Cogency of Argumentation in Obama's (2013) Speech on the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria: A Pragmatic Study

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Abstract

This study attempted to bridge the gap between cogency of argumentation and political discourse constructed in Obama's (2013) speech regarding the use of chemical weapons in Syria. It was concerned with analysing the speaker's argument in an effort to persuade the American Congress to approve the strike of the facilities that belonged to Al-Assad's regime. The data were selected to examine the premises adopted by Obama and the conditional construction of his hypotheses. The current work was qualitative in nature since it observed, described, and examined the selected data. The researcher employed Toulmin's (2003) six components of argument realized in the data to ascertain how these elements could effectively participate in helping the speaker achieve his objectives. The researcher also advocated Gruyter's (2001) model to examine the degree of cogency utilized by Obama's speech in question. The results of the study revealed that Obama was linguistically successful in manipulating all the components of the model. However, he objectively failed to win support from Congress and the majority of the American allies. The study also indicated that Obama showed a low degree of cogency in his proposition. It further showed that the hypothetical realities overwhelmed the factual realities based on the results obtained from the analysis of the conditional constructions .
Keywords: Argumentation, Cogency, Persuasion, Obama' (2013) Speech, Conditional Construction, Pragmatic Analysis.

قوة الحجاج في خطاب أوباما \2013\ بعد استخدام الأسلحة الكيميائية في سوريا دراسة تداولية

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الملخص

تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على العلاقة بين قوة الحجاج، ذات المنظور التداولي، وبين الخطاب السياسي بالإشارة الى خطاب أوباما عام 2013 بشأن استخدام الأسلحة الكيميائية في سوريا. وتعنى الدراسة هذه بتحليل هذا الخطاب الذي حاول فيه المتحدث اقناع الكونغرس الأمريكي بالموافقة على ضرب نظام الأسد بعد استخدام أسلحة محرمة دوليا ضد السوريين في محاولة هدفت الى تحليل الفرضيات التي تبناها أوباما، وكذلك تحليل التراكيب الشرطية لفرضياته. والدراسة الحالية ذات طبيعة نوعية كونها تراقب وتصف وتتفحص الخطاب المعني. تبنى الباحث مفردات الحجاج الستة لتولمن (2003) سعيا لمعرفة كيف تم توظيف هذه المفردات في الخطاب. كما تبنى ايضا مفهوم اخر لجروتر (2001) لتحديد قوة الحجة التي استخدمها أوباما في خطابه تداوليا. وقد كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن الرئيس الأمريكي السابق نجح في توظيف جميع مكونات الحجاج الستة في الخطاب المعني من الناحية اللغوية، لكنه لم ينجح موضوعيا في الحصول على موافقة الكونغرس وأغلبية الحلفاء الأمريكيين. وكشفت الدراسة أيضًا أن أوباما كان غير مقنع في حجته حيث أن الحقائق الافتراضية طغت على الحقائق الواقعية وذلك حسب نتائج تحليل التراكيب الشرطية في خطابه.

الكلمات المفتاحية:الحجاج، الحجة المقنعة، الاقناع، خطاب أوباما 2013، البناء الشرطي، التحليل التداولي.

1. Introduction

Argumentation is the act of formulating reasons, defending beliefs, and drawing conclusions based on efforts in which the appeal is to address the thoughts and actions of others. The key concept of convincing the audience is to make them embrace the logic and evidence provided by the speaker. Principally, Quasthoff (1978) stresses that argumentation refers to the comprehensive argumentative discourse and its complementary components (claim, support, reason, and warrant). He maintains that there are three integral levels of argumentation: the macrostructure level, which views argumentation as a universal activity; the microstructure level, which considers an argument to be a basic internal activity; and the complementary recognition of the macro and microstructures that deal with an argument as a fundamental activity of argumentation.

Argumentation, according to Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004:1), is "a verbal, social, and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by putting forward a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the proposition expressed in the standpoint". They further explain that argumentation is a verbal activity since it is the process that is validated by the use of language. As a social activity, it is governed by rules that are directed at other people, and it is a rational activity because it is a process that is generally based on intellectual consideration and often distanced from emotion. Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004), and Freeley and Steinberg (2013) indicate that the standpoint of the speaker is the target towards which the arguer tries to argue for, justify, and reason up the standpoint in question. Notably, a successful justification depends on how cogent the argument is within the process of argumentation; otherwise, the speaker's proposition would not arrive at a convenient conclusion that can be realized by the audience.

Argument, on the other hand, is viewed by Johnson (2000:31) as "a component of practice of argumentation. It is just one phase of the entire dialectical process". He ascertains that this process includes a response and a challenge at the same time in which

both are shared by two or more participants. To put it differently, controversial topics are exchanged by arguers in which one speaker presents his/her argument while the opposing one presents his/her counter-argument. In this context, the latter would either agree or disagree with the topic under argument. In case of disagreement, the speaker should put before his/her foe a contra counter-argument to systematically accredit his/her claim. Johnson (2000:31) postulates that arguments should be dealt with as teleological practices "illative core", aiming at coherent persuasion "dialectical tier". Besides, the exchange of debatable issues between the arguers is said to be cogent when the arguments reach their purpose(s) "on the illative core". Also, the speaker's argument should not only work on the fulfillment platform; however, it should be more effective on the recipient's mind compared to the opponent's arguments "on the dialectical tier.", where the arguer may anticipate and respond to objections or counter-arguments of his/her world view.

On this basis, the current study will systematically examine Obama's (2013) political speech which addressed the American congress and the whole nation to strike the facilities belonging to the Syrian government. The speaker was trying to defend his claim that Al-Assad's regime attacked innocent Syrians with chemical weapons. Therefore, it should be confronted and banned from using these weapons in the future. Otherwise, the American troops and their national security, as well as the allies would be endangered. To this end, the study will adopt Toulmin's (2003) model and Gruyter's (2001) model that both help extract invisible meanings in Obama's speech by pragmatically analysing the argumentative components and the conditional constructions deployed in his discourse. The former model, on one hand, provides a deductive approach to examine the speaker's premises so as to see how far he is successful in providing the nation with valid, strong support for his conclusions against the Syrian government. It also aims to test how far the six components of an argument, proposed by Toulmin, are conditioned to persuade the recipient. On the other, the latter model helps understand the construction of Obama's speech by contextually interpreting the factual and hypothetical realities. The analysis of these realities,

endorsed in the conditionals governing the discourse in question, aims to examine the strength of the speaker's degree of cogency in his argument and to see to what extent the tilting of either reality (hypothetical reality or factual reality) can affect the mind of the nation.

