

WHAT DID HE SAY?
LYNDON JOHNSON, DOUBLESPEAK, AND VIETNAM

by
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Ever since George Orwell wrote 1984 and, afterwards, authored the famous essay, "Politics and the English Language," what he called "Doublespeak" has become an object of fascination for linguists and rhetoricians. Indeed, the use of Doublespeak in political language is commonplace in the twentieth century- especially during civil or international war. This paper studies the nature of Doublespeak, during the Tonkin Gulf Crisis, of former President Lyndon Baines Johnson.⁶⁸ The goal is to explain historical background of the war, define Doublespeak by using the standards of modern rhetorical scholars, and then to apply their models to three separate Johnson speeches. The results of this study are that the rhetorical models correspond with Johnson's discourse.

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Dedicated to Ken Hankland, whom I'll never forget.

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I.

INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is still with us. It has created doubts about American judgement, about American credibility, about American power- not only at home, but throughout the world. It has poisoned our domestic debate. So we paid an exorbitant price for the decisions that were made in good faith and for good purpose.

-Henry Kissinger

Henry Luce, founder of *Time/Life* magazines, once wrote an article called, "The American Century" in his own magazine. In it, he made a lofty, messianic prediction of America's future on the eve of World War II: "We need most of all to seek and to bring forth a vision of America as a world power, which is authentically American. America as the Good Samaritan...and America as the powerhouse of the ideals of Freedom and Justice." This proclamation of America's duty to preserve global well-being, though chided at the time, would be echoed over and over again by successive presidents as they spoke of America's place in the world. "The world today looks to us for leadership," said Harry Truman, and Kennedy promised in his inaugural address that America would "pay any price...support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and the

success of liberty." Lyndon Baines Johnson, President during the Vietnam years of 1963-1968, proclaimed a similar goal: he wished to "bring peace and hope to all the peoples of the world." Ironically, it was the Vietnam episode, the only defeat in America's history, which deflated the United States' vigorous belief in its supremacy and in its role as watchdog for world democracy.

The Vietnam experience traumatized Americans from coast to coast and around the world. It left the American government bruised, defensive, and unsure of what lessons had been learned. In January 1991, when President George Bush announced the attack against Iraq following its occupation of Kuwait, he attempted to allay the fears of the public that U.S. involvement would lead to "another Vietnam." As this presidential anxiety reveals, America has progressively become more aware of the repercussions of its government's foreign policy; it realizes that it holds a vested interest in the international practices of its elected officials. In 1983, Reagan was rebuffed by Americans who flinched at the possibility of a long jungle war in Central America that seemed to be a replay of the long jungle war in Vietnam. During the Persian Gulf affair, doubts about impending war filled America. A former policeman in Maine implored Congress to look at the price of war: "There's so much at stake. Are we willing to sacrifice our kids for the sake of stimulating our economy? We're

still paying dearly for Vietnam."

Much of the infamy of Vietnam springs from the reality that so many participants and observers of the war were laboring under lies, misunderstandings, and misinformation about their mission and about their government's true goals. A generation of Americans is resentful of the hoax- and in account after account a common theme repeatedly appears: disenchantment. Gus Wilson, mayor of a Kentucky community, related a post-war mood:

We believed that the first thing that you did for your country was to defend it. You didn't question that. But I think we realized as we went along...that the government was pulling a bit of a flimflam. We weren't getting the truth. The Vietnam War was being misrepresented to the people- the way it was conducted, its ultimate purpose. Though I'm still a patriot, I ended up very disillusioned (Karnow, 26).

In sum, the war is a story of the misguided energy and effort of citizens and of the thwarted ideals of politicians. The failure impressed people deeply and irrevocably.

It may be said that the late 20th century finds our nation at last willing to recall the experience of Vietnam. Memorials to Vietnam veterans have been built and a parade to honor veterans was held in New York City in the mid eighties. Americans appear to be aware of the gravity of the episode and they want to learn from it. It is felt that "a Vietnam" must never be allowed to happen again. After America withdrew from Kuwait last year, George Bush proclaimed victory by saying, "By God, we've kicked the

Vietnam syndrome once and for all."

It is significant that such phrases as "a Vietnam" and "Vietnam syndrome" are commonly used. Such wording categorizes the American experience in Vietnam as a generic entity- much like a dot on the timeline which is printed on the back pages of every high school history textbook. The very word "Vietnam" has come to have near-adjectival connotations; for example, when the Soviets were mixed up in Afghanistan, they were said to be experiencing "their own Vietnam." But, many hit films as *different* as Rambo II, Full Metal Jacket, Hamburger Hill, or Apocalypse Now have been produced and released; many a Vietnam veteran will argue that one of these types of movies is more representative of their tour of duty than another is. Every former G.I. has "a Vietnam" of his own, which confirms that American involvement was not a homogenous experience. Plainly, America is still unable to define what happened to itself -individually or as a group- between 1963 and 1973.

The abundance of Vietnam movies is a sign of an increased willingness to look Vietnam "in the face." Media and film normally examine the issue from the perspective of the soldier. The result is that a typical young adult's knowledge of Vietnam consists of visual imagery and reenacted combat scenes; this focus on effect rather than cause is inadequate. There are many people, too young to experience the war firsthand, who do not understand the why

and how of Vietnam. A typical Vietnam education seeks to view the war in terms of military facts; few textbooks look at the faces *behind* the combat and explain how those players put America on the road to Southeast Asia.

One of the most prominent "faces" behind Vietnam is that of former President Lyndon Johnson. Although he was hardly the sole architect of Vietnam policy, he was the most influential representative of his administration throughout his presidency. It was his voice and words which guided Congress and the public toward an acceptance of warfare in Vietnam in the early sixties. It is important to remember that U.S. actions in Vietnam were the product of mistakes by the Johnson administration, as well as of a worldview shared by our leaders and the public. Johnson never acted alone; still, his war rhetoric, however valid, was instrumental in the formation of public opinion and consent.

