

ABSTRACT

Spring as a Seasonal Political Metaphor: The Prague and Arab Spring in Presidential Rhetoric

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Presidential rhetoric has historically adopted the common metaphor of “spring as political change” which serves as a metonymic naming of political periods or events characterized by change and vitality. This “spring as political change” metaphor has been influential through history in naming a varied group of political activities and changes. This study focuses on “the Arab Spring” and the “Prague Spring” as “spring as political change” metaphors that have shaped and defined presidential rhetoric on the issues they purport to describe. In isolating the dimensions of the spring metaphor at work in presidential rhetoric, this study demonstrates that this “spring as political change” metaphor reflects and projects certain values in order to make the conclusions or associations of the rhetor appear natural, logical, or otherwise necessary to complete the metaphoric meanings initiated by this metaphor.

Spring as a Seasonal Political Metaphor:
The Prague and Arab Spring in Presidential Rhetoric

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Springtime is Everywhere

“The Arab Spring,” a common name for the anti-authoritarian protests in the Middle East and North African regions, has brought the political usage of the “spring” seasonal metaphor to the attention of global public sphere again. Despite its seemingly new prevalence, it is not a uniquely modern phenomenon but owes its rhetorical currency to a long history of conceptually related seasonal political metaphors including its most well known preceding “spring” event: the Prague Spring. A rhetorical analysis of how the spring seasonal metaphor maps various meanings onto the political events it describes in presidential rhetoric will evaluate the consequences of this strategy both in shaping the role and meaning of presidential rhetoric. An analysis of how presidential rhetoric utilizes the various metaphorical meanings attached to both the Prague and the Arab Spring, this study purports to learn more about the “spring is change” metaphor as applied to political unrest or protest in presidential rhetoric.

Spring as a metaphor for change derives from natural associations of the seasons as periods of significant change. These seasonal associations are especially strong for spring as a time of the year specifically associated with birth (and thus new life), renewal, and the normatively charged positive perception of this “springing forth of life.” It is these associations that are most at play in rhetorical configurations

of the spring as a vehicle for the representation of various political changes or upheavals.

The primary metaphor transferring these particular instances of the spring metaphor for political change is precisely that seasonal association of spring with renewal and change. Ben Zimmer, linguist and etymologist, argues that the idea of a political spring (as a metaphor for normatively positive change) is “an ancient one,” citing Shakespeare’s metaphorical, homophonic pun in the opening line of *Richard III*: “Now is the winter of our discontent, made glorious summer by this sun of York.”¹ While the inclusion of such literature as a text for analysis is beyond the scope of this study, it is this type of social and cultural prevalence of spring as a metaphor for substantial political change or reform which has informed its use through history and allowed it to become one of the most salient metaphors for political reform - a sudden ‘springing forth’ of action by citizens.

Spring as a metaphor for substantial political change began its more modern history with the European revolutions of 1848, sometimes referred to as the “Springtime of the Peoples” or, in German, *Völkerfrühling*.² Early twentieth century Russian historian Moissaye Joseph Olgin documented that the latter half of 1904 was often referred to as “‘Spring’ [and] was therefore marked by a strong liberal movement.”³ “The Polish Spring of October” referred to the period of liberalization and attempted reform in 1956.⁴ In keeping with the associations of spring’s role as the harbinger of warmth and renewal, the period of Russia’s history briefly following Stalin’s death from 1956-1962 is referred to as “the Khrushchev Thaw.”⁵ The rhetorical label of spring was also applied as a metaphor to the period of economic

liberalization, political unification, and structural change in the first years of the 1970s in the name “the Croatian Spring.”⁶ In 2000, a series of debates among Syrian liberal intellectuals calling for systemic reforms of the Syrian government toward liberalization was referred to as “the Damascus Spring.”⁷

The Prague and Arab Springs

One of the most prominent political phenomena consistently identified by its metaphoric spring name is “the Prague Spring” which refers to the period of attempted liberalization through partial decentralization of the largely state-controlled economy of Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s during its period of domination by the Soviet Union. Amongst other similar attempts at resistance and regional modification of the imposition of the Soviet model of communism, the Prague Spring was, at its core, an effort to reform Soviet communism to bring it more in line with the beliefs and customs of Czechoslovakians. As former Czechoslovakian president and Prague Spring dissident Václav Havel said, “Thanks to the efforts of citizens of the most divergent political orientations, Czechoslovakia became an island of freedom and a relatively dignified state living in the gloomy grey ocean of the Brezhnev Soviet bloc, earning itself great respect around the world.”⁸ While this period of resistance might have inspired hope, this hope was essentially undone in the period of Soviet “normalization.” The Prague Spring was met with armed Soviet invasion and occupation, a retaking of political power by repressive communist factions, and the repeal and undoing of the various reforms achieved by the Prague Spring.⁹ Presidential rhetoric has not only embraced the rhetorical label of the Prague Spring but has also adapted and invented various rhetorical figures and conceptually related

phrases when discussing the events in Czechoslovakia as they occurred and also in memorializing the Prague Spring.

The popularity of the Prague Spring as a metaphoric naming of political change was emulated in rhetoric of the Arab Spring. “The Arab Spring” was initially used to refer to a prospective or desired outcome of President George W. Bush’s foreign democracy promotion and state-building efforts. Charles Krauthammer explicitly referred to the 1848 Springtime of Peoples noting that this “flowering of liberal revolutions throughout Europe [was] eventually repressed” even while marking “a turning point from which there was no going back.”¹⁰ Krauthammer predicted, “the Arab Spring of 2005 will be noted as a similar turning point for the Arab world.” While his timing was less than prescient as protests in 2005 remained largely localized or nationalized and issue-specific, the Arab Spring would come into fuller fruition as acts of massive public protest and demonstrations against state mismanagement, economic inequality and lack of opportunity, and political and social repression eventually gained momentum across the Middle East and North Africa regions in mid-to-late 2010. “The Arab Spring” has become such a strong metaphor for these revolutionary movements that almost all discussion of these movements occurs under its metaphoric parameters. That is, as is the case with the Prague Spring, for the Arab Spring, the metaphor becomes the name. Presidential rhetoric has adopted this metaphoric naming of political protest in its public address on the issue both as an expedient referent but also as a poetic device around which to build ornate rhetoric on philosophically undefined concepts such as “freedom” and “autonomy,” which are seen as springing forth from citizen-subjects.

In the wake of the Arab Spring, the political adaptation of the seasonal spring metaphor as a vehicle for the tenor of rapid political change has rapidly increased. Modifications of the spring metaphor adapted for a variety of countries and political changes have come manifest in the wake of the Arab Spring, as have claims that the Arab Spring has influenced or caused analogous uprisings in other parts of the world. In short, the spring metaphor is perhaps experiencing its most prevalent period to date. As leaders, the media, the public, and government policy continues to adapt and adopt this metaphor toward their various ends, a historically informed, metaphoric rhetorical criticism which seeks to discover its impact on rhetors, their audience(s), and future deliberation and rhetoric will only become more relevant with the continued periods of turbulent change to which political systems the world over are being subjected.

Justification of Study

Few metaphors (with perhaps the exception of “revolution”) have been applied to such a diverse set of political events as has that of a political “spring.” In detailing the contours and consequences of this spring metaphor, this project will seek to demonstrate the shared conceptual meanings that inhere throughout the various historical contexts in which the spring metaphor has played a prominent rhetorical role in presidential address. This influential spring metaphor has defined the way American presidents have spoken about certain periods or events of political change. This study will begin to unpack and interrogate the questions surrounding the use of spring as a metaphor and its impact on both presidential rhetoric and the public and political audiences for whom those metaphors are intended.

One seeks an answer to these admittedly broad questions knowing that deductively determining which characteristic or configuration of the metaphor's various forms could be credited for its continued relevance to public deliberation is impossible. Metaphoric criticism, however, provides a means to imprecisely evaluate the metaphor's various meanings and shared conceptual underpinnings. This need for subjective, qualitative analysis of the metaphor's associated language and the contextual influences resulting from adoption of a popular spring metaphor makes a study of spring as a political metaphor uniquely well suited to explain this phenomenon. Historical accounts of these springtime political events by historians and political scientists tend to focus on the social and political conditions that precipitate or constitute the event itself. This concern for developing a coherent account of the political history of the spring event overshadows a consideration of the seasonal and meteorological bases of the metaphors used in naming and describing the historical events surrounding the political event or events. This is not to imply that such study is inferior or in any way less insightful to analyzing the rhetoric of, for example, the Prague Spring; to the contrary, this study will employ such historical and politically oriented narratives of the Prague Spring and the Arab Spring in order to gain a deeper appreciation of the circumstances and meanings of the presidential rhetoric under analysis.

Presidential rhetoric addressing the Prague Spring and the Arab Spring has frequently extended this metaphoric association of seasonal change with political change into figurative rhetoric associated with the season of spring in the northern hemisphere of the Earth. Presidential rhetoric has also sought to compare spring to the

other seasons, normatively associating spring with positive changes toward “freedom” and an open exchange of ideas and beliefs. The spring metaphor also gives rise to a related metaphor of an impending or already present “political winter” contrasted to the spring as normatively undesirable, associated with decay and death (as the opposite of life and birth). The spring metaphor not only serves to give a poetic vehicle for the communication of a political message of change but it also helps to reduce a complex political situation into an appealing and (deceptively) simple, singular metaphor. In reducing the political complexity of these situations to an easily communicable, grand seasonal metaphor, the spring metaphor provides a rhetorical means by which the president may seek to align the United States with the positively determined concepts of “freedom” as a form of life, associated with life and birth as aspects of spring’s seasonal connotations.

The role of metaphor in persuading, shaping, and communicating ideas with audiences by rhetors has a long history of study in the field, as their import to critical thinking and constructive engagement with the world around us and other human beings is almost self-evident. This is even more so the case in the context of political rhetoric and issues of public policy. As George Lakoff and Paul Chilton state succinctly:

Metaphors are among our most important tools for comprehending the world. They may well be necessary tools for understanding the nature of world politics and for formulating policy. They need to be better understood and they could certainly be put to better use.¹¹

It is for these reasons that a rhetorical study of the history that informs and the consequences that follow from the use of spring as a political metaphor for change is necessary. It is a scholarly task worth pursuit because it enables a clearer

understanding of a metaphor that has defined presidential rhetoric over a long period of time and which has been remarkably consistent between recent presidents even despite their (perceived) ideological differences on the events being discussed.

Structure of Thesis

In Chapter One, I provide an introduction to the history and lineage of spring seasonal metaphor as a vehicle for political change and introduce my findings regarding presidential rhetorical use of the spring metaphor as a vehicle for political change. In Chapter Two, I will survey and review the relevant literature concerning presidential metaphoric rhetoric, the history of the events being described by the Prague and Arab Spring metaphors, as well as provide a detailed account of this study's method for selecting texts for analysis as well as the methodology adopted to perform the rhetorical criticism and the theoretical orientation which informs that method's process. Chapter Two's treatment of methodology will also include a discussion of the methodological assumptions and responses to common criticisms of metaphoric presidential rhetorical analysis. Chapter Three will begin the analysis of presidential rhetoric concerning the Prague Spring by sequential acting U.S. presidents from Reagan to Obama and will demonstrate the persistent characteristics of the seasonal associations outlined in Chapter Two in presidential rhetoric. Chapter Three will also entail a discussion of the political and social issues that inform the Prague Spring metaphor in presidential rhetoric and which inform the context in which presidents evoke the seasonal metaphor. In Chapter Four, I will use the same method to evaluate presidential speeches concerning the Arab Spring by President Obama (the only president since the beginning of the Arab Spring). Using contextual

analysis and the methods of metaphoric criticism, the implications of the spring metaphor in Obama's rhetoric of the Arab Spring will be brought to the fore in order to demonstrate the role of this metaphor in presidential rhetoric. Chapter Five will attempt to bring the various insights of this metaphoric presidential analysis into sharper focus by examining what is unique about metaphoric presidential rhetoric. Chapter Five will also examine what is unique to the spring as a seasonal metaphor for political change. Chapter Five will serve as a conclusion to this study, making explicit the conclusions and answers discovered to the research questions outlined in Chapter One and postulating as to the future relevance and use of spring rhetoric as a seasonal metaphor to discuss political change.

Notes

¹ Ben Zimmer, "The 'Arab Spring' Has Sprung," *Visual Thesaurus*, May 20, 2011, <http://www.visualthesaurus.com/cm/wordroutes/the-arab-spring-has-sprung/>

² John Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe: From the French Revolution to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 715.

³ Moissaye Joseph Olgin, *The Soul of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Holt, 1917), 98.

⁴ Roman Slowacki, "Catholic Intellectuals and Constitutional Change in Poland," *Religion in Communist Lands* 4 (1976): 12.

⁵ Susan E. Reid, "Masters of the Earth: Gender and Destalinisation in Soviet Reformist Painting of the Khrushchev Thaw," *Gender & History* 11 (1999): 276.

⁶ Elinor Despalatović, *Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture, and History*, ed. Joel Martin Halpern and David A. Kideckel (University Park: Penn State Press, 2000), 91.

⁷ Nadim Houry, "The Forgotten Damascus Spring" *Human Rights Watch Online*, February 23, 2009. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/02/23/forgotten-damascus-spring>.

⁸ Václav Havel, Preface, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, ed. Jaromír Navrátil (New York: Central European University Press, 1998), xv.

⁹ "Prague Spring (Czechoslovak History)," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/473793/Prague-Spring>.

¹⁰ Charles Krauthammer, "The Arab Spring of 2005," *The Seattle Times*, March 21, 2005, http://seattletimes.com/html/opinion/2002214060_krauthammer21.html

¹¹ George Lakoff and Paul Chilton, "Foreign Policy by Metaphor," *Center for Research in Language* 3 (1989): 19.

