ and were very instrumental in developing this CDA method and arguing for its validity and its strengths, both are quoted and referred to quite often when dealing with elements of CDA:

CDA as a network of scholars emerged in the early 1990s, following a small symposium in Amsterdam, in January 1991. By chance and through the support of the University of Amsterdam, Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak spent two days together, and had the wonderful opportunity to discuss theories and methods of discourse analysis and specifically CDA. The meeting made it possible for everyone to confront each other with the very distinct and different approaches, which still mark the different approaches today Since then, much has changed, the agenda as well as the scholars involved. New journals have been launched, multiple overviews have been written, and nowadays CDA is an established paradigm in linguistics. (...)

Now, an essential component of CDA which does in a basic sense set it apart quite noticeably from other ways of analyzing text or the spoken word or even imagery etc. is that we must be rather aware of also considering broader, general and even some historical social and political context which is all related to the speech or text. I will be keeping this in mind as I will be doing both an analysis of sentences and quotes somewhat focusing on what is being said, in its own right but also very much relating the analysis to include some social analysis including commentary and acknowledgement of socio-economic realities which relate to the topics being discussed by Obama. The kind of inquiry that CDA proposes is thus also different, in summation:

It is important to remember that distinct methodological traditions not only deploy different methods, but also emerge from distinct traditions, theories, and principles of reasoning that have shaped research techniques used in the field. Therefore, they often ask fundamentally different questions. (Lamont, 2015. P 16)

I have elected to concentrate on just the written text based transcript version of the farewell address by Obama. I will in other words not focus on or give any consideration to elements such as facial expressions, body language, prolonged pauses, crowd reactions, general gestures or his vocal pitch changes. Performing CDA and especially when dealing with the topic and the material of a political speech such as this; there are surely numerous areas of potential interest, many things to explore which could all be ripe with opportunity for some good insight. Nevertheless, one might always be recommended to tighten in ones elected approach and actually limit the scope of what one will investigate deliberately. This can help us to keep the analysis itself fairly concise and thus also more

digestible to carry out and to be presented also. There are arguments for and against the addition or omission of the visual and auditory parts of the speech. I would ultimately argue that it depends on the context of the specific piece material that is the basis for the research. For the objectives of this particular CDA analysis, I say that maintaining our concentration on the textual transcript of just the spoken word will serve as entirely sufficient and that also keeps the work focused and condensed which is essential also. Obama is no doubt viewed by many as a rather charismatic figure and indeed remarks could be made to his facial expressions and body language throughout this speech to highlight certain things in relation to the analysis if that were the chosen approach, but there is plenty to delve into simply in terms of using strictly the transcript of his words for this speech as the singular focus of this analysis. So, to make it clear, CDA can indeed involve analysis of both audio and visual content and certainly at times material will call for it. But however magnetic and charismatic Obama can appear and that holds some importance no doubt, the video footage of the speech is more or less a still shot of him speaking and of course gesturing and smiling here or there and the crowd cheering on sporadically throughout. Yes, this could be something to include but it can be argued that media with more varying sights and sounds such as a movie or a documentary style television presentation with music and visual effects etc. would have been a different story, where the audiovisual aspects would likely be key to understanding and deciphering the messages.

In terms of my specific methodological approach: I go through with reading the speech and then starting upon my analysis I decide on what are the major aspects and reoccurring themes that stick out to me throughout his speech. I will pay close attention to his discursive tendencies but perhaps mostly to his consistent themes, the main values he wants to instill or uphold, things he brings up continuously as a general thread showing us what he prioritizes to get across most fervently. What are the words he

keeps using, what are the phrases that he likes to use over and over again? These will be central questions. Repeated phrases and reoccurring themes that are revisited to a noticeable extent that also expose some of the ideological agendas Obama is working to push forward in his delivery of discourse. How does he go about arguing for what is good and what is bad, who is the in-group and who is the out-group and how does he refer to both? These considerations and things to look for will be key components to making our way through the analysis portion and also the conclusion.

I will point out some of the ways that he manages to try to get his messages across to the American citizens and refer to specific tools such as metaphors, modes of persuasion, or referring to other texts or bringing up past historic events. To analyze this speech with the mindset of someone carrying out CDA and for this to be done in a fruitful way I must not simply look at what Obama says during this speech and just look at it in a compartmentalized manner. Being incentivized and encouraged to relate the themes and tendencies and argumentations in his speech to the wider social and political context is part of what makes CDA unique and insightful. “(...) there is generally no step-by-step, fixed approach to analysis. The analyst is given considerable freedom in choosing texts, combinations of different analytical techniques and the order in which they are carried out.” (Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 26-27)

To elaborate a bit more on this it could be said that a key component of CDA is that as you perform your analysis of the given material which in this case is a speech in the form of text – you not only look into the speakers use of metaphors or intertextuality and so on, the more technical elements of Discourse. You involve as part of your analysis the ‘critical’ perspective which more than just suspects but expects there to be a hidden agenda with ideology and power relations being expressed.

(...) I define an ideology is an elaborate story told about the ideal conduct of some aspect of human affairs. As I see it, its power lies in its truth value, which is determined by the number and nature of its subscription base (...) In short, the truth of an ideology is determined by the number subscribing to it. The related term, 'hegemony', can consequently be defined as the state of affairs which exists when the subscription base of an ideology is broad in terms of numbers and reinforced 'vertically' by the social status of its subscribers. Or to put it more stridently, 'Hegemony is secured when the virulence of oppression, in its many guises (e.g. race, gender, class, sexual orientation) is accepted as consensus.'" (Locke, 2004, P. 33-34)

Interests are being sought to be met and the Discourse has things to be revealed concealing motivations and ideological underpinnings. Once again, CDA basically argues that Discourse is such a powerful and important feature to pay attention to because of its ability to reinforce ideological agendas and maintain power structures. Furthermore, you also want to often consider larger order implications in the sense of keeping the social and political climate in mind for general context to help improve potential insight and understanding of the discourse being analyzed. With this in mind, as I now will move into the analysis of Obama's speech, I will be providing thoughts that go beyond just the discourse in an enclosed sense. I will rather be relating the analysis of the discourse to broader societal factors and connecting his messages to political and socioeconomic considerations, so as to be able to provide more substantive thoughts which can contribute to the overall interpretation, discussion and reflections gathered from the analysis.

Carrying from this it should also be stated that some of the insight and larger order socio-economic considerations which will be part of the analysis are not all direct criticisms of Obama but rather the broader political and socio-economic systems and norms that he as the president and as thus, really, the ultimate symbol of political power in some sense, represents. In fact, there will be critical discussion and evaluation when contextualizing some of the quotes from the speech that do not always reflect Obama's own expressed stances but part of the analysis will be more about relating the discourse to the larger picture and larger order of society, American society also specifically with some of the attributes associated with American socio-economic factors. Even on some issues that Obama claims to be quite aware of we will still be providing more discussion of the context to point out the problems of creating these presupposed accepted things that are merely 'a given' to the majority of citizens in America. The outlined aims of performing CDA is partially defined by particular notable academics in this field of discourse analysis such as Van Dijk who proclaims: "... CDA is a type of discourse analytic research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context ... and thus wants to understand, expose and ultimately resist social inequality." (T. Van Dijk, p1-2) This is stated so that it is clear that while some points of the analysis may not be a reflection of Obama's own expressed stances, the analysis does touch upon general societal realities in relation to the subjects that Obama covers in his speech.

As someone approaching this speech with CDA methodology and thus with the 'critical lenses on' so to speak, I go into the analysis section with some basic ideas and understandings in mind which translates to what I wish to analyze and bring most focus on. Thus, I am also necessarily missing out on other potentially profitable areas that another analysis style could provide. Discourse Analysis

generally speaking is classified as an interpretivistic type of approach to analyzing, discussing, and evaluating data. It is mostly a qualitative rather than quantitative method. “It can be argued that IR scholarship can be grouped into two broad epistemological traditions that advance competing claims as to what should be regarded as acceptable knowledge within the field: empiricism and interpretivism.” (Lamont, 2015. P 18) CDA has an element of inductive reasoning behind its assumptions and this means we already do assume some fundamental things about the role and significance of Discourse, particularly Discourse delivered in the political sphere. It is critical to be mindful in terms of selected methodology seeing not merely the potential but likewise the potential limitations that can come with any given chosen approach. When we carry out any work in academia, we must some degree acknowledge that certain things will unavoidably be left out or that the approach we take is not entirely bullet proof. No method of analysis will be without some inherent downsides but depending on what you are interested in learning about and discovering you apply appropriate methods to investigate: “Discourse scholarship is regularly criticized as bad science, because of its lack of testable theories or empirical analyses.” (Milliken. 1999. P 227) There are critics with a different attitude regarding data analysis and it is essential to acknowledge possible drawbacks to really any chosen approach in order for us to properly manage our expectations and avoid overestimating ourselves or any results we arrive at.

