**Chapter Two**

**Tools for Critical Analysis: Concepts, Cases, Commentaries**

**In this chapter:**

* Presuppositions
* “Genre-alizing” About Social Influence: Notes on Method
* Seven Key Concepts
	+ Genre
	+ Rules-of-Thumb
	+ Core Dilemmas
	+ Core Strategies
	+ Retrospection
	+ Theory
	+ System
* Some Conceptual Tools
* Examples
	+ “God Words” and “Devil Words” Identification As, Identifying With Association /Dissociation
	+ Contradiction/ Paradox
* Cases and Commentaries
	+ Case Study 2.1 Obama’s Cautious Optimism
	+ Case Study 2.2 the Rhetoric of “Child Abuse”
	+ Case Study 2.3 Cluster Analysis of a Mobil Advertorial: “Logical Allies of Business”
	+ Case Study 2.4 Obama’s Charleston Eulogy
* Co-Active Persuasion
* Appealing to Reason and Emotion
* Questions for Thought and Discussion
* Summary
* Works Cited

This chapter offers theoretical and conceptual tools for dilemma-centered analysis of political persuasion as well as case studies. It presupposes cyclical influence processes, in contrast with linear models that either begin with persuasion as the driving force of history or that minimize its significance in the larger scheme of things. In what sociologist Peter Berger (1967) called the “outpouring of human being into the world,” humans develop the wherewithal to respond to challenges, some so urgent as to constitute structural imperatives. We are accustomed to thinking of these imperatives in material terms—the needs, for example, of food, clothing and shelter. But they include the tools and tool-making building blocks of language as well and reasoning that Kenneth Burke (1973) called our “equipment for living” (Simons, 2013). Together we create (and sometimes subvert) social organizations, political institutions, and civil societies. Among our most indispensable tools are persuasive acumen and critical acuity.

It is possible to interrupt the never-ending cycle of history at any point—for example, by marking the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycotts as the beginning of America’s civil rights movement. But, as my colleagues and I have argued,

‘Sooner or later …any student of movements must come to grips with the mix of elements that make up movements of whatever sort: their structural and functional characteristics, their origins in society and culture, their evolution over time, the resources they mobilize and deploy, the power wielded against them, the ideas that animate them, the symbolic acts and artifacts that embody those ideas, and the intended and unintended effects that movements produce. (Simons, Mechling and Schreier, 1984, p. 793)

            James Andrews’ (1969) rhetorical analysis of the Chartist movement in the UK during the 19th Century illustrates how all of these elements enter into the mix. Public rhetoric, said Andrews, served as filter and creator of situation. The Chartist movement provided “popular interpretations of phenomena” (p. 208) and “left a rhetorical legacy, a memory of strategies which failed and hopes that did not materialize, a stock of arguments to be exploited in other ways and the example of working-class leadership and its problems and advantages” (p. 207). In these ways the Chartist movement indirectly influenced the repeal of the Corn laws, the Ten Hours Act, the softening of the Poor law, and even the subsequent development of the trades union movement.

            Yet Andrews did not conceptualize “situation” as simply the product of rhetoric. He also recognized conditions to which political actors and their audiences had to react. As Andrews conceived it, the situation for the Chartists included structural factors so compelling as to constitute “rhetorical imperatives”—industrialization, urbanization, and the poverty and misery that followed in their wake—and included other factors, more fluid, pliable, but nevertheless impelling, that constituted “strategic indicators” for the movement’s leadership. The more malleable factors included equations, by those who opposed the Chartist movement, of working-class rule with mob rule and rioting, and of aristocratic rule with stability and liberty. Strategically, then, Chartist leaders would have to cope with these challenges.

            We have, then, by Andrews’ account, a process by which situations impel and constrain rhetoric, and rhetoric in turn alters situations. That account applies more generally to political organizations and institutions.

**“Genre-alizing” About Social Influence: Notes on Method**

What factors impel and constrain rhetorical choice? What must be said when eulogizing an assassinated head of state? What can’t be said? What are the norms and role expectations for situations of this kind? What constitutes a fitting response? Are there precedents to draw upon and role models to follow? What finally can and can’t be said in eulogizing *this* assassinated head of state?

**Seven Key Concepts**

1. *Rhetorical Genre*

Stripped of its aura of mystery, the term genre vaguely denotes some type of categorization. Familiar rhetorical genres include the eulogy, the political apologia, protest rhetoric and the political attack ad, each appropriate to particular roles and situations. Genre may likewise be formulated at various levels of abstraction. The eulogy is a genre but so too is the eulogizing of an assassinated head of state. (Cap & Okulska, 2014; Simons, 1978a)

Genre to be illustrated in this book are corporate issue advocacy campaigns, political crisis rhetoric, the political apologia, the eulogy, American exceptionalism and how autocrats manage to talk the talk of democracy without walking the walk.

1. *Rules-of-Thumb*

A rule-of-thumb is a generalization of the "as a rule" variety that is intended to cover types of practices such as the eulogy and the political apologia, rather than specific acts. We might call such rules “genre-alizations.” Just as genre may be identified at various levels of abstraction, so rules-of-thumb may be formulated for particular occasions or episodes, for delimited roles, and for ongoing relationships of a certain type or combinations thereof.  They cover such tricky tasks as engineering a quick exit of troops from a country you’d pledged to defend, serving up a credible account of an ethically questionable political ad, and out-manoeuvring a political debate opponent who’s determined to put you on the defensive.

1. *Core Dilemmas*

These are the crux of a political leader’s problems. Dilemma management begins with diagnosis of problems, and an analysis of the rhetorical challenges they pose but also with an eye for the opportunities that a situation presents. Every politician faces the dilemma of not wanting to appear weak-willed or wishy-washy but also not antagonistic and uncompromising. Their actions and words walk a line between these two extremes.

1. *Core Strategy*

Just as identifying core dilemmas is a way of capturing the central rhetorical problems for a political actor, so core strategies name key plans for managing the dilemma. In political campaign debates, candidates behind in the polls need to go on the offensive while frontrunners can usually present themselves as being above the fray. In the 2008 election Barack Obama won his presidential campaign on the slogan of “change,” a strategy that overcame his perceived shortcomings as a young and inexperienced political candidate.