CHAPTER TWO

On Research and Method

Prior Research

Rhetorical study of metaphor has been ongoing since the time of Aristotle. It has experienced times of relative prominence and times of relative absence in publication quantity concerned explicitly with metaphor, with a relative upswing in interest in metaphoric studies yet again recently.¹ With such a vibrant history of study within the field, naturally there have been a significant number of unique approaches to metaphoric criticism with consensus on certain points and stark divergence of opinions on others. An exhaustive and entirely inclusive review of all such metaphoric scholarship would be nearly impossible given the frequency of new publications on the matter in a variety of fields and disciplines including communication studies, the cognitive sciences, psychology, psychoanalysis, and others. With such divergent and highly specific applications in the history of the field's study as clothing metaphors in Alexander Richardson's *Ramist-Puritan Letters*,² the atomic metaphors of Walt Disney,³ and the function of spatial metaphors in *Sports Illustrated*,⁴ metaphoric criticism even within only the field of rhetorical criticism has such a broad range of application to such highly specific texts that to subject them all to evaluation would be to strain considerations of relevance and argumentative applicability. Instead, preference in influence was afforded to those preceding studies that are more generally concerned with instructing in the way of

method or refining theoretical models of metaphoric rhetoric, especially the method of metaphoric criticism.

One fundamental and primary contribution to metaphorical criticism literature is Michael Osborne's seminal "Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light-Dark Family," in which Osborne contends that "the cycle of the seasons" is one of several archetypal metaphors which, "because of their persuasive power, their potential for cross-cultural communication, and their time-proofing, one can expect the perceptive rhetorician to choose them when he wishes to effect crucial changes in societal attitude, to speak to audiences beyond his own people, or to be remembered for a speech beyond his lifetime."⁵ Osborn's academic career has been marked by a concern for the role of metaphor in all language and those insights originally hinted at in "Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric" have been developed throughout his long career. This study will seek to incorporate those studies relevant to the spring metaphor in presidential rhetoric as well as to serve as an extension of these types of metaphoric criticisms as applied to presidential rhetoric..⁶

The rhetorical analysis of presidential texts has a deeply sustained history within the field. To begin, there is a distinction in the literature between presidential rhetoric and the rhetorical presidency. In *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, Martin J. Medhurst contends that the rhetorical presidency is taken to be the realm of social scientists seeking to define the exact nature and scope of the office of the president while presidential rhetoric studied by communication scholars seeks insight into the way presidential rhetoric attempts to persuade and communicate its messages to audiences in particular occasions. This study attempts to integrate the findings

provided in the “Report of the National Task Force on the Theory and Practice of the Rhetorical Presidency,” especially at it concerns responding to critics in the vein of George Edwards who argue that presidential rhetoric lacks sufficient empirically verifiable, statistically significant influence or change and is statistically irrelevant: “rhetorical studies of sustained persuasive transactions have the potential ... to reveal enlightening consequences of discursive encounters, even if we cannot point to cause-effect relationships at statistically significant levels of influence.”⁷

I will incorporate the insights of those rhetorical studies that have preceded this one, with special attention to those that have focused on the role of metaphor in presidential rhetoric such as the work of Rodger C. Aden, Robert L. Ivie, and Stephen J. Heidt. Aden’s “Entrapment and Escape: Inventional Metaphors in Ronald Reagan’s Economic Rhetoric” argues that the use of rhetorical metaphors of escape and entrapment served to “help sharpen” President Reagan’s popularity. By Aden’s argument, reliance on the inventional metaphor created an inflexible response which proved ultimately detrimental to the president’s intended aims.⁸ While Aden’s analysis of this particular cluster of metaphors is certainly apt, its specificity to the exigencies and circumstances of the Reagan presidency preclude much broader generalization. This study more closely approximates Robert Ivie’s genealogically informed analysis of savagery as a trope intended to mobilize audiences toward the support of war and U.S. empire in its methodology (and emphasis on circulating and implied conceptual implications).⁹ Stephen J. Heidt’s “Presidential Rhetoric, Metaphor, and the Emergence of the Democracy Promotion Industry,” demonstrates the deep power and sway of the City on a Hill, wave, and disease/body metaphors

(itself connected to archetypal metaphors of light and dark) utilized in the promotion of democracy as a “growth industry” amongst U.S. policymakers.¹⁰

Textual Selection

The relevant texts for analysis were considered to be those done under the auspices of the president in public remarks or addresses either discussing the political events surrounding or described by the spring metaphor being analyzed. In some of these instances, the explicitly named spring metaphor language may not be present (for instance, Obama’s “Arab Spring” speech) yet other associated linguistic configurations or implied imagery of spring as political change and specifically metaphors of renewal are subjected to analysis and taken as relevant to the study of the uses of spring as a political metaphor in presidential rhetoric.

Searches of digitized indexes of presidential texts for analysis were conducted through the official White House government-hosted website, the American Presidency Project, and several other online search engines in order to ensure complete inclusion of texts relevant to the study. Where the texts meeting the criterion of relevance fit for consideration were not discovered through the official White House website(s) or the American Presidency Project, the text was subject to further verification before being considered an accurate transcript or depiction of the rhetorical event it purports to report (for example, a popular media outlet “transcript” or supposedly verbatim transcript of the speech delivered by the president). In order to ensure the thoroughness of the results of the searching capabilities (algorithm variance and composition, date and textual range, etc.), any search conducted inside

of a particular website (for example, searching “Prague Spring” through the White House government-hosted website’s search function) was also repeated in a Google search of the specific website (as “‘Prague Spring’ site:whitehouse.gov”) in an attempt to normalize the search procedures for procuring texts from different hosting servers. While it is true the neither result could ever provide conclusive determination that all texts meeting the criteria of relevance have been considered and analyzed, performing a secondary search through at least one common digital search engine between the websites should serve to both confirm the veracity of the actual text as a depiction of the event as well as the accuracy of the search engine particular to whichever website from which the text originated.

Method and Theoretical Assumptions

Deductively coming to a conclusive decision about exactly which characteristic or trait of a single, particular application of the spring metaphor across its wide history has imparted its lasting power would be impossible and a relatively useless endeavor. Instead, metaphoric criticism in the form of rhetorical analysis enables a consideration of the effects of this metaphor for the rhetor, their audience(s), and the impact of those rhetorical choices of the president on future discourse. This project will forward a theory and method of metaphoric analysis which prefers the tracing of cognitive and rhetorical associations and commonalities in situational meaning over attempts to deductively determine discrete effects of a certain rhetoric. Rather than attempting to ascertain whether the metaphor performs a necessary and sufficient role to achieve some calculated persuasive goal of the speaker(s), this method of metaphoric analysis will instead use close textual analysis

and careful reading of the surrounding historical, political, and rhetorical contexts to demonstrate the metaphor's meanings, consequences, and figurative expressions and, from those, attempt a qualitative appreciation of what types of speech are enabled by choosing to use spring as a metaphor for political change and what (among the almost infinite set of associations) meanings resonate from its use.

Metaphoric analysis is broad and diverse in its exact method and various applications. Despite this inconsistency across its various manifestations, metaphoric criticism, in large part, aims toward the analysis of metaphors as a form of communication that often hold consequences beyond those immediately apparent in their accepted usage. This study employs a modified form of this process of metaphoric criticism to reveal the patterns of usage, the diction and verbiage of conceptually associated words and phrases, its structure and uses as a tool of persuasion (either intentioned or simply inherent to the metaphor).

Rather than sorting numerous, distinct metaphors employed within a single selected text in order to tally their use, this study will select presidential texts in which the spring metaphor as vehicle for the tenor of political change is utilized and evaluate its use to determine its influence on the rhetor's language and the role of this metaphor in public discourse on the issue being discussed. By focusing on the various configurations of a single metaphor rather than the diversity of metaphors particular to a single text or speech, this study will seek not only an explanation of the artifacts and texts considered but also of the use and prevalence of this metaphor across time in the office of the presidency. Roland Paris adeptly describes this ability of metaphoric rhetoric to frame and determine the reception of certain ideas and policies

when strategically used by influential political actors:

... policy makers use historical metaphors as tools of political persuasion in their public rhetoric by drawing parallels between contemporary phenomena and past events, and thereby encouraging listeners to conceive of the present in the light of the past. Because historical references frequently evoke the perceived lessons of past experience, political actors can use historical metaphors to legitimize certain policy options and to delegitimize others.¹¹

This study's metaphoric analysis will be markedly different in theory even if similar in process and method to many of the metaphoric rhetorical analyses that have preceded and informed it. Rather than conceiving of the metaphor as a unique and special rhetorical form to be diametrically contrasted to literal language, this study understands metaphor more as a paradigm for all language; that is, it considers all language to operate metaphorically as Nietzsche infamously portrayed truth, "as a mobile army of metaphors and metonyms, and anthropomorphisms."¹² In understanding language to operate through conceptual associations rather than deductive, rational, and linear processes of meaning interpellation, Nietzschean metaphoric criticism enables a method of metaphoric criticism which directly enriches the pursuit of the answer to the question with which this study is concerned, namely the loosely associated effects of the spring political metaphor's use determined through close textual analysis with special attention to language which heralds or otherwise performs the metaphoric function of associational logic.

This approach or methodology is not entirely original but rather adapted from existing critical rhetorical studies scholarship to provide a theoretical grounding for the specific contextual metaphoric analysis forwarded here. The Nietzschean conceptualization of rhetoric as essentially moving "from 'trope to trope' rather than from 'topoi to topoi'" emerges from a long historical line of debate and rhetorical

criticism concerned with the competitive definitions or, accurately argued conceptualizations of rhetoric.¹³ In fact, this debate has largely proceeded in the field as being almost exclusively focused on the perceived contest between the epistemic and the aesthetic as categorically distinct and mutually exclusive perspectives from which to determine the role and nature of rhetoric.¹⁴ Rather than seek to contribute another dialectically engaged piece of scholarship on the question of the relative significance of the epistemic and the aesthetic categories, this study will instead utilize a Nietzschean concept of rhetoric as a series of metaphors toward an understanding of the role of metaphor in presidential rhetoric. In so doing, this metaphoric criticism will avoid the untenable conclusions such as the positivist (as previous scholars might have called them, epistemological) conclusions about the sufficiency and necessity of a particular metaphor's use to achieving some pre-meditated goal of the rhetor. In its stead, a historically informed appreciation for the contextual contours of the spring metaphor as a vehicle for the tenor of political change in presidential rhetoric will blossom, enabling a more vivid and careful appreciation of this common and influential metaphor. While we cannot know with any meaningful certainty that the metaphor served a necessary and sufficient role in the creation of a particular pre-meditated meaning by the speaker, such metaphoric criticism offers an enriching portrait of metaphoric language used to communicate political realities and to come to a subjective appreciation of its context, history, and effects. This methodological move is very much in line with the insights offered by Paul De Man in *Allegories of Reading* in which De Man argues that "the differentiation between performative and constative language (which Nietzsche

anticipates) is undecidable; the deconstruction leading from the one model to the other is irreversible but it always remains suspended, regardless of how often it is repeated.”¹⁵

In essence then, in this model of rhetoric, the clear distinction between the metaphor and the supposedly literal is disturbed and thrown into question. This does not mean of course that determinations of relative materiality of meaning cannot be made but rather that because of the imprecise nature of all language, rather than deductively communicating discrete meanings, words work through oft forgotten metaphoric associations and meanings in order to attempt the communication of affective potential. From its ancient status in classical study as an ornamental form of “mere rhetoric” intended only to adorn persuasive or literary pursuits to its more modern status as an instrumental faucet of rhetoric, metaphor’s status has changed so drastically that “rather than a deviant type of language defined against proper language, metaphor can then be considered an instance of language that points toward the ground of language out of which the very possibility of a distinction between proper and improper first arises.”¹⁶

Notes

¹ William Franke, "Metaphor and the Making of Sense: The Contemporary Metaphor Renaissance," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 33 (2000): 137–153.

² John Charles Adams, "Linguistic Values and Religious Experiences: An Analysis of Clothing Metaphors in Alexander Richardson's Ramist-Puritan Lectures on Speech, 'Speech is a garment to cloath our reason'." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 58-68.

³ Elizabeth Walker Mechling and Jay Mechling. "The Atom According to Disney." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 436-453.

⁴ Roger C. Aden and Christina L. Reynolds, "Lost and Found in America: The Function of Place Metaphor in *Sports Illustrated*," *Southern Communication Journal* 59 (1993): 1-14.

⁵ Michael Osborn, "Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light-Dark Family," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53 (1967): 118.

⁶ See Michael M. Osborn and Douglas Ehninger, "The Metaphor in Public Address," *Speech Monographs* 29 (1962): 223–234 and Michael Osborn, "The Trajectory of My Work with Metaphor," *Southern Communication Journal* 74 (2009): 79–87.

⁷ David Henry, Philip Abbott, Davis W. Houck, Mel Laracey, Stephen E. Lucas, Shawn J. Perry-Giles, "Report of the National Task Force on the Theory and Practice of the Rhetorical Presidency," in *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric* ed. James Arnt Aune and Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press 2008): 344.

⁸ Roger C. Aden, "Entrapment and Escape: Inventional Metaphors in Ronald Reagan's Economic Rhetoric," *Southern Communication Journal* 54 (1989): 384–400.