CDA greatly differs from many other approaches to discourse and analysis of text, it has that inductive element of reasoning, where we indeed acknowledge having some preconceived notions and thus suspicions of the power of language in creating or maintaining societal norms and power dynamics – especially when dealing with political speeches. Really, part of the appeal of CDA is frankly to be

able to take given material, which in this case is a speech in transcript text form – and to be able to analyze it in such a way that can include wider considerations contextualizing the discourse by relating it to the multifaceted societal circumstances and thus CDA enables the option of providing a level and a type of insight unlike other types of analysis.

To put it simply CDA opens the doors to many possible ways of approaching discourse and the insight that can be gained through this basically interpretivistic method. Fundamentally it can be said that the analytic foundation and outcome of a social constructivist, relativistic, post-structuralist kind of approach which CDA exemplifies, necessarily results in findings that are somewhat subject to interpretation and thus arguable subjective, ultimately. Perspectives and findings derived from the CDA approach do not claim to be of the objective empirical quantitative nature and this is something we must be sincere about and aware of. This does however open up more possibility of bold inquiry which can lead us many thought-provoking places throughout an analysis.

Social constructivism involves a kind of attitude or interpretation of knowledge that is “... concerned with how knowledge is constructed and understood” (...)“... views society as existing both as objective and subjective reality...” and ”... places great emphasis on everyday interactions between people and how they use language to construct their reality.” (Andrews, 2012). The epistemological basis of this CDA based thesis, is inherently interpretivistic. Part of this is the assertion that we as people in society“... interpret the world through the discourse that are available to us. Social interaction, especially linguistic interaction, (which is relativistic and phenomenological) is seen as having the greatest influence on how our versions of reality are shaped.” (Baker & Ellece, 2011 p.135) This basically means that our individual and collective realities are partly constructed through shared social

discourse, thus new understandings and constructions of realities are constantly developed, which brings forth the notion of malleable ideologies and agendas to affect these ideological perceptions. This relates to the inquiry of the thesis, examining the attempts of persuasions to shape reality from a political speaker, and thus reflecting on their interest of influencing the malleable ideologies of the audience, or more specifically the American public. In this case it relates to and illustrates the persuasive agendas that we assume and expect are always present, especially in a political speech. We also admit and acknowledge that we humans are malleable and sensitive to the affects of cleverly devised discourse.

This is not a particularly complicated speech for the most part but does delve into a variety of topics and Obama also does not necessarily stick to one topic at a time exclusively. This means there is a great deal of overlap in his speech in the sense that what he speaks of in the first few paragraphs he then circles back to or refers to in some way much later in the speech and this has an impact on how I chose to handle the speech analysis and present it. The analysis will not be carried out in a way that is entirely chronological, the nature of how the speech unfolds does not allow for that if I wish to handle and deal with one overall subject at a time. I will have some main quotes that I highlight clearly sectioned off in boxes. This makes the analysis more reader friendly and will help section up the analysis into clearly defined bites. This means the analysis is loosely divided up into sections, but natural some overlap will also happen. There will be mentions of other quotations from within the analysis paragraphs themselves as well and these will also not necessarily be in any chronological order due to the nature of how Obama goes about his speech. These quotations from within the actual analysis parts will simply be relating to the overall topic of the original highlighted quote, which is always clearly boxed,

thus I will largely be staying on one particular topic at a time. I will use the main highlighted quotes somewhat as the launching pads for a new section of the analysis and then deal with that overall subject within his speech, even if he deals with that subject at various times throughout. This will be done in a way that both includes the typical things we tend to look for in critical discourse analysis such as metaphors, intertextuality, use of pronouns etc. but also the wider social and political contextual insight such as I've described prior. Ultimately, as was touched upon earlier - we will be looking to pinpoint which particular themes, words and general topics that most characterize his speech and which subjects he focuses on the most. Included of course will also be observations about linguistic tools such as metaphors, modalities, modes of persuasion and some examples of intertextuality.

Speech Analysis

(Full PDF transcript of the speech is attached in the digital hand in as an associated appendix. An online link to the official speech transcript is also available in list of references. I will not cite the same speech which I am analyzing over and over again after every quotation as it would be redundant.)

– *President Obama's official farewell address to the American people in Chicago, Jan. 10th, 2017*

“Hello, Chicago! It's good to be home! (...) I first came to Chicago when I was in my early 20s, still trying to figure out who I was; still searching for a purpose to my life. It was in neighborhoods not far from here where I began working with church groups in the shadows of closed steel mills.”

Obama initiates his speech giving attention to his time living in Chicago and thus playing to the crowd and their excitement and pride in Chicago, he is thereby positioning himself early in good graces with the crowd referring to Chicago as his home. He also gets a little bit personal talking about his 20's and searching for his purpose and so forth, there in Chicago. This is recognized in Discourse analysis as 'self-disclosure': "Self-disclosure is the act of revealing personal information about oneself to others (...) Self-disclosure could be seen as (Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 125) Not only does Obama speak as an American citizen, but also more particularly as a resident of Chicago. Thus, he positions himself for this particular speech as something of a 'hometown boy done proud', as it were. This is a fascinating thing to observe as this speech while Nationalistic in one sense as an American President addressing the Nation for the last time as president, also of course addressing the world as he still was here 'the leader of the free world' and as the man most in control of a global superpower with far reaching influence, but indeed he also presents himself as someone from a particular city and with some sense of allegiance to that city: Chicago. In this sense we can observe that there are many levels of community, many layers of belonging. In terms of considering implications of cosmopolitanism vs. Tribalism in the modern world – this is not merely something to take for granted. "Despite disagreement concerning its nature, however, nationalism remains a potent ideology in contemporary society, and its popularity appears to have diminished little in the face of potential threats such as globalisation, mass communication and multinational institutions." (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2008, P. 221) We have indeed the most powerful man on earth, making reference to what he deems his hometown saying it's good to be home and thus starting off a very high magnitude speech by showing allegiance and even social identification with a particular city and because we don't take any of these things for granted observing this through the lens of CDA we therefore pay attention and notice the startling fact that he is thereby legitimizing tribal or at least communitarian mentalities to some extent by engaging in this type of

pandering to the crowd albeit this is a completely expected and ‘normal’ thing to engage in.

Nonetheless this is arguably promoting a sense of pride in one’s geographical origins and this is not some neutral thing to take for granted, but we should be mindful of seeing it being expressed and promoted.

It is somewhat startling that this kind of basic attitude to human life still prevails and is exhibited by a president to such positive response: “Globalization makes it harder to draw clear ethical distinctions between insiders and outsiders and, consequently raises the idea of a cosmopolitan community of humankind.” (Baylis, Smith & Owens, 2011, P. 198) Now while Obama does indeed draw distinction between the in-group and the out-group to some extent in a few moments of the speech, overall, he does in fact showcase a general cosmopolitan and inclusive non polarizing position. He mixes nationalist sentiment with a kind of global awareness as well with the idea that America has a duty to lead the world. Porsdam (2012) also invites people to ask the question: “I am a citizen yes, - so of course I can ask myself, what can I do for my country? But I can also ask myself, what can I do for both my country and for the world?” (p. 66) This is no doubt a sentiment that some would view as fundamentally arrogant, particularly this idea that America should act as the knower of what is right and thus always intervene when they see wrongdoings, but Obama does walk that line between nationalism and a kind of cosmopolitan view of things as well, partly using the cosmopolitan viewpoint as a way to justify intervening in international affairs. Early in the speech he also uses the commonly used register: "My fellow Americans, (...)" as part of his introductory remarks, which of course is no surprise as it is custom to do so for a presidential speech when he is addressing the nation. "A register is a specialized code or variety of language associated with a specific social practice and designed to serve a specific social goal." (Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 113)