1. *Retrospection*

Applied to dilemma-laden cases retrospection involves efforts at accounting for successes or failures. How did the post-Mao Chinese leadership manage to advance China’s political fortunes without going to war? What has been the secret of their “soft power” approach to international relations? (Lu and Simons, 2006) What enabled the Republicans to achieve electoral dominance in 2014? Was it money, better candidates, greater determination, superior strategizing, or Democratic ineptness?

1. *Theory*

A theory is like a funnel. Into the funnel go the ingredients for theory-building: facts and statistics for scientific theories, and stories and descriptions for theories of the more “muddleheaded” variety (Simons, 1978b). Theories of every type attempt to summarize and explain a phenomenon while directing the search for additional knowledge. The heart of any theory is a set of assumptions, basic concepts, definitions of those concepts, and explanatory statements or theorems that relate the concepts in a condensed and organized way. As a theorist, I move vertically between the general and the specific to ground my abstract claims and horizontally between cases for purposes of comparison and contrast. The result is a *scaffoldin*g, none too secure, but which serves as an entry point into analysis of particular cases and which can be modified as a result of these analyses.

1. *System*

Various on-line dictionaries coalesce in characterizing *system* as an aggregation of interacting, interdependent items or elements forming a unified whole. Examples include: an educational system, an ecological system, a political system, and an economic system. ([www.thefreedictionary.com/system](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/system)*;*[www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/system](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/system)*)*

Systems impel and constrain political action and may be changed as a result of that action. Hence the importance of systems analysis in understanding dilemmas and in assessing strategies of political persuasion for coping with them. In James Andrews’ analysis of the rhetoric of the Chartist movement the system included structural factors that impeded rhetorical choice and other, more malleable, “strategic indicators. (Andrews, 1969)

*Functional political systems facilitate problem-solving and dysfunctional, “crazy” systems make problems worse. At the University of Iowa in 1975, a functional system of informal communication and decision-making enabled urban planners to head off a crisis in plans to move ahead with an ambitious urban renewal program for Iowa City. The occasion was a cocktail party welcoming me as a visiting professor. As I stood chatting in a small group, another guest at the party brought news of the crisis and our circle suddenly enlarged. In short order, the discussants came up with a viable plan. It was then I discovered that the key decision-makers on urban renewal in Iowa City were all at the party. It occurred to me that rhetorical studies may have gained traction in small, Midwestern college towns like Iowa City because they were similar to the Athens of Aristotle’s day where rhetoric had flourished. In Athens, as in Iowa City, the decision-makers had a sense of common purpose and civic friendship was highly valued. Said Edwin Black, “ideological conflict in Athens was foreign to their way of thinking.” (Black, Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method, 1965)*

Beginning in Chapter 3 and in several subsequent chapters I provide examples of “dysfunctional” political systems, some delusional, others sociopathic, others exhibiting signs of repetition compulsion disorders, but all of them incapacitating except for those who have learned how to “game” the system.

The remainder of this chapter is given over to teaching by example, the cases used to make concepts and theories come alive, the commentaries serving to introduce additional concepts, suggest methods of theory-building and illustrate dilemma-centered rhetorical analysis.

**Some Conceptual Tools**

Among verbal rhetoric’s most powerful tools are: names, classifications (i.e., categorizations), definitions, descriptions, explanations, comparisons and contrasts, examples, and extended narratives (Simons and Jones, 2011; Tilly, 2006).

Table 2.1 needs[note]

**Examples**

1. *“God Words” and “Devil Words”*

In any culture, certain words function as symbols of approval or derision. In the West, such "god" words include freedom and democracy, while slavery, totalitarianism, and plutocracy are considered “devil” words. Words of this kind tend to be defined and differentiated from other terms in ways that reinforce the prevailing values of a society or those of its ruling elites. In service of these ends, the culture provides "persuasive definitions," defini­tions consistent with its mythical beliefs rather than its harsher realities. When examples of "god" words and "devil" words are offered, they also tend to be one-sided. Distinctions between them tend to be rockbound and rigid; there is no middle ground. In conventional parlance, for example, a nation is either "democratic" or "autocratic"- it cannot be neither or some of both. The net effect of these verbal treatments is persuasive indeed. When a society strongly identifies with its "god" words and strongly "dis-identi­fies" with its "devil" words, its values become highly resistant to change because they are no longer even regarded as values. They become as real and as solid as the ground beneath our feet.

Consider in this context the negative onus often attached to such words as persuasion, rheto­ric, propaganda and indoctrination. The conventional wisdom holds that schools "educate" or "acculturate," but school teachers rarely claim to "indoctrinate." Employers "orient" or "train" but never "brainwash" their employees. Situational comedies "entertain" us but do not "persuade" us. Scientists and philosophers "describe," "explain," "reason," or "prove" but seldom are said to utilize "rhetorical strategies" or "persuasive appeals." When "propaganda" and "rhetoric" are used in references to artists, scien­tists, newscasters, etc., they are almost always terms of derision; ways of indicating a speaker's belief that artists, scientists, or other profes­sionals have pretended to be what they are not; that they have somehow violated principles held in high esteem by their professions. In these con­texts, the terms have come to mean "deception" or "impurity," something that the speaker wishes to expose. In popular discourse we might say, "I wish my teacher would stick to the facts and stop preaching that malicious rhetoric." Or, "his argument that males are inherently better than females isn't scientific, it's chauvinistic propaganda.”

1. *Identifying as, Identifying with*

Some political candidates identify themselves as ordinary folk, others as “super-representatives” of their audiences, still others as superior by virtue of their greater expertise, experience and trustworthiness (Simons and Jones, 2011). In the film ‘All The King’s Men’, Louisiana’s up-and-coming Huey Long (known as Willy Stark in the movie) made adroit use of the “Plain Folks” device in a campaign speech at a state fair. To an audience of down-at-the heels farmers he declared that they were all a bunch of hicks (pause), that he was a hick (pause), and that together they were going to run the state legislature. Stark identified *with* his audience by identifying himself *as one*of them*.* By implication he was *decidedly not* your average uppity politician. Here are some other examples of identification:

Appeals to shared beliefs, values or attitudes. “We stand for freedom.”

Appeal to shared memberships (“Fellow Americans”)

Shared opposition (“Axis of Evil”)

“My enemy’s enemy is my friend” (e.g., The Afghani military, as against the Taliban)

Flattery (“Our brave fighting men and women”)

Encouraging opposition to a group by identifying things we hate with things they like (e.g., “Did you know that the North Koreans eat raw fish heads?”)