Importantly, political discourses have a plethora of variant tenets that analysts/readers cannot rigorously unveil unless they use specific linguistic tools. These tools help reveal the logical and reasonable interpretation of meanings in a political text. Significantly, Obama's (2013) speech on Syria has been investigated comprehensively from various lenses, including critical discourse analysis (Aschale and Ababa, 2013), argumentative analysis (Hasan, 2018), and grammatical analysis (Fitria, 2019), etc. However, to the best knowledge of the researcher, the speech has scantly been examined pragmatically and not yet investigated by employing Toulmin's (2003) and Gruyter's (2001) models. The amalgamation of these two frameworks is a newly emerging tool of investigation, aimed to see how they can be interwoven to examine a given political speech. Consequently, the results that will be obtained from the current study as well as the procedures of collecting and analysing the data in question may inspire other researchers to tackle new areas so that they can add to the body of research some tools that help readers understand contexts more properly.

1.1 Cogent Argument

A cogent argument is a powerful inductive argument in which all of the premises are true. Johnson (2000). He further states that since argumentation deals with verbal activities, an argument should deal with a verbal performance in which both concepts are incorporated together to reach a particular conclusion. In addition, Johnson (2000: 168) indicates that it is necessary to distinguish between argumentation and argument, stating, "at its most basic, most recent pragmatic theories place argument in the context of argumentation with the aim of approaching argumentation as a mode of action". As far as a cogent argument is concerned, Martinich (2016) ascertains that it is recognized as

valid and strong based on its structure and substance. In addition, a cogent argument is the type of argument that has true premises and attempts to establish irrefutable support for its conclusion(s). In other words, an argument will be logically cogent and valid when its conclusion arises from its premises. Furthermore, when it is based on a logical sequence, an argument will play a vital role in persuading the audience by guiding them to specific inferences. Thus, this process will provide norms that can produce a cogent argument leading to a reasonable conclusion(s). Toulmin (2003) develops a substantial type of cogent argument, characterized by the premise(s) and conclusion(s) of an argument in a way that is structurally amplified. In the traditional formal logic model, (Aristotle's logic), the structure of an argument is based on syllogism and enthymeme. However, in Toulmin's model, a cogent argument is perceived in terms of its six interrelated components that can measure the degree of cogency of that argument: claim, data, warrant, backing, rebuttal, and modal qualifier.

1.2 Cogent Political Language

A political argument is a logical argument used in the domain of politics, which is almost always used by academics, political figures, and media experts. Ordinary people also use political arguments in their daily interactions to comment on political issues or events (Johnson, 2002). This broad range of arguments necessitates the need to understand the cogency of language used by arguers to influence, persuade, and/or mislead the recipient by unveiling its interlinked texture. Johnson (2000) further stresses that cogent political language requires speakers to respond to controversial questions raised by the public or by opposing arguments. This response has to be in a way that shows how they can construct a counter-argument to defend their proposed claim. Speakers in this context seek to use highly institutionalized and well-crafted language to convince the audience with their standpoint and to maximize the degree of cogency in their speech.

In the same vein, Benoit (2007) believes that a cogent argument is the one that is accepted to be such by virtue of staging

its structure and context. It is also the one that encourages the audience to accept its conclusion by demonstrating that the arguments are sound, and the premises are correct in comparison to others. In a similar context, Al-Juwaid (2019) contends that a successful and effective argument should accomplish its goals and provide concrete grounds in an influential manner to resolve conflicting and debatable issues. Accordingly, this motivates the researcher to examine Obama's language in his speech delivered in September 2013, to persuade the American Congress to act against Al-Assad's regime. This issue is highly controversial since there is still no conclusive evidence confirming who was behind the use of chemical weapons in Syria, whether it was Al-Assad's administration or their opponents.

1.3 Persuasion

Persuasion is a process in which a person or an organization seeks to persuade another individual or group of individuals to affect their minds, behaviours, and attitudes. Persuasive messages, according to Perloff (2003), are representational in that they may include words, images, or sounds. These messages can be communicated verbally or nonverbally, through media or face-to-face in which understanding how they work could help people become more conscious of how persuasive communications impact individuals. Perloff (2003), Gass and Seiter (2004), and Poggi (2005) view persuasion as the study of attitudes and how they can be changed. They argue that persuasion is generally based on the persuader's competency to influence people to change their beliefs and attitudes consciously or unconsciously. Therefore, being persuaded encompasses circumstances in which bahaviour is affected by realistic engagements that are, though not always, coupled with intimidating power and call for reason and emotions of the person being convinced.

Virtanen and Halmari (2005) view persuasion as those linguistic choices that aim to influence and affect the behavior of others or strengthen the existing views and behaviors of those who already agree, including existing views that the persuader holds. In the same vein, politicians are interested in changing

their people's minds about who or whom not to vote for. To this end, Aristotle (as cited in Wrobel, 2015: 409) describes persuasion as "a feat that can be achieved when the speaker's character is in accordance with the way the speech is spoken and the audience is prone to grant him credibility". This indicates that the speaker should be able to provide logical reasons to convince the audience with a particular claim, understand the audience's beliefs and ideologies, and understand their emotions. Not far from the above literature, van Eemeren (2015), sees an argument as including any communication skills that may have a persuasive influence on the audience, as well as providing arguments to support a particular viewpoint. To accomplish this impact, he suggests using ethos and pathos in addition to logos to provide persuasive impacts that comprise how arguments are delivered (message structure) akin to those components of argumentation substance (message content).