When such tribal oriented attitudes are prevailing as we also see here in the very beginning with Obama referring to Chicago and his past times spent there, in spite of technological and thus gradual cultural changes in the sense that “the world is becoming smaller” this is one of the many things that we can question and wonder about: how on earth are these tribal, patriotic, nationalistic or just generally any kind of fervent geographical pride still so prevalent, accepted and even celebrated despite the multifaceted and wide-ranging effects of modern globalization which has been long racing forward? British historian and social scientist Benedict Anderson had the following thoughts to share relating to this issue of nationalism and its tangible legitimacy from an anthropological point of view:

In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” (Anderson, 1991, P. 6)

We are being taught in so many ways ranging from climate and environmental problems to the current COVID-19 pandemic having global effects, that as ‘hippie thinking’ or unrealistic or romantic as it may sound to some traditionalists – we are indeed quite scientifically and factually one human family on one shared finite fragile planet. So, to observe such posturing from mainstream politicians continuously being presented as normality, then when we are looking at discourse critically, this is something to point out and be mindful of and not merely take for granted. We now arguably have to ask the basic question – what actually constitutes a community in the modern age with all the lessons we are receiving as a species more broadly? At what point do we attempt set ourselves free from the

many contrived inventions of ultimately made-up countries as the grounds for a sense of community? Cosmopolitanism in its most fully idealized vision of humanity has been criticized for proposing that rather than having us feel a sense of belonging to a certain local community instead we will all start feeling like we are instead part of nowhere if we simply disregarded the emphasis put on localized communities. (Porsdam, 2012, P. 62) The persistent “us and them” mentality that appears almost ubiquitous across human societies has certainly been a huge part of human history. It has been expressed through warfare but also less violent forms such as sports and other competitive ways. It has long been argued that this sort of behavior is quite simply part of human nature.

Furthermore, communitarians argue that our very identity as individuals is after all strongly determined by being part of a given closed and specified community which expresses itself in different ways: “We love our hometown. Others love theirs.” (Porsdam, 2012, P. 62-63) This does in a deeper sense beg the question of why we can't simply orient that love to the planet itself by simply extending our notion of what is actually our real tangible home in the bigger picture, the earth. This of course is to put it simply a matter of realism vs. idealism but also of course an ongoing process which is very nuanced to try and understand or ever change. Nevertheless, it is striking to see such emphasis upon tribal allegiance and sense of belonging whether to a city or to the country so openly celebrated, even in the globalized and gradually more cosmopolitan world stage.

“It was on these streets where I witnessed the power of faith, and the quiet dignity of working people in the face of struggle and loss.”

Now as has been mentioned prior, as we are doing CDA we are always fundamentally looking for the different ways in which minorities or so called ‘out-groups’ can sometimes be represented by the communicator. The authoritative power figure: the speaker may showcase albeit in perhaps subtle ways a possible agenda of neutralizing any warranted tensions that could exist within in the public. Linguist Norman Fairclough and Professor Ruth Wodak wrote this in 1997:

Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power, Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people. (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, P. 19)

By extension of this kind of observation of a general tendency; one of the many American virtues and values which at once is taken for granted yet is always promoted; is this idea of ‘hard work’ and struggle and perseverance being praised and romanticized, as he puts it there is dignity to it. This in a certain way flatters those who are struggling having to work long hours at hard jobs to survive, perhaps easing the tension a bit by appealing to them through flattery. Indeed, this may or may not be any deliberate attempt by Obama but this is particular section of analysis will comment on political speeches in general in terms of the issue which CDA deals with a lot which is power and ideology and maintaining a certain order of what is deemed normal in society all being upheld and expressed in subtle ways:

(...) dominance structures are legitimated by ideologies of powerful groups, the complex approach advocated by proponents of CL and CDA makes it possible to analyze pressures from above and possibilities of resistance to unequal power relationships that appear as societal conventions. According to this view, dominant structures stabilize conventions and naturalize them, that is, the effects of power and ideology in the production of meaning are obscured and acquire stable and natural forms: they are taken as 'given'. (Wodak & Meyer, 2001 P. 3)

There is this sort of insistence particularly in American culture that even modern life with all of our potential technological advancements and automative capacities to relieve mankind of dangerous, back breaking, or just monotonous, boring, and uninspiring drudgery and increasingly so - it is nonetheless still all about 'working hard' to feed your family. Struggling financially is an accepted reality for the majority in American society and thus keeping your nose to the grindstone and engaging in hard labor be it physical or mentally taxing work to pay the bills and stay afloat for the majority of Americans is an accepted reality viewed as necessary natural and unavoidable – but perhaps most strikingly it is largely celebrated as morally virtuous and admirable. Perhaps this is somewhat attributable to the fact that much political discourse glorifies hard work.

This is pointed out as it really illustrates the cultural attitude and for such a young country as America after all really is, it showcases a kind of conservative and rather primitive attitude to being a hard working citizen where it ostensibly necessarily involves constant financial struggle even while living in the richest country in the world with utterly obscene and downright unimaginable degrees of economic inequality. "Eight men own the same wealth as the 3.6 billion people who make up the

poorest half of humanity, according to a new report published by Oxfam (...)” (Oxfam report, 2017)

Now, to be fair later on in the speech Obama does indeed touch upon the general issue of inequality stating that: “But stark inequality is also corrosive to our democratic principles.” He is not outright a proponent of the levels of inequality we see in America or perhaps the world, however it’s a matter of degree in terms of how much inequality is too much and at what point can it be deemed acceptable etc. but undoubtedly America is notorious for accepting and promoting extraordinary socio-economic inequality. This all has profound implications to the general zeitgeist if such grotesque inequality is accepted as valid and sane, it deserves mentioning that 6 of these 8 men with as much wealth as half the earth’s population combined are indeed American men. Obama addresses the wealth of America also here: “After all, we remain the wealthiest, most powerful, and most respected nation on Earth” This very much adds to the sense of shared pride and patriotism that this speech ignites in the listeners, although saying it is ‘the most respected nation on earth’ comes across as fundamentally an unsupported groundless and an unfalsifiable subjective claim which ultimately seems self-congratulatory, perhaps without genuine basis. Now in terms of him addressing the wealth in America; with so many homeless and poor people in the country, it can appear rather astounding and baffling quite frankly to observe the sheer acceptance of such immense disparity despite even the president acknowledging the incredible and unprecedented wealth at the country’s disposal. Granted, Obama does speak out against the levels of inequality in America.

The general cultural norms and accepted notions within a society, according to CDA theory can very much be impacted through political discourse especially from the ultimate symbol of authority the president of the United States. So if you’re told that the financial difficulties you face, the grueling working hours, the desperate need to work most of your waking hours to be able to pay rent and buy

food to survive is all just part of being a proud hard working and thus an admirable American citizen and NOT a tragic failure of a profoundly flawed and exploitative social system - then the culture will apparently not only accept but even take pride in being economically challenged, faced with having to work very hard. This is all tied to the striking reality that the puzzling mantra of “creating more jobs” which is the mainstream narrative and is seemingly the desired pursuit. More hard work. The seemingly logical route of simply decreasing the average working hours for citizens decreasing stress and increasing time spent with family and friends is not even considered by most as a feasible or acceptable concept, perhaps largely due to this ‘American pride’ in working hard and working long hours – arguably a pathological culturally created need in the average citizen to fervently prove that they are ‘earning a right to live eat and have shelter’ by working so much. Now this of course goes very deep as the labor for income paradigm acting as the literal basis for survival for the vast majority of citizens in society is largely unquestioned and viewed as entirely rational, acceptable and necessary. But when we perform CDA sometimes we do have to be inquisitive even about the things that mainstream society takes for granted to an extent, precisely because it is so reinforced through discourse and thus upheld as normality. “Critical discourse analysis is, or should be concerned... with discourse as the instrument of power and control as well as with discourse as the instrument of the social construction of reality.” (Toolan, 2002, P. 12) This social construction of reality is at the heart of what we are looking for when we engage in analysis of text or other Discourse content. A rather striking and prudent elaboration which perfectly encapsulates this issue of authoritative figures being able to create a climate of the majority accepting potential issues related to inequality, oppression and exploitation can be seen here:

(...) that language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious unawareness) that certain groups in any society are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable (Locke, 2004, P. 25)

Even Christian biblical notions such as the bible verse stating: “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food” or as Obama himself asserts in this very speech: “The freedom to chase our individual dreams through our sweat, toil, and imagination – and the imperative to strive (...)” which may actually be a subtle indirect form of intertextuality (Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 64) referring in an understated way to the bible’s notions of work ethic etc. American politics of course is heavily predisposed to Christian ideals and outwardly so. He also combines this praise and pedestalization and glorification of hard work with his consistent message about shared identification and unity in America: “(...) start with the premise that each of our fellow citizens loves this country just as much as we do; that they value hard work and family like we do (...)” Thus he paints a picture that says: if you are an American you thus inherently value hard work. This may or may not be true and certainly that is painting with a very hard brush, but it illustrates directly one of the ways where discourse from a powerful authoritative figure can take something like valuing hard work and making it into a given, a presupposed expected attitude. This making the idea of resenting hard work and wanting to pursue less work and more leisure as an ideal to strive for in society a taboo concept, perhaps demonizing that as a lazy condemnable mindset and even by extension an unamerican perspective. Another description of what CDA looks for seen here: “CDA regards ‘language as social practice’ (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997), and takes consideration of the context of language use to be crucial (Wodak, 2000c; Benke,

2000). Moreover, CDA takes a particular interest in the relation between language and power.” (Wodak & Meyer, 2001 P. 2) So the context of the economic conditions and systems in place is part of that context, where language can validate power structures and thus be part of upholding systems of potential oppression, cloaking the oppression as natural and even as virtuous and commendable.