Embodying an object of mimetic identification (Being photographed with firemen on the scene at the Trade Towers in 2001 in the wake of their collapse)

Identifying hypothetically or conditionally; taking the perspective of the other (“If you want to be re-elected, you should…”)

Selective naming, whether true or not (Barack Obama is a Muslim.)

 Finding any common “substance” from which X and Y derive shared meaning (“We Americans and Israelis who have witnessed the dark face of terrorism.”)

1. *Association/Dissociation*

Political actors *associate*by linking themselves to favorable ideas or attributes while *dissociating* themselves from that which is hated or feared by their audiences. Many of the attributes that politicians associate themselves with invite mindless approval, as when on office-seeker declares that she is for “faith, freedom, and family.” Candidates for public office can find lists of “positive, governing words” to use in campaign speeches. Just some of the words beginning with the letter ‘*c’* are *candid, caring, change, commitment, common sense, and courage.* Similarly, candidates have a list of negative words and phrases that they can use when speaking about their opponents, such as, betray, coercion, corruption, endanger, failure, greed, hypocrisy, and incompetence.*.[use with PI cartoon on Saudi Arabia & ISIS]*

Consider the various associations/dissociations that can be made of Medicaid:

|  |
| --- |
| (1) Medicaid is more similar to other health insurance programs, like Medicare, that help people pay for health care. |
| (2) Medicaid is more similar to welfare programs like food stamps that help people pay for food. |

(3) Most American prefer the Medicaid they liken to Medicare (Martin, J. and Burns, A., June 23, 2017, NYTimes.Com).

1. *Contradiction/Paradox*

A *logical* *contradiction*asserts what it denies and denies what it asserts: for example:

* We’ve ordered Iraqi political leaders to act more independently.
* General Lovenot said “I’m a simple man, who enjoys the finer things in life.”
* Senator Snoop is so ugly she could win a beauty pageant.
* More broadly one might speak of beliefs and position statements that embrace contraries as contradictory and as a sign of dilemma-laden confusion or ambivalence (Poole, Seibold, and McPhee, 1985; Putnam, 1986).

Consider the conundrum of John Dickinson in 1767. In his “Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania”, Dickinson implored American colonists to take on the burdens of patriotism against usurpations of their rights by King George, and cast them as loyal subjects of the Crown to whom they were duty-bound to obey. His blatant inconsistency resonated with the colonists for they embraced the same ideological contradictions.

A *paradoxical statement*appears contradictory on first hearing but may not be, as when a professor who is soaked to the skin announces to the class with a wink that it is *not raining outside,*or to improve upon his joke, that it *is* raining outside. Both statements appear contradictory until we realize that the speaker is being comically *ironic*. The ironist’s implicit claim is that things are not as they seem or are contrary to what they seem.  Social constructionists risk contradiction when they insist that reality is socially constructed, save for the “literal truth” of its being socially constructed.

**Cases and Commentaries**

***Case Study 2.1 Obama’s “Cautious Optimism”***

In 2009 the Obama administration inherited a recession that threatened to become a full-fledged depression. No one in the administration wanted to fuel the pessimism that comes with loss of jobs, homes, and credit, because optimism about the future is key to lending and spending; it is essential in getting a market economy back on track. Neither did they want to paint too rosy a picture out of fear of a boomerang effect, as President Bush had done with Iraq in declaring “Mission Accomplished.”**(**Art of the Sayable., Lyne 1990; see also Campbell and Jamieson, 2008)

As political persuaders seek to thread their way through difficult dilemmas, they must reach out to their audiences but not overreach to the point of tarnishing their personal credibility:

As repairs were gradually introduced into the economy, the administration sought ways to bolster confidence incrementally. “Glimmers of hope” were upgraded to “signs of recovery.” Warning that “real recovery is months, if not years, ahead,” Obama reported that “the gears of our economic engine do appear to be slowly turning once again”. (Sanger, 2009)

“There’s a kind of artistry to this, isn’t there?’ said [Robert Dallek](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/d/robert_dallek/index.html?inline=nyt-per), the presidential historian best known for chronicling how Lyndon Johnson, was unable to lead the public out of its view that everything was falling apart. “You don’t want to come out and say the recession is over. You want to do a version of Churchill’s line about how this isn’t the end, or the beginning of the end, but rather the end of the beginning” (Sanger, 2009).

Situations like the one Obama confronted occur with sufficient frequency that “cautiously optimistic” has become a stock phrase in the argot of press secretaries, diplomats, and corporate executives. The language of the genre is calibrated so as to address the core dilemma: how to buoy up the dispirited while protecting against future criticisms of having created “false expectations.” In dire situations minimalist projections of reason for optimism point to “new beginnings,” “seeds of hope,” “the start of what could be a turnaround.”

***Case Study 2.2 The Rhetoric of “Child Abuse”***

Do societies discover social problems objectively, or do they construct them rhetorically? This question continues to perplex social theorists (Hacking, 1991). Seventy-five years ago, the terms *child abuse* and *sexual harassment* were not in use in the United States. At one point in its rhetorical history, child abuse was surrounded by quotation marks—testimony to its iffy status (Pfohl, 1977; Hacking, 1991). But did that mean that the problems designated by the terms also did not exist?

The issues in the child abuse controversy are common to the genre of social problems discourse generally. Child abuse, sexual harassment, and for that matter such suspect “problems” as satanic abuse and alien abductions are rhetorically similar. Joseph Gusfield (1989) identified three types of claims makers in what Ian Hacking (1991) called their “making and molding.”

* 1. *Moral crusaders* frame the alleged problem in melodramatic terms, i.e., in the language of good versus evil, us versus them. Alarmed at what they saw as the brutal mistreatment of poor waifs on London’s East End in 1884, upper class social reformers likened it to animal abuse and urged the creation of a human equivalent to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, in existence since 1824.

(2) *Putative experts* such as health professionals lend legitimacy to the claims of moral crusaders. For example, Doctor David Gill of Brandeis University testified before a committee of Congress in 1973 that the average number of child abuse cases was approximately 8,000 per year. (1973) But his definition restricted child abuse to intentional physical harm by parents or parent substitutes such as guardians. In subsequent testimony, Gil greatly expanded his definition of child abuse to include sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect, whether conscious or unconscious, deliberate or inadvertent. By that greatly expanded definition, influenced at the time by feminists and other moral crusaders, Gill estimated that the number of instances of child abuse was closer to 55 million. By that definition nearly all parents abused their children at least some of the time by failing to help realize the child’s full potential.