⁹ See Robert L. Ivie, "Literalizing the Metaphor of Soviet Savagery: President Truman's Plain Style," *Southern Journal of Communication* 51 (1986): 91–105; Ivie, "Metaphor and the Rhetorical Invention of Cold War 'Idealists'," *Communications Monographs* 54 (1987): 165–182; Ivie, "Savagery in Democracy's Empire," *Third World Quarterly* 26 (2005): 55–65; Ivie, "Cold War Motives and the Rhetorical Metaphor: A Framework of Criticism," in *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology* ed. Martin J. Medhurst, Robert L. Ivie, Philip Wander, Robert L. Scott (East Lansing, Michigan State University Press 1990): 71-80.

¹⁰ Stephen J. Heidt, "Presidential Rhetoric, Metaphor, and the Emergence of the Democracy Promotion Industry," *Southern Communication Journal* 78 (2013): 233–255.

¹¹ Roland Paris, "Kosovo and the Metaphor War," *Political Science Quarterly*, 117 (2002), 428-429.

¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1979), 46-47.

¹³ Ivie, "Literalizing the Metaphor of Soviet Savagery: President Truman's Plain Style," 91-105; Ivie, "Metaphor and the Rhetorical Invention of Cold War 'Idealists,'" 165-182; Ivie, "Savagery in Democracy's Empire," 55-65.

¹⁴ Douglas Thomas, "Reflections on a Nietzschean Turn in Rhetorical Theory: Rhetoric Without Epistemology?," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (1994): 71-76; Alan D. Schrift, "Language, Metaphor, Rhetoric: Nietzsche's Deconstruction of Epistemology," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23 (1985): 371-395; John Poulakos and Steve Whitson, "Rhetoric Denuded and Redressed: Figs and Figures," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 378-385; James W. Hikins, "Nietzsche, Eristic, and the Rhetoric of the Possible: A Commentary on the Whitson and Poulakos 'Aesthetic View' of Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 353-377; Lawrence M. Hinman, "Nietzsche, Metaphor, and Truth," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 43 (1982): 179; Kevin Ayotte, John Poulakos, and Steve Whitson, "Mistaking Nietzsche: Rhetoric and the Epistemic Pest," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 121-127. James W. Hikins, "The Seductive Waltz: Rhetoric and Contemporary Interpretations of Nietzsche," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 85 (1999): 380-399.

¹⁵ Paul De Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 130.

¹⁶ Franke, "Metaphor and the Making of Sense: The Contemporary Metaphor Renaissance," 137.

CHAPTER THREE

The Prague Spring

There is scholarly discord as to the specific origins of the phrase “Prague Spring” as a metaphoric synecdoche of the failed reform movement in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Jiří Pehe claims, “We will probably never know who first used the term ‘Prague Spring’ to denote Czechoslovakia’s political development in 1968.”¹ Actual scholarly inquiry into the phrase itself is un-concentrated, incidental in nature, and not particularly well documented. Chris Kostov claims “The Western media coined the term ‘Prague Spring’ to describe the short period of liberalization of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in 1968.”² Relegated to the footnotes of his edited collected entitled *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968* is editor M. Mark Stolarik’s most substantive criticism of the metaphoric term:

The expression “Prague Spring” was coined by western journalists to describe the 1968 reform movement in Czechoslovakia. It could just as well have been called the “Bratislava Spring” because its leader, the Slovak Alexander Dubcek, was First Secretary of the Slovak Communist Party from 1963 to 1968. . . . Since Dubcek was located in Bratislava, western reporters did not notice him, because they were customarily based in Prague. Most Slovaks resent the term “Prague Spring” and seldom use it.³

The term “Prague Spring” however was also used to name a music festival whose history precedes that of the reform movements of the 1960s, dating back to 1946.⁴ It seems that while the phrase itself was seemingly not an artifice of purely “Western” invention, the application of the existing phrase to the period of attempted reform was

not a wholly organic metaphoric naming on the part of Czech citizens and others involved in the reform movement during the so called “Prague Spring.”

The Prague Spring lends itself to the metaphoric seasonal naming, imbued with notions of freedom, independence, and vitality. The presidential rhetoric under examination in this study concerning the Prague Spring can be characterized as commemorative in its tone. The Prague Spring is hailed as emblematic of the truth and righteousness of American policy as being synonymous with freedom and democracy. From Reagan to Obama, through time and without regard to the occasional circumstances, the metaphoric language of the Prague Spring has been employed to portray the emergence of resistance to Soviet oppression as natural and inevitable (as are the seasons). Moreover, all of the presidents use the naturalistic vocabulary supplied by the spring metaphor to align the United States and its national identity with (presumptively similar) notions of freedom and independence for those living in Czechoslovakia (modern day Czech Republic). In this chapter, I will demonstrate how each president’s rhetoric (from Reagan to Obama) concerning the Prague Spring are similar and dissimilar and in so doing, reveal those features which are essential to the metaphor’s use by the President of the United States of America.

Reagan’s Prague Spring – Winds of Change towards the Immutable Truth

Reagan’s rhetorical deployment of the Prague Spring metaphor recalled the normatively positive association of the United States’ national identity and ideas of freedom and independence in order to convey a “truth” namely, the moral righteousness of Western capitalism and political organization over the Soviet brand of evil communism. In this instance, the Prague Spring is described as an injustice

between East and West and a violation of self-determination, which Reagan proclaims to be essential to bringing "peace and stability to Europe and to the East-West relationship."⁵ The Prague Spring is rhetorically cast in the public memory as an unjust tyrannical separation of East from West, a separation continued by the existence of a divided Germany, uniting the two fronts so to speak. The Prague Spring is interpellated not in terms of its domestic emergence or significance for the lived participants themselves but as part of a larger trans-historical narrative of freedom against tyranny whose contemporary manifestation is the bi-polar Cold War struggle between Good and Evil. The Prague Spring is mapped onto the larger Cold War meta-narrative whereby the economic policies regarding regionally particular industries and goods in Czechoslovakia is seen as inextricably intertwined with the issue of Germany's contested political divisions in a zero-sum fashion where either freedom or tyranny, Good or Evil, are "winning" in a partisan struggle for power.

This rhetorical framing of the history of the Prague Spring as a failed attempt at liberalization and resistance to Soviet domination undertaken in Czechoslovakia as part of the universal and transcendent struggle between Good and Evil, between tyranny and freedom, is extended in the naturalistic metaphoric dimensions of spring. For example, in this address the Prague Spring metaphor bleeds into other naturalistic metaphors for political change - "the winds of change now sweeping across the Soviet Union."⁶ Essential to the normative associations of spring's metaphoric uses is the association of the speaker and the audience as joined not only in commitment to certain political positions but to freedom as a fundamental political truth. Reagan

stresses, "we take the occasion of this anniversary to salute these people and to express firm agreement with their conviction that, in the end truth will prevail."⁷

Truth and its revelation are seen as self-evidently complementary to the collective, national "we" hailed by Reagan's address. The moral righteousness of American capitalism over and against Soviet communism is not an issue of policy, procedure, or even debate but an objectively apparent and universal truth. The attempted liberalization seen in the Prague Spring by this rhetoric's portrayal is not a unique response to situational circumstances, itself an outpouring of a distinct demand for unique cultural autonomy but for the singular culture of universal autonomy. It was not the result of geopolitical and geostrategic planning and cost/benefit analysis by multiple actors but rather a spontaneously singular and natural part of the "sweeping change" blowing across the Soviet Union. This rhetorical framing is significant because it implicitly refutes an alternate perception whereby resistance like the Prague Spring is seen as foreign instigated agitation or a corrosive foreign social influence. This refutation of the Soviet perspective on the Prague Spring as the result of the insidious Western cultural and political manipulation is a feature of the Cold War metanarrative onto which President Reagan's rhetoric mapped the Prague Spring.

This rhetorical alignment of America and Czechoslovakia in the Prague Spring on the side of freedom against Soviet tyranny also defined Reagan's discussion of similar issues when inclusive of the Prague Spring. In Reagan's very brief "Statement on the 30th Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution," the Prague Spring is included amongst the workers revolt in East Germany and Poland's solidarity trade movement

as events which heralded the pursuit of "democracy, independence, pluralism" across Europe. This configuration of the spring metaphor portrays the United States as an agent of and embodiment of freedom, a position shared by the Prague Spring itself. Reagan calls for "all Americans [to] honor the Hungarian freedom fighters with profound gratitude for our own freedom and with renewed solidarity with everyone whose dream is the noble one of freedom."⁸ The naturalistic and normative associations carried in the spring metaphor for political change permit the construction of a rhetoric that aligns the American and (independent) Czechoslovakian identities as having a shared constitution towards freedom in the face of tyranny.

In Reagan's rhetoric (amongst the first presidential rhetoric to commemorate the Prague Spring), the essential elements which appear throughout presidential rhetoric concerning the Prague Spring come to the fore: the alignment of the U.S. national identity with the Prague Spring, the positive normative association of the Prague Spring (and implicitly the United States) with freedom, independence and Good (contrasted to tyranny, Soviet imperialism, and Evil), and mapping the Prague Spring onto the president and the nation's global geopolitical agenda of the political epoch.

Bush and the Prague Spring –Spring in the Fall of the Gulf War

President George Bush spoke in celebration of the Prague Spring at a Ceremony "Commemorating the End of Communist Rule." In continuation of the characteristics analyzed in President Reagan's Prague Spring rhetoric, President Bush's Prague Spring rhetoric is characterized by its emphasis on the shared national

identity of Americans and Czechoslovakians, the positive associations of the Prague Spring and the United States with freedom, independence, and Good, as well as the mapping of the Prague Spring onto the larger United States' geopolitical agenda at the time.

The seasonal language of the Prague Spring metaphor permitted President Bush to explore the deeply resonating metaphoric meanings through commenting on the historical anachronism of its time of delivery. President Bush proclaimed, "There are no leaves on the trees, and yet it is Prague Spring. There are no flowers in bloom, and yet it is Prague Spring. The calendar says November 17th, and yet it is Prague Spring."⁹ By noting the temporal anachronism of the seasonal metaphor, President Bush brings to the fore the metaphoric associations of spring to resolve the anachronism. It is "Prague Spring" despite the time of delivery because of the "political climate" evoked by the occasion commemorating the end of Communist rule is one of freedom, vitality, and independence. Vitality discourse and light-dark metaphors inhere throughout President Bush's Prague Spring rhetoric and demonstrate the rhetorical possibilities opened by use of the Prague Spring metaphor: "We saw this square become a beacon of hope for an entire nation as it gave birth to your new era of freedom."¹⁰ The associations of spring with renewal, birth, and a "springing forth" of life forces or vitality are part of what operationalizes the spring seasonal metaphor to become a positive normative metaphor for political change. Whereas the spring brings life and "gives birth" to freedom, its effects can be portrayed as incontrovertibly good.

This vitality rhetoric is also used as the Prague Spring is situated within the Cold War geopolitical terms: “In Czechoslovakia: from revolution to renaissance, across this continent toward a new Europe in which each nation and every culture can flourish and breathe free.”¹¹ The existence of Czechoslovakia as an autonomous nation (free from Soviet imperialism) is rhetorically associated with the language of vitality (“flourish,” and “breath free”) and, by extension, the political activities described by the Prague Spring seasonal metaphor. The Prague Spring is described, again, not in its historical particularity but in terms of its position in the inevitable ascent of democracy in Eastern Europe: “Now, with the division of Europe ending and democracy ascending in the East, the challenge is to move forward.”¹²

The value of independence is of particular significance to President Bush’s Prague Spring rhetoric. National declarations of independence are constitutive rhetorical artifacts that call a group of peoples into being. It both establishes and subverts certain identities as authentic to the location the document purports to represent. President Bush in his address lauded the Czechoslovakian Declaration of Independence as a source of mutually shared cultural heritage of resistant commitment to freedom even in the face of oppression, drawing a number of explicit parallels between the documents in their values, texts, and respective cultural meanings. This comparison culminated in the presentation of a replica of the Liberty Bell that President Bush then rang thrice: “Once for your courage, once for your freedom, and once for your children.”¹³ While declarations of independence and celebrations of autonomy, especially with such a problematic history of each in Czechoslovakia, are meant to denote the singularity of what is described, in

presidential rhetoric on the Prague Spring, independence and commitment to freedom is used as that which binds Czechoslovakia and America. This is essential so that the metaphor and the values and meanings which inhere in its use may be recalled in order to determine which agents act on the side of Good, “just war,” righteousness, etc. and which are Evil, tyrannical, and imperial. This denotation of moral agents in the world is the result of attempts to negotiate the potential inconsistency of the values of the Prague Spring metaphor and the prevalent geopolitical issues of the time.

President Bush delivered the commemorative address in November of 1990 in Prague, during the initial few months of the first Persian Gulf War following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait just three months previous. Highly evocative metaphoric language was instrumental to building public consent and support for U.S. operations in the Gulf War and these metaphors often strategically obfuscated or sanitized the realities of war and decision-making.¹⁴ President Bush’s Prague Spring rhetoric attempts to use the singularly positive spring associations with freedom and equality in order to present the celebration of the Prague Spring as synonymous with support for U.S. armed forces actions in the Gulf War. President Bush pursued this strategy by means of equivocating the position of Czechoslovakia in 1968 with that of Kuwait in 1990 (and the Evil of Soviet imperialism with that of the Hussein regime):

A thousand miles to the south, this new commonwealth of freedom now faces a terrible test. Czechoslovakia was one of the first nations to condemn the outrage in the Persian Gulf, one of the first to measure the magnitude of the wrong committed in the name of territorial ambition. It is no coincidence that appeasement's lonely victim half a century ago should be among the first to understand that there is right and there is wrong, there is good and there is evil, and there are sacrifices worth making. There is no question about what binds our nations, and so many others, in common cause. There is no question

that ours is a just cause and that good will prevail. The darkness in the desert sky cannot stand against the way of light. I salute your courageous President when he joins us in saying that Saddam Hussein's aggression must not be rewarded.¹⁵

President Bush's rhetoric on the Prague Spring, like Reagan's before him, values and evaluates it universally as transcendently Good and then maps this shared identity of paradigmatic Goodness onto the prevailing geopolitical issues of the president's agenda; in this case, the legacy of Soviet imperialism is rendered analogous to "Hussein's aggression" in order to make Czech support for U.S. operations in the Persian Gulf War appear as a logical conclusion of indelible opposition to Soviet imperialism. The obviousness of the relative desirability of "our" "just cause" is reinforced as natural through the use of both normatively endowed terms like "Good" and "Evil" but also through President Bush's light/dark metaphor. "The darkness of the desert sky" is the rhetorical equivalent of tyranny, specifically in this context, the darkness of desert plays on the mental imagery of vast empty desert space to characterize modern Iraq and to underscore the Evil nature of the tyranny "we" are fighting. This "darkness" is said not to be able to "stand against the way of light." Light here is obviously not only the symbolic inverse of the negatively coded "darkness" but also the figural embodiment of the combined "truth" of the American-Czechoslovakian unity in the name of freedom.