Discussing a particular turning point in the Vietnam war called the Gulf of Tonkin incident, Barbara Tuchman stated in The March of Folly: "Not a Fort Sumter or a Pearl Harbor, Tonkin Gulf was no less significant: in a cause of uncertain national interest, it was a blank check for Executive war" (Fleming, 27). This event was the alleged attack by North Vietnamese gunboats on the United States destroyer *Maddox*. President Johnson used the incident to persuade Congress to approve a resolution that was used to justify major escalation of the war. We know now from the

Pentagon Papers and other sources that Johnson misled the Congress and the public; however, materials such as school textbooks are still inconsistent in casting doubt on the validity of Johnson's actions. For example, the two accounts below exemplify the different textbook treatment that this key Johnson action has received. Notice that the second version tempers what happened by using the word 'may':

Version 1

Johnson did not reveal that the South Vietnamese patrol boats, assisted by the United States, had attacked a North Vietnamese coastal island only hours before the American destroyers were hit.

Version 2

Johnson told Congress that three North Vietnamese patrol boats had attacked an American destroyer in international waters. He asked for powers to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression. It was later learned that the American destroyer may have been within North Vietnam's territorial waters, and may never have been attacked (Fleming, 27).

The Tonkin Gulf incident remains a controversial topic to this day. It is certain that the Johnson administration misled the public, but it is uncertain with what awareness Johnson delivered that misinformation; notwithstanding, it is significant that Lyndon Johnson, through rhetoric, was able to convince the United States of the appropriateness of war in spite of dubious and contradictory reports received from U.S. officials and military in Vietnam. Almost forty years after the fact, a reliable story of the Tonkin Gulf

can finally be gathered from the reports of historians, politicians, and other direct participants in the affair. In addition, Johnson's use of power through communication has been studied closely by rhetoricians. The task of this paper will be to review the historical circumstances of the Tonkin Gulf incident, then to describe certain aspects of verbal behavior and politics, and finally integrate the two issues in order to come to a conclusion about the nature of Lyndon Johnson's rhetorical tactics of mid-1964. This paper will blend history and linguistics in an examination of how Johnson's policies failed while his words succeeded.

II.

HISTORY OF TONKIN

Near midnight, Tuesday, August 4, 1964. The world of Patrick N. Park, United States Navy, consists of a round, greenish-hued radar screen, occasionally crossed by wavering, pencil-thin scratches of light or dotted by shapeless blurs that appear and vanish as rapidly as a speck of dust floats past the eye. Park stands in the main gun director of the destroyer USS Maddox, the posture of the experienced sailor holding him steady as the vessel lurches at full speed, 34 knots, through the eight-foot swells of the Gulf of Tonkin.

Outside, total darkness: the kind of night when a man listens for voices to know which shipmate stands beside him; when rain squalls and wave slaps against the hull are background for the deeper-pitched engine sounds. Somewhere off in the night the USS C. Turner Joy, the Maddox's

companion destroyer, is also speeding south on an erratic, evasive course- both warships, with lights out, weaving through the water like a pair of drunken porpoises.

During three hours, only seconds of fleeting light: the sudden orange flash of the Turner Joy's five-inch guns; twice, maybe three times, but no more, flickers of lightning creating a lingering, silverish glow under the low, heavy cloud cover; a fast-burning flare plunging from the sky, dying before it provides enough illumination to do more than attract one's attention.

Into Park's earphones come the confusing sounds of an apparent sea battle. At 9:12 P.M. the combat information center (CIC) below deck announces its radar has detected fast-closing targets, to all appearances the repetition of a bold daylight attack two days earlier when the Maddox had driven off three North Vietnamese torpedo boats, leaving one dead in the water. More than 20 times, the sonarman calls out "Torpedoes in the water," sending the Maddox and Turner Joy into zigzag turns. The Turner Joy time and again reports the ranges of "targets" upon which it is firing. But the Maddox's own radar room, near to anguish, says it has found nothing since the first contacts; that it is having trouble locating even the Turner Joy.

Accompanying the darkness and the speed and the confusion are anticipation and excitement: the dread of unseen enemy boats with primed torpedoes trailing the slower

United States destroyers, maneuvering for firing positions, then racing back to the safety of the North Vietnam mainland, 60 miles westward.

For Patrick Park, however, there are three hours of staring at the meaningless green quivers of the gun director's radarscope, blank even when he seeks the "targets" at which the Turner Joy is firing so enthusiastically. His radar controls the Maddox's six five-inch guns and, at short ranges, is more sensitive than the ship's main radar. But for Park, no targets- only the occasional roll of a wave as it breaks into a whitecap.

Then, a few minutes before midnight, the bridge gives Park a range reading from CIC. "The firmest target we've had all night," the voice tells him. Park hastily directs the gun-control radar toward the area of the contact.

"It was a damned big one, right on us. No doubt about this one," he says. "About 1,500 yards off the side, a nice fat blip." Park asks for the "firing key"- that is, for control of the triggering device on the five-inch gun mounts- and for permission to fire. "Open fire!" is the response. Park tells what happened:

"Just before I pushed the trigger I suddenly realized, That's the Turner Joy. This came right with the order to open fire. I shouted back, 'Where is the Turner Joy?' There was a lot of yelling of 'Goddamn' back and forth, with the bridge telling me to 'fire before we lose the contact,

and me yelling right back at them. (I really wasn't thinking about what I was saying.)

" I finally told them, 'I'm not opening fire until I know where the Turner Joy is.' The bridge got on the phone and said, 'Turn on your lights, Turner Joy.'

"Sure enough, there she was, right in the cross hairs. I had six five-inch guns right at the Turner Joy, 1,500 yards away. If I had fired, it would have blown it clean out of the water. In fact, I could have been shot for not squeezing the trigger."

The averting of near-disaster was the peak of the night's tension; Park says a "great sense of deflation" followed. "People started asking, 'What are we shooting at? What is going on?' We all began calming down. The whole thing seemed to end then." (Goulden, 11)

In the late 1950s, far before American bombing and raids had officially involved the U.S.A. in the Vietnam war, struggles between North and South Vietnam were ongoing: The corrupt and United States-supported South Vietnamese government of Ngo Dinh Diem intensified its campaign against all Communist opposition groups based in the South. By 1958, the Communists began to fight back against the purge. Eventually, a full-fledged local rebellion had formed in the South; thus, in September 1960 in Hanoi at the Third Congress of the North Vietnamese Communist Party, a report

was issued that urged the creation of a broad united front against what they saw as the "U.S.-Diem clique."