(3) *Image-makers*, such TV talk show hosts, tended to take putative experts and moral crusaders at their word, if anything exaggerating the alleged problem by presenting extreme cases as typical cases and displaying attractive “poster children” to win their audiences’ sympathies.  Sensationalists hinted at links between child abuse and satanic abuse, while other media professionals took seriously claims that child abusers included aliens from other galaxies who had abducted the children, taken them to their space ships, and returned them somehow without the children’s or their parents’ awareness. (Nugent, and Baumeister,1966)

*Commentary*

In *The Rhetorical Turn,*I cited as exemplary sociological theory and critical analysis on rhetoric’s role in the construction of social problems (Simons, 1990). Here is a literature, focused initially on rhetorical histories, which has long since moved beyond particular problems (or alleged problems) to studies of claims-making about social problems as a rhetorical genre. Their recurring patterns have provided grounds for the aggregation of knowledge about the process of “disquotation” (Pfohl, 1977) by which some “problems” come persuasively to be regarded as problems and others not.

            I will refrain from passing judgment at this point on the “reality” of child abuse, preferring instead to use the genre as Exhibit A in the “objective” use of naming, categorizing, explaining and the like as verbal devices.

***Case Study 2.3 Cluster Analysis of a Mobil Advertorial: “Logical Allies of Business”*** *[copy of ad needed here]*

Many organizations take public stands on controversial issues but until relatively recently large corporations were reluctant to get into the fray lest, in pleasing some consumers, they offended others. Times have changed, and corporate America, led by the Mobil Corporation (now merged with Exxon), has led the way.

Mobil’s issue advocacy campaigning began in 1970. Since then, it has placed editorial ads, known as advertorials, in major newspapers and magazines. From time to time, it has purchased access to the television airwaves, but its most enduring campaign medium has been print. Mobil’s Herb Schmertz believed corporate America had a story to tell, one that might reach the intellectual establishment with correctives to what he and his colleagues at Mobil took to be antibusiness editorializing and reporting by the mainstream press. (Simons and Jones, 2011; Smith, G., & Heath, R. 1990)

The need for the petrochemical industry to tell its side of the story seemed especially pressing. Mobil and the other big oil companies had been accused during the 1970s of creating oil shortages, exerting monopoly control of resources, reaping windfall profits, pollution, colluding with oil-producing nations, bribing politicians in other lands, making illegal campaign contributions, and withholding information. But Mobil was also at this time riding the winds of change toward political conservatism in America, a trend manifested in part by shifts among some leading liberals toward the conservative camp. There was already a movement in Washington toward lower corporate taxes and deregulation—a movement, by the way, that Mobil executives claimed to have helped propel by Mobil’s advertorials. Here I focus upon one campaign message.

*[Picture 2.1 about here: “Liberals: Logical Allies of Business][needed – Julia should have a copy]*

The advertorial reproduced in Picture 2.1 appeared early in Mobil’s efforts to answer industry critics while attempting to win support for its pro-business philosophy. Before pronouncing judgment on this message, consider where Mobil is coming from and where it is heading. A clue to its image management objectives is to be found in the ad’s title. Mobil is surrounding itself here with the aura of objectivity.

The core strategy in the ad is ‘divide and conquer’. Although liberals are typically identified with one another by way of a single cultural stereotype, they are here divided into two types, the better to vilify the “unthinking” liberals, while permitting Mobil the opportunity to woo “thinking” liberals. Grouped in a “favorable” cluster of terms, along with business (including Mobil), rationality, help for the needy, and democracy are thinking liberals. Grouped in the “unfavorable” cluster, along with pro-government, antibusiness attitudes, are “knee-jerk”, “unthinking” liberals. Antibusiness liberals are also identified with help for the needy and democracy, but its members’ inability to realize these values places them at odds with themselves. Mobil seeks to drive home their dilemma.

Recall how language choices may be used to play up an alleged problem or downplay it. Then consider how Mobil frames business and government. Business is represented in paragraph 6 as a company’s “management,” while government is represented by “City Hall” and by “government bureaucrats.” Imagine, by contrast, if government had been represented by a popular governmental building (“When the White House calls...”), while business had been represented as “corporate bureaucrats.”

Note also Mobil’s use of caricature. The “professional liberal” is consistently caricatured in the Mobil ad as an unthinking fool and is likened in paragraph 5 to another stereotypical character in our culture, the haughty dowager type who scoffs condescendingly at anything new or different. Who but such a snob would use such phrases as “impossibly vulgar,” “aesthetically offensive,” and “unbearably plebeian”? Mobil achieves something of a rhetorical coup by these language choices. Government, conventionally viewed as being on the side of the people, is now to be seen as distant and uncaring, whereas government’s liberal supporters emerge as false friends of ordinary folk.

Who, asks Mobil in subsequent paragraphs, is truly responsive to the people? Not those foolish, snobbish, antibusiness liberals and certainly not those government bureaucrats. No, it is business that cares; indeed, it is business that is truly democratic. By Mobil’s rational way of thinking, democracy is responsive customer service. Missing from Mobil’s argument is the full sense of democracy, not just customer service but government “of the people, by the people and for the people.” Still, Mobil’s brief for business is a powerful one, and in helping make that case, it helped itself.  (Simons, 1983)

 Public Relations is either the scourge of modern society or the source of much of its progress. Stuart Ewen (1996), author of *PR! A Social History of Spin*, described PR executives as hired hacks who will do virtually anything to make malodorous clients smell sweet. But in its defense Weaver, Motion and Roper (2006) cite Michel Foucault post-structuralist position:

Each society has its regime of “truth”, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse that it accepts and makes function as true.” (p. 131)

Does this mean that “truth” is contingent on power? PR proponents deny the charge of ethical indifference. They insist, in any case, that their clients, like defendants in a criminal trial, have a right to the best possible representation. PR critics respond that the courtroom is inherently adversarial: This entitles each side to place its best possible case before the judge and jury. PR firms, by contrast, offer their services to one side only, and that side tends to be richer and more powerful. PR proponents deny that they operate in noncompetitive environments—sometimes yes, more commonly no. Moreover, the tactics of persuasion they use in making a corporate client look good are not much different from those any one of us uses on a day-to-day basis in making ourselves look good. PR critics respond that this is just PR about PR. (Ewen, 1996; Jackall, 1995)