The logic of broadening similarities and reasoning through metaphor is a pervasive feature of Prague Spring rhetoric among the presidents considered in this study. By using metaphor's capacity to enable and constrain further rhetorical pursuits, President Bush's use of the Prague Spring metaphor seeks to unify the audience in support of American efforts in the Persian Gulf both in form and in

identity - that they have a moral reason or a “just cause” as well as a unified political identity forged in shared “sacrifice” to what is right. The metaphoric dimensions of Prague Spring rhetoric heightens this ability for metaphoric rhetoric to create cognitive framings that compel or produce sympathetic acceptance of the communicated truths. Like the aforementioned studies which describe the litany of examples in which various rhetors utilize metaphoric language to incite familiar and deeply resonating justifications for war, this study concludes that the Prague Spring metaphor becomes linked in President Bush’s rhetoric with Czech support for U.S. action in the Persian Gulf War.

Clinton and the Prague Spring – Spring Forward into NATO Membership

President Clinton’s rhetoric concerning the Prague Spring largely conforms to the characteristics demonstrated in Reagan and Bush’s rhetoric. Clinton’s Prague Spring rhetoric similarly relies on the alignment of American and Czech national identities. This association is justified and forged in a sense of objective truth and righteousness in action, that the United States and (through their alignment with our core values of freedom and democracy) Czechoslovakia are agents of Good against Evil and tyranny. Yet again, the moral alliance between agents of righteous freedom is called upon to support the president’s global geopolitical agenda of the epoch in which the president is speaking. In these ways, President Clinton’s Prague Spring rhetoric conforms to the patterns and characteristics of the metaphoric language demonstrated by preceding presidents.

The Prague Spring’s metaphoric dimensions present the president with another opportunity to discursively literalize its seasonal qualities to suggest the inevitability

of the success of such resistance (even though the Prague Spring was overwhelmingly defeated and overturned in the short-term). During a State Dinner honoring President Havel, Clinton proclaimed, “We shared the world's sadness when Czechoslovakia lost its freedom 50 years ago. We felt a similar sense of loss when the Prague Spring was followed by Soviet invasion in 1968. But you and your comrades, Mr. President, taught us again that all seasons are cyclical, that spring always returns. In 1989, your Velvet Revolution rejuvenated the entire world.”¹⁶ The seasonal metaphor of Prague Spring enables the president’s rhetoric to explicitly recall its cyclical nature to make the Velvet Revolution seem to be an analogous “spring” event, a return of the earlier Prague Spring itself. The seasonal metaphor of Prague Spring even mediates the more prevalent “revolution” metaphor in this instance where it is not the case that the spring eventually culminated into a revolution but rather that the revolution is confirmation of the return of spring to Czechoslovakia. The seasonal qualities of the spring metaphor permit the formation of a shared identity between Americans and Czechoslovakians, grounded in a commitment to freedom.

President Clinton’s rhetoric uses a mutually shared identity and commitment to freedom and democracy as the starting point from which the seasonal metaphoric rhetoric of Prague Spring can further map relations onto the contemporary geopolitical components of the president’s foreign policy. The Clinton presidency was marked by a highly active role in foreign policy. “This legacy of foreign policy activity, along with the fact that Clinton presided over a key transition period, makes our 42nd president a pivotal figure in the evolution of U.S. foreign policy discourse.”¹⁷ As Jason Edwards notes, “For Clinton, expanding NATO facilitated the expansion of

democracy within Europe and democracy provided for more stability on the continent.”¹⁸ Thus, Clinton’s rhetoric which celebrated the legacy of the Prague Spring as a force of liberalism and the spread of democracy made explicit moral commitments which are recalled in another context but as part of the universal whole or “truth” which structures its reality. President Clinton’s rhetoric then, by aligning the Prague Spring with democratic freedom and that democratic freedom with NATO membership, ties the normative desirability of the Prague Spring to the accession of the Czech Republic into NATO. Clinton’s commemorative rhetoric ties the metaphoric hail of freedom in the Prague Spring rhetoric to NATO expansion: “In the Prague Spring of 1968, a celebrated young playwright boldly called for an end to one-party rule before Soviet tanks crushed the people's hopes . . . We talked about next year's NATO Summit here and the Czech Republic's preparations for integration into the NATO alliance.”¹⁹ Lest mere “integration” or symbolic association with NATO as an organization seem sufficient to evidence this commitment to democracy, President Clinton details Czech co-ordination with NATO forces in Bosnia: “Already, Czech troops are working side by side with us in Bosnia, where we've just seen further evidence that the Bosnian people are on the path to lasting peace: a free election with a strong turnout.”²⁰

Thus, similarly to the presidents before him, President Clinton uses the metaphoric associations and non-literal meanings of the spring metaphor at work in the Prague Spring in order to forge a mutual identity in recognition of the righteousness of democracy in order to combat tyranny. This mutual identity (and the tyranny against which it is united) is mapped onto other geopolitical conflicts and

issues central to the president's agenda at the time. Czech troops' shared operations with NATO armed forces in Bosnia is portrayed as evidence of the Czech Republic's commitment to "build a united and peaceful Europe" through a "partnership for security." Paradoxically, willingness to support military operations becomes evidence of one's commitment to tolerance and peace. Moreover through the transitional association of the Prague Spring's (temporarily) failed attempt to achieve freedom and the threat to Bosnian freedom in the absence of NATO forces, Clinton's rhetoric ties the promise of future prosperity to NATO integration.

In the wake of the various geopolitical conflagrations in the wake of the Soviet Unions dissolution, Clinton's foreign policy agenda (and rhetoric) was a marked change from the Cold War mentality of bi-polarity that had been primarily preoccupied with countering Soviet expansionism. However, like Reagan and Bush before him, Clinton sought to align the United States with the history of the Prague Spring and extend this association in the name of democracy onto the dominant geopolitical issues of the time. Clinton's rhetoric was not however, forgetful of the traditional dichotomy of Soviet tyranny and the Prague Spring's aspiration for freedom:

Through long years of darkness, you kept alive the hope of freedom. I still remember the Hungarian uprising of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968, the Gdansk Shipyards in 1981. But we also appreciate the fact that when these three nations threw off the shackles of tyranny, they embraced democracy and tolerance. They devoted themselves to reforming their economies and their societies, to settling age-old disputes with their neighbors. They have done the hard work of freedom now for over 7 years, and they have proved that they are ready to share in the full responsibility of NATO membership.²¹

Again, the Prague Spring metaphor is utilized to demonstrate "the hope of freedom." "Embracing democracy" and "reforming their economies" is the work of having

thrown off the “shackles of tyranny.” The viability of NATO membership is rhetorically transformed into a demonstrative piece of evidence that the Czech Republic has successfully pursued reform towards “freedom.” In Clinton’s rhetoric, the commitment to freedom and democratic reformism heralded by the Prague Spring is normatively grounded and valued by the extension of that shared commitment to those democratic principles. That commitment is then measured by the metrics of the reigning geopolitical problems of the administration. In Clinton’s rhetoric, the Prague Spring metaphor becomes inextricably linked to the issue of the Czech Republic’s ascension to NATO and NATO forces’ involvement in global peacekeeping in the name of its democratic members.

George W. Bush and the Prague Spring – Prague Spring, Muslim Winter

George W. Bush’s rhetoric commemorating the Prague Spring is like that of his predecessors, directed at identifying with the Prague Spring in celebration of democracy and freedom and then applying this principled association to other geopolitical issues on the president’s agenda. Through the use of the metaphoric associations of spring with vitality, freedom, and nature, President Bush aligns the United States and the Czech Republic in freedom to build support for global counterterrorism (including the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan).

President Bush’s rhetoric of the Prague Spring casts Soviet occupation as a “long darkness” from which Czechoslovakia emerged into the light of democratic rule.²² Naturalistic metaphors such as that of the normatively associated concepts of “light” and “dark” play within and resonate with the associations of spring and its longer, brighter days in the Northern Hemisphere after the short, dark days of Winter.

This association between the light and dark and positive and negative is a form of archetypal metaphor, as analyzed by Osborne.²³ These archetypal metaphors act as terrains upon which other metaphors and rhetorics may operate or from which they may draw their currency and sway. The uniquely positioned association of America and the Prague Spring in democracy's "light" so to speak is again rhetorically posed as the warrant for America and the Czech Republic's truth in freedom: "The truth is that the only ones who have to impose their values are the extremists and the radicals and the tyrants. And that is why the Communists crushed the Prague Spring ..."²⁴ The stark dichotomous metaphors at work in President Bush's rhetoric attempt to depict all reality as existing within the binaries of truth and falsity, Good and Evil, freedom and fear: "History shows that ultimately, freedom conquers fear. And given a chance, freedom will conquer fear in every nation on Earth."²⁵ This alignment of the freedom of American democracy and capitalism and the Prague Spring with opposition to "extremists and radicals" (meaning national compliance with American counterterror operations) permits President Bush's rhetoric to map the shared commitment to freedom onto the dominant geopolitical struggles of the administration's agenda.

Remarkably consistent with his predecessor President Clinton, Bush's remarks to the Democracy and Security Conference in Prague extended the rhetorical significance of NATO membership and the commitments to democracy heralded by the Prague Spring as central to addressing the new global geopolitical realities of terrorism. The "transition to democracy" which has been successfully completed by Central and Eastern European nations has generated resentment and contempt from Muslim extremists who seek to destroy democracy and the "Western lifestyle"

through intimidation and threats of violence. President Bush casts the Prague Spring and its legacy of “democracy” both as proof of the inferiority of and inspiration for the Muslim extremists/terrorists. The threat of Muslim terrorism is then transformed into an exigent threat to this fragile legacy of democratic peace in Europe: “The extremists's [sic] ambition is to build a totalitarian empire that spans all current and former Muslim lands, including parts of Europe.”²⁶

Like the rhetoric of Reagan, George Bush, and Clinton, President George W. Bush’s Prague Spring rhetoric used its metaphoric and literal associations with freedom and democracy in order to build support for its preferred solutions to geopolitical problems of the era. By rhetorically portraying Muslim extremism as a force of Evil that plots to build an expansive “totalitarian empire” which even includes European territory, President Bush posits opposition to American counterterrorism policies as capitulation to the same brand of tyranny opposed by the Prague Spring, rhetorically equating Soviet Communist imperialism and modern anti-American terrorism.

President Bush’s rhetoric concerning the Prague Spring is focused more exclusively on the global dimensions of the security threat posed by Muslim extremist terrorism than on the particularity of the Czech Republic’s role in combating that threat through commitment to democracy. Financial and military commitment to U.S. operations in Afghanistan and Iraq are rhetorically equated with participation in the global universal culture of democracy and freedom, as metrics by which the world and history may denote the legacy of freedom and reform promised by the Prague Spring: “I’m grateful for the commitment many new democracies in Central and

Eastern Europe are making to Afghanistan and Iraq ... the hard work necessary to enable people ... to live in a free society.²⁷ The protection of freedom is again, heralded as that which unifies America and the Czech Republic against tyranny both in the form of the history of Soviet imperialism and in the form of global totalitarian Muslim extremism. By recasting the Prague Spring as yet another opportunity to rhetorically separate the desired “free society” from the implied society of repression that would befall the globe in the absence of a successful strategy to “defeat” the coming Muslim “totalitarian empire” across the globe, President Bush’s rhetoric portrays support for the Prague Spring and support for U.S. counter-terrorism efforts as sharing the same basis or reasoning. Similar to how the Prague Spring has been rhetorically manipulated by previous presidents in order to bolster support for their agenda, President Bush utilizes Prague Spring rhetoric in order to build support for the Bush administration’s global counterterrorism policies.