Accordingly, on December 20, 1960, Hanoi leaders formed the National Liberation Front for South Vietnam, which the Saigon regime dubbed the Vietcong, meaning Communist Vietnamese.

During the period 1957-1961, the "NLF" and its principal constituent, the Vietminh, were operating as guerrillas in the South and receiving a measure of aid from the North. Almost as soon as President Kennedy was sworn into office in 1961, there were reports that these guerrillas were enjoying considerable success- so much that the U.S. promptly agreed to increase its own assistance to the Diem regime; however, the South Vietnamese were doing poorly chiefly because of the inner degeneration of the government (Galloway, 33). Among other things, their government had violently repressed the Buddhist faith and refused to participate in nationwide elections; moreover, Diem's own officers were intriguing and plotting among themselves against the Diem regime.

Beyond the U.S.'s goal to "make the world safe for democracy," there was also a basic desire to maintain international reputation. One participant, in referring to the "euphoria" over the newly expanded Special Forces (such as the Green Berets) and the enthusiasm for counter-insurgency, noted, "A new Administration is likely to be

optimistic about new ways of doing things -even of fighting wars- and Vietnam turned out to be a testing ground for these new kinds of forces and techniques." (Pfeffer, 24)

Because the Saigon government was becoming increasingly dictatorial, failing to behave like a proper puppet for the United States, and refusing to heed Washington's counsel, the Kennedy Administration decided that it would not stand in the way of a military coup; specifically, Henry Cabot Lodge, the American ambassador to Vietnam, recommended to Kennedy that Duong Van Minh (Diem's senior officer) be told that the United States "will not attempt to thwart the coup." "The coup" referred to the likely outcome of a conspiracy that had formed among Diem's higher officials. Kennedy approved the convoluted language- advising only that Americans refrain from direct involvement in the plot: "While we do not wish to stimulate a coup, we also do not wish to leave the impression that the United States would thwart a change of government...But we should avoid being drawn into reviewing or advising any operational plans, or any other act that might tend to identify the United States too closely." Once in motion, the plot spun out of control and Diem was assassinated along with his powerful brother. Kennedy would be murdered three weeks later.

South Vietnamese general Nguyen Khanh seized power and became Prime Minister in Saigon on January 30, 1964; however, the situation in Vietnam was nowhere near

improvement. Covert South Vietnamese maritime operations had begun against North Vietnam in July. These maritime operations were related to the plans of the Pentagon for eventual strategic air and naval attacks against North Vietnam. Included in these plans was a blueprint for an amphibious invasion by U.S. and South Vietnamese ground troops. The Communist leaders of North Vietnam, anticipating an escalation of the war into their territory, had recently requested that the Soviet Union boost their defenses, and the Soviets began to install modern antiaircraft missiles and radar stations around North Vietnam's main cities and along its coastline of bays and islands on the Tonkin Gulf. It was necessary for the United States to be informed on this defensive network in order for it to develop its plans for military involvement in the north; thus, an approach was developed to profile the shore sites: covert South Vietnamese commandos would harass the enemy radar transmitters, thereby activating them so that American electronic espionage vessels in the gulf could learn their locations and measure their frequencies. Also, the American ships could chart and photograph the coastal region and monitor its traffic. Similar operations, code-named DeSoto missions, had been going on for years off the coasts of China, North Korea and the Soviet Union. The program offered the U.S. Navy its first chance to get involved in Vietnam. Enter, the Tonkin Gulf.

The destroyer *Craig* was to undertake the first DeSoto mission in March 1964 under the new U.S. plan, but it was canceled because of bad weather. President Johnson extended the program's four-month experimental phase by a year, and the combined U.S. and South Vietnamese efforts resumed in July. Admiral Ulysses Grant Sharp, Jr., who was the American commander for the Pacific, ordered that the destroyer *Maddox* be assigned to the Tonkin Gulf to revive the DeSoto electronic eavesdropping activities.

The *Maddox* was advised by Sharp to get no closer than eight miles from North Vietnam's coast and four miles from its islands, assuming that the Communists still adhered to the three-mile limit that had been established by the French during their colonial period in Vietnam; however, there was also the possibility that the Communists had switched to the twelve-mile limit which China subscribed to. The fact was that the destroyer was possibly heading toward a violation of North Vietnam's sovereignty in league with an underground South Vietnamese operation.

The captain of the *Maddox*, Herrick, stopped the ship at the Taiwan port of Keelung in order to collect a van outfitted with electronic gear and seventeen specialists to operate the equipment. Herrick was under orders to move quickly, even though his vessel's sonar was faulty, and several of his crew were green (Karnow, 381). On August 1 the ship was following a zigzag course, seven to nine miles

from the coast and four to six miles from the islands. Herrick had sighted patrol boats in the distance, which he identified in a radio message to the Seventh Fleet as Soviet-made craft, presumably manned by North Vietnamese. A message came back identifying them as Swifts, Norwegian-built aluminum craft manned by South Vietnamese crews. They were returning from a covert mission in the North. Two days before, four Swifts filled with commandos had left their base at Danang and attempted to storm Hon Me, an island seven miles offshore, with the intent of destroying a Communist radar station. Because the resistance was too strong for a landing, two of the Swifts instead assailed the island with machine guns and cannons. Simultaneously, the two other Swifts assaulted an island near one of North Vietnam's busiest ports. The radar and radio commotion resulting from the attacks was naturally picked up and monitored by the *Maddox*, which relayed the information to CIA headquarters outside Washington.