The last word in this “pro-con” discussion goes to the even-handed Grunig (2001) who writes that ‘public information practitionersare journalists-in residence who disseminate accurate but usually only favorable information about their organizations. {They} conduct scientific research to determine how to persuade publics to behave in the way their organizations wish.(11-12)

# *Case Study 2.4 Barack Obama’s Charleston Eulogy*

 Photograph by Stephen Crowley / The New York Times / Redux

# *Figure 2.4 Obama’s Eulogy to Rev.Clementa Pinckney, one of the slain in Charleston shooting* (Source: The Atlantic, June 27, 2015)

One hundred and fifty years after Abraham Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address, Barack Obama eulogized nine parishioners people killed at Charleston South Carolina’s AME church by a racially motivated assailant. Just as Lincoln counselled charity for all and malice toward none, so Obama offered a way to comfort and inspire, bringing “new life to the 5500 mourners in Charleston and “move all Americans closer to justice, equality, and ever elusive grace.” (Hobbs, June 29, 2015) The *Atlantic’s* James Fallows said it was Obama’s most “fully successful performance as an orator” (July 27, 2015) best adapted to its ends, audiences and circumstances.

Transcripts of the speech are available via Google, but it should be seen and heard. A video can be screened on You Tube. There viewers will see how Obama moved his audience, speaking as a man in possession of his soul. Said Obama, “He (God) has allowed us to see where we’ve been blind. He’s given us the chance where we’ve been lost, to find our best selves”. In the speech Obama appears alternately, and in some moments together, smart, funny, cool, black, bi-racial, sexy, serious, knowledgeable and passionate.

Comparisons have also been drawn with Martin Luther King, Jr’s “I have a dream” speech. Lincoln framed the civil war as an enormous tragedy, but a necessary evil, requiring atonement by North and South for slavery, “with charity for all, malice *toward* none.” Months later the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, freeing the slaves. King’s nonviolent leadership of the civil rights movement, as exhibited in “I have a dream,” led to passage of significant civil rights legislation in the U.S. But for Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter as possible exceptions, no recent American President has done more for the cause of racial equality in the U.S than Obama.

The Obama eulogy combined reason and passion. It began conversationally with a remembrance of Reverend Pinckney and the other eight parishioners gunned down at AME church, this in keeping with the “as-a-rule” rules for eulogies of this sort, honoring them for their ability to forgive but by no means excusing what the assassin had done. It then moved from religion to politics, Obama reminding the congregants how far America must come toward becoming Lincoln’s idea of “a more perfect union

The eulogy is a genre of ceremonial rhetoric, called *epideictic* by Aristotle,dealing with what is rather than what was or should be. But, as Aristotle observes the eulogy also provides an opportunity for self-advertising, which Obama does by way of display. In a rousing series of arguments, he calls America and its civil religion to its higher purpose, that of obeisance to the Almighty who will forgive us for our sins if we are repentant. Obama’s recurrent theme: “We’ve been blind and now can see.”

In keeping with expectations for the genre, Obama provides a way of remembering those murdered in the AME church. Here is his recollection upon first meeting the AME’s Reverend Pinckney:

Friends of his remarked that when Clementa Pinckney entered a room, it was like the future arrived, that even from a young age, folks knew he was special, anointed. He was the progeny of a long line of the faithful, a family of preachers who spread God’s words, a family of protesters who so changed to expand voting rights and desegregate the South...Reverend Pinckney embodied a politics that was neither mean nor small. He encouraged progress not by pushing hid ideas alone but by seeking out your ideas, partnering with you to make that that happen…What a good man. Sometimes I think that’s the best thing to hope for when you’re eulogized, after all the words and recitations and resumes are read, to just say someone was a good man. You don’t need to be of high distinction to be a good man.

In cadences reminiscent of King and the African-American church, Obama builds to the finale of his eulogy with a celebration of soul, this by way of singing the Gospel hymn, Amazing Grace, and enjoining AME’s parishioners to sing with him. In the process, he displays the virtues of bi-racialism (a concept both useful and of dubious scientific value), this by way of code-switching, the alternation of “white” and “black” vocal patterns, originally made necessary by slavery and continuing through white supremacist racism well into the present moment.

Shelby Steele has written that some blacks—Obama and Oprah Winfrey included-have triumphed over racism by explicitly or implicitly conceding that slavery is no longer a problem, thus earning the right to level with whites about other, remaining problems (Steele, 2015). This, it may be recalled, is a variant of the “yes-but” strategy, introduced in this chapter in the section on co-active persuasion. Among the other problems that remain, said Obama, are the black incarceration rate, inadequate gun control, Jim Crowism (segregation) and race-related poverty, a conjunction of race and class. (Steele, 19??). The list is far from complete, as his audience must surely know, and Obama elected to engage in tactful blindness (Goffman, 195?), lest he appear as a grouch. Instead he accents the positive, saying that the federal courts have come a long way on affordable health care, gay marriage, and immigration reform. As a consummate politician, Obama says nothing about his Administration’s role in bringing these good things about.

While appreciating Obama’s speech we need also to subject it to reasoned critique. Others of a theological bent can comment on its correctness. The analysis which follows takes note of the dilemmas Obama confronted in preparing the speech and assesses the strategies he employed in dealing with them.

Obama’s Jeremiah Wright dilemma. Obama came into politics under the tutelage of liberation theologist Jeremiah Wright, but at the Democratic National Convention Wright lost control of his anger, becoming for Obama a political liability. At that convention Obama praised the Wright who had nurtured him but distanced himself from Wright in an act of dialectical transcendence, thus moving the issues needing consideration to higher ground.

Obama’s Identity Dilemma. Obama has been a puzzle to Americans. Was he born and raised a Kenyan, as his enemies had claimed, and was he also reared a Muslim? Over the years Obama has overcome concerns in the U.S. about his identity, but problems persist due to ambiguities in the meanings of race in the U.S. as a social construction. Should race be defined by skin color? By blood? By DNA? By whatever contrived definition the U.S. Census Bureau comes up with? However defined it would have political consequences. In the south you could be marked as colored by the infamous “one drop” rule; a different mix and you were a mulatto or perhaps by the skin color criterion you could pass as white. The designation, “bi-racial,” rests on a different criterion, a child of mixed race, born of white and “colored” but not Hispanic parents. So tortured are these markers of race that *New York Times reporter,* Peter Baker, could ask whether conservative Warren Harding was America’s first black president. (Baker, August, 2015)

The spontaneity/control dilemma. Persuasive speaking requires controlled spontaneity, the use of its argumentative and narrative resources, and measured release of passions that comes off as authoritative expression. Obama has on many occasions come off as emotionally distant, but not on this occasion. His words and song seemed to flow effortlessly.