Obama and the Prague Spring – Nonproliferation to Peace

President Obama’s rhetoric of the Prague Spring follows very narrowly in the tradition of presidential Prague Spring rhetoric that preceded him. While President Obama’s rhetoric does conform to that of his predecessors in the way in which it underscores the importance of democracy and freedom to the identity of citizens of the Czech Republic and also maps the Prague Spring onto the geopolitical issues of the administration’s agenda (like terrorism, nuclear proliferation), President Obama’s rhetoric does not make as much use of the seasonal and climatological dimensions of the Prague Spring metaphor. The seasonal associations of spring with vitality, change,

and freedom are absent from Obama's description of the history of the Prague Spring's failed attempt to contest Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia:

We are here today because of the Prague Spring, because the simple and principled pursuit of liberty and opportunity shamed those who relied on the power of tanks and arms to put down the will of a people.²⁸

In President Obama's rhetoric, a more streamlined version of the same rhetorical configuration is at work. Through appeals to the universal nature of humanity, Obama's Prague Spring rhetoric shifts from transcendent forces of Good versus Evil into addressing the issues that threaten the "common history" of societies dedicated to democratic liberalism. Instead of positing the Velvet Revolution as the return of the failed Prague Spring, President Obama's rhetoric instead constructs the memory of the Prague Spring as that of the voice of ghosts to be remembered for their sacrifice in bringing down the Soviet Union:

Those are the voices that still echo through the streets of Prague. Those are the ghosts of 1968. Those were the joyful sounds of the Velvet Revolution. Those were the Czechs who helped bring down a nuclear-armed empire without firing a shot.²⁹

While this contrast with the trajectory of presidential Prague Spring rhetoric marks a unique aspect of Obama's rhetoric on the issue, the ultimate purpose and framing of the argument is still directed at producing a shared identity in the name of democratic freedom opposed to tyranny, defined in remembrance of Soviet imperialism and with analogy to modern geopolitical issues on the president's agenda.

NATO membership, which had functioned as a metric for the Czech Republic's commitment to democracy in President Clinton and President Bush's rhetoric, had been transformed in Obama's vernacular into a binding promise whose continued assurance preserves freedom for both America and the Czech Republic:

The people of the Czech Republic kept that promise after America was attacked; thousands were killed on our soil, and NATO responded. NATO's mission in Afghanistan is fundamental to the safety of people on both sides of the Atlantic. We are targeting the same Al Qaida terrorists who have struck from New York to London and helping the Afghan people take responsibility for their future. We are demonstrating that free nations can make common cause on behalf of our common security. And I want you to know that we honor the sacrifices of the Czech people in this endeavor and mourn the loss of those you've lost. . . . Now, just as we stood for freedom in the 20th century, we must stand together for the right of people everywhere to live free from fear in the 21st century.³⁰

By emphasizing the “common cause” and the struggle for our “common security,” Obama’s rhetoric of commonality fuses the national identities into a singular perspective on the multitude of issues that define foreign policymaking in the Obama administration. The creation of a future “free from fear” is indelibly tied to the Obama doctrine of American counterterror and policies to redress proliferation and asymmetrical warfare across the globe, similar to how previous presidential rhetoric has sought to use the Prague Spring’s metaphorical dimensions to motivate adherence to their administrations’ preferred solutions to the geopolitical problems of the era.

Memories of Prague

While the origins of the phrase “the Prague Spring” might be an issue of unresolved scholarly dispute, it is clear that its adoption by American presidents is unequivocal and worthy of inquiry into its meanings and uses (and the interactions thereof). The remarkable consistency of presidential rhetoric concerning the Prague Spring, America’s relation to it, and its meaning for other, broader geopolitical issues requires analysis. The Prague Spring as a failed attempt to liberalize or reform Soviet Communism within Czechoslovakia is commemorated by presidential rhetoric within terms of the American identity of freedom and democracy. The Prague Spring is

compared to and identified with the American drive for independence from colonial Britain, the quest for democratic governance, and the freedom embodied by the United States. This unifying rhetoric consistently interprets the Prague Spring in relation to American democracy and the various democratic myths surrounding American government and values. The rhetorical unification serves the purpose of then re-considering this association between Czechoslovakia and America in another geopolitical context, that of the most significance to the president who makes the rhetorical maneuvers. In this way, the memory of the Prague Spring offered by presidential rhetoric across time is one with vague contours and convenient connections. The Prague Spring is rhetorically posed as that which not only ties Czechoslovakia and American desires for democratic independence together but also as that which projects the relationship into the future, into new endeavors be they the continuation of the Cold War, NATO membership expansion, counter-terrorism, or non-proliferation. Presidential rhetoric of the Prague Spring seeks to utilize the seasonal metaphoric associations of the Prague Spring to align the United States and the Prague Spring as agents of democracy and Good, combating tyranny and Evil in the form of Soviet imperialism or international terrorism. Presidential rhetoric then seeks to use this normative alliance against tyranny by defining the administration's geopolitical agendas in these terms. In each instance examined, the "spring as political change" metaphor is called upon to defend the president's proposed policy or rhetorical framing as natural, inevitable, and Good.

Notes

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CHAPTER FOUR

The Arab Spring

In the vein of the presidential rhetoric that preceded him, President Obama's Prague Spring rhetoric emphasizes the characteristics isolated in earlier sections of this thesis. However, the Arab Spring plays a more flexible role in Obama's rhetorical arsenal and it deployed in varying contexts and toward various ends. Obama's Prague Spring rhetoric used the mutually constitutive "we" in order to position the Czech and American audiences as sharing a mutual heritage, founded on a commitment to democracy and freedom. The Arab Spring is distinct from the Prague Spring in that the events being described are far more diverse and varied than those of the Prague Spring. To unify the protests of peoples and places as diverse as Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco under the singular metaphor of "the Arab Spring" inherently risks a strong degree of conceptual reductionism to afford its singular and poetic, non-literal meanings. This reductionism in the spring metaphor applied to these diverse movements affords President Obama the opportunity to utilize this metaphor in a manner similar to how previous presidential rhetoric has used the spring metaphor in reference to the Prague Spring. By remaining "the Arab Spring" rather than a complexly interrelated set of diverse revolutions with multiple interested parties participating in each, this rhetoric permits a more simple explanatory mechanism to describe it as part of our changing reality. President Obama's rhetoric emphasizes the Arab Spring as an inevitable economic cost prior to November 2011 and emphasizes the unifying values of

democracy (and the strategic isolation of Iran) when speaking about the Arab Spring after November 2011.

Obama's Arab Spring – Freedom Isn't Free (and America Pays at the Pump)

Most of President Obama's early Arab Spring rhetoric was directed at domestic American audiences. President Obama rhetorically casts the Arab Spring as a single, temporally bound phenomenon in the past whose impact is primarily economic. The exact nature of the repeated rhetoric of the Arab Spring as causing higher gas prices for American consumers is noteworthy. In his August 2nd remarks on the federal budget, President Obama cast the Arab Spring as an uncontrollable obstacle to post-recession economic recovery in America:

In the last few months, the economy's already had to absorb an earthquake in Japan, the economic headwinds coming from Europe, the Arab Spring, and the rife [rise; White House correction] in oil prices, all of which have been very challenging for the recovery. But these are things we couldn't control.¹

As natural and inevitable as the economic impact of Japanese earthquakes, the Arab Spring is a nature outpouring of energy, a cyclical and seasonal probability or even inevitability. On August 3, President Obama noted in extremely similar language, “The economy is still weakened, partly because of some things we couldn't control, like the Japanese earthquake and the situation in Europe, as well as the Arab Spring and its effect on oil prices.”² On August 5, in an almost verbatim repetition, President Obama noted, “There is no doubt this has been a tumultuous year. We've weathered the Arab Spring's effect on oil and gas prices, the Japanese earthquake and tsunami's effect on supply chains, the extraordinary economic uncertainty in Europe.”³ On August 6, 2011, in his weekly address of the public, President Obama spoke about the

necessity of bi-partisan support for economic recovery measures to relieve unemployment. In describing the economic hardships that had beleaguered the U.S. economy, President Obama claimed it had been a “tumultuous” year for the U.S. economy: “We’ve weathered the Arab Spring’s effect on oil and gas prices. The Japanese earthquake and tsunami’s effect on supply chains. The economic situation in Europe.”⁴ Obama rhetorically positions “the Arab Spring” as one of many singular events, whose impact can be most meaningfully conveyed through its impact on consumer gasoline prices. In this instance, “the Arab Spring” is one of many historical events or happenings that Americans and specifically the American economy must “weather.” Obama’s radio address also performs a familiar move in applying “the Arab Spring” rhetoric in the form of a temporally bound event. This is mirrored (perhaps even exacerbated) in further coverage as time progresses and more and more rhetorical applications of “the Arab Spring” treat it as an event resigned to the past, rather than an ongoing set of political activities.

On August 15, 2011, President Obama rhetorically portrayed “the Arab Spring” as a sort of opportunity/cost between democracy and cheap gasoline and economic stability:

Over the last 6 months, we've had a string of bad luck. There have been some things that we could not control. You had an Arab Spring in the Middle East that promises more democracy and more human rights for people, but it also drove up gas prices, tough for the economy, a lot of uncertainty.⁵

This theme of the Arab Spring has an inevitable constraint driving up gas prices was repeated almost incessantly in President Obama’s rhetoric. On August 17, 2011, in a town hall meeting President Obama said, “But then you had the Arab Spring, and that shot gas prices and fuel prices up. And I know a lot of farmers here experienced that

spike.”⁶ In a television interview on August 21, President Obama stated that “There've have been a lot of headwinds, the European debt crisis, Japan, high gas prices from the Arab spring.”⁷ In A September 26, 2011 Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in La Jolla, California, president Obama stated that, “And a couple of weeks back, I put forward what we call the "American Jobs Act," that says at a time when because of all sorts of headwinds—Europe and high gas prices because of what happened in the Arab Spring—we've got to redouble our efforts to people back to work [sic].”⁸

In his October 4, 2011 address to Eastfield College in Mesquite, Texas, President Obama claimed, “We've had a tsunami in Japan; we've had the Arab Spring, which shot up gas prices; we've had problems in Europe. And so the economy has gotten weaker.”⁹ On an October 6” 2011 new report, president Obama stated that: “... the combination of a Japanese tsunami, the Arab Spring, which drove up gas prices, and most prominently, Europe, I think, has gotten businesses and consumers very nervous.”¹⁰ In his October 11, 2011, remarks during a meeting with the President’s Council on Jobs and Competitiveness, President Obama claimed, “We have had a very tough string of events over the course of the last 10 months. You had the Arab Spring, which shot up oil prices far higher than any of us anticipated.”¹¹

In Obama’s domestic rhetoric, “the Arab Spring” is categorized in such economic and calculated terms that it is various rhetorically equated with “bad luck,” “headwinds,” “uncertainty,” a hardship to be “weathered,” a “tough string of events,” amongst other things. President Obama’s rhetoric vacillates between blaming the gasoline price rise on the Arab Spring and listing the increase in gas prices and the

Arab Spring as a similar but distinct cause of slowed economic recovery. The purpose of each however is the same: to render the Arab Spring (with its positive normative and seasonal associations) as blameworthy for the slow economic recovery of mid-to-late 2011. The Arab Spring metaphor, which reduces the political and historical complexities at work in the various movements, expedites President Obama's rhetorical attempt to provide an account of the slow nature of economic recovery. This is not to say that President Obama's claim is factually inaccurate; Libya's petroleum reserves' (perceived) stability is a significant factor for those speculating about global oil prices. However, to suggest that the Arab Spring is solely and determinedly to blame for higher gasoline prices for domestic consumers ignores the highly speculative means by which gasoline prices are actually determined. Rather than an intrinsic exploration and disambiguation of what is at stake in the diverse sites or theatres of the Arab Spring, President Obama's rhetoric uses the singularity of the metaphor to further simplify economic realities and to respond to critics of his economic recovery program.

More important than the claim's veracity however, is what its repeated utterance reveals about the nature of Arab Spring rhetoric in the Obama administration. By appealing to the naturalistic metaphor and the associations with positive displays of democratic protest, President Obama's early Arab Spring rhetoric attempts to essentially use the Arab Spring to absorb the blame for slowed economic recovery on the account of rising gasoline costs. In effect then, this rhetoric implicitly rebukes critics who were arguing that the president's various economic reforms were failing as evidenced by slow recovery and high gasoline prices. By rhetorically aligning

democratic values and the Arab Spring while also blaming the Arab Spring for rising gas prices, President Obama portrayed critics of slowed recovery as either ignorant of the effect of the Arab Spring or as sacrificing democratic freedoms and universal principles for cheap gasoline. In essence, the Arab Spring's metaphoric and literal associations with democracy were called upon argumentatively not only to explain slowed economic recovery (in the sense that it was blamed on the Arab Spring) but also to justify it (as a sacrifice to universal principles like freedom and democracy).

Similar to how previous presidential rhetoric on the Prague Spring sought to use its rhetorical allure as an explanatory mechanism or exemplary proof of the desirability of the administration's preferred solutions to problems currently on the agenda. In this domestic context, President Obama uses the rhetorical flexibility of the metaphor to permit flexibility in normative association and meaning between contexts. As will be demonstrated in late 2011 and 2012, Obama's Arab Spring rhetoric is significantly different though it still appeals to the metaphoric dimensions of the phrase and its associations to forward Obama's preferred solutions to geopolitical problems.

Obama's Arab Spring – The Flowering of Foreign Democratic Unity (against Iran)

As the events of the so-called Arab Spring continued, President Obama's rhetoric became more inclusive of the protesters calls for systemic economic and political reform. Obama's rhetoric began to emphasize the democratic nature of American support for the Arab Spring. On October 25, 2011, on the "Tonight Show" with Jay Leno, President Obama portrayed the Arab Spring as an "opportunity" for tyrants to step down peacefully: "Well, this is somebody who, for 40 years, has

terrorized his country and supported terrorism. And he had an opportunity during the Arab spring to finally let loose of his grip on power and to peacefully transition into democracy.”¹² In November 7, 2011, at a victory election fundraising event, President Obama spoke of the Arab Spring as an opportunity or potential risk or danger that necessitated American direction or guidance:

In foreign policy, we're ending the war in Iraq and we're transitioning out of Afghanistan. But I didn't run for office only to end a war or only to make sure that we got bin Laden. We also want to make sure that we're creating opportunity all around the world, that we have a positive, proactive agenda that is helping alleviate poverty and helping to provide education and helping to make sure that the Arab Spring is one that turns positive and that gives more people opportunity.¹³

In this rhetorical portrayal, the U.S. role in the Arab Spring is not merely one of solidarity from afar or symbolic support but one of strategically determined guidance. The role of the American ‘we’ is to “make sure that the Arab Spring... turns positive.” From this perspective, the Arab Spring is both a positive change to be lauded but also an opportunity for more dangerous, undesirable change absent the appropriate response by the United States. Thus, President Obama’s rhetoric stages the Arab Spring not merely as an event resigned to the past (as in his earlier rhetoric) but as ongoing process, a potential threat to American interests.