It is perhaps somewhat ironic then that Obama makes the following assertion: “For too many of us, it’s become safer to retreat into our own bubbles, (...) surrounded by people who look like us and share the same political outlook and never challenge our assumptions. (...) And increasingly, we become so secure in our bubbles that we accept only information, whether true or not, that fits our opinions (...)” Unquestionably there are many assumptions that indeed are taboo to question in mainstream American politics and even more broadly in American culture. Whether that is democracy, notions of liberty, capitalism and the free market, Christian religious faith, the military industrial complex, and its associated mantra of “We support the troops” and so forth. The point being is that there is no running away from the blatant and easily observable fact that there indeed are many cornerstones of American political culture that go largely unquestioned and it is taboo and seen as radical, with great risk of social rejection and ridicule if one is to publicly express contrary or at least skeptical stances on any of the aforementioned established norms. Presenting the established norms and reinforcing them as a given is a powerful force: “The beliefs and attitudes of the powerful can be represented as 'natural' or 'common sense.’” (Simpson & Mayr, 2010, P. 50) When we look at how many of these accepted norms are created or at least strengthened by political discourse through applying CDA principles, it urges us to attempt to look beyond presupposed commonly accepted and often rather unexamined cultural norms. Exemplified with this statement by Obama later in the speech: “To all who serve, it has been the honor of my lifetime to be your Commander-in-Chief.” We can tell also by such a statement from Obama that

severe criticism with any fundamental aspects of the American military and its activities from a moral standpoint, would be met with utter hostility as the people who serve are revered and held in such high regard at least when addressed in speeches such as this, for their sacrifice and willingness to defend their country with their lives at stake.

Now Obama even goes on to mention: “But the next wave of economic dislocation won’t come from overseas. It will come from the relentless pace of automation that makes many good, middle-class jobs obsolete.” Some would argue indeed that it is clear as day that this gradual decrease in the need for human toil and drudgery for survival ought to be an entirely celebratory thing to any sane and rational civilization rather than some terrible and intimidating prospect which threatens people’s ability to take care of themselves and their basic needs. Now Obama again is not outwardly and concretely justifying the issues I am raising in fact he also states: “Our democracy won’t work without a sense that everyone has economic opportunity.” But once again, this analysis at times goes well beyond merely trying to comment on him or his stance but also considers the larger picture of society and the economic paradigm he represents more broadly with its startling inequities, despite his statements that condemn ‘too much’ inequality, once again somewhat vague, perhaps necessarily so. It is clear however that Obama acknowledges the inequality issue albeit not in a very radical way suggesting any severe root level changes but he continues: “While the top 1% has amassed a bigger share of wealth and income, too many families, in inner cities and rural counties, have been left behind – the laid-off factory worker; the waitress and healthcare worker who struggle to pay the bills – convinced that the game is fixed against them, that their government only serves the interests of the powerful – a recipe for more cynicism and polarization in our politics.” He makes a point to include examples of regular everyday Americans which he makes a point to do in this speech more than once. People that often feel ignored

and he uses this quite cleverly to support his general message about the need to include and give attention to all Americans of varying socio-economic standing, to avoid cynicism and polarization. Although polarization is not a group of people and thus is not to be categorized as the out-group, certainly polarization is metaphorically being positioned as ‘the bad guy’ throughout the speech, the thing we do not want and need protection from.

“Michelle – for the past 25 years, you’ve been not only my wife and mother of my children, but my best friend. (...) You’ve made me proud. You’ve made the country proud. (...) Malia and Sasha, under the strangest of circumstances, you have become two amazing young women, (...) Of all that I’ve done in my life, I’m most proud to be your dad.”

Obama utilizes the mode of persuasion referred to as ‘pathos’ here as he does considerably throughout the entire speech. Modes of persuasion is something we should pay attention to when analyzing any type of speech and it can be part of CDA as well. Logos appeals to the listeners rational logic; ethos has to do with appealing to moral values and then pathos appeals to emotions, just to sum it up very shortly and simply. Obama uses pathos several times in fact, in a very obvious but also seemingly successful way in terms of how often he would do so and how much positive reaction and attention it would usually get throughout his presidency particularly when he brought attention to his family and spoke so highly of them in that way opened up to his personal family life and illustrating his tender side in such a manner. Much can be said in terms of the obvious suspicions about the motivation behind such pandering that does come across like: “hey look at me I’m such a sweet guy I love my wife

and children I'm a wholesome family man therefore you can trust me" to put it crudely, however there is something to be said for appealing to the public in this manner. Obama also engages in some self-disclosure in the sense of talking about his personal life by involving mention of his own family. Family values is of course a core part of life for many and perhaps more so now than ever in the modern era, public figures tend to open up a fair bit about their personal lives and relations to the world, even the president of America is expected to, to a certain extent. Even now years after his ended presidency, Obama's family and most notably his wife Michelle Obama are very popular in the media, they are celebrity figures to an extent with much attention from large sections of the American public and even across the world. Arguably no one in history as American president has involved their family members in quite such a fashion and in that style as Obama did in the public eye and once again illustrates here in this farewell address.

Persuasion is an integral part of ARGUMENTATION (...), and it involves a speaker or speakers adopting strategies to convince the listener of the validity of what he/she is saying. Persuasion this involves attempts to influence people to change their perceptions, attitudes towards people, ideas or the world in general. (Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 91)

Indeed, it is fair to say and not a controversial thing to point out that mainstream political speech across the board in terms of modes of persuasion leans heavily towards ethos and pathos and usually not so heavily towards logos, for the most part. Now, naturally once again when one is trying to communicate and resonate with a broad audience which in America in particular is incredibly diverse

in terms of cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds you speak to emotion and broader nonspecific values, generally. At one point Obama even uses the phrase: “Because as my mother used to tell me (...)” which also perfectly exemplifies the kind of tone that he sometimes uses, a very casual everyday tone that hardly seems very professional but does make him appear quite personable. Talking in an everyday casual type manner breaks up the formality and the register or formal political speech making to an extent and is perhaps one of the ways in which Obama excels, that is to appear very human and relatable to the public when he is addressing them.

“But tonight it’s my turn to say thanks. Whether we’ve seen eye-to-eye or rarely agreed at all, my conversations with you, the American people – in living rooms and schools; at farms and on factory floors; at diners and on distant outposts – are what have kept me honest, kept me inspired, and kept me going. Every day, I learned from you. You made me a better president, and you made me a better man.”

Obama as a leader positioning himself early on as being indebted and thankful to the citizens of America is a noteworthy approach. Here we witness a rather clever technique on Obama’s part to try to appear incredibly relatable and down to earth while also simultaneously humbling himself and showing appreciation to the public, making it clear to them that this is not a one way relationship, but a reciprocal one and he thus makes the average American feel seen and important. By going through examples of the kinds of people he has spoken to, namely average everyday citizens, middle class

working America as it were – he is bringing up these very typical examples of workplaces and the people that he has communicated with throughout his tenure as president, visiting such places. It is a way to try to seem relatable and not pedestalizing himself too much, making it known that he appreciates and considers the American public that he represents. He also makes a point to make it known that even those that he disagrees with on most things, he allegedly appreciates and values. He recognizes and affirms their validity and right to have their differing viewpoints. In that sense by extension, he also here, in one of the many ways he does this; positions himself as someone who values basic cohesion in America and is not in favor of radical polarization and condemning those of differing or even oppositional stances on various matters. This certainly can be said to be quite a pillar of how Obama positions himself and one of the most central themes of his speech, this emphasis upon maintaining focus on the things that the American people hold in common and respecting each other as American citizens. Recognizing that according to Obama is concerned the American people ought to keep in mind their shared identification and though they may have quite different ideas about how to get there – they all should have similar goals and interests.