The Multiple Audience Dilemma. Politicians requires sailing skills, the ability to tack right, then left against a headwind in order to reach their destinations The problem arises when competing interests and ideals must be dealt with, ideally by reconciliation but more often by *triangulation*, political leaders conceding here, standing firm there, and making the necessary compromises by giving opposing factions at least some of what they’ve wanted.

Not so in Charleston. There Obama comes across as committed to a higher politics, one that links rather than divides, eschewing power politics, Reverend Pinckney’s Politics of the “good man.”

**Co-Active Persuasion**

Coactive persuasion is an umbrella term for the ways that persuaders might *move toward*message recipients psychologically so that they will be moved, in turn, to accept the persuaders’ position or proposal for action. Just what form it takes depends on the situation, for example, whether it uses the media or involves interpersonal communication: if interpersonal, on whether persons A and B are locked in a conflict of interests or merely have a difference of opinion; if the media, whether the object of their talk is to convince each other or to persuade some third party such as the voters in a political contest. In a staged confrontation, as when two presidential candidates are facing each other in a television debate, coactive persuasion may be highly combative toward the adversary even as it appeals coactively to the target audience.

The coactive persuader moves toward the audience psychologically by establishing relational bonds. Verbally but also nonverbally, the coactive persuader expresses caring and concern for the audience as people, respect for their feelings and ideas, and perhaps affection as well. Even in a formal presentation, the coactive persuader will give the impression of communicating *with*the audience rather than communicating *at*them.

Especially important to audiences are evidences of membership group similarities. The persuader may move toward the audience psychologically by emphasizing similarities in background, experience, and group affiliation and also by displaying evidences of commonality through dialect, dress, and mannerisms. These signs of commonality not only enhance the persuader’s attractiveness to the audience but also serve indirectly to express shared beliefs, values, and attitudes.

Evidences of interpersonal similarity are clearly essential, but so, too, is it important on most occasions for persuaders to appear *different*in ways that make them appear more expert, better informed, and more reliable than most members of their audience. The general point is that although interpersonal similarity almost always results in *attraction*toward the persuader as a person, it doesn’t always yield *credibility.* Attraction is generally important on issues of value and taste; dissimilar but more expert sources tend to be more effective on questions of belief.  If, for example, you were looking around for a new brand of coffee, chances are that you would be more influenced by the judgments of friends than by experts. But you would ordinarily trust experts on medical matters, or on the question of where to invest your money. The “ideal” communicator is often one who seems both similar enough and different enough to appear overall as a *super-representative*of the audience.

Coactive persuasion also builds on acceptable premises**.**A *premise*is a hook on which to hang an argument. Depending on the context of the discussion, it may be a definition, a value assumption, or a general observation. Get people to grant the premise, and they are halfway to granting the conclusion as well.

The distinctive character of coactive persuasion is nowhere more manifest than in conflict situations or where there are sharp differences of opinion between people. In the face of their disagreement, a number of options are available for settling their differences. One approach is that of the *objectivist.*Operating from what he or she perceives as greater knowledge or wisdom on the matter, A may elect to tell B what is best for him or her. Parents, and sometimes teachers as well, do that—not always with great success. Or A may attempt to “demonstrate” with cold logic why his or her way of thinking is the only way. This is the “sage on the stage” method. For the thoroughgoing objectivist, hard fact and cold logic are, and ought to be, the sole arbiters of disputes, and everyone ought to reason as the objectivist does. A second way is that of the *expressivist,*who merely asserts his or her feelings on the matter at hand, offering no reasons, no appeals, and no support for the views of any type. If B remains unconvinced of the merits of A’s views, that’s okay. If B shifts position, so much the better, but A does nothing to bring that shift about. *Expressivism* stems from a deep-seated antipathy toward persuasion. On expressivist social movements, see Chapter 4.

The *coactive persuader* lies somewhere between these two extremes. Coactive persuaders reason with their audiences. They offer arguments in support of their more controversial claims and evidence in support of their arguments. In these respects, the methods of the coactive persuader are not unlike those of the objectivist. The coactive persuader, however, is less concerned with showing that he or she is right with winning arguments than with *winning belief.* This requires arguments that begin from general premises that the audience can accept.

In building from acceptable premises, persuaders generally start from premises that they themselves accept, and they make a point of emphasizing their points of agreement. In addition to providing hooks on which to hang arguments, these *common* *ground*appeals make the persuader appear more trustworthy and more attractive. Typically, the coactive persuader moves from agreement to disagreement on highly sensitive controversial issues, or at least delays direct confrontation until agreed-on issues have been identified.

Two variants of this bridge-building process are the *yes-yes*technique and the *yes-but*technique. In both cases, little or no hint of any disagreement with the audience is expressed until after a whole string of assertions is communicated about which agreement is sure. The object is to establish a habit of assent, to get receivers nodding “Yes,” “That’s right,” and “You said it” either aloud or to themselves. Once this is done, the audience will presumably be receptive to more controversial assertions.

Using the yes-yes approach, the persuader lays the groundwork for the case by identifying a number of acceptable principles or criteria by which the case will later be supported. Thus, the vacuum cleaner sales rep might say,

If you’re like most of the people I meet, you also want a vacuum cleaner that really cleans, one that picks up the ashes and the threads and the crumbs that hide in the corners. I’d guess too that in these tough times you don’t feel like getting stuck with big bills. Well, okay, I know just what you mean. Here’s our new kind of vacuum cleaner, and it fits your specifications exactly.