Drawing on the motif of “universal rights,” President Obama’s remarks at the Iftar Dinner on August 10, 2012 rhetorically constructed a relationship between the liberty of free speech and expression of Americans and women protesting in the Arab Spring:

More broadly, we've seen the extraordinary courage of Muslim women during the Arab Spring. Women, right alongside men, taking to the streets to claim their universal rights, marching for their freedom, blogging and tweeting and posting videos, determined to be heard. In some cases, facing down tanks and

braving bullets, enduring detentions and unspeakable treatment, and at times, giving their very lives for the freedom that they seek, the liberty that we are lucky enough to enjoy here tonight.¹⁴

In a Sept. 11, 2012 pre-recorded video address, President Obama spoke to the Arab Forum on Asset Recovery regarding “the Arab Spring,” saying:

During this Arab Spring we’ve been inspired by the courage of ordinary citizens determined to forge their own future. As president, I’ve made clear that the United States stands with those seeking their universal rights. I’ve made it our policy to support reform across the region and assist transitions to democracy.¹⁵

Again, “this Arab Spring” is rhetorically proffered as a singular historical event with equally singular knowable traits. Obama’s rhetoric of a policy of support for “reform across the region” (in the context of the previous temporal framing of “during this Arab Spring”) strongly implies that the situations being described demand similar responses because they are of a similar character. At a Dec. 19, 2012 Diplomatic Corps Reception, President Obama delivered the following prepared remarks concerning international co-operation and diplomacy:

And that’s why, over the past four years, we’ve worked together, wherever we can, with your nations in a new era of engagement, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. Strengthening alliances. Forging new partnerships. Confronting the spread of nuclear weapons. Promoting open government, global health and food security, and fighting human trafficking. Ending one war in Iraq. Winding down another war in Afghanistan. Going after terrorist networks that threaten all of our people. Standing up for self-determination and freedom -- from South Sudan to the Arab Spring to Burma.¹⁶

In contrast to the eventual and temporal framing of a majority of the administration’s rhetoric of “the Arab Spring,” Obama’s remarks to the Diplomatic Corps position “the Arab Spring” as the name of a physical or geographical space or sovereign state/territory: “from South Sudan to the Arab Spring to Burma.” Comparing the two contextual meanings demonstrates that even in this altered configuration, the rhetoric

of “the Arab Spring” still functions singularly as a discrete entity, subject to an appeal of evidentiary proof, physical substantiation of American willingness to “stand up for self-determination and freedom.” In so doing, it rhetorically constitutes “the Arab Spring” as a locus or site of American self-determination through diplomatic interaction. This furthers the rhetorical portrayal of “the Arab Spring” as a singular noun, whose meaning (both intrinsically and contextually) is so obvious as to be self-evident, needing no further explanation or explication. This conceptual reduction permits the construction of a democratic unity which Obama proclaims to be universal in nature to further his preferred solutions to the top geopolitical issues on the administration’s agenda. In his remarks to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, President Obama made more explicit this universal basis for the Arab Spring:

It has been less than 2 years since a vendor in Tunisia set himself on fire to protest the oppressive corruption in his country and sparked what became known as the Arab Spring. And since then, the world has been captivated by the transformation that's taken place, and the United States has supported the forces of change. . . . We have taken these positions because we believe that freedom and self-determination are not unique to one culture. These are not simply American values or Western values, they are universal values. . . . So let us remember that this is a season of progress. For the first time in decades, Tunisians, Egyptians, and Libyans voted for new leaders in elections that were credible, competitive, and fair. This democratic spirit has not been restricted to the Arab world.¹⁷

The primary geopolitical issue for which President Obama’s Arab Spring rhetoric was used to mobilize public support was the denuclearization of Iran through a strategy of combined escalatory economic sanctions and diplomatic engagement. The climatological and seasonal metaphorical meanings that inhere within “the Arab

Spring” are employed in the President’s rhetoric to further isolate Iran from the democratic universal embodied by Obama’s Arab Spring:

Because of our diplomacy and our efforts, we have, by far, the strongest sanctions on Iran that we’ve ever seen. And China and Russia were critical to making that happen. Had they not been willing to support those efforts in the United Nations, we would not be able to see the kind of progress that we’ve made. And they’re having an impact. All our intelligence indicates that Iran’s economy is suffering as a consequence of this. And we’re also seeing that Iran’s influence in the region has ebbed, in part because their approach to repression inside of Iran is contrary to the Arab Spring that has been sweeping the Middle East.¹⁸

As the Arab Spring “sweeps” through the Middle East like a wind of change, it demonstrates the failure of Iranian influence and repression. Argumentatively then, the continued existence and persistence of the Arab Spring is a continued testament to the failure of the Iranian regime and proof of the efficacy of Obama’s diplomatic efforts at economic isolation to incite political integration. The fact that the Arab Spring (metaphorically understood and rhetorically postured as inevitable) is presently “sweeping the Middle East” is proof of the receding nature of Iranian influence in the region.

Through its rhetorical alignment with the Arab Spring, Obama’s policy of engaging Iran diplomatically and raising sanctions considered what was democratic to be entirely synonymous with American and Israeli security interests. Obama’s rhetoric again constructs the role of the United States as that of an arbiter of legitimacy, globally:

Part of it is by making sure that as the Arab Spring swept through the region, that we are pushing hard on countries like Egypt to make sure that they continue to abide by the peace treaties that have served both countries well. ... When I came into office, Iran was united and the world was divided. And now what we have is a united international community that is saying to Iran, you’ve got to change your ways. Now, this doesn’t mean that we’re where we need to

be. The Arab Spring can still go in a whole multitude of directions, and this is going to be a very delicate time for us to make sure that the legitimate aspirations of ordinary people for democracy and economic opportunity doesn't get channeled by demagogues in ways that are dangerous for America's security interests or Israel's security interests.¹⁹

Again, the Arab Spring “sweeping through the region” is presented as both a force of change worthy of respectful yet deeply hesitant optimism through a call to action. The Arab Spring *can* be a force for good and democracy - assuming that the United States ensures the proper outcome through its policy. This is juxtaposed to the universal isolation of Iran through a global community ‘s consensus symbolically governed by United States support of Israel and its security interests. Standing in the name of democracy (and the Arab Spring), in Obama’s rhetoric, means standing with American and Israeli security interests. President Obama’s rhetoric of the Arab Spring is that of a force which is ever threatening to the Iranian regime:

That is where we are today because of our work. Iran is isolated, its leadership divided and under pressure. And by the way, the Arab Spring has only increased these trends, as the hypocrisy of the Iranian regime is exposed and its ally, the Asad regime, is crumbling.²⁰

Like previous presidents and himself in regards to the Prague Spring, President Obama’s rhetoric of the Arab Spring emphasizes a universal democratic character or identity to recontextualize or rhetorically reframe the Arab Spring within the context of other dominant geopolitical problems and desired solutions of the president. Specifically, President Obama uses the metaphoric meanings and associations of freedom and vitality and change tied to the Arab Spring to portray the administration’s strategy on Iran as efficacious and natural. By portraying the Arab Spring as the outpouring of democratic protest that is further isolating the Iranian regime from a global democratic consensus, President Obama’s rhetoric aligns

support for the Arab Spring with support of American-Israeli security interests through diplomatic engagement and economic isolation in an attempt to render them synonymous as defenses of freedom and democratic values.

The re-mapping or rhetorical reframing of the Arab Spring in light of American and Israeli security interests and their convergence on the issue of Iranian nuclearization is one which frames the Arab Spring not merely as a singular event in the past which is passively viewed but rather that which is actively engaged so that it may be narrated and judged as it occurs.

Similar to presidential rhetoric preceding the Obama administration as it concerns the Prague Spring, President Obama's Arab Spring rhetoric seeks to map this democratic struggle onto the geopolitical terrain of the administration's own agenda in order to portray the Obama administration's policy solutions as necessary and desirable responses to circumstances as they exist now. President Obama's rhetoric was able to do this as result of the rhetorical construction of a democratically unified global community who had economically isolated Iran to incentivize diplomacy with Iran on terms dictated by American security interests and Israeli security interests in the region. The rhetoric of the Arab Spring was narrowly tailored to serve two distinct purposes: to absorb the blame for slow economic recovery in mid-to-late 2011 and to build support for Obama's Iranian diplomatic strategy. Regardless of the truth of the relationship between these phenomena, Obama's rhetoric constructs a set of relations that utilize the positive associations (both literal and metaphorical) with the Arab Spring in way that is similar to that of the Prague Spring to direct the audience towards the Obama administration's preferred policy

solutions. In each, the role of American policy and response is pivotal to the outcome of history. The rhetorical universality and mutuality of democratic values forms a background against which the Arab Spring is interpellated and given meaning. President Obama's rhetoric seeks to explore this association to the benefit of his administration's proposed policy solutions.

Whose Arab Spring? - Competing Frames of the Arab Spring

Attempts to frame the Arab Spring rhetorically are subject to contestation and criticism. President Obama's Arab Spring rhetoric as has been demonstrated seeks to reduce its plurality and diversity to a rhetorically bound singularity in order to facilitate its use to explain gas prices or to forge democratic unity against Iran. This issue of contested frames is more clearly represented in the way in which Obama's rhetoric of the Arab Spring carves a unique place for American response to carry enormous weight and significance. As has been noted throughout this chapter, President Obama's rhetoric of the Arab Spring is primarily aimed at explaining slowed economy recovery until late October 2011 when it shifts to being primarily about American foreign policy towards Iran and the U.S.-Israeli security alliance. In both rhetorical frames, the Arab Spring is an event whose impact is solely understood in relation to the American experience, in relation to American democratic norms or an impact on the daily lives of its citizens. Moreover, in Obama's Arab Spring rhetoric, the United States is to take an active role in the promotion and shaping of minority rights and other tenets of liberalism:

There is a larger issue, and that is, what's going to be happening in the Arab Spring as these countries transition from dictatorship to democracy. And we cannot replace the tyranny of a dictator with the tyranny of a mob. And so my

message to the Presidents of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and these other countries is, we want to be a partner with you, we will work with you, and we stand on the side of democracy, but democracy is not just an election; it's also, are you looking out for minority rights, are you respecting freedom of speech, are you treating women fairly.²¹

The language of 'we' and 'you' here is illustrative of this point; the leaders of Arab Spring countries (who are not listed in totality) will have the "we" of the United States of America working with them ("you") on the side of democracy. Along with this partnership comes a set of questions which implicitly make the partnership conditional: "are you looking out for minority rights, are you respecting freedom of speech," etc. In making the partnership evaluative and active, President Obama's rhetoric suspends judgment on the Arab Spring dependent on the response elicited by the U.S. response.

It is on this type of conditional and inconsistent response which most critics of Obama's Arab Spring rhetoric have focused. As Bady writes, it is a "disinterested interest whereby the spectatorism of Western audiences watching "the Arab Spring" blossom from afar, whose interest is only pulled in that direction by the potential impact of the Arab Spring on its 'interests.'"²² Bady further argues that this is the position of colonial amnesia by which vague moralizing and symbolic solidarity ahistoricizes American contributions to the tyrannies against which the Arab Spring revolts by using the rhetoric of non-intervention now to functionally "erase" the history of interventions in the past.²³ Contestation over the framing of the Arab Spring often disputes the very reality of American policy in the present as well as its colonial past. The presence of the Fifth Fleet to maintain safe passage through the Suez Canal against potential Iranian blockade or aggression is the type of reality often

mystified by the metaphorical and ideologically loaded associations of vitality and freedom and democracy which are at work in President Obama's rhetoric of the Arab Spring. Rami Kouri argues:

... the popularity of "Arab Spring" in the West mirrors some subtle Orientalism at work... many quarters of many Western lands remain hesitant in fully acknowledging the implications of free and self-determinant Arabs... Revolutionary, self-determinant, self-assertive Arabs frighten many people abroad. Softer Arabs who sway with the seasons and the winds may be more comforting.²⁴

The passivity and historical amnesia inherent in the term "Arab Spring" works to moderate the potentially disturbing reality of Arab self-determination. The potentially disturbing nature of Arab self-determination is greatly magnified when examined in the light of continued U.S. support for the failed/failing authoritarian regimes that prompts many to see (perhaps rightly) these anti-authoritarian revolutions as, in part, demonstrations against non-domestic, non-populist methods of rule (which includes U.S. control or support).