Following from this he also states: “(...) potential will only be realized if our democracy works. Only if our politics better reflects the decency of our people. Only if all of us, regardless of party affiliation or particular interests, help restore the sense of common purpose that we so badly need right now.” By saying that he wishes for politics to ‘reflect the decency of the American people’ he is thereby asserting that the American people are indeed decent, once again making favorable attributes to the in-group of American citizens furthering the positive sense of social cohesion and commonality, viewing being a citizen as something to have pride in. But here we also see again that it all comes down to that basic recognition of common purpose and compromise, avoiding polarization and condemnation

of those that disagree. You can make arguments about this approach being completely sincere or not, some may interpret it as ‘fence-sitting’ or being politically correct in a negative or cunning sense but certainly it seemed to work for Obama for much of his 8 years as president and many Americans appeared to resonate with this style and appreciated his style of communication in this regard.

A bit later in the speech he speaks of: “a constant widening of our founding creed to embrace all, and not just some.” Which once again highlights that particular focus of his message which he gets across in different ways at different times in the speech. Social cohesion but also more specifically being inclusive is considered a very liberal sentiment in general and Obama focuses on this quite a bit. (Heywood, 2011, P. 61) “Understand, democracy does not require uniformity. Our founders quarreled and compromised and expected us to do the same. But they knew that democracy does require a basic sense of solidarity – the idea that for all our outward differences, we are all in this together; that we rise or fall as one.” Perhaps if one singular quote were to exemplify the message Obama was seemingly very eager to share during this speech and arguably during most of his presidency; it could easily be this one just presented. Another concise moment is when he states: “We can argue about how to best achieve these goals. But we can’t be complacent about the goals themselves.” Once again, his overarching message is presented clearly and he manages to use potent ways to transfer to the people this dire sense that they need to be pulling together and have that as a core central priority that he goes back to again and again as the speech unfolds.

His persistent stance that he advocates for is that people of different viewpoints should be respectful towards each other and he takes that upon himself in regard to the end of his presidency and the switch to a republican president coming soon after this speech: “I committed to President-elect Trump that my

administration would ensure the smoothest possible transition, just as President Bush did for me.” This seems the classy thing to say but furthermore he puts himself in good standing with the republicans who have elected Trump and who in times past had elected George W. Bush, he in other words endeavors himself by not being a ‘sore loser’ and even insinuates a kind of gratefulness to George W. Bush for the way the transition was handles when Obama himself got into office in 2008. So clearly all of these examples illustrate Obama making many efforts, consistently to appear incredibly diplomatic and tactful in his discourse, he rarely comes across as Egregious, obnoxious or overly boastful. In hindsight, certainly it is tempting to comment on how things have changes since then in relation to the years of Trump as president and unquestionably performing CDA on some of Trump’s speeches could serve as an interesting contrast, which could also present interesting opportunity for insight. Obama furthermore adds the following: “For if we don’t create opportunity for all people, the disaffection and division that has stalled our progress will only sharpen in years to come.” One would be remiss in not acknowledging that he was seemingly right about that danger, albeit the tangible reasons for why there has been an apparent rise in division and polarization in America certainly involves many nuanced factors which could serve as potential grounds for an entirely different thesis assignment. This thesis will not be delving into detailed elaborations or research on this matter, yet it would perhaps be somewhat disingenuous not to acknowledge this at all given the distressing state of affairs as relates to current and recent American political events, specifically relating to presidential affairs.

“This is where I learned that change only happens when ordinary people get involved, get engaged, and come together to demand it. After eight years as your president, I still believe that. And it’s not just my belief. It’s the beating heart of our American idea – our bold experiment in self-government. It’s the conviction that we are all created equal, endowed by our creator with certain unalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It’s the insistence that these rights, while self-evident, have never been self-executing; that we, the people, through the instrument of our democracy, can form a more perfect union.”

Here we see more than just one thing happening, indeed Obama mixes mainly his fervent upholding of democratic values and the enthusiastic promotion of the democratic process, endorsement of human rights ideals with brief mention and inclusion of religious Christian views. Now firstly we will touch upon his persistent advocacy of democracy. Similar to how Obama consistently employs the message of social cohesion, unity and shared values and thus identification, to a similar extent Obama heavily and consistently embellishes the topic of democracy to great length, clearly advocating for this ideal at almost every turn in not just this particular speech here, but he was notorious for electing to focus on that, which of course is not uncommon for an American president to do, but it is fair to say that Obama is at the forefront of presidents focusing on that one key value. He even states himself at one point in the speech: “That’s what I want to focus on tonight – the state of our democracy.” So as stated democracy functions as a fundamental pillar of this speech and this is of no surprise, nor would anyone think of that as being likely to be unsuccessful or a very risky thing to focus on for him. Democracy to be fair is a word that keeps appearing again and again throughout political discourse in American and

unsurprisingly it is a buzz word in many large scale American political speeches, it seemingly goes hand in hand with words like liberty and freedom in terms of being textbook go to material in American political discourse. But Obama underscoring the importance of the people taking action and taking ownership of the democratic process is seen throughout the speech and is well on display here in this quote where he urges people to ‘come together and demand change’. This ‘change’ motto is also a word much associated with the original election of Obama in 2008 where he would famously use the word change very much in his speeches, to the point where it became a cultural well known mantra, simple and arguably vague as it was, the way he would underline the need for change was no doubt powerful to many.

He then makes reference to Christian religious ideas and talks of “our creator” as if to suggest that all Americans have the same creator in the way he says it so offhandedly. Of course, being the incredibly diverse nation that it is, American citizens vary greatly in their religious convictions and even differ greatly about the notion of whether they in fact have a creator or not. This is important to point out because once again, when performing CDA we want to point out odd examples of conflicting factors such as this utterance exemplifies. Namely, Obama is the president of a country with a vastly diverse population in terms of ethnic, cultural and religious factors are concerned. Yet despite this, he speaks in a pretty uniform manner insinuating indirectly that he is speaking to a crowd and a public that agrees with him on this across the board, when this is not the case. Now also noteworthy is his shrewd use of a powerful and telling metaphor, that is to refer to: “the beating heart of our American idea”

Metaphors have long been known as significant component of discourse and certainly political discourse more specifically. Metaphors function in human communication as 'an important means of

conceptualizing political issues and constructing world views' (...). A metaphor is basically the means by which we understand one concept in terms of another (...) (Simpson & Mayr, 2010, P. 43)

Giving attention to the use of metaphors in any given speech can be quite significant when dealing with really all forms of discourse, formal or informal. Making use of various metaphors is arguably one of the most powerful ways of subtly and without it being necessarily visible to most – influencing people's understanding of events and the world. By referring to America's beating heart and the heartbeat of an idea he is thus also engaging in of what we call a personification, more precisely. "Personification is a metaphorical representation, common to literary texts, whereby nonhuman objects are ascribed human attributes or qualities." (Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 90) America of course is not an actual living entity that has a heart nor do ideas have literal hearts, this is just a metaphorical image he is creating which does paint a picture that we can easily grasp and perhaps more clearly than if a metaphorical image was not used.

Metaphors can often be quite complex or they can be more straightforward and this linguistic tool can reveal a lot to us, if we look carefully. We must sometimes try to read between the lines to discover what is really being said. (Simpson & Mayr, 2010, P. 44) Metaphors can also often be utilized as a method of concealing the important power relations and ideological messages that are being communicated. This is all central to what we try to make sense of when we are performing CDA. Identifying ideological agendas and the potential motivations behind the use of metaphors is of the utmost importance. Metaphors ultimately play a considerable role in creating and maintaining established world views. There is an increased sentimentality associated with something that like a country, an idea or a concept when you ascribe it human traits, particular romantic traits like having a

beating heart.