Despite a formal protest issued by the North Vietnamese, the *Maddox* stayed where it was and kept monitoring coastal facilities and activities through the next day and night. By eleven o'clock on the morning of August 2, the *Maddox* had come within ten miles of the Red River delta, the northernmost point of its circuit. Although Herrick had sighted three Communist patrol boats he remained confident that he was in international waters and

had no fears that they would strike. His technicians, however, intercepted a message to the enemy boats, directing them to attack after they had refueled. The boats were soon upon the *Maddox*, which turned toward the sea and fled with the Communist boats in hot pursuit. Herrick ordered his crew to fire if the enemy came within ten thousand yards. The *Maddox* opened fire just after three in the afternoon. The Communist crafts launched two torpedoes, both missing the *Maddox*. The third was a dud. Herrick's gunners hit one of the enemy boats as four jets from the carrier *Ticonderoga* arrived. The skirmish ended within twenty minutes with no American casualties and the sinking of one Communist boat and the damaging of the others.

Since Washington is twelve hours behind Vietnam, reports of the clash arrived there on the morning of the same day, Sunday, August 2. Lyndon Johnson was in the middle of a presidential election campaign and so had to consider his actions in light of that: he knew that he should not appear to be a candidate heading toward war, but his opponent, Goldwater, was pressing for a tougher approach to Vietnam, and Johnson also wanted to look firm (Karnow, 383).

Johnson employed stern rhetoric. He told his staff that further action was unnecessary and he instructed his spokesman to de-emphasize the matter. At the same time, Johnson directed the *Maddox* to return to the Tonkin Gulf

with orders to "attack any force that attacks them." He also sent a diplomatic note to warn the Communist regime in Hanoi that "grave consequences would inevitably result from any further unprovoked offensive military action" against American ships deployed "on the high seas" off North Vietnam.

Meanwhile, additional American fighter-bombers were dispatched to South Vietnam and Thailand, and U.S. combat troops were placed on alert. Admiral Sharp arranged for possible air strikes by ordering the carrier *Constellation* to the South China Sea to meet up with the *Ticonderoga*. He outlined a new mission for the *Maddox* and a second destroyer, the *C. Turner Joy*: The DeSoto electronic intelligence watches were to become much more aggressive; the two destroyers would stage tours in broad daylight to within eight miles of North Vietnam's coast and four miles off its islands, as if in provocation (Karnow, 384).

While the destroyers acted as Communist bait, the covert South Vietnamese commandos returned to the scene and headed toward mainland objectives. Herrick knew from monitoring the North Vietnamese radar and radio traffic that the communists were aware of these furtive activities and that they had connected his presence in the area to the commando forays. Herrick proposed that it would be prudent for the destroyers to retreat to sea; he cabled the following to his superiors: "(a) Evaluation of info from

various sources indicated that the DRV [North Vietnam] considers patrol directly involved with 34-A operations [cover term for South Vietnamese forays or sea raids above the North Vietnamese border] and have already indicated readiness to treat us in that category. (b) DRV are very sensitive about Hon Me. Believe this PT operating base and the cove there presently contains numerous patrol and PT craft which have been repositioned from northerly bases." He concluded: "Under these conditions 15 min. reaction time for operating air cover is unacceptable. Cover must be overhead and controlled by DD's [destroyers] at all times." This report from the *Maddox* was based on intercepted North Vietnamese messages. But Admiral Sharp rejected this, replying that to halt the mission so soon "does not in my view adequately demonstrate United States resolve to assert our legitimate rights in these international waters." He ordered Herrick to continue the patrols and suggested that the American vessels might serve as decoys to distract the Communists from the nearby South Vietnamese operations (Karnow, 385).

Conditions aboard the *Maddox* were not optimal: the sonar was functioning erratically and an inexperienced sailor was in charge of it because the skilled operator was manning one of the turrets. Radar normally reaches only as far as the horizon- 20 to 25 miles. But low clouds can sometimes cause "ducting"-whereby radar beams strike the

cloud cover and deflect over the horizon. Radar used this way is often unreliable; as it was, atmospheric conditions were already warping the radio beams reaching both ships. The implications of this are that it was possible for the *Maddox* technicians to have monitored such things as rain, waves, or the sound of their own propellers, and to have misinterpreted these things as unidentified presences.

Five hours after Captain Herrick's warning the *Maddox* and the *C. Turner Joy* reported a radar contact paralleling the path of the two destroyers. It was then 10:30 A.M. The *Maddox*, at 8:36, reported new radar contact with two unidentified surface vessels and three unidentified aircraft. At this point fighter planes were launched from the *Ticonderoga* to cover the destroyers. When the two destroyers thought the enemy to be 8000 yards distant, the *Maddox* fired star shells in an unsuccessful attempt to throw some light on the situation. At 6000 yards, the *C. Turner Joy* opened fire. For the remainder of the incident the *Maddox* was unable to locate the enemy on its radar.

Commander James B. Stockdale, the senior pilot aboard the carrier *Ticonderoga*, had been the leader of the eight U.S. aircraft that had arrived to aid in the "battle." Stockdale wrote later: "The *Joy* was firing at 'targets' the *Maddox* couldn't track on sonar, and the *Maddox* was dodging 'torpedoes' the *Joy* couldn't hear on its sonar." Despite this, both ships continued until after midnight to shoot in

many directions while employing evasive maneuvers to avoid what they believed to be their foes. Within the next hour, according to Robert McNamara's statement of August 6, 1964: "The destroyers relayed messages stating that they had avoided a number of torpedoes, that they had been under repeated attack, and that they had sunk two of the attacking craft." At midnight local time, according to McNamara, the destroyers "reported that, even though many torpedoes had been fired at them, they had suffered no hits or casualties and that defensive aircraft from the *Ticonderoga* were illuminating the area and attacking the enemy surface craft." Two enemy craft were reported sunk and the *C. Turner Joy* was said to have further reported being "fired upon by automatic weapons while being illuminated by searchlights."

This graphic report notwithstanding, Herrick began to have second thoughts as he left the scene of the supposed confrontation, which he shared with his superiors. "The entire action leaves many doubts," he said, urging a "thorough reconnaissance in daylight" from the air. He ordered officers on both ships to quiz the crews and found that not one sailor had seen or heard communist gunfire. Those who claimed to have observed anything, like the lights or shadows of enemy boats, were really not sure.