If one understands these modern activities as revolutions against governments beholden to interests foreign to or at the expense of its subjects, the attendant causes, effects, and explanations would be understood far differently than if one considers these activities to be "an Arab Spring" in the tradition of previous springs or periodic acts of protest whose destiny is to be quashed by backlash. Critics contend that "the Arab Spring" rhetoric intrinsically risks the depoliticization of essential, contestable features of these diverse and disparate attempts to mobilize political change, which in turn denies agency to the participants and involved parties. "The most favoured term... 'Arab Spring'... performs a certain depoliticizing function. The term 'Arab

Spring' sounds a lot less threatening to defenders of the status quo elsewhere in the world than 'revolution' does."²⁵

By positing Arabs as a mass group whose passivity has been modified by external influence, the term “Arab Spring” works to moderate the images of self-determination into a narrative frame of political action decidedly taken to be less disturbing to mediate external actors’ perceptions of the potentially disturbing revolutionary nature of activism, framing them instead in simplistic terms of familiar polemics such as “freedom versus tyranny” which permits the type of strategic ambivalence of President Obama’s rhetoric so carefully isolated earlier in the study. Unfortunately, the empirical record of these metaphorical “Spring” events as struggles for freedom and against tyranny is dismal. As Bady writes:

The use of spring in this sense [of the Arab Spring] is almost certainly derived from the Prague Spring ... which ended when the Soviet Union crushed the reforms by force. But even before that was the 1848 Springtime of Nations—in German and French, the *Völkerfrühling* and *Printemps des Peuples*—a pan-European series of revolutionary uprisings that also almost uniformly resulted in counterrevolutionary repression, perhaps most famously in the return to power of a Bonaparte in France. What these historical precedents have in common, in other words, is that they were popular uprisings that were put down by military force, the very outcome that currently goes most unnarrated in the Western media.²⁶

President Obama’s conformity to the metaphoric language of the Arab Spring permits his other attempts to pursue several rhetorical strategies in order to build support for his administration’s policies and agenda. This conformity however, incurs the consequent of the historical baggage of the spring metaphorical frame – the failure to appreciate the immediate backlash or counterrevolutionary response to the “spring” event with appropriate historical memory. In its instrumentalization of the Arab Spring as a rhetorical object to explain slowed economic recovery or to further

demonstrate the political isolation of Iran, President Obama's rhetoric conceals the United States' past of supporting forces of "tyranny" as matter of preference for market stability over democracy. In so doing, it permits the alignment of American identity and future policies of engagement and "the Arab Spring."

Against this criticism of Orientalism at work in the rhetoric of "the Arab Spring," Hamid Dabashi's argues that the "Arab Spring" rhetoric is not Orientalist because "The East, the West, the Oriental... - they are no more. ... we are witnessing ... the end of postcolonial ideological formations – and that is precisely the principal argument informing the way this book discusses and celebrates the Arab Spring."²⁷ Dabashi's primary argument against an account of "the Arab Spring" rhetoric as informed by Orientalist values is that because there is "no 'West' and no 'mainstream media,'" there can be no "authorial power to misrepresent anything." While Dabashi's point that there is no monolithic "West" or any particular rhetorically coherent "Western media" which acts in concert is an extremely insightful and valid point, it does not justify his conclusion that there can thus be no misrepresentation informed by stereotypes or unconsciously homogenous understandings. His dismissal of the relative perceptual authority or functional authority between rhetors is less than eloquent: "Who cares what 'the media' say – what does the term mean today?"²⁸ Again, while the point that participants should not be assumed to be powerless in either contesting others' narratives or in crafting and disseminating their own is significant, it does not follow logically as a response to criticism about the impact of rhetoric of "the Arab Spring." Indeed, contra Dabashi's indignant dismissal of a

consideration of the impact of these media metaphors, such a study is integral to understanding the various meanings of the phrase “the Arab Spring.”

President Obama’s Arab Spring rhetoric is qualitatively very different from the Prague Spring rhetoric that precedes and informs it. However, the spring metaphor operates similarly to encapsulate and reduce complex political reality into metaphorically appealing synecdoche that permits a rhetorically simple explanation or use. The values which inhere in certain contextual framings of the Arab Spring metaphor are therefore paramount to its meaning. This study has demonstrated that President Obama’s rhetoric of the Arab Spring has changed in practice and verbiage from that of the Prague Spring rhetoric but not in purpose. The seasonal and climatological vehicle for the tenor of political change permits a simplistic and ahistorical emphasis on vague ideals such as democracy and freedom to permit the president to construct rhetorically the administration’s policies as desirable and necessary.

Notes

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²⁴ Rami Khouri, "Arab Spring or Revolution?" *The Globe and Mail*, September 10, 2012, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/arab-spring-or-revolution/article626345/>

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²⁶ Bady, "Spectators to Revolution: Western Audiences and the Arab Spring's Rhetorical Consistency," 142.

²⁷ Hamid Dabashi, *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism*, (London: Zed Books, 2012), xviii.

²⁸ Dabashi, *The Arab Spring*, 68.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

The Spring Metaphor

Presidential rhetoric on the Prague Spring and the Arab Spring has unique similarities in the shared seasonal of “spring” as a metaphor for political change. This carries with it a whole host of implications and associations and meanings. The spring metaphor interacts with other nature-related metaphors to build associated abstract meaning to permit the construction of more literalized, concrete ideas. If the event being described could aptly be called a “spring,” one would imbue some characteristics of spring (even if only non-literally) to the event itself. The vitality, recurring, cyclical nature, and normative desirability associated with the season of spring all operate subconsciously to give currency and meaning to this metaphor.

The primary metaphorical association operating in both the Prague and Arab Spring rhetoric is that of “spring” (in its seasonal meaning) as a rhetorical vehicle for the tenor or meaning of change. As was noted in the first chapter of this study, the spring metaphor hails from a long trajectory of seasonal associations of spring with change. “Spring as change” already incurs multiple structuring metaphors and linguistic constructions to operationalize its meaning. It relies on a play in the multiple meanings of the word “spring” both as a movement, to “spring forth”, etc. as well as the climatological meaning of spring as the season between winter and summer. Both of these metaphors are deployed to create new, non-literal meanings born of these overlapping, indirect associations. The political changes are understood

as movements both in the traditional social scientific sense of a group of likeminded activists, co-operating to achieve a goal as well as in the more literal minded but still analogically applied spatial meaning of spring as motion. These multiple, overlapping associations are called upon in the presidential rhetoric examined in this study. This study's analysis of how these meanings are carefully orchestrated in presidential rhetoric in order to invite certain conclusions or to frame issues in a particular rhetoric or with particular idioms.

The climatological associations of the springtime (in the Northern Hemisphere) are that of a thawing of winter, birth of fauna, and growth of flora. Its associations with vitality and liveliness stem not only from human observation of the natural world around us but also from the social structures and constructions upon which those seasonal and cyclical forces are designed. In its climatological meaning, the rhetoric of spring often has several roles that complete the associated season and natural metaphors ability to conform to the spring as political change metaphor. There must be a metaphorical force of the frost or winter, there must be a force of "thaw" (either the natural passage of time or social change), and there must be a situated peoples or audience who can note the transition into the season. In the Prague Spring configuration, Soviet totalitarianism fills the role of the force of frost or winter while either the appeal of democracy or the inevitability of Communism's failure serve as the force of thaw (think of the Khrushchev Thaw). Czech citizens were the people who participated in and observed the passage from winter to "Prague Spring." In the Arab Spring configuration, Muslim totalitarianism and repression play the role of the frost or winter forces, technology or the passage of time or Western influence are

usually cast as the forces of a thaw in the “winter” of Muslim totalitarianism, and the “Arab people” of the affected populations are generally considered to be the recipients or observers of the spring.

This array of climatological roles re-enforces the associations between the natural dimensions of spring and the nature of the political change serving as tenor for the vehicle of “spring.” It provides another layer of associational meaning, permitting the “spring as political change” metaphor to continue to have currency in the rhetorical economy amongst such powerful rhetorical speakers as Presidents Reagan through Obama with such remarkable consistency despite the divergence in ideology one might expect to find in such a wide array of U.S. presidents. This study extends the provisional work concerning the “spring as political change” metaphor that has emphasized the role of associated idioms and rhetorical configurations to understand how the metaphor serves to enable or disable certain other rhetorical strategies. This study demonstrates that the spring metaphor provides an opportunity for specifically presidential rhetoric to configure a mutual identity with the named political event, to define that identity as “democratic” or “in favor of freedom,” and then to reframe that mutual relationship in light of some prevalent geopolitical agenda item of the given rhetor’s administration.

In addition to these roles, the climatological metaphor also necessitates another role to complete its metaphorical meaning: summer. At this point the propriety of the metaphor becomes a more deeply contested matter of ideology and political worldview, of the desirability of the specific policies and postures of the presidents whose rhetoric were herein analyzed. In the various configurations

analyzed here, the role of summer is assumed by the proposed changes, those things to which the president explicitly made appeal as hypothetical policies not yet in effect. It is also occupied by the rhetor's projected image of a good world in the future (implicit or explicit): for Reagan, the "defeat" of the Soviets and Communism/"victory" in the Cold War; for Bush, "victory" in the Gulf War; for Clinton, democratic international liberalism through NATO; for George W. Bush, "victory" in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan/the "war on terror"; for Obama, global arms reduction and non-proliferation compliance as well as "victory" in the "war on terror." These implicit and explicit summer roles project the rhetor's wishes as the inevitable conclusion of the extant reality within the metaphorical coordinates that orient knowledge in the present. In short, because the Prague and Arab Springs are a known reality and their legacy is known, the results rhetorically proposed by the presidents' rhetoric which appear in the role of summer are considered to be inevitable, as is the cyclical nature of seasonal change.

Another dimension of the spring metaphor at work is the more colloquial but nonetheless prevalent understanding of "spring" as the sudden, unexpected presentation or recognition of something ("those political movements sprang from nowhere," etc.). Understanding how this meaning of spring informs, particularly Western audiences' perceptions of the Prague and the Arab Springs as sudden breaks or aberrations from Soviet and Muslim totalitarianism respectively. While this understanding trades less on the explicitly seasonal and climatological dimensions of the metaphor, it does in its application to real political events, convey an important

additional layer of meaning in commonly acknowledged associations of the Prague and Arab Springs.

Rhetoric as Valuation through Metaphor

The method of metaphoric analysis has difficulty confronting the question of epistemology without resort to the cognitive sciences of psychology. Essential to the epistemological question is determining what constitutes rhetoric, not by example but as categorically unique, by definition. Answering the question of what rhetoric is occurs through recognition of the highly influential role of metaphors in structural rhetorical potentiality. Metaphor has been afforded an account in theories of rhetoric since the time of Aristotle. Modern rhetorical criticism and communication studies scholars more generally have afforded great importance to the role of metaphor, treating it one of many other significant types of rhetoric. This is divergent from more ancient accounts of metaphor within rhetoric that treated it rather as an adornment or superfluous rhetorical flourish: rhetoric in the pejorative sense of “mere rhetoric.” Franke argues, “the decline of interest in philosophical, Aristotelian rhetoric had much to do with metaphor’s reduction to a merely technical or decorative device.”¹

From this resurgent emphasis upon the metaphoric not as mere artistic or decorative excess comes the Nietzschean emphasis on metaphor as paradigmatic of all language that informs this study’s method of analysis. Recalling the theoretical assumptions inherent to a metaphoric criticism of this study’s ilk detailed in Chapter One, the “critical turn” in rhetorical studies saw a resurgence of interest in the

theories of rhetoric in the writing of Friedrich Nietzsche in which metaphor plays a central role.

This study draws on the history of Nietzschean theories on metaphoric rhetoric and contributes another case study in how metaphors frame and shape the reality they describe. In privileging metaphor as a constitutive, rather than incidental, paradigm of rhetoric, this study attempts a fruitful tracing of the metaphors and idioms which give life to the “spring as political change” metaphor through an understanding of the values which inhere in the presidential rhetoric under consideration. To understand the relation between metaphoric rhetoric and to attempt to read the values of the rhetor into their contextualization of the spring metaphor, requires a theory or account of rhetoric which privileges the role of metaphor as a means of communicating ideas and persuading audiences.

This study seeks to employ the insight of Nietzschean scholarship on rhetoric while simultaneously moving beyond the somewhat polemic debate concerning the relative supremacy of epistemology over and against aesthetics in the philosophy and rhetoric of Nietzsche that has defined its presence in the field to date.² Instead, using the lack of scholarly consensus and the fruitful nature of debates about the question as a point of departure, this study considers the universal nature of metaphor as a point of departure for its analysis of how metaphor operates amongst and by means of other metaphors and idioms in order to construct varied meanings which can be framed in a diverse set of ways. The study adopts these methodological and theoretical presuppositions when analyzing the presidential texts selected for study in the process of textual selection. By seeking out the metaphors of this study’s primary subject,

“spring as political change,” this study has demonstrated how this metaphor operates in presidential rhetoric as a metaphor amongst metaphors rather than as a metaphor in contrast to more literal or concrete presidential rhetoric.

While the proposition that all rhetoric operates metaphorically may appear on face paradoxical and obviously self-contradictory, it offers a unique perspective from which to consider rhetoric and structured by groundless associations with varying degrees of relatability. If all rhetoric is metaphorical then how could one ever attempt to separate the vehicle from the tenor, the metaphorical from the literal? This continual definition through negation using literal and metaphorical as opposing terms seems to miss the true function of metaphoric rhetoric by pushing conceptually related “levels” or types of meaning into categorically opposing fields despite their inter-relatedness. Instead, in the frustration of the groundlessness of language in asking the above rhetorical question, we find a new way to consider language beyond this binary of literal and metaphorical. In recognizing that even our most literal of descriptions still draw on idioms, figures of speech, and analogic reasoning, the metaphoric nature of language comes to the fore and can help the critic analyze and recognize the various interrelated metaphors and associated meanings. In this way, the value of metaphor is seen not in its ability to produce discrete effects or to act as a cause but rather in its reflection of a worldview or for how it emanates from certain values. If metaphor is not incidental rhetoric but paradigmatic of rhetoric itself, in the failure to draw comforting distinctions between the literal and the metaphoric a new perspective on criticism that emphasizes the understanding of metaphoric operation

amongst other metaphors rather than attempting to ground them back into so-called literal reality.