“This generation coming up – unselfish, altruistic, creative, patriotic – I’ve seen you in every corner of the country. You believe in a fair, just, inclusive America; you know that constant change has been America’s hallmark, something not to fear but to embrace, and you are willing to carry this hard work of democracy forward. You’ll soon outnumber any of us, and I believe as a result that the future is in good hands.”

As this is indeed Obama's last chance to address the USA as president – he chooses to appeal to the younger generation towards the very end of the speech, thus leaving a lasting impression on those who have the chance to carry out his visions for the future. His positive references and favorable descriptions would flatter much of the younger audience and this is a noteworthy thing for him to do, trying to appear as supportive and positive of the younger generation as possible. Partly this is linked to the fact that he now leaves much of his power behind and thus uses this chance to appeal to those who will shape the future long after he himself is out of office. He then continues: “My fellow Americans, it has been the honor of my life to serve you. I won’t stop; in fact, I will be right there with you, as a citizen” By qualifying himself as now a citizen which is a key word in this speech going forward; he manages to really make the word citizen a very favorable word, one that people aspire to. “Because for all our outward differences, we all share the same proud title: Citizen.” Even he, the president of America reminds them that soon he himself will be 'merely' a citizen just as them, that they are all to be proud of the title of citizen and with that title comes responsibility for the country as a whole. “For 240

years, our nation's call to citizenship has given work and purpose to each new generation." He really pushes this message of taking pride in one's American citizenship and the moral obligation to use it for good and he also refers to the history of citizenship in America to drive that point home for people today. "It's what led patriots to choose republic over tyranny, pioneers to trek west, slaves to brave that makeshift railroad to freedom. It's what pulled immigrants and refugees across oceans and the Rio Grande, pushed women to reach for the ballot, powered workers to organize." Once again, we see an example of Obama listing a collection of examples one by one, it appears to be a reoccurring tendency of his and it creates a certain rhythm to the speech – listing people or events one by one such as he does with pulling up examples of major events in the history of America. Referring to historical events is important for a political speech of this nature, trying to accomplish a sense of reverence and respect for the past as Obama seeks out to do. But also, more broadly for anyone engaging in CDA we want to also be mindful of the context of history as this is an integral part of understanding the context of the text, the speech. "Consequently, three concepts figure indispensably in all CDA: the concept of power, the concept of history, and the concept of ideology. (Wodak & Meyer, 2001 P. 3) Obama makes use of all three of these aforementioned concepts in his speech, he makes reference to American history more than once.

He then goes on to say: "I am asking you to believe. Not in my ability to bring about change – but in yours." Thus, making it even more poignant that truly it is the citizens, the common person of America that has to be part of the change. This is also a central message of the speech which expresses itself throughout the whole address and it is fundamentally linked to the message of social cohesion and democracy. "And to all of you out there – every organizer who moved to an unfamiliar town and kind family who welcomed them in, every volunteer who knocked on doors, every young person who cast a

ballot for the first time, every American who lived and breathed the hard work of change – you are the best supporters and organizers anyone could hope for, and I will forever be grateful. Because, yes, you changed the world.” He does not take ownership exclusively for the changes brought about during his time as president but rather underscores that the American citizens and his supporters should be praised and thanked. This is similar to his earlier expressions about how he has talked to Americans of every walk of life with every kind of occupation throughout his time as president, this time here he gives attention and praise to those average citizens who worked for the similar goals as he did and so this is a clear inclination of Obama to list people and make them known and show them appreciation, this makes him appear grateful and not conceited in his own personal power.

One last example of this tendency is seen here and once again he emphasizes the contributions of the American people and his supporters, letting them know their importance: "If I had told you eight years ago that America would reverse a great recession, reboot our auto industry, and unleash the longest stretch of job creation in our history...if I had told you that we would open up a new chapter with the Cuban people, shut down Iran's nuclear weapons program without firing a shot, and take out the mastermind of 9/11...if I had told you that we would win marriage equality, and secure the right to health insurance for another 20 million of our fellow citizens – you might have said our sights were set a little too high. But that's what we did. That's what you did. You were the change. You answered people's hopes, and because of you, by almost every measure, America is a better, stronger place than it was when we started.” We could say that this paragraph of his speech also involves a certain kind of boasting on behalf of the admirable achievements of his presidency over 8 years but where he then concludes by attributing these achievements to the public, not taking the responsibility all to himself. This is a favorable approach of course as it makes him seem humble while at the same time, he flatters

the those that identify as either his supporters or just the American citizenry in general. Positive self-representation and by contrast negative other-representation is also something we typically will want to look for in CDA explorations, as van Dijk emphasized the importance of. (Simpson & Mayr, 2010, P. 113) Obama certainly does this a lot, in particular the former, where he uses much positive self-representation of the American citizens and uses many flattering remarks in this regard, in a somewhat self-congratulatory manner at times.

It should also be noted that him outright claiming that America by almost every measure is ‘a better and stronger place’ does as he is guilty of a couple of times throughout seem a little over the top in the sense that it’s quite the broad claim to make. Some will feel like that is a little too easy to make a claim like that, without really specifying or clarifying details to back up the claim. However, this hearkens back to the general realization that mainstream political speeches are notoriously of this nature and thus arguably this gives him an out, he simply does not have the time to go into great detail about ever claim and perhaps this is not the kind of audience that would want to hear elaborations on these matters, either. This makes political speeches fundamentally ripe with opportunity for deception in that way where you are not necessarily expected to elaborate very much on your statements and is part of why CDA as a method can be such an important tool to apply to these kinds of examples of discourse.

“There’s a second threat to our democracy – one as old as our nation itself. After my election, there was talk of a post-racial America. Such a vision, however well-intended, was never realistic. For race remains a potent and often divisive force in our society.”

As would truthfully be expected, Obama does dedicate a sizeable portion of his speech to the issue of racism in America and the many issues related to this ongoing diverse problem which. Perhaps it would be useful here with a general overarching and perhaps simplified definition of racism: “A mode of classification of human beings which distinguishes between them on the basis of physical properties (e.g. skin colour, facial features) which purportedly derive from genetic inheritance.” (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2008, P. 278) Obama touches upon a variety of the issues related to discrimination, specifically as relates to racism in America. He shortly refers to the historical aspects concerning this issue in America “I’ve lived long enough to know that race relations are better than they were 10, or 20, or 30 years ago (...)” He also gets into specific examples of how it can and sometimes does come to expression in modern day America: “Going forward, we must uphold laws against discrimination – in hiring, in housing, in education and the criminal justice system.” So most certainly this portion of his speech dealing with racism and the moral aspects of it is heavily Ethos based, in terms of his mode of persuasion. He even states that hearts must change, so also includes pathos based persuasion tactics here and the issue of racism is often handled in this way, mixed with ethos appealing to people’s emotions and their moral ethical considerations Obama also uses a deontic modality when he talks about how we “must uphold laws against discrimination” and he uses similar modal verbs like should, will, can, would and must extensively throughout the speech. Modalities can be said to be:

Ways of expressing possibility (epistemic modality) or necessity (deontic modality) (...)

Aspects of modality are sometimes focused on in CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, particularly because modal verbs often highlight POWER, inequalities or IDEOLOGY –

deontic modality can be used to express authority, whereas epistemic modality can construct different representations of the world. ((Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 71)

Obama was always known for tackling this issue of racism in his speeches and surely as America is such a diverse nation ethnically this has been relevant and important topic to address as he does here as well. Obama moving on from this topic of racism goes on to make some general statements about the importance of facing the facts. He chooses to spend some time elaborating on the importance of mutual agreement on basic facts which acts as something of a transitional topic into dealing with climate change and it's implications.

“Take the challenge of climate change. In just eight years, we’ve halved our dependence on foreign oil, doubled our renewable energy, and led the world to an agreement that has the promise to save this planet. But without bolder action, our children won’t have time to debate the existence of climate change; they’ll be busy dealing with its effects: environmental disasters, economic disruptions, and waves of climate refugees seeking sanctuary.”