Stockdale was even more sure that there had been no incident. He had flown over the scene for an hour and a

half- enjoying the "best seat in the house," as he put it later. He had observed every movement of the ships. Immediately following his return to the *Ticonderoga*, he was "debriefed" by an intelligence officer, who asked if he had seen any enemy boats. "Not a one," Stockdale replied. "No boats, no boat wakes, no ricochets off boats, no boat gunfire, no torpedo wakes- nothing but black sea and American firepower." A message was sent to Washington, saying that the returning pilots "report no visual sightings of any vessels other than *Turner Joy* and *Maddox*." Back came a response from the joint chiefs of staff urgently requesting "evidence of second attack [to] convince United Nations that the attack did in fact occur." Stockdale stuck to his story, but learned, after his release as a P.O.W. from a Hanoi prison, that other pilots involved in the episode, and who had agreed with him that nothing had happened, changed their versions under a process known as "rebriefing." (Karnow, 386)

North Vietnam denied that the supposed skirmish occurred, claiming that the entire affair was a sheer fabrication created by the United States to justify its escalation of the war. The automatic weapons fire which McNamara reported directed at the *C. Turner Joy* was later discovered to be the anti-aircraft barrage fired by the destroyers at what their radars erroneously depicted as enemy aircraft. The *C. Turner Joy* located enemy vessels on

its radar during the "attack"; the *Maddox* could not. The *Maddox* reported 22 enemy torpedoes by sonar; the *C. Turner Joy* failed to detect even one. Furthermore, patrol boats of the type used by North Vietnam carry two torpedoes. Since there was no suggestion that the destroyers had been attacked by 11 patrol boats, obviously most of the sonar reports were erroneous.

Lyndon Johnson announced to key Democratic members of Congress on the morning of August 4 that the U.S. destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf had definitely been attacked. This time, he said, he would retaliate against North Vietnam- and he would ask Congress for a resolution of support. Yet, Johnson needed some verification of the incident, if only to guard against possible future charges of having acted prematurely (Karnow, 387). At six o' clock in the evening on August 4, while Herrick was still trying to supply additional evidence, a Pentagon spokesman declared that "a second deliberate attack" had occurred. Just before midnight that day Lyndon Johnson appeared on television across the nation, saying, "Repeated acts of violence against the armed forces of the United States must be met not only with alert defense, but with positive reply. That reply is being given as I speak to you tonight." This statement was given nearly an hour after the carriers *Ticonderoga* and *Constellation* had sent off their jets on the first U.S. bombing mission of North Vietnamese territory.

The facts, then, to the extent that they can be determined are these: The *Maddox* was under orders to activate North Vietnamese radar and monitor its communications; in the process she twice approached a North Vietnamese island attacked two days before by American-supplied vessels, operated by South Vietnamese; the shooting began when the *Maddox*, having been chased out to sea and made suspicious by the North Vietnamese communications traffic, fired at three approaching North Vietnamese patrol boats; the second incident, two days later, began when the destroyers fired at what they considered menacing enemy craft.

The real issue, however, is **not** whether the North Vietnamese responded by firing one or two torpedoes, as finally claimed by the Defense Department. At issue is whether the incident justified the retaliatory bombing of Vietnam as well as the passage of Johnson's "blank check" to wage war, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The facts are that the role of the Johnson administration and the military in causing the crisis and their evaluation of the incident have been explored thoroughly by political, rhetorical and military scholars, and that the varying results and conclusions resulting from the inquiries have left the investigators and the public either ambivalent or very angry.

Joseph Goulden, speaking in his 1969 book Truth is the

First Casualty, noted that, "revisionism on the entire Vietnam situation is now rampant, as former Kennedy and Johnson officials busily attempt to restate or minimize their roles in a ghastly national venture." To this day, the American tragedy of Vietnam is continually being re-evaluated as more information is released by the government and more stories are told by war participants.

President Lyndon Johnson is by far the darling of scholarly scrutiny; partly because he was the executive power during the high-water mark of American involvement, and partly because a new profile of his presidency has recently begun to emerge: to Johnson's credit, he was actually one of the few dissenters when Washington had initially drafted plans for potential American commitment. Contrary to the heartless war-monger reputation that stuck for so long, he was, initially, far more reasonable than his own advisors and his Secretary of Defense, John McNamara, in his doubts that this "Vietnam thing" could ever work out.

There will be no evaluation of Johnson's personality or psychological health in this inquiry, nor any lengthy examination of his changing opinions and sentiments as the war developed- although those are fascinating and worthy subjects. For the purposes of this paper, Johnson's rhetoric will be examined; the linguistic samples will be the speeches which he directed to the general public during and regarding the incident in the Tonkin Gulf in mid-1964.

The job of any President is to strengthen his/her foreign and domestic position. The public must be assured that the administration's actions, both in the country and abroad, are well-intentioned and justified. It is crucial that the President create an image of confidence and resolve, no matter what doubts or misgivings he or she may actually harbor. Lyndon Johnson needed such public confidence and support in order to justify the extraordinary powers granted by the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. This would have been difficult to obtain were all the facts known; therefore, Johnson used rhetoric to strategically misrepresent what occurred in the Tonkin Gulf, so that a complex international incident, involving repeated provocations of the North Vietnamese, became a simple case of repeated aggression against the United States.

With the above analysis in mind, the question will be asked: how did LBJ make use of what we will call "Doublespeak" devices (i.e. deceptive speech forms) when attempting to make Tonkin Gulf policy more palatable to the general public? This notion of Doublespeak will be the yardstick by which we shall measure the honesty of Johnson's administration in reporting the affair to the American people.

III.

MODERN ORWELL

-Populus vult decipi, ergo decipiatur

Among the wide spectrum of perceptual and intellectual aberrations from which the human brain can suffer, there exists a neurological disorder called aphasia. Aphasia causes a patient to suffer total or partial loss of the power to use or understand spoken words and is usually caused by brain disease or injury. Dr. Oliver Sacks, one of the best and the most well-known of contemporary clinical writers, describes a story about this affliction in his book The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat.