Using the yes-but approach, persuaders begin by noting those arguments of the message recipient with which they can agree, and then, having shown how fair-minded they are, they offer a series of “buts” that constitute the heart of their case. Here are the beginnings of an argument on the perennial question of how much a government should tell its citizens about its more sensitive operations:

Look, I’m not one of these people who’ll tell you that our government has got to tell all, that it’s got to conduct diplomacy in a fish bowl, that it’s got to give away secrets that are vital to national security, that it’s got to make its wildest contingency plans public. These are valid reasons for keeping things under covers, *but…*

Although coactive persuasion generally builds on areas of agreement between persuader and persuade-e, it need not do so to be successful. What counts from a purely practical standpoint is that the persuade-e finds the arguments attractive, not that the persuader be enamored of them. Suppose that Rachel is an agnostic, and her friend Rashid is fervently religious. Although it might enhance Rachel’s credibility if she were able to share Rashid’s religious convictions, Rachel need not be a believer herself to convince Rashid of the disadvantages to believers of mandating prayer in schools. Rachel can make the case from the believer’s perspective, pointing out, for example, the many occasions in history when religious groups have benefited from separation of church and state.

**Appealing to Reason and Emotion**

Objectivists tend to separate fact from value, reason from emotion, and to decide that only questions of fact and logic can be addressed rationally. By contrast, *coactive persuaders* combine the appearance of reasonableness with appeals to emotion and projections of benefits from adoption of their proposals.

Audiences needa feeling for problems and not just a dry accounting of them. They also need incentives to act. In Rank’s (2007, p. 1) colloquial terms, they need to be convinced that proposals for action will help them either “get a good” (acquisition), “keep a good” (protection), “get rid of a bad” (relief), or “avoid a bad” (prevention) In providing incentives, persuaders might well tap into audience emotions. For example, a public service announcement warning viewer not to drink and drive is likely to play on the emotion of fear. But surely there is nothing irrational about fearing the consequences of drinking and driving.

Coactive persuasion at its best makes artful use of the various ways in which messages may be framed and delivered. Every utterance is the end product of a set of conscious or unconscious decisions, from among a huge array of possible choices, that constitute what Burke (1945/ 1969a) has called the *“resources of ambiguity”*in language [HS4] (p. xix). Burke’s phrase is a way of suggesting that there are multiple ways to label something: categorize it; define it; illustrate it; or compare, contrast, or contextualize it. For example, at the annual company holiday party, a coworker whispers to you in anger that the boss “has been hitting on half the people in the office.” Want to *intensify*your coworker’s rage? Agree that yes, the boss is an animal. Want to *downplay*the matter? Assure your coworker that your boss is just an old goat.

Language choices may involve far more than mere labeling. Responding to another animal label, the charge that he and some of his colleagues in the House of Representatives had been behaving like “ostriches” in refusing to see the wisdom of President Ronald Reagan’s policy toward Nicaragua, Representative Barney Frank responded with an ancient rhetorical technique known as *peritrope*(a table-turning). According to Representative Frank, the member of Congress who had heaped insult on the ostrich, not to mention on his colleagues, was sadly deficient in his ornithological knowledge. The ostrich, Frank said, was a great survivor, capable when riled of delivering a lethal kick. With its large eyes and keen vision, the ostrich was ever alert. And, contrary to myth, the ostrich does not stick its head in the sand. “So, there you have it,” concluded Frank. “The ostrich is a rugged, wily, and frugal bird. Indeed, in a scrap between an ostrich and a Member of Congress, I would bet on the ostrich.” (Jamieson, 1998, p. 18)

**Questions for Thought and Discussion**

1. What genre are played out in political election campaigns?
2. Based on University of Michigan experience- If you were staging a campus forum on the 2016 presidential election, would you strive to make it evenhanded or select panelists who “tell it like it is”?
3. From the different resources of co-active persuasion discussed in this chapter (E.g. ‘Yes-Yes’, ‘Yes-But’) identify and Illustrate arguing from the perspective of the other- concessions, identification, and highlight/downplay.

**Summary**

Chapter Two has provided conceptual and critical tools for dilemma-centered analysis of political Persuasion. Concepts have included *rhetorical genre, rules-of-thumb, core dilemmas, core strategies, retrospection, theory,* and *system,* as well as such building blocks of communication as names, definitions, comparisons and contrasts, “god” words and “devil” words. Others bear upon co-active persuasion, including types of identification (and division), “yes-yes” and “yes-but” strategies, association and dissociation. The concepts are illustrated by way of case studies, culminating in an analysis of Barack Obama’s eulogy to slain parishioners at Charleston, South Carolina’s AME Methodist Church.

By contrast with linear models of historical causation, the chapter presupposes cyclical influence processes—humans responding to challenges so urgent as to constitute structural imperatives in what sociologist Peter Berger called the “outpouring of human being into the world. They include the tool-making building blocks of language and reasoning, what Kenneth Burke called our “equipment for living.” We create thereby social organizations and civil society as well as the essential tools for functioning in society as persuasive acumen and critical acuity. Public rhetorics serve as filter and creator of situation.