2. Literature Review

A body of research has drawn on the pragmatics of argumentation by applying specific theoretical frameworks and lenses. These attempts were to expose the interconnectedness of pragmatics and argumentation research topics, and the way argumentation theory was gradually incorporated into different pragmatic models. To begin with, Indah and Khoirunisa (2018) investigated the argumentative strategies endorsed by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential debates. The study aimed to interpret the ideologies that were expressed in the structure of argumentations. The researchers adopted Toulmin's (2003) model of argumentation to analyze the six interrelated components of an argument in the selected debates. They also adopted van Dijk's (2006) Critical Discourse Analysis model to explore the reproduction of Islamophobia, manipulation, and racism. The findings of the study signified that the candidates' discourses contributed to the reproduction of deception, inequality, and marginalization. These grounds were successfully used to influence the audience's minds to vote for them in the presidential elections.

Furthermore, Voloshchuk and Usyk (2018) examined the persuasive strategies utilized by Cameron and Obama during their election campaigns. The researchers adopted Aristotle's rhetorical parameters (Ethos, Pathos, and Logos) to pragmatically trace the candidates' persuasive strategies. The analysis was based on the employment of Cameron and Obama's arguments to validate their claims with solid data to support their conclusions as a means to influence their people's minds. The results of this study showed that the strategies of persuasion manipulated by the two candidates (rhetorical questions, repetitions, similes, metaphors, etc.) were found to be key instruments in the systematic organization of their speeches. The results also indicated that both candidates were similarly inclined to employ ethos and logos in their arguments rather than pathos. The researchers concluded that the successful employment of logical reasoning in political speeches could effectively influence the voters' thoughts and attitudes.

Following that, Al-Ka'bi (2019) conducted a study that analysed seven selected argumentative articles published by Chomsky from 2003 to 2011 in different journals around the world. The research sought to identify and describe the argumentative indicators tackled in the selected argumentations as key issues related to the construction of political argumentation. The researcher adopted Eemeren and Grootendorst's (2004) pragma-dialectical approach through which a political argument and an arguer's stance could be illuminated. He further adopted Searle's (1979) speech act theory to identify the characterization of the normative structure of the speech acts used in the collected data. The study revealed that the acquired argumentative indicators had distinct structures, numbers of distribution, and types from one text to another, even though they were written by the same author. These differences were due to their relational nature, through which the arguer could take advantage of the differences to argue for or against various issues. The very indicators helped identify the process of argumentation and predict what might be concluded. The study also recognized that argumentative indicators like 'but', 'no', 'and',

'as even', and 'if conditionals' were the most frequently used by Chomsky. Besides, it signified that 'declarative' and 'assertive' acts were strongly recurrent, compared to the rest of the speech acts, in the analysed data, granting argumentations credibility and acceptability to the audience.

Toulmin's (2003) model has been frequently used to evaluate the quality of an argument, and it may also be used to assess the veracity of accepted news information. On this basis, Admoko et al (2021) attempted to investigate the news concerning the spread of COVID-19 pandemic found on some YouTube channels. The results indicated the significance of applying Toulmin's (2003) model in assessing the truth of the news. It was therefore possible to place news components more precisely into the structure of a more complex, organized, and systematic argumentation pattern that could facilitate the understanding of the main objectives of a given text.

Faris (2021) analyzed Trump's 2018 speech on the Iran Nuclear Deal. The primary objective of the study was the establishment and reassertion of power in the discourse under inquiry. Four theoretical moves were utilized by the researcher: Fairclough's (1989) "Relational Values," van Dijk's (1990) "Discourse, Power, and Access," van Dijks (2014) "Socio-cognitive Approach to CDA," and Gruyter's (2001) Linguistic typology and language universals. The study demonstrated a correlation between Trump's narcissism and his use of personal pronouns, which were employed as a technique for shaping social structures. Some lexical words used in the given discourse showed Trump's hostile attitude toward the Iranian government, which was formed by his sociocognitive heritage in Iranian politics after 1979. In addition, the results revealed that Trump's conditional constructions were perceived as establishing more hypothetical realities than factual realities regarding the Iranian nuclear deal and the Iranian political system.

3. Research Objectives

The current study seeks to investigate
1. Toulmin's (2003) six components of argument manipulated in Obama's (2013) political speech on Syria to persuade the American congress and their allies, and
2. the conditional constructions established in Obama's (2013) political speech.

4. Research Questions

The study intends to answer the following research questions:
1. How are Toulmin's (2003) six components of argument manipulated in Obama's (2013) political speech on Syria to persuade the American congress and their allies?
2. How are conditional constructions established in Obama's (2013) political speech?

5. Theoretical Framework

This section is dedicated to reviewing the theoretical models advocated in this study: Toulmin (2003) and Gruyter (2001). They can be adopted to understand how Obama's (2013) speech is to be subsumed pragmatically. The former is catalogued to find how the speaker in the selected data implements Toulmin's six components of argument to get his conclusion approved congressionally. The same speech is also a subject of pragmatic investigation of conditional constructions developed by Gruyter (2001). The model will contribute to examine the degree of cogency of Obama's speech and highlight particular proposed assumptions about Al-Assad's use of chemical weapons. The results will be strengthened by applying both models and discussed to answer the research questions.

Toulmin's (2003) model is a form of argumentation that splits any given argument into six components: claim, data, warrant, backing, modal qualifier, and rebuttal. The first three are essential in any given argument, while the second ones are complementary elements of an argument rather than compulsory which may not be equipped under some unnecessary circumstances.

For Toulmin, (2003), a claim is a proposition that speakers/writers seek to establish in their argument trying to persuade and convince the audience/reader with the proposed assertion and might, sometimes, need to make a variety of other claims to reach their objective. A datum (ground) is the basic foundation for the claim i.e. the facts and evidence that speakers/writers use explicitly to support their claim on the basis of which an argument is constructed. A warrant functions as a link that connects the data with the claim. In other words, it is a general statement of possibility and/or plausibility that links and justifies the movement from one step to another in an argument. Therefore, "what are needed are general, hypothetical statements, which can act as bridges, and authorise the sort of step to which our particular argument commits us" (Toulmin, 2003:91). Besides, a warrant offers the rigid data and general support to "register explicitly the legitimacy of the step involved and to refer it back to the larger class of steps whose legitimacy is being presupposed" (Toulmin, 2003: 92). Table 1 below displays a simplified version of the first part of the model:

Table 1: Definitions and Criteria of Claim, Data, and Warrant

Components of Argument	Definitions and Criteria
1. Claim	- An assertion created in response to a controversial issue - An opinion or personal attitude that requires additional evidence that needs to be supported - It is essential in every logical argument
2. Data	- They take the form of an objectively observed fact - They can be a consequence of observation, information, or statistical data - They support the claim to be accepted
3. Warrant	- It connects the claim with the data - It is a basic principle, assumption, constitution, or a formal process of resolution

Backing is the element that provides extra reasoning and evidence for the support and completion of the data and strengthens the warrant. Backing also helps the warrant possess authority and currency without which the very warrant can be challenged. It should be noted that the backing of a warrant is significantly different from other elements of an argument in the sense that "the backing for warrant can be expressed in the form of categorical statements of fact quite as well as can the data appealed to in direct support of our conclusion" (Toulmin, 2003: 98). Importantly, a categorical statement, in an argument, is a proposition that is essential in deductive reasoning. This type of reasoning is the process of developing a specific conclusion based on conventions assumed to be true by the speaker (Toulmin, 2003).

Modal Qualifier is another supportive element in argumentation which is namely used to specify and determine the provided data, warrant, claim. It is needed to add some references to explicitly fortify the degree of cogency and reinforce the conferred data on the claim by virtue of the provided warrant (Toulmin, 2003). Table 2 below illustrates the second part of the model:

Table 2: Definitions and Criteria of Backing, Rebuttal, and Modal Qualifier

Components of Argument	Definitions and Criteria
4. Backing	- It completes and promotes the data - It strengthens and enhances the warrant - It is based on a result gained from facts or observations
5. Rebuttal	- It weakens the claim of an opponent - It strengthens the claim of the speaker - It allows the speaker to moderate his/her speech in case the claim has limitations
6.Modal Qualifier	- It increases the degree of certainty - It reinforces the claim and the data

Gruyter (2001) assesses that a conditional clause is a sentence that conveys a factual implication or hypothetical situation with its consequences. Accordingly, any conditional sentence is divided into two parts: protasis and apodosis. The former represents the dependent clause that hypothetically expresses the condition of the sentence, while the latter is the main clause that expresses the consequence (s) of the condition. Conditional clauses are of different types that are all decided by the verb forms used in the dependent clause (protasis) and main clause (apodosis). The construction of the predictive conditional is primarily concerned with the situation based on the hypothetical event. Whereas the consequent statement can be about the past, present, or future time. The key feature of conditionals is their potentiality which acts on two binary realms, correlated with the human ability to react to each: hypothetical realities and factual realities that both are performed and inferred by the recipient.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

The study was an attempt to draw a map of the relationship between argumentative strategies, and the hypothetical and factual realities assembled in the conditional constructions. This map tended to examine the degree of cogency in the selected political discourse in which the analysis of the data went beyond the sentence to consider the transcribed text in connection to the outside world. Therefore, the design of this paper was qualitative as it worked on observing, describing, and examining Obama's (2013) political speech in which the interpretations of the text were based on the researcher's observation and understanding. These interpretations were linked to the context and the text material under investigation. Creswell (2013) stated that interpretation inquiry should be seen as a form of analysis in which researchers could interpret or evaluate what they experienced and understood.

In this context, the researchers' views ought to be inextricably tied to their background, prior knowledge, history, and understanding. It is worth noting that the researcher's own observation and examination of the text in question were used as

primary instruments for collecting the data. This is indicated by Ary et al (2010), stating that the most prominent qualitative research instrumentations would include observations, document analyses, and interviews. In addition, being qualitative in nature, the current study comprised a non-statistical approach to data analysis. That is, the units of analysis involved words, phrases, conditional clauses, and sentences, related to the total speech situations to pragmatically elicit the meaning of the units in context (Merriam, 2009).

6.2 Procedures

The researcher keenly watched the video of Obama's speech downloaded from YouTube (https://www.youtube.com) to collect the data and prepare it for analysis. The speech was delivered on Sept. 10, 2013, at the White House, and the transcript was downloaded from (www.washingtonpost.com). It was composed of 2210 words and lasted for 15 minutes and 46 seconds. The researcher also observed the English caption attached to the video to maximally have an integrated interpretation of the context. The collected data had been frequently examined to extract the utterances used by the speaker to identify the strategies and components of arguments and the conditional constructions utilized by Obama while addressing Congress in his speech. Afterward, the researcher identified the expressions that manifested the six components of argument, and those of certainty that were implicitly or explicitly stated in the selected data.

The second round was dedicated to examining the conditional constructions in the selected data to decide their relation to hypothetical or factual realities; a process that intended to look upon the degree of cogency of the speaker's proposal. It is important to note that the researcher excluded the conditional clauses that did not indicate hypothetical or factual realities in their conditional constructions. In other words, the cited quotations (as not reflecting the speaker's personal words), and the rhetorical questions (that were syntactically structured similar to conditionals) were not covered in the discussions since they did not implicate the study objectives.

Notably, the variation in the number of the extracted examples, representing the proposed components of the argument, was due to the availability of the data in the selected speech. To put it differently, some of them were supported with one extract only, while others were reinforced with more than one which consequently violated the consistency of the number of samples used for each. Similarly, the data that denoted the conditional construction depended on the emerging themes they signified. In other words, the researcher selected only one extract to represent a specific theme in an attempt to avoid redundancy.

7. Results and Discussions

7.1 Components of Argument

The first part of the study highlights Toulmin's (2003) six interrelated components of argument as applied to Obama's (2013) speech on the legitimization of the American troops to respond to al-Assad's regime after the use of gases. Based on the fact that since the Syrian uprising against Al-Assad's government in 2011, the Americans considered the mass slaughter that took place in Syria as a humanitarian crisis. For Obama, his claim was an attempt to regain power as the president of the United States after several failures in dealing with several issues including the Syrian crisis.

Claim:

Extract 1: "*I determined* that *it is in the national security interests of the United States* to respond to the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons through a targeted military strike. *The purpose of this strike would be to deter Assad from using chemical weapons, to degrade his regime's ability to use them*, and to make clear to the world that *we will not tolerate their use*"**.