In a chapter entitled "The President's Speech," Sacks tells the tale of a group of patients in a hospital aphasia ward. These patients, though intelligent, had the severest form of aphasia which rendered them incapable of understanding words as such; yet, they were still able to grasp some or most of the meaning. This was attributed to the extraverbal cues which they would receive- cues such as tone of voice and intonation, as well as all visual cues like gestures, facial expressions, and all personal, unconscious and unique body language. As it happened, the ability to perceive and interpret these features of human communication was found to be preternaturally amplified in

those who suffered from aphasia.

It was because of his first-hand encounters with this perceptual enhancement that Sacks came to the conclusion that it is impossible to lie to an aphasiac because their power of understanding lies in knowing, without words, what is authentic or unauthentic. This is why an entire ward of aphasiacs was sent into fits of laughter as they watched a television broadcast of a speech by former President Ronald Reagan.

"There he was," writes Sacks, "the old Charmer, the Actor, with his practiced rhetoric, his histrionisms, his emotional appeal- and all the patients were convulsed with laughter. What could they be thinking? Were they failing to understand him? Or did they, perhaps, understand him all too well?" Sacks recognizes the beautiful irony of this situation: the "normal people, aided probably by their wish to be fooled," were deceived. "And so cunningly was deceptive word-use combined with deceptive tone, that *only the brain-damaged* remained intact, undeceived."

The above anecdote is amusing and intriguing and may conjure up images of the stereotypical American bureaucrat, or may invoke memories of such former leaders (or personalities) as Ronald Reagan. The emotions or opinions surrounding those memories are dependent entirely on the experiences of the reader. Sacks' tale, however, is not merely illustrative of the sometimes bizarre potential of

the human brain, nor is it just a humorous reminder that many a politician is duplicitous or is more actor than trustworthy orator. A grander theme exists.

It is easy to review the histories of past American presidents and to come to the conclusion that nearly each "track record" is not unblemished. In addition, it is sometimes entertaining to compare presidential words to presidential intentions and actions; one need only quote then-presidential candidate George Bush: "Read my lips- no new taxes," to elicit a snicker or a knowing roll of the eyes. The contemporary American politician, whether President or not, cuts a stereotypical figure: he/she is assumed untrustworthy, slick, self-interested, and often insincere in his or her speech. Statements similar to Richard Nixon's infamous "I am not a crook" are now unsurprising and are less than scandalous when they are uttered. Such rhetorical artifacts as General Norman Schwarzkopf's ubiquitous, "I'm afraid I can't answer that question," or Pentagon euphemisms which call the neutron bomb a "radiation enhancement device" tend to become public catch-words. They gain an almost iconic status and come to symbolize entire political or societal eras. For example, can one remember when portions of President George Bush's "Thousand points of light" speech were first lampooned in a political cartoon?

Questionable political rhetoric is so pervasive that

its role is easily underestimated. A dubious political message is often only comprehended at face-value and appreciated later for only its facetiousness- if it is evaluated at all. Let us return to the example of former-President Ronald Reagan to illustrate this phenomenon.

By the end of his political career, Ronald Reagan had become known for his misappropriations and inaccuracies. The humor that Americans found in his speech easily eclipsed many of the positive aspects of his administration. That same sense of humor, however, tended to downplay the deeper issues; consequently, a closer examination of the nature of Reagan's rhetorical practices was often dismissed. A fitting example of this phenomenon might be the 1980 presidential campaign, during which Reagan's oratory was filled with inaccurate assertions and statistics, and misrepresentations of his past record. A television commercial in 1982 pictured a postman delivering Social Security checks

with the 7.5 percent cost-of-living raise that President Reagan promised...[he] promised that raise and he kept his promise, in spite of those sticks-in-the-mud who tried to keep him from doing what we elected him to do.

(Lutz,ed,204)

In fact, the cost-of-living increases had been provided automatically by law since 1975, and Reagan tried three times to roll them back or delay them but was overruled by

congressional opposition. One Republican official was quoted by the *Chicago Tribune* as calling the commercial "inoffensive" and added: "Since when is a commercial supposed to be accurate? Do women really smile when they clean their ovens?" (Lutz, 204)

While it cannot be assumed that this careless opinion of ethical rhetoric is typical of all modern American politicians or political rhetors, it is only one example of the countless ways in which administrators manipulate the lives and opinions of the governed through the strategic use of rhetoric. The above Reagan advertisement and resulting public statement were, in fact, recipients of the "Doublespeak Award," awarded by the National Council of Teachers of English in 1982; the Doublespeak Award is an ironic "tribute" to American public figures who have perpetrated language that is deceptive, evasive, euphemistic, confusing, or self-contradictory. Following George Orwell's intention of exposing inhumane, propagandistic uses of language, the committee restricts the Award to misuses of language with social or political consequences that are worthy, in their estimation, of censure.

Understandably, one might be skeptical of a comparison between modern political speech and the Doublespeak of George Orwell's Nineteen-Eighty-Four. The book was a work of fiction and Orwell did not imagine himself to be a

prophet; however, much of what Orwell wrote about Doublespeak in both his novel and his critical essay "Politics and the English Language" has been realized (Lutz, ed, xii). Doublespeak, or language misuse and linguistic insincerity, according to "Politics and the English Language," has spread from the language of politics to the language of business, of education, and almost all aspects of life.

Benjamin Lee Whorf, of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, argues in his essay, "Science and Linguistics," that each language conveys to its users a ready-made world view. "Every language...incorporates certain points of view and certain patterned resistances to widely divergent points of view" (Whorf, 212). He adds:

Language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade...[T]he world is presented in a kaleidoscope flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds- and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. (Whorf, 212-213)

Thus, if we accept this view, language becomes the means by which we shape reality and the means by which we communicate our perceptions of reality to others. In the political world, language is the means to a very specific end: to influence public perceptions and behavior. Political beliefs, perceptions, and expectations of the public are generally not based upon first-hand observations of and

experience with external events, but rather "upon cuings among groups of people who jointly create the meanings they will read into current and anticipated events. The various linguistic strategies and combinations of language in politics explains why different groups of people see the world in different ways (Edelman, 32-33). Language is power.