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| Toying with access to classified information has become the White House’s go-to method for drawing attention away from screw-ups and scandals. On July 23, the White House faced a [grim news cycle](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=pMJKdIFVI6p9ZOCk5JW/Jme36ldBKhGrL6B+6PAeN3u9rvOSZI1cPW/lkQxe0LcVRuC2elMXyOzaD7eV1xsvC5GHKcJYugYbB4t95m+qvD6h/laOPGgBy4YhIgEInWrm&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=32752118" \t "_blank) in response to President Trump’s disastrous Helsinki summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Then the White House press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, [announced](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=pMJKdIFVI6pghfX2HXfSzxRpdoyDWYNWQABac8RwHMkm2ICkXUf8cpY5yf0hwFgAFcb8PhbuiStBRqeOR0yIUOEc2golW8RRbrDlK8Dbt4WPvVDVkpsKkEECYP3GNBtrd3Ky8JhKuBm0jgIAFPIz/V497lMkXNAM&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=3275211820180816" \t "_blank) that Mr. Trump was “looking to take away” the security clearances of a number of former top officials who had criticized him, among them the former C.I.A. director John Brennan. |
| Early this week, the president flung insults at his former aide Omarosa Manigault Newman as [speculation heated up](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=pMJKdIFVI6pghfX2HXfSzxRpdoyDWYNWMaG9Pg/mxWfOENY/BFxr/heTbn3x+me/tjX54JHHdajkJR3Ajq2aljw7u8ouphQ8Rlqxy3iUcKucjF+eV3TXFKJRm4Bg/toCcQSdjtF/9QusT4szrudtNzJMo4Bsh1LlXoj+RCiUTozo9Jv94SqsslfRPFvPOt3JVeGH4pLWhoa46OwhM0k2wMAwKWRjFnCx+zYHlWeq2caO2mKd7HaGHSxxljsO7p4ynwGDUgYihCy90FqSnMM+QfHBrztGE9MfP3EcckIv/2OgGDfMMGr609Mxip702OWNo29xZqPDeO1l7R4FENXUpBMOwhtGR4A596QP7yPg8nWpR8elyMioKCh+6YpVRsJcHjrDdaaRVIYFq+d4NR6Dow==&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=32752118l=opinion-today&emc=edit_ty_20180816" \t "_blank) over the existence of a tape of Mr. Trump using a noxious racial slur during his tenure on “The Apprentice.” Then on Wednesday, Ms. Sanders began her press briefing with a notice that [the president had stripped Mr. Brennan of his clearance](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=pMJKdIFVI6pghfX2HXfSzxRpdoyDWYNWMaG9Pg/mxWfOc/L0F9E9ux7lcuL8LDLdzV/W2GyWq8ayH0xFngLxPKWNX5Q7a2mI7GFM1ezXiN2GT18dL/s5olueGvImKFv7aG+KTr/xTYCyRWvyXY3GsCKnShAQK5Ed6Rppq1XLZXA=&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=3275211820180816" \t "_blank). |
| It has become cliché to complain about the Trump administration’s use of distractions to divert the press from unwelcome news, but this time the White House didn’t even put any effort into hiding it. The document announcing Mr. Trump’s decision was [dated July 26](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=pMJKdIFVI6pehkIEQ5/wRpF88f/y69L+w1CcEZ1qrcnEPjJ7lulQ3HrlUK1iFLyiGlqj6R/f1nW+q5gPs53chg==&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=32752118" \t "_blank) — suggesting strongly that the White House had been saving it for a rainy day. (After this was pointed out, the administration quickly issued a second, undated copy.) What's more, Mr. Trump himself [told The Wall Street Journal](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=pMJKdIFVI6qF988znn3DYw7IEwpqcygQd7OSQIPY7wcOqFQBJvDSRha2thP1jpacia8XQ4TpzlZdvw9kBSfQFIB1pUTwAyWiOsZOafBcBzlcA0+Z0NipN5G63w8KTM3D1Im4SxFKQf3Ggyi03qvde75JWQ2/ffdT&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=32752118" \t "_blank) that he had revoked Mr. Brennan’s clearance because of the former official's role in leading “the rigged witch hunt.” |
| On one level, this particular distraction is vindictive but unimportant. John Brennan will be fine, and so will most of the other officials — including James Comey, Sally Yates and James Clapper — whose clearances Ms. Sanders threatened during the briefing. They have the power and visibility to continue criticizing the president as loudly as they like on cable news — and on Twitter, where Mr. Brennan has taken to attacking Mr. Trump as “[treasonous](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=pMJKdIFVI6pehkIEQ5/wRrM3TwxfUk6Is/dlVuiCNhNaksMh0ETpAxGCglY2B88fZr+cR8ziKPDeZmySGrEmQA==&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=32752118" \t "_blank)” and “[disgraceful](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=pMJKdIFVI6pehkIEQ5/wRrM3TwxfUk6Is/dlVuiCNhPniZeAccnPpoKh1WURJi+re4Zo0vtxDza59/1yRDoCBA==&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=32752118" \t "_blank).” |
| The real risk is that this will strike fear into the many civil servants and government contractors who need security clearances for their jobs. As with [the humiliation of Mr. Strzok](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=pMJKdIFVI6pghfX2HXfSzxRpdoyDWYNWMaG9Pg/mxWfOkRmlqh7lzTCoDWfLvkZj8KXQLP1qBar7DYzfE6S+1Ul99UO33lPobrDlK8Dbt4WPvVDVkpsKkEECYP3GNBtrd3Ky8JhKuBm0jgIAFPIz/V497lMkXNAM&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=3275211820180816" \t "_blank), the message here for less prominent public servantsis that the president has the power to destroy your livelihood if you voice dissent. And Mr. Trump appears to have taken his action without going through any process or [consulting the relevant](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=pMJKdIFVI6pehkIEQ5/wRlU4ZWtGLMC/vaZ1RfbHMFWY+gOpKINkARI239pvmkKNvfV5cHNBUPa59/1yRDoCBA==&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=32752118" \t "_blank) [intelligence leadership](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=pMJKdIFVI6pehkIEQ5/wRqVn9UR2LQnIHMw6cvUj/2r8ki3rfFvR29A6fS5Dnd6Uy5hO8HPIApboU4z87o605Q==&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=32752118" \t "_blank), making this another exercise in unilateral norm-busting. |
| When Mr. Trump first threatened Mr. Brennan’s clearance in July, the speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, dismissed it as “[just trolling](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=4z5Q7LhI+KUz+GhtiX9Csbh5WNZ/8raxfyc9wlrSq35AAFpzxHAcyVxx1ClDHDkWUfa0r/M4+KPDF4aps3OIRaWNX5Q7a2mIZGLsufxA7RG/4hC8nigRDv4Crc0e6gkEwWyDl2CTQrvf6GA29oBrHw==&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=32752118" \t "_blank).” He may have been righter than he knew: Wednesday’s [announcement](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=pMJKdIFVI6pR2DC0/25NmTy/THEko8CX/MWEpHDlxJxiZjTedUJx+71gKWAycl79xoeDqpeyUviVhG4XxSL5VKkU3lge5RwGz+XnpWUcmWJWVs+G0YVq/ZwqWEZEHUxbMsXa6ZJ8gW9Y45yuFLTd1g==&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=32752118" \t "_blank) was thick with unintentional irony. In listing Mr. Brennan’s sins, Mr. Trump [accused the former C.I.A. director](http://p.nytimes.com/email/re?location=pMJKdIFVI6pehkIEQ5/wRuF8HGj1Y/w/gRK8sQTnQwVZtSkV4gQhR/fjO5ykDw2IA0B6VXezd0o=&campaign_id=39&instance_id=3413&segment_id=4780&user_id=baa389bed771c4f6662ab25634c1875e&regi_id=32752118" \t "_blank) of “erratic conduct and behavior,” “frenzied commentary” and “wild outbursts on the internet and television.” Sound familiar? |

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