Obama brings up this heated topic with much confidence and manages to express some frustrations about the lack of consent about the reality of this issue without resorting to employ a mocking tone. He states: “Now, we can and should argue about the best approach to the problem. But to simply deny the problem not only betrays future generations; it betrays the essential spirit of innovation and practical

problem-solving that guided our Founders.” Something we have not pointed to yet in this analysis till now is that Obama refers to the founders quite a few times and this reverence for the founding fathers and the founding ideals of the nations is an ongoing topic throughout the speech, he indeed mentions the founding father quite a few times to appeal to the American people. It’s as if he uses this kind of appeal to suggest that if any action or belief goes against the ideals of the founders then it is somehow unamerican and wrong in some fundamental sense, that is the way in which he seems to use this particular type of argumentation. This sets up an un nuanced and rather simplistic good. Vs. evil dichotomy, where you either revere and wish to uphold the old ideals of the founders or you must therefore be against traditional American values. In fact, Obama carries on from there expanding upon this kind of argumentation style even going so far as to speak of ‘the spirit’ of the founding fathers and their ideals. Then from there he lists many positive attributes and results that came about from faith in this spirit in its reasoning – creating a positive order which America is largely attributed to creating.

“That order is now being challenged – first by violent fanatics who claim to speak for Islam (...)”

He follows up on this talk of order, by warning America that this order is threatened. This is a rather startling and clear-cut example of contrasting all of the proliferation of positive references to the in-group (American citizens) with the negatively described ‘out-group’ being Islamic terrorists in this case here and presenting them as a threat. Obama’s tenacious use of pronouns like 'our' and 'we' or conversely ‘they’ should likewise be mentioned briefly as it demonstrates how he incessantly attempts

to build a sense of cohesion with the American public, it's citizens and set up the easy distinction between them the in-group and the out-group described quite differently.

Obama up until this point has been focusing on internal threats, threats to democracy and threats to a properly functioning America. But here he deals with the issue of external international threats and the tone is a bit different when he starts to delve into the overall subject of international military affairs which America is involved in. For much of the speech Obama comes across as diplomatic, moderate and agreeably unaggressive in his style of communication. He exemplifies mostly a non-confrontational kind of discourse, which is subtle, and he stresses the need for compromise and mutual understanding. However, there are a few rare instances, such as here where even he comes across a little more assertive and arguably simplistic in his distinctions between good and bad.

He quickly returns to making positive remarks about the in-group when describing and praising police and soldiers etc. "Because of the extraordinary courage of our men and women in uniform, and the intelligence officers, law enforcement, and diplomats who support them, no foreign terrorist organization has successfully planned and executed an attack on our homeland these past eight years (...)" We can also observe a reference back to the tragedy of the 9/11th attacks from 2001, which if nothing else tends to stir up many feelings such as sadness and anger in the American population particularly but also perhaps most importantly it was an event which certainly at the time brought America together in many ways, a collective spring to action and a largely shared vision at the time. This of course is likely no accident then, to bring about such feelings again here by referring to it, as Obama generally throughout this speech is attempting to do just that – inspire a sense of a collective unity in America and the cohesive identification of patriotic pride. He also does the diplomatic thing

again assuring the American citizens that it is not OK to conflate Islamic terrorists with Muslims and he makes a point to keep that very clear, that he is not in favor of viewing or treating people of a certain religious orientation differently for any such reason.

He then boasts about the military achievements in relation to dealing with the maligned ‘out-group’ namely terrorists: “We’ve taken out tens of thousands of terrorists – including Osama bin Laden.” To some this may seem a little bit barbaric to essentially brag about killing foreign enemies. As much as he advocates for peaceful conduct and compromise and being diplomatic, he does not shy away from more conventional ruthlessness when it comes to insisting on how ‘those who wish to harm America’ are going to be dealt with, with force. We see established good vs. evil dichotomies and creating an ‘other’ which represents a way of thinking which some argue is becoming outdated or obsolete in the modern era. “However, some argue that the challenges of global interconnectedness defy all established theories, and, in effect, require the development of an entirely new way of thinking.” (Heywood, 2011, P. 78) Surely by bringing up a past horrific event which many Americans recognize and remember as something which at once made them feel vulnerable but also inspired them to come together and focus more on commonalities with their fellow Americans rather than on differences; makes bringing this up a pretty clever move on Obama’s part in terms of imparting some of the feelings that he has been trying to convey in his speech and in that sense an interest is being served. An interest in being able to present a picture where America and its military conducts are necessary and admirable to fight the other, the evil forces of the world that oppose the wonderful democratic values that America represents.

(CDA) stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice. All social practices are tied to specific historical contexts and are means by which existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different interests are served. (Toolan, (2002) P. 26)

But right as Obama perhaps came across a little more aggressive and vicious in his strict condemnation of terrorists, he does proceed to actually explain the ‘proper’ ways to combat these international threats and issues militarily in a lawful way and he lists some positive steps that have been taken on that front during his 8 years as president in terms of respecting law and human rights issues. It is fair to say that on the whole Obama does seem to exemplify and uphold cosmopolitan values to a certain degree despite his patriotic and nationalistic sentiments as well. He speaks of the duty America has to intervene in unjust affairs internationally and while many might be skeptical about the genuine intent and interests of these military interventions and occupations that America’s military has been engaging in, nonetheless the expressed intent of altruistic and moral duty is however in line with cosmopolitan ideals.

Moral cosmopolitanism is the belief that the world constitutes a single moral community, in that people have obligations (potentially) towards all other people in the world, regardless of nationality, religion, ethnicity and so forth. All forms of moral cosmopolitanism are based on the belief that every individual is of equal moral worth. (Heywood, 2011, P. 21)

“So let’s be vigilant, but not afraid. ISIL will try to kill innocent people.” This particular quote seems strange in that he just told people to not be afraid but then states a horrifying threat almost giving mixed signals, deterring people from feeling fear but then inspiring that very feeling with the next statement. One of the hardest ways perhaps to come across as congruent and sensible is perhaps when it comes to the fundamentally and inherently unpleasant and violent affairs of the military, so perhaps even Obama should be expected to struggle with such a task.

Obama also engages in another use of manifest intertextuality (Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 64) following the portion about the military and terrorism, by directly reading some words from the very first American president and one of Americas founding fathers which actually support and reinforces much of Obama’s own messages about democracy: “In his own farewell address, George Washington wrote that self-government is the underpinning of our safety, prosperity, and liberty, but “from different causes and from different quarters much pains will be taken...to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth;” that we should preserve it with “jealous anxiety;” that we should reject “the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest or to enfeeble the sacred ties” that make us one.” This choice to refer to sentiments from the very first American president towards the closure of his own farewell address after 8 years of presidency, managing to tie together one of the central themes of his speech, that being of the importance of appreciating and valuing democracy and encouraging citizens to remember to value and use it – is a powerful way for Obama to bring the speech full circle. He manages to combine issues and merge these issues into his broader arguments as extra ammunition in fact for his stances, also doing it in such a way where he shows agreement with the very first president of America and a largely respected figure. “One persuasive strategy involves the

speaker or writer appealing to authorities, experts or celebrities who support his or her point of view.” (Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 91) Perhaps no better way than to refer to George Washington, with that kind of strategy. He then uses his famous old catch phrase at the closing of his speech:

“Yes We Can.

Yes We Did.

Yes We Can.

Thank you. God bless you. And may God continue to bless the United States of America.”

He of course as to be expected includes not only his own famous lines which were instrumental in him getting elected to begin with, but he also keeps in line with tradition and closes the speech in the register, with a formal expected “God bless the United states of America.” Which is a pillar of American presidential speeches and a textbook example really of a register and an expected convention within formal political Discourse.

Conclusion

One could argue that by utilizing a good number of inclusive pronouns to describe the American citizens is in fact a major element in terms of effectively presenting a speech of this kind if part of the intention is to be able to successfully create a heightened sense of social cohesion in the public.

Additionally, this also helps creating a degree of commonality and relatability with the president speaking also. Applying inclusive pronouns liberally such as: we, our, us etc. is a straightforward but still quite helpful way of ensuring a felt sense of ‘social cohesion: “(...) bring together people and cement their relationship to form one unit. Social cohesion is usually relevant when there is some sort of diversity in society (ethnic, religious, sexual, economic etc.) that can potentially cause discord.” (Baker & Ellece, 2011, P. 134) With this description of social cohesion used as a general template to for understanding the concept we can surely gather that for Obama to spend considerable time and effort in maintaining this sense of social cohesion is likely going to be fairly paramount in such a culturally diverse country such as the United States of America, with so many different cultural and ethnic backgrounds of people. This is likely also a major part of the reasoning behind Obama’s persistent positive references to the in group and him focusing on all the importance of citizenship and shared identification in that regard.