In his claim, Obama tried to convince the Americans that Al-Assad's use of chemical weapons against his people was a threat to the entire nation including the United States' security which is very prominent in his argument "*it is in the national …… United States…*". Obama also emphasized that Al-Assad's regime should be hindered from using any chemical materials through a military

strike, as seen in the phrase "*The purpose … them",* so as to make it clear to the world that the U.S government could not tolerate Al-Assad's propensity to destroy the region as shown in the phrase "*to make … we … use"*; This, in turn, indicates his attempt to show solidarity and belonging to his nation through the use of the pronoun "we"; an effort to provide an indirect conclusion that the Americans still own the world and it was time to re-establish authority over the entire region. For Obama, his claim was an attempt to regain power as the president of the United States, particularly when he used the pronoun "I" in the phrase "*I determined…"*. The utilization of the very pronoun reflected his attitude and the claim he was trying to defend, especially due to the vitriols against his administration for mismanaging several issues where the most prominent of which was the Syrian crisis.

Data:

Extract 2: "*the United States Senate overwhelmingly approved an international agreement prohibiting the use of chemical weapons, now joined by 189 governments that represent 98 percent of humanity***".**

In order to validate his claim, Obama, objectively, delivered statistical evidence to persuade the Americans and the world with the message he was trying to convey. In this extract, Obama showed that the United States Senate made an international agreement with 189 governments, endorsing 98% of humanity, that banned the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances. This deal aimed to ban all categories of weapons of mass destruction, and prohibited the retention, development, use, and transfer of these weapons, as cited in www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons.

Extract 3: "*On August 21st, these basic rules were violated, along with our sense of common humanity. No one disputes that chemical weapons were used in Syria. The world saw thousands of videos, cell phone pictures, and social media accounts from the attack, and humanitarian organizations told stories of hospitals packed with people who had symptoms of poison gas…."* **Extract 4:**

"These weapons can kill on a mass scale, with no distinction between soldier and infant, the civilized world has spent a century working to ban them".

Obama further proffered another piece of evidence to support his argument to take action against Al-Assad's regime, stating that the Syrian government violated the rules of humanities agreed upon in the deal referred to earlier. He then continued to offer a series of narratives in the form of videos, pictures, and stories about people who were poisoned with gas. In addition, Obama elucidated the extreme danger of weapons of mass destruction and how they could destroy a mass scale of people without distinguishing between an armed person and an infant. All these examples indicate, according to Obama, the violation of the international agreement which was found to secure human life; in an attempt to endeavor people's passion, legitimize his claim, and persuade the nation with his project of attacking the Syrian regime.

Extract 5: *"Over the last two years, my administration has tried diplomacy and sanctions, warning and negotiations -- but chemical weapons were still used by the Assad regime".*

Obama tried to show that the American administration dedicated two years looking for peaceful solutions to end the war in Syria and to stop Al-Assad's regime from using chemical weapons but to no avail. Lexically, the words 'diplomacy', 'sanctions', 'warning', and 'negotiations' are interpreted as means through which Obama tried to prove he was a highly responsible president, seeking peace in the entire region. However, in reality, he intended via this message to emotionally escalate aggression against the Syrian regime, and he was left with no choice but to attack Al-Assad's administration. The strike, according to Obama, would remove the danger of these weapons against the Syrians, the American allies in the region, and the national security, too.

Warrant:

Extract 6: *"what happened to those people -- to those children -- is not only a violation of international law, it's also a danger to our security… And a failure to stand against the use of chemical weapons would weaken prohibitions against other weapons of mass destruction, and embolden Assad's ally, Iran …".*

To provide sound grounds that justify and bridge his claim together with the data, Obama offered multiple hypotheses and general statements that serve this purpose as illustrated in the above extract. Obama, in this quote, linked what happened to the innocent Syrians might also happen everywhere including the United States unless Al-Assad's chemical weapons were banned and his regime would be attacked. The speaker supported what he validated in the data when he stressed that the violation of the international law would seem plausible to jeopardize the American national security as illustrated by the pronoun "our" to refer to his nation. Importantly, the speaker associated the breach of the international agreement with a potential danger that threatened the whole nation; an effort to warn his people and his allies, and to defend his claim. Notably, the phrase "*it's also a danger to our security*" reflects Obama's compelling force of logical proof being associated with a high degree of certainty attributed to the double use of the verb to be "*is*" in the same phrase to signify a fact that the speaker believed in. Obama further assumed that if the world, represented by America, failed to deter Al-Assad's chemical weapons, it would consequently weaken the chance to eliminate the weapons of mass destruction. Besides, this failure would guarantee other countries, including Iran as one of Al-Assad regime's strongest allies, to possess these weapons that might be used against innocent people as seen in "*would weaken prohibitions against other weapons of mass destruction, and embolden Assad's ally, Iran*". Therefore, for the speaker, it became a dire necessity to attack Al-Assad so as to ensure the American security and their allies. However, this assumption was not based strongly on a shred of rigid evidence and was merely a non-factual presupposition of what might happen in the future if the weapons were not banned. Thereby, he was trying again to legitimize his project to target Al-Assad's regime and strengthen his claim.

Extract 7: "*But this initiative has the potential to remove the threat of chemical weapons…*".

For Obama to sound true in his claim, he increasingly was trying to persuade the Americans and other countries like Russia, one of Al-Assad's strongest allies, with his intention to target the

Syrian regime. In this quote, Obama explicitly maintained another reasoning for his proposition as seen in the phrase *"… has the potential to remove the threat…"*. However, the degree of cogency seems lesser in weight than shown in the previous extract. To put it differently, it is true that the potential elimination of the threat of Al-Assad or any other organization possessing chemical weapons reflects the speaker's categorical proposition; yet, the level of certainty is lower due to Obama's limited proof and an indication of what might have happened if the strike had taken place; meaning that the speaker had no concrete evidence that might substantially guarantee the repercussions of the future of Al-Assad's weapons after the alleged military strike.