This study walks a fine line between this assumption of metaphor as a rhetorical paradigm and an analysis of the spring metaphor in presidential rhetoric. If all presidential rhetoric is metaphorical then there ought be nothing more to say other than to list the metaphors and note their connections and simply be done with it. However, this study provides insight into not only what metaphors are present and associated but, more informatively, it suggests reasons as to why they are both chosen by the rhetor in a given context but also as to what purpose its invocation is meant to serve. This is not a study of the efficacy of such attempts at political persuasion through metaphor but a study of the efficacy of the metaphor in persisting *through* presidential rhetoric. By emphasizing the role of metaphor in shaping values and perspectives on a given issue or in a given context, this method of metaphoric criticism appreciates the means by which rhetoric both reflects and attempts to shape values through persuasion.

Presidential Rhetoric as Valuation

The presidential rhetoric analyzed in this study has consistently sought to reframe the so-named “spring” event in the context of the president’s geopolitical agenda through rhetoric of mutuality based in “freedom” and “democracy,” symbols David Zarefsky would identify as “condensation symbols.”³ This study analyzes presidential rhetoric not for its discretely discernible and identifiable “effects” but rather in how the metaphor’s various configurations reveal a president’s attempts to

define a situation and “shape the context in which events or proposals are viewed by the public.”⁴

The spring metaphors analyzed by this study are clear examples of exactly this type of historical metaphor which becomes part of a circulating economy of allusions or reference from which political rhetoric can isolate political lessons and “truths” to “legitimize” certain policy options while delegitimizing others. Through its associations with freedom and democracy (themselves already so vague and contested as to lack any fundamentally shared meaning), the spring metaphor for political change draws connections between remembered historical events being commemorated and pressing, extant geopolitical conflicts or policies. As was noted in Chapter Two of this study, historical metaphors like those analyzed in this study can be used by political actors to “legitimize certain policy options and to delegitimize others.”⁵ These connections between the historical events and the metaphoric rhetoric used to describe them are precisely what is scrutinized by this study in an attempt to demonstrate the value of inquiry into how metaphors by political actors attempt to shape history.

These associations are made intelligible by the multiple meanings ascribed to the word “spring” as well as the intricately interrelated naturalistic idioms and metaphors which command the interpretation of the “spring as political change” metaphor in presidential rhetoric. Presidential rhetoric has empirically used metaphor for a variety of reasons and a vast array of contexts. This study has demonstrated that presidential rhetoric utilizes the “spring as political change” metaphor to construct a mutual identity based on democracy and freedom. This mutual identity is then

rhetorically alluded to to portray the pursuit of some future agenda item as a necessity and/or inevitability (given the reality of the mutual identity).

Not surprisingly, in much of the presidential rhetoric utilizing the Spring metaphor concerns the pursuits of war and peace. As Robert Ivie notes, “Nowhere is the desire to literalize a fertile metaphor stronger or more consequential than in deliberations about peace and war.”⁶ Benjamin R. Bates notes “This creation of similarity by substitution becomes particularly powerful in war rhetoric. In war rhetoric, metaphors are often used to reshape the public perceptions of the enemy so that there is no alternative to war. Rather than seeing metaphors as illustrative, they become constitutive of reality.”⁷ This study extends these lines of insight into an analysis of how presidential rhetoric utilizing the “spring as political change” metaphor has been used, including in the support of wars (Cold War, Gulf War, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and the War on Terror). By providing presidential rhetoric with an opportunity to align foreign interests with United States security interests as perceived by the given administration, the “spring as political change” metaphor enables presidential rhetoric to present their war plans as necessary and inevitable. This is not to argue that in the absence of such rhetorical ploys, these real material conflicts and operations would not be conducted. Rather, this rhetorical configuration was one amongst many rhetorical operations that cumulatively attempted to validate their respective rhetors’ war plans. The material and financially interested parties involved as well as the perceptions of enemies as well as their material presence make these struggles largely inevitable. Despite this fact, the rhetoric employed by presidents through the metaphorical justifications provided for these wars form an

essential work of analyzing how rhetoric shapes public deliberation and policymaking through metaphoric valuation.

Even outside the context of justifying war operations, presidential metaphoric rhetoric of “spring as political change” seeks to justify a mutual identity between America and the participants of the spring event itself. It was noted several times in the course of this study that presidential rhetoric often utilizes light-dark metaphors associated with Good and Evil respectively in its explication of the “spring as political change” metaphor to give it relational meaning (as metaphor amongst metaphor). Stephen Heidt noted that this light-dark metaphor has been essential in defining democracy in presidential rhetoric (and in the development of democracy promotion as a growth industry).⁸ “Spring as political change” also operates through the mobilization of associations of American with freedom in presidential rhetoric in order to make the continuation or maintenance of this mutual partnership in freedom capable of being interpellated into different theatres or into the future, understood in terms of a new geopolitical problematique.

This study has demonstrated that presidential rhetoric utilizing the “spring as political change” metaphor has operated with remarkable consistency as well as noteworthy variance. The metaphor not only shapes perception of the events but becomes a vehicle for the communication of the president’s (and by extension, the United States’) values concerning the issue. That is to say, the metaphors presidents use communicate not only ideas and associated meanings but also values and beliefs that stem either explicitly or implicitly from the specific contextual applications of the metaphor as apt.

In analyzing the role of metaphor in presidential rhetoric at work in the “spring as political change” metaphor, this study seeks to extend and build upon a long trajectory of extant literature surrounding particular metaphors deployed in unique contexts and an analysis of their contours. By seeking to affix these observations with the realization that these metaphors enable the positive portrayal of particular policy reforms or propositions by the president or the president’s administration, this study seeks to extend the role of metaphoric criticism to understanding how presidents attempt to use rhetoric to persuade or mobilize support for particular policies. As noted earlier, this does not require the calculation of empiric certainties or probabilities in an attempt to come to deductive certainty about the necessity and sufficiency of this particular metaphor amongst other metaphors simultaneously deployed towards the same ends by a variety of actors. Rather than pursuing answers to the unanswerable question of how the past was determined, this study demonstrates that, due to the metaphoric nature of language and therefore decision making, knowledge about what gives a certain metaphor currency or longevity in its applicability is instructive in appreciating how metaphor operates to produce new realities by permitting certain rhetorical connections otherwise not present in the juxtaposition of two events or objects for consideration.

The Prague Spring

This study’s analysis of Prague Spring rhetoric specifically saw consistency in its use even as the contexts and specific contours of that use were adapted and modified by presidents over time. Consistently, presidents spoke commemoratively

about the Prague Spring to align the United States and American identity with the “democracy” and “freedom” inherent to the Prague Spring. Through emphasis on the seasonal dimensions and the various roles of frost, thaw, recipient, and summer, the “spring as political change” metaphor structured reality through the presidential alignment of that mutual democratic identity on alternative geopolitical agendas.

President Reagan’s rhetoric of the Prague Spring was characterized by the binary logic of the Cold War. This meta-narrative shaped the values which inhered in President Reagan’s rhetoric of the Prague Spring. Reagan’s rhetoric cast the Prague Spring as experiential proof of the Evil of Soviet Communism as well as the inevitable ascension to democracy and Western values as a normative Good. Instead of casting the Prague Spring as a failed communist reform movement, Reagan’s rhetoric cast it instead as part of a global linear progress against Soviet Evil, only temporarily stalled in its inevitable success over Communism. President Bush too sought to integrate the metaphor of “spring as political change” into his pressing geopolitical concerns, namely “victory” in the Gulf War. President Bush used the season associations of the Prague Spring to build democratic solidarity with the U.S. and then suggested that this same mutual democratic freedom was at threat in the theatre of the Gulf War. Recalling the light/dark and Good and Evil rhetoric of Reagan, President Bush puts the Prague Spring and the Gulf War in terms of truth and falsity. Using the “spring as political change” metaphor’s associations with vitality and democracy, President Bush’s commemorative rhetoric portrays the Gulf War as a “just cause” for democracies to uphold in support of the vitality and light of spring. This study’s analysis President Bush’s utilization of the Prague Spring and its

associated metaphors to mobilize support for the Gulf War extends the type of metaphoric criticism described by Lakoff as “literally vital to understand just what role metaphorical thought played in precipitating the gulf war.”⁹

President Clinton’s Prague Spring rhetoric like that of President Bush plays with the seasonal dimensions of the “spring as political change” metaphor in order to present the growing tide of liberalism and democratic consensus as inevitable. In Clinton’s rhetoric, the Prague Spring is seen as emblematic of the spirit of expansion of democratic reformism and analogized to and associated with NATO expansion. Clinton’s Prague Spring rhetoric marked a shift from the Good versus Evil rhetoric that had characterized that of Reagan and Bush. President Clinton’s rhetoric extends however the emphasis on democracy and freedom and motivates a solidarity which should be affirmed in other contexts.

President George W. Bush’s rhetoric commemorating the Prague Spring seeks to integrate it into the new Good versus Evil metanarrative, that of the global war on terror and the (perceived as related) wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. America’s embodiment and eminence of freedom serves to bond American national identity with the Prague Spring that was crushed by Communists. Phrased in stark terms of freedom versus fear and Good versus Evil, President Bush’s rhetoric extended the role of NATO in forging democratic unity that was first exhibited in Clinton’s presidential rhetoric and then extended this solidarity of democratic security pacts to the logic of pre-emptive war against Iraq and Afghanistan. The seasonal dimensions of the “spring as political change” metaphor serve to enable the rhetorical strategy by which President Bush is able to depict U.S. operations in the war in Afghanistan as an

integral defense of the same freedom in whose name protestors were acting in resisting Soviet occupation in 1968.

President Obama's Prague Spring rhetoric is similar to that of his predecessors. By emphasizing the democratic unity of the international community and the commonality of the American and Czech position through rhetoric of common history and common security, President Obama's Prague Spring rhetoric utilized the memory of the Prague Spring as a repressed reform movement to arouse empathetic solidarity. By building this democratic solidarity, Obama's Prague Spring rhetoric attempts to mobilize support for his counterterrorism and non-proliferation policies. The Prague Spring is rhetorically posed as that which not only ties Czechoslovakia and American desires for democratic independence together but also as that which projects the relationship into the future, into new endeavors be they the continuation of the Cold War, NATO membership expansion, counter-terrorism, or non-proliferation.

The Arab Spring

Through its seasonal relations to the "spring as political change" metaphor, the Arab Spring rhetoric extends the multiple meanings and associated ideas which give the spring metaphor currency. Though historically completely unique and distinct from the Prague Spring, the use of spring in "the Arab Spring is derived from this modern application of the "spring as political change" metaphor onto political unrest.

President Obama's rhetoric of the Arab Spring sought to employ it as a justification or explanation for the slowed economic recovery of mid-to-late 2011. Primarily framing the Arab Spring as an inevitable and unpredictable economic

obstacle, President Obama explained the Arab Spring during this period of time as that which caused a spike in gas prices and slowed job growth numbers in this period. In this configuration, President Obama's attempt to rhetorically portray the Arab Spring as inevitable and natural is made possible by the "spring as political change" metaphor. After mid-October 2011, President Obama's rhetoric of the Arab Spring became more oriented towards lauding Obama's policy of engaging Iran diplomatically while isolating them economically through harsh sanctions. The democratic unity of the international community (even including Russia and China) in promoting sanctions against Iran is rhetorically posed as the same unity which binds together American national identity and the forces of the Arab Spring which President Obama rhetorically celebrates as heralding democracy in the Middle East.

The concept of democratic freedom at work in President Obama's Arab Spring rhetoric is one that is defined as synonymous with American and Israeli security interests, understood as converging on the issue of Iranian nuclearization. Similar to the Prague Spring rhetoric analyzed earlier, Obama's Arab Spring rhetoric seeks to foster and create democratic unity in order to further the Obama doctrine of foreign policy. The "spring as political change" metaphor is utilized in Obama's Arab Spring rhetoric in order to reframe the issues at stake in the movement away from the criticisms of U.S. force deployment in the region (including the Fifth Fleet in the Persian Gulf) and demands for economic security and domestic protections from international markets and predatory investments. President Obama's Arab Spring rhetoric is qualitatively very different from the Prague Spring rhetoric that precedes and informs it. However, the spring metaphor operates similarly to encapsulate and

reduce complex political reality into metaphorically appealing synecdoche that permits a rhetorically simple explanation or use. The rhetoric of the Arab Spring itself is “external to the region it describes, a term used to make sense of an event from which we are excluded and forced to observe from afar.”¹⁰

Conclusions of the Spring

The “spring as political change” metaphor has remarkable consistency through presidential rhetoric. It has historically been used to foster a sense of democratic unity or a shared identity as those who act in the name of or embodiment of freedom. This relationship and association is then projected onto or used to reframe a prevalent geopolitical issue important to the president who invokes this rhetoric. Presidential rhetoric, in utilizing this spring metaphor for political change, attempts to align the United States and its administrations’ policies with democracy and freedom. This study’s analysis of the spring metaphor for political change extends a long line of metaphoric criticism within the field as well as a strong tradition of presidential rhetorical criticism. Metaphoric criticism in this study is employed to reveal what values are displayed by presidential use of the spring as political change metaphor. By analyzing the values and messages that inhere in configurations of the spring metaphor in presidential rhetoric, this study contributes valuable knowledge to the study of how metaphor shapes our rhetoric, our policymaking, and our reality.

Notes

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³ David Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 34 (2004): 612.

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⁸ Stephen J. Heidt, "Presidential Rhetoric, Metaphor, and the Emergence of the Democracy Promotion Industry," *Southern Communication Journal* 78 (2013): 234.

⁹ George Lakoff,, “Metaphor and War: The Metaphor System Used to Justify War in the Gulf,” *Peace Research* 23 (1991): 25.

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