There are some discursive tendencies that we can observe to and easily point out in Obama’s speech which we have gone into some detail about in the analysis section such as his use of metaphors, modalities, in-group vs. out-group dichotomies, intertextuality and his heavy leaning towards using pathos and ethos. Obama throughout the years in the public eye and specifically during his time as president was notorious for being an overall gifted speech deliverer, there is no question that most of his reoccurring themes and his main methods of communication appear quite effective

It becomes clearer and clearer throughout this analysis that a strong emphasis on the topic of democracy, maintaining social cohesion while avoiding polarization in America and encouraging

American citizens to be engaged and active in the political democratic process and in shaping America in general are arguably the main topics of this speech. To illustrate very simply:

Main revisited themes of Obama's speech:

- Democracy
- Social cohesion
- Encouraging American citizens to be engaged in democracy
- Positive references to the in-group and negative references to the out-group

To break it down into more specific more technical linguistics focused components we can also look at the various key tools he utilizes from a discourse strategy standpoint to get many of his points across effectively:

Linguistic tools commonly utilized in Obama's speech:

- An overwhelming leaning towards Pathos and Ethos
- Intertextuality
- Metaphors and personifications
- Modalities (what America 'should' and 'ought' to be and what we 'might' be able to do etc.)
- Repeated phrases

- Positive references to the in-group: American citizens and those actively working for positive change
- Negative references to the outgroup: Extremists and terrorists etc.

Quite predictably as has now been explored and pointed to, in the analysis Obama is very guilty of utilizing many favorable references and descriptions of the in-group and unfavorable condemning descriptions of the out-group. T.A. Van Dijk a well-known Dutch scholar within the field of Discourse Analysis has been recognized for explaining a phenomenon he refers to as the 'The ideological square' which details a significant tendency for speakers to mention positives about 'us' and then by contrast highlighting negative attributed traits or actions when it comes to 'them' aka the out-group. This kind of partiality which seems to propagate much political discourse is briefly clarified by Van Dijk here:

If we apply the ideological square to this phenomenon, we may expect that Our good actions and Their bad ones will in general tend to be described at a lower, more specific level, with many (detailed) propositions. The opposite will be true for Our bad actions and Their good ones, which, if described at all, will both be described in rather general, abstract and hence 'distanced' terms, without giving much detail. (Van Dijk, 1997, P. 35)

Now certainly, we can also point to the general subjects he covers in the sense of delving into racism, development in America and generalized inequality, and even climate change. We have covered these parts of his speech in the analysis but overall, this thesis sought out mostly to cover the

overarching consistent themes of his speech and so it was less about focusing on all the total subjects that came and went throughout the duration of his speech, more about recognizing constants and overall tendencies on Obama's part throughout the speech. And one of them was his relentless call to duty for American citizens to live up to what democracy begs of them, to get engaged and active in shaping America and avoiding complacency. "And all of this depends on our participation; on each of us accepting the responsibility of citizenship (...)"

It can certainly be argued that this type of emphasis on social cohesion, calling for unity and cooperation and mutual respect in spite differences that Obama so clearly illustrates stands in stark contrast to the current trends of political discourse coming from the white house today in 2020 during the presidency of Donald Trump. I made brief mention of this in the analysis section as well and do not intend to make this a focus, but it is so clearly something which stands out and is arguably appropriate to touch upon for a bit of context looking back. Obama refers to this tendency in his speech and indeed, many have noticed and commented on the tendency towards the very opposite kind of message circulating in the cultural climate of America – that of increasing polarization and internal division seemingly taking place.

The dividing line between liberal and conservative, Democrat and Republican seems to be emphasized more than it has in a long time since Obama's terms as president came to an end. Obama was no doubt notorious for his attempts of prioritizing the commonalities in the American people and

putting great weight and importance on the need to come together for a common purpose and a common good and we see this perfectly illustrated and exemplified with this particular farewell speech as well. Since Obama left office in things have unquestionably changed in terms of the general trends of discourse and also in the American political climate more broadly and by extension in the American media. This trend is so noticeable and striking, that it must be pointed to briefly in this paper just for some general context of what has happened since the end of Obama's time as presidency and of course Obama even at the time had noticed this occurring. In hindsight from a current day perspective, it is also quite notable the overall difference in attitude as Trump has showcased defiance and a lack of willingness to accept or fully acknowledge the end of his tenure as president whereas Obama illustrates a much different attitude, albeit Obama was not defeated in an election and his maximum time as president being 8 years had come to an end so in that sense the context differs slightly.

As I briefly mention in the analysis section it would be oblivious to pretend that there are not taboos in American political culture and that there are not social norms and cultural givens that one does not get to question or express criticism about without risking being ostracized and deemed unamerican. So, to illustrate very simply some of these taboos that come to mind after going through the speech I will present a short list. These are things that are directly or indirectly touched upon in Obama's speech. They are things that on the whole are taken for granted as presupposed truths, going largely unquestioned by the majority and partly due to powerful political discourse that is reinforcing them.

Truths to be taken as self-evident:

- Democracy
- Freedom
- God and Christian values including Faith
- Dignity in hard work
- Nationalistic pride
- Supporting the troops
- The fundamental decency and moral virtue of the American people
- Respect and admiration for the founding fathers and the founding documents of America
- Duty, responsibility and obligation as American citizens

A simple word cloud is illustrated on the following page to showcase some of the most frequently used words in the speech and I think overall it is quite in alignment with what would be expected after analysis and some consideration of the topics and themes most explored by Obama. Words like Democracy, Americans, people, work, freedom, proud and nation are standouts both in this visual image and in terms of the words and messages that resonate after reading the speech.



In summary Obama largely focuses on a few key factors and themes in his speech which we have identified. He has certain priorities, and it shines through, he manages to deal with many subjects throughout the duration of the speech but manages to bring most every subject back around to relating it somehow to the need for amplifying democratic values, American ideals and the encouragement for the American public to take ownership and show initiative as proud active citizens. He is very successful at maintaining a diplomatic and agreeable tone where so much of the speech is centered around Americans all finding common ground and recognizing their shared aspirations which should therefore bring them together in a shared identification as American citizens. Investigating and

analyzing sections of the speech with CDA as the method of doing so has provided some insight into the particular patterns and tools of discourse Obama used as president, a notoriously successful and gifted speaker. With that in mind, it was therefore a fruitful text to explore and served as a proper speech for analysis. This last quote about CDA and the power of language perfectly exemplifies some of the lessons we learn as we delve into political discourse and understand the power of it, especially so when someone as skilled and experienced on delivering speeches as Obama is the one who wields the powerful tool of Discourse.

Critical theories, thus also CL and CDA, are afforded special standing as guides for human action. They are aimed at producing enlightenment and emancipation. Such theories seek not only to describe and explain, but also to root out a particular kind of delusion. Even with differing concepts of ideology, critical theory intends to create awareness in agents of how they are deceived about their own needs and interests. (...) For CDA, language is not powerful on its own – it gains power by the use powerful people make of it. (Wodak & Meyer, 2001 P. 10)

List of References

Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.

Revised Edition ed. London and New York: Verso.

Baker, P. & Ellece, S. (2011). *Key Terms in discourse analysis*. New York: Continuum.

Baylis, J. & Smith, S. & Owens, P. (2011). *The Globalization of world politics*. New York: Oxford University.

Chase, S. (1938). *The tyranny of words*. London: Methuen & Co.

Edgar, A. & Sedgwick, P. (2008). *Cultural theory: The key concepts*. London: Routledge

Heywood, A. (2011). *Global Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lamont, C. (2015) *Research methods in International Relations*. London: Sage Publications.

Locke, T. (2004). *Critical discourse analysis : Critical discouse analysis as research m*. ProQuest

Ebook Central <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>

Milliken, J. (1999). The Study of Discourse in International Relations. *European Journal of International Relations*

Porsdam, H. (2012). *Civil religion, Human rights and International relations*. Edward Elgar publishing Limited.

Simpson, P. & Mayr, A. (2010). *Language and Power A resource book for students*. Abingdon: Routledge.

T.A. Van Dijk, (1997). *Approaches to Media Discourse*. Blackwell publishers.

Toolan, M. (2002) *Critical discourse analysis: critical concepts in linguistics*. London: Routledge

Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2001). *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (1st ed.). SAGE Publications, Ltd <https://www-doi-org.zorac.aub.aau.dk/10.4135/9780857028020>

Official online link to the full Obama farewell speech: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/farewell>

Oxfam report, 2017: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press>