At this point, it is necessary to turn our attention toward a definition of what has been called "Doublespeak," a term borrowed from George Orwell which has been redefined by modern scholars.

Doublespeak is language which pretends to communicate but really does not. It is language which makes the bad seem good, something negative appear positive, something unpleasant appear attractive, or at least more tolerable. It is language which avoids or shifts responsibility: language which is at odds with its real and its supposed meaning. It is language which conceals or prevents thought. Doublespeak is language which does not extend thought but limits it (Boardman, 106). William Lutz, editor of the Quarterly Review of Doublespeak, specifies at least three kinds of Doublespeak: jargon, bureaucratese, and inflated language. There are many sub-categories, but the above list may be given the general label of "euphemism."

Modern society is simultaneously suspicious of and in need of euphemisms. Sometimes the world is so chaotic and

less-than-beautiful that humans need a way to mask what we see in order to create what we would much prefer to see or what we would have be seen. With that in mind, it is understandable to encounter euphemistic speech in both public and private life. This justification for euphemisms, however, excludes the fact that politicians or public leaders use them freely and strategically in order to steer public sentiment and opinions to a desired end. A clear example is the infamous custom of the Pentagon to re-name events and actions according to a certain aesthetic standard: a word such as "killing" is replaced by the phrase, "arbitrary deprivation of life."

In sum, when euphemism is used to manipulate or deceive, it becomes Doublespeak. Dan Hahn, in his article "Political Language: The Art of Saying Nothing," argues that the Doublespeak of politicians is significant and warrants examination because

1. Euphemisms make situations that are unpleasant seem more tolerable, thus lessening the feeling of a need to change them.
2. Problems are explained too simply, leading us to adopt oversimplified solutions.
3. Euphemistic inaccuracies lead to inappropriate solutions.

- * 4. Generalizations lead us to think politicians agree with us when, in fact, they have other policies in mind. (Hahn, 112)

*Example: a public leader promises to bring peace to his war-torn country; however, it is intended that violence will be the means used to achieve that peace.

Not all euphemisms are as harmless as the Pentagon's

labelling of toothpicks as *wood interdental stimulators*; the euphemisms of the Vietnam war are particularly unsettling. The words of American Air Force Personnel, for example, used metaphors as euphemisms in the following passage:

When they brought a lot of bombers from Guam, 2,500 miles away, and dropped huge supplies of bombs from 40,000 feet, enough to wipe out a whole valley, they called it a *carpet raid*. Vietnamese huts were *barbecued* by American firepower. To kill people with machine guns from the air was to *hose* them. With cluster-bomb units, a pilot could *lawn-mower* an area, destroying everyone in a long path several hundred feet wide. (Gibson 1974, 20)

Jargon, one of the classes of Doublespeak, is the specialized language of a trade, profession, or similar clique or group. When a member of such a group uses jargon to talk to someone outside of the group, with the knowledge that his/her audience will likely be confused or misunderstanding of the language, jargon becomes Doublespeak. Frank D'Angelo writes in his article, "Fiddle-Faddle, Flapdoodle and Balderdash," that jargon is frequently characterized by the following:

1. Using several words when one will do:

exhibits a tendency = tends
in an efficient manner = efficiently
resembling in nature = like
at this point in time = now

2. A preference for abstract nouns ending in *-tion*, *ity-*, *-ment*, *-ness*, *-ance*, *-ate*, *-ous*, *-ist*, etc.:

pertinacity	withholding (noun)
utilization	elimination
parsimonious	discountenance

3. Excessive use of words with Latin or Greek prefixes:

upgrade
contravene

debriefing
intrazonal

nonpreferential
dishabituate

4. The use of stock phrases:
in the final analysis
all things being equal
within the framework of
in the event that

With such examples in mind, it might make sense to group "jargon" and "bureaucratese" together since bureaucratese is simply a matter of overwhelming an audience with such words and phrases as appear in the above examples.

Another type of Doublespeak, inflated language, is intended mainly to make the ordinary seem extraordinary -such as calling a janitor a 'custodian' or a 'sanitation engineer'- or to make the simple seem complex -such as when the Chrysler company "initiates a career alternative enhancement program" (which really means that they are laying off five thousand workers). In military Doublespeak fashion, the 1983 invasion of Grenada was conducted not by the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, but by the "Caribbean Peace Keeping Forces." But then, according to the Pentagon, it wasn't an invasion, it was a "predawn vertical insertion."

Although Doublespeak is meant to be virtually undetectable to its intended audience, it can be recognized and identified. In his essay "The Teacher-Heal-Thyself-Myth," Hugh Rank has written that identifying Doublespeak requires an analysis of language "in context with the whole

situation." To identify the full context in which the language occurs, he asks these four questions:

1. Who is saying what to whom?
2. Under what conditions and circumstances?
3. With what intent?
4. With what result?

Answering these questions will usually help to identify, as Doublespeak, language that appears to be legitimate or that at first glance doesn't even appear to be Doublespeak (Lutz, 2).

As an example of the four criteria at work, let us briefly analyze a letter which a major car company in America sent to the owners of a particular model of their cars: the car was being recalled for correction of mechanical defects. In its letter, the company wrote that the rear axle bearings of the cars "can deteriorate" and that "continued driving with a failed bearing could result in disengagement of the axle shaft and adversely affect vehicle control." Using the above criteria, the situation may be described in the following way:

1. Who is saying what to whom? A car company is recalling a car from its customers, as well as giving its reasons for doing so.
2. Under what conditions and circumstances? The car which the company sold to the customers has a serious defect which should be corrected immediately, otherwise the customers run the risk of being killed.
3. With what intent? The company wants to prevent its

customers from being harmed by the car.

4. With what result? In theory, the customers are convinced to return their cars for the sake of personal safety.

These statements of fact are straightforward and terse; however, the reader of the actual letter must find this message beneath the Doublespeak which the company has used to disguise the harshness of its message. According to the letter, what are "mechanical deficiencies"- poor design, bad workmanship? The rear axle bearings "can" deteriorate, but will they deteriorate? If they do, what causes the deterioration? Note that "continued driving" is the subject of the sentence and suggests that it is not the company's poor manufacturing which is at fault but the driver who persists in driving. Note, too, "failed bearing," which implies that the *bearing* failed, not the company. "Adversely affect vehicle control" means nothing less than that the driver could lose control of the car and get killed.