Backing:

Extract 8: *"Our ideals and principles, as well as our national security, are at stake in Syria, along with our leadership of a world where we seek to ensure that the worst weapons will never be used".*

The speaker boosted up his proposal with a potential probability that the American ideals and principles to protect the world were challenged. In other words, the failure in deterring the Syrian regime from chemical materials might embolden other countries and organizations to take Al-|Assad as their model to attack innocents. If that happened, the American security could be endangered and might undermine the American prestige to lead the world as indicated in "…*along with our leadership of a world"*. Notably, the deliberate use of the pronoun "our" for two times in the above quote gives an impression that the speaker intended to create a sense of institutional in-groupness, particularly after his administration was severely criticized for the failure in running various issues including the Syrian chemical weapons. Besides, the speaker kept on glorifying his nation in an attempt to win approval from the American congress to execute his military action which, in turn, would help him achieve his objectives. This strike would ensure that these weapons could not be used in the region; thus, the American security and the allies would become safe.

Rebuttal:

Extract 9: *"But I'm also the President of the world's oldest constitutional democracy. So even though I possess the authority to order military strikes, I believed it was right, in the absence of a direct or imminent threat to our security, to take this debate to Congress. I believe our democracy is stronger when the president acts with the support of Congress. And I believe that America acts more effectively abroad when we stand together".*

To avoid the potentiality and possibility that his claim might not be realized, Obama folded some statements into his speech to address his audience that his claim had limitations; otherwise, their confidence in the soundness of his argument could be compromised. Obama overtly stated that he was the guardian of the oldest constitutional democracy in the world. He also had the right to take action without the permission of congress, showing his institutional authority to give commands when necessary. However, he toned down his speech to indicate that democracy would seem stronger if the president was supported by congress which retrospectively would boost the effective act of America. In other words, the speaker did not want to respond unilaterally; on the contrary, he went to congress to seek their support, evoking a constitutional democracy and that civilian leadership was consulted to increase the legitimacy of his claim.

 Modal Qualifier:

Extract 10: *"Over the past two years, what began as a series of peaceful protests against the repressive regime of Bashar al-Assad has turned into a brutal civil war". Over 100,000 people have been killed. Millions have fled the country……."*

Extract 11: *"<u>The situation profoundly changed</u>, though, on August 21st, when Assad's government gassed to death over a thousand people, including hundreds of children...Men, women, children lying in rows, killed by poison gas…." "and why <u>the overwhelming majority of humanity</u> has declared them off-limits a crime against humanity, and a violation of the laws of war".*

Obama, in the above extracted lines, referred to the way how the situation changed against Al-Assad's government because of those hundreds of people who were gassed to death by the chemical weapons. Obama's exploitation of the underlined examples is found to over qualify his arguments and conclusions as indicated by expressions like "*The situation profoundly changed*"; "*overwhelming majority of humanity has declared them off-limits a crime against humanity*". The speaker, in these extracts, reinforced his claim and tried to avoid any reasonable doubt about what he proposed earlier. He based his statement on the fact that the world overwhelmingly changed its perspective of Al-Assad right after the violation of the international agreement and the use of chemical weapons against civilians which was a remarkable crime against humanity. Obama again endeavored to weigh his reasoning for the potential American attack. He also made use of those casualties as solid examples since he was quite sure of matters of people around the globe would certainly earn credibility and boost up his claim.

Extract 12: *"…after careful deliberation, I determined that it is in the national security interests of the United States to respond to the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons…".*

The above extract dictates that Obama appeared very confident in his claim. In other words, he determined that his claim was realistic after careful deliberation, meaning that he was not just true but he even considered the pros and cons of that proposition; therefore, he arrived at that conclusion. Contextually speaking, the speaker qualified his speech with the phrase "*careful deliberation*" to address his people that his proposal was crucial and could not be avoided; otherwise, Al-Assad and his allies might attack innocent people. It should also be considered that the pronoun "I" in the above quote shows that the speaker was expressing his determination to strike Al-Assad's regime being the president of the U.S who constitutionally had the right to take similar action. Besides, the phrase "*I determined…*" is inferred that the speaker was trying to prove to his people that he was still the president who could powerfully defend and preserve American security.

To sum up, it becomes clear that the evidence displayed in the data supported Obama's claim and cemented a link that was backed up by specific examples in the warrant. The latter was reinforced by additional propositions in the backing. Then, the speaker avoided the possible limitations of his claim when he offered an explicit congressional consultation to appear more realistic in his conclusion. Finally, he weighed his proposal with some qualifiers during his speech. The whole process of Obama's argument can be demonstrated in the following analytical framework:
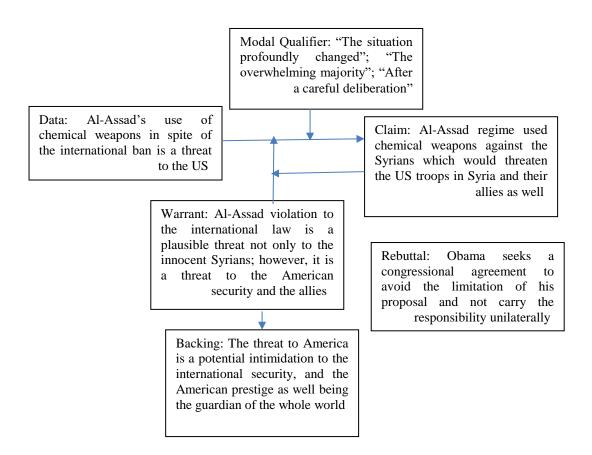
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┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Modal Qualifier: "The   │
│ situation profoundly    │
│ changed"; "The          │
│ overwhelming majority";  │
│ "After a careful        │
│ deliberation"           │
└─────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Data: Al-Assad's use │          │ Claim: Al-Assad      │
│ of chemical weapons  │          │ regime used chemical │
│ in spite of the      │          │ weapons against the  │
│ international ban is  │          │ Syrians which would  │
│ a threat to the US   │          │ threaten the US      │
│                      │          │ troops in Syria and  │
│                      │          │ their allies as well │
└──────────────────────┘          └──────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Warrant: Al-Assad    │          │ Rebuttal: Obama      │
│ violation to the     │          │ seeks a              │
│ international law is  │          │ congressional        │
│ a plausible threat   │          │ agreement to avoid   │
│ not only to the      │          │ the limitation of    │
│ innocent Syrians;    │          │ his proposal and not │
│ however, it is a     │          │ carry the            │
│ threat to the        │          │ responsibility       │
│ American security    │          │ unilaterally         │
│ and the allies       │          │                      │
└──────────────────────┘          └──────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────┐
│ Backing: The threat  │
│ to America is a      │
│ potential            │
│ intimidation to the  │
│ international         │
│ security, and the    │
│ American prestige as │
│ well being the       │
│ guardian of the      │
│ whole world          │
└──────────────────────┘
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Figure 1: The Distribution of Obama's Speech According to Toulmin's (2003) Model of Argument

By examining the data in question, it becomes clear that Obama's speech, from a linguistic point of view, included all the components of Toulmin's (2003) model. He presented a logical

sequence in proposing his premise to strike the facilities that belonged to the Syrian government after using internationally banned weapons. This evidence resembled in the data, warrant, backing, modal qualifier that weighted his claim, and rebuttal to moderate his assertion in case it would be refused. He intended to move the American Congress and mobilize forces against Bashar al-Assad. Obama was successful to summon Russia, one of Al-Assad's allies, and the UN to interfere to stop the use of chemical weapons. However, they failed to deter gassing the Syrians in the long term, and similarly, he was not able to convince Congress and some of the allies with his conclusion. This, in turn, answers the first research question that states *"How are Toulmin's (2003) six components of argument manipulated by Obama's (2013) political speech on Syria to persuade the American congress and their allies?".*

7.2 Conditional Constructions

The second part of the study is dedicated to analysing and discussing the conditional constructions delivered in the selected data based on Gruyter's (2001) model. The following table displays the number of the conditionals, themes they denote, frequency of occurrence, and the percentages for each:

Table 3: the distribution of the conditional constructions in the data

Themes of the conditionals	Conditional construction	Frequency	%					
Deterring the use the chemical weapons	Hypothetical realities	3	33.33%					
The potential threat of the chemical weapons	Hypothetical realities	4	44.44%					
The potential increasing threat of al-Qaeda	Hypothetical realities	1	11.11%					
The American troops in Syria	Factual realities	1	Total of hypothetical realities	%	Total of factual realities	%	Over all Total	
			8	88.88%	1	11.11%	9	

Table 3 above displays that hypothetical realities were repeated 8 times in the data, forming 88.88%, whereas factual realities were only used one time (11.11%). The distribution of the themes of the former was diverse as well, in that, the potential

threat of chemical weapons, linked to Obama's claim, occupied the highest position (4 times, forming 44.44%) compared to the rest of the themes. The second one was the deterrence of chemical weapons, which was utilized 3 times to resemble 33.33%, while the least theme went to the possible increase of power of al-Qaeda in the region (1 time, 11.11%).

The table also shows that the latter type of conditional construction, exemplified by the theme of the readiness of the American troops in Syria, was only used one time in the selected data (11.11%). This gives the sense that the speaker was more likely to employ hypotheticality than factuality due to his uncertainty about the premises that he opened the speech with. The following extracts demonstrate the four themes mentioned in table 3 with discussions:

Extract 13: *"If we fail to act, the Assad regime will see no reason to stop using chemical weapons".*

In the above extract, Obama warned the American congress of what might happen if his proposal was declined marked by Obama's inability to convince Congress and many of the American closest allies to strike Al-Assad's government. In other words, Congress was reluctant to ratify a U.S. military action in Syria, and the plan which was engineered by Russia urging Al-Assad to stop the fight was fruitful though temporarily. Additionally, the UN inspection reports in many cities in Syria, carried out by a group of academics and experts in chemical weapons like Sellström, Åke; Scott Cairns; Maurizio Barbeschi (2013), as cited in opcw.unmissions.org, and Pita and Domingo (2014) did not prove Obama's claim as well. They stressed that the chemical, environmental and medical samples, they collected, provided clear evidence that surface-to-surface rockets containing nerve agent sarin were used in Ein Tarma, Moadamiyah, and Zamalka in the Ghouta in Damascus; however, there was no tangible evidence went against the Syrian government directly.

Notably, what makes Obama's claim less convenient is that he did not provide any clear rationale why Al-Assad would use chemicals against his people at a time he had other means that could help him reach his goals. Also, the latter president was fully

aware of the consequences of using such weapons in that it would make him lose more than gain internationally.

Extract 14: *"As the ban against these weapons erodes, other tyrants will have no reason to think twice about acquiring poison gas, and using them".*

Closely related to the first one, the second extract demonstrates Obama's willingness to necessitate his strike to convince the American congress to target the Syrian government. The quote also demonstrates that the speaker was warning Congress of the possibility of other organizations possessing chemical weapons that might provide a suitable environment to gas innocent people. Besides, Obama in the same quote presupposed that there would be a feasible possibility for other organizations to own chemical weapons if the ban against Al-Assad's regime was undermined. Remarkably, no concrete evidence is yet available that any of these organizations own and/or use such weapons in the entire region. Importantly, these groups do not consider international norms generally, and they are less sensitive to deploying prohibited weapons against innocents, but what prevents them is the lacking of these weapons. Thus, this assumption reflects a very low cogency in Obama's assertion and explains the speaker's readiness to persuade congress with his proposal no matter how real it was.

Extract 15: *"But al Qaeda will only draw strength in a more chaotic Syria if people there see the world doing nothing to prevent innocent civilians from being gassed to death".*

Obama in the above extract set forth a precaution that al Qaeda might regain power and take advantage of chaotic Syria making the country a base for potential terrorist attacks against the Americans and their allies. Therefore, the speaker granted accredited congressional action to weaken Al-Assad's control over his chemical weapons. Obama also emphasized that this process had the chance to increase rather than decrease the possibility of these weapons falling into the hands of al Qaeda; attempting to persuade the Americans and the allies to approve his proposal.

Nonetheless, an international response to Assad's behaviour, will not significantly impact the terrorist organizations' determination to possess weapons of mass destruction. Groups

such as Al-Qaeda looked for and would pursue such deadly weapons prior to the Syrian civil war. Indeed, al-Qaeda was only a domestic dog-hissing in Obama's speech, designed to frighten Americans on the consequences of passivity. It denotes that an attack on the Syrian regime will surely hamper its military capabilities and makes it more probable that radical jihadist organizations are gaining control of the Syrian civil war.

The very quote discloses hypothetical realities in which the strike was not endorsed by congress nor was it approved by the American allies which shows a low cogent hypothesis. Telhami (2013) rationalized the rejection of Obama's airstrike proposal. He stated that weakening Al-Assad's regime might be met with an increase from Russia and other anti-American sentiments that would consequently impact the balance of the war, and innocent lives would inevitably be lost during the airstrikes.

Extract 16: *"I've ordered our military to maintain their current posture to keep the pressure on Assad, and to be in a position to respond if diplomacy fails".*

The quote above asserts that Obama sought to allow diplomacy an opportunity to avoid the alleged airstrike on Syria for Al-Assad's use of chemical weapons. However, he commanded the American troops there to be ready to take action if diplomacy failed. The speaker was trying to emphasize himself as a professional political actor who could run the rules of the game skillfully in Syria as indicated by the phrase *"I've ordered...".* The construction of the very phrase shows that Obama strived to reconstruct his power as the president of the U.S after the vitriol against his administration for their failure in running several international issues like the Syrian crisis. It also reveals a factual reality that shows a high degree of cogency in his argument when succeeded to urge the Russians and the UN to push Al-Assad to the negotiation table. In other words, as indicated by Telhami (2013) that the Russians and the UN did eliminate Assad's weapons through diplomacy, revealing that the proposed military operation would not do the same as diplomacy could by all means. Furthermore, Obama's intention was not to escalate the pace of fighting in Syria to maintain the presidential election in 2014 and not to lose face before his people as he assured during his presidential campaign to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and not to involve the American troops in more wars.

It can be remarked that despite Obama's provisional success in pressing the international community to seize Al-Assad's chemical weapons, he concluded his speech with a shift in his argument and a change in his stance. In other words, he moved from asserting a military action to a diplomatic solution. Accordingly, this illuminates a low cogency in his speech due to the instability in his proposals and his unwillingness to attack the Syrian regime as indicated by the CNN official website, reporting that "It's a step Obama was unwilling to take, at least without congressional approval, as Obama elected not to strike Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime in 2013 after a chemical attack crossed his red line." (www.cnn.com). However, he rather sought to tilt the balance to his side and to win the passion of the American as a peacemaker than a man of war.

Obama's (2013) political address against the Syrian regime can be seen as ranging from warning the American congress of potential recurrences of Al-Assad to gas civilians; warning the American congress from other organizations to possess and use chemical weapons across the Syrian borders; conducting a precaution from Al-Qaeda to regain power in the region; to a shift in his argument from war to a peace negotiation. In addition, the analyses of extracts 13-16, regardless of their thematic representations and their various syntactic constructions (see table 1), reveal that 8 out of 9 of them evoke hypothetical realities rather than factual realities which, in turn, answers the second research question "*How are conditional constructions established in Obama's (2013) political speech?*". It can also be observed that Obama's failure to turn his hypotheses into realities all through the use of the conditional constructions in his speech decreases the degree of cogency of his claim to attack Al-Assad's administration. Instead, the speaker was eager to constructively influence the public perception of his government as having the ability to run crucial problems like the Syrian crisis to his potential voters in the 2014 round.

8. Conclusions

The present study investigated Obama's (2013) speech revolved around having approval from the American congress and the allies to strike the chemical facilities in Syria. It was delivered in response to the excessive use of prohibited chemical materials against civilians which Al-Assad's regime was being accused of. The speech in question endeavoured to urge the American congress to grant the ex-president congregational consent to deter the use of gases in Syria. This effort, according to Obama's claim, was to protect the Americans and their allies from any potential action that might threaten their national security. Ironically, the speaker addressed the republicans more than it was to the Syrian crisis. In other words, he was after saving his face before the public due to the criticisms against his administration that failed to run several crucial issues including the Syrian crisis.

The results of the study revealed that Obama was competent in employing all the six components of argument provided in Toulmin 2003; nevertheless, he failed to convince Congress and most of the American allies in his assertion. By and large, despite the rationality and reasoning in a given discourse like the one in question, they were; however, insufficient and inconclusive linguist tools to determine the success in persuading the audience. He may need stronger and more effective strategies to achieve his objectives i.e. convincing congress and the American allies to strike Al-Assad's government.

Based on the analysis of the conditional constructions, the study indicated that Obama was highly inclined to use hypothetical realities more than factual realities in the data selected. The reasons for that were due to the promises he made during his election campaign that the US. Forces would not be involved in wars outside their borders. Besides, Obama was not serious about taking action against Al-Assad's government independently, although the American constitution permits the president to determine a similar action without the Senate's approval, to absolve himself and his administration from being criticized by the public. The speaker also found it a huge political gamble in that he could not guarantee the consequences of a war

against Al-Assad whose strongest allies were Russia and Iran. In short, the degree of cogency and certainty in his argument were notably decreased which contributed to getting his groundless claims declined by congress and most of the American allies.

9. Limitations and Recommendations

Practically, there is no single work that can cover the entire aspects of text genres. Therefore, it is worth noting that the current study limits itself to covering specific argumentative strategies as well as the conditional constructions reflected in the selected text. On this ground, future research work is recommended to tackle the same data using different pragmatic theories to compare the prospective results with those that emerged from the present study. This will help researchers and academics to have a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of pragmatic analysis. In this way, they can involve a set of linguistic tools that allow them to develop a methodical account of discursive political and social interactions.

It is also recommended to utilize the frameworks conducted in this study to examine different data. This may contribute to the making of a new conceptual framework, and may bring forth an insight into the field of discourse analysis when doing a pragmatic investigation. In addition, as qualitative-oriented research work, it pays attention to the interpretive nature of the inquiry, locating the study within the political and social environment, and provides a detailed understanding of the speaker's attitudes. However, it may bring a less thorough explanation to the established conclusions. Hence, researchers may compile a mixed-method approach (qualitative and quantitative) instead. By qualitative design, they account for a given context from a specific theoretical lens, whereas by quantitative design, they account for, for instance, the reoccurrence of specific grammatical items, or the repetition of particular words, phrases, or sentences, etc., supported by evidence extracted from the text under investigation. In this way, researchers can support their findings statistically to gain more generalized results.

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