In conclusion, whether we apply Hugh Rank's criteria to a car company's recall letter or to a Presidential Declaration of War, the criteria expose the underlying message of the rhetoric. This, in turn, reveals a gap between the intended and the real meaning of language of any genre. Whether in political speech or not, the Doublespeak is unmasked. Accordingly, we will test this premise on

Lyndon Johnson's August 4, 1964 Address to the Nation, his August 5, 1964 Address to Syracuse University, and his Remarks of August 10, 1964, in signing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

IV.

WHAT LBJ DID

How does a public leader find just the right words or the right way to say no more and no less than he means to say-bearing in mind that anything he says may topple governments and may involve the lives of innocent men?

-Lyndon B. Johnson

The commitments that resulted in U.S. military intervention in Vietnam were not the result of the sole efforts of one leader, Lyndon Johnson; they began under President Truman and continued under President Eisenhower. President Kennedy sent the first U.S. military advisors and other personnel, but large-scale and direct military involvement in the war occurred under President Johnson. It is for this reason that his words are the focus of this study.

In the previous chapters, politicians have been described as having the potential to be manipulative or misleading in their speech. Such speech has been defined as Doublespeak, which, in turn, has been shown to be made of specific features such as euphemisms. This chapter advances the theory that Johnson used Doublespeak as a means of gathering support for the policy of forceful intervention, which he had been unable to implement prior to August, 1964.

Because the supposed attacks against the *Maddox* and the *Turner Joy* were mysterious and questionable when they were

first reported to the U.S. government, it is conceivable that Johnson used misleading rhetoric naively and with no malice aforethought... and that the attacks, in his mind, merely provided a prima facie case for the retaliatory air raids which he ordered. The preponderance of evidence (i.e., the Pentagon Papers), however, indicates that the administration was preparing for bombing and other tactical operations in Vietnam long before the Tonkin incident; moreover, the exact wording of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution had been framed months prior to the reported chain of events. It therefore seems relatively clear that the events in Tonkin Gulf provided Johnson the rhetorical opportunity to justify previously formulated plans and decisions regarding the role of the United States in Vietnam- plans which could not be persuasively justified prior to August, 1964.

With the above perspective in mind, this chapter examines the rhetoric with which Johnson sought to justify his exercise of war powers in Vietnam, and attempts to identify and describe the Doublespeak within.

The first document to be studied is the Address to the Nation by President Johnson, August 4, 1964 (see Appendix A). To identify the full context of the speech, we apply Hugh Rank's criteria:

Who is saying what to whom? LBJ is making a televised address to the American public. He is relaying the official

version of what happened between North Vietnamese patrol boats and American destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf on August 2 and August 4, 1964; he is also telling the public that he is asking Congress for a resolution of support of retaliation against North Vietnam.

Under what conditions and circumstances? LBJ is running against Barry Goldwater for the presidency. North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked a U.S. destroyer in Tonkin Gulf on August 2. A doubtful second incident is reported two days later. Though his information is sketchy, LBJ announces to key Democratic members of Congress on the morning of August 4 that the U.S. destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf have definitely been attacked. LBJ wishes to retaliate and asks Congress for a resolution of support.

With what intent? Johnson wants to update the American public on the Vietnam situation and prepare them for what may be to come.

With what result? A resolution of support, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution is approved.

In the very first sentence of the address, Johnson gives both an account of the Vietnamese attack as well as his decision to respond with military force: "As President and Commander in Chief it is my duty to the American people to report that renewed hostile actions have today required me to order the military forces of the United States to take action in reply." In the second paragraph, Johnson supplies

an explanation of the Tonkin Gulf attack based on dubious evidence; thus, in only a few sentences, by closely associating a description of the attack and America's military reply, Johnson is able to "magnify and internationalize a local incident, providing the American public a strong case of justification" (Cherwitz, 98, 1978). He does not, however, explain the circumstances leading to the naval barrage. Moreover, he does not mention the very explanation for the presence of the *Maddox* and *Turner Joy* in the Tonkin Gulf. Throughout the entire address, rather than present details of the war, the President primarily condenses his arguments into clusters of more abstract forms. These subjective and euphemistic forms do not reflect external reality, as shall now be illustrated.

All available pre- and post-event polls show that Johnson was successful in getting popular approval for his Tonkin Gulf policies after this speech (Cherwitz, 41). But Johnson's words are carefully chosen. He makes use of euphemisms and abstract concepts toward the following goal: as long as the message of the speech has a positive effect on the audience, then the audience's perception and interpretation of individual words, phrases and symbols is of no consequence...because what Johnson really means is that he reserves the right to determine what those words actually suggest, regardless of their surface connotation.

Johnson reserves the right to decide how the Tonkin

Gulf Resolution will make the government's goals "clear," who in the government is "united in its determination," what "necessary measures in support of freedom...in Southeast Asia" will be taken, and what standard will be used to determine what measures are "necessary." When describing the alleged attack on the destroyers, he counts the enemy vessels as "a number" -a phrase which often translates as "many," but which, in this case, is a term which masks Johnson's lack of accurate statistics. In recounting what military moves have been made by both sides, he views the complex events in simplistic categorical frames of reference: the North Vietnamese took "hostile actions" and committed "acts of aggression" and "violence." In contrast, the U.S. Navy "performed" in this "engagement" in the "highest tradition." The North Vietnamese are thus portrayed as base and rash while the Navy appears to be committing noble and respectable deeds.

Because, according to the criteria, the President's duty is to familiarize the public with the situation and brace them for what may be to come, he must now explain U.S. intentions and goals. First, he states that "repeated acts of violence" must be met with "positive reply." One might ask: what is involved in a reply? Who will receive this reply and who or what will decide whether or not it is positive? Only the President has those answers. Johnson reserves the right to define "the importance of the struggle

for peace and security in Southeast Asia," just as he will define who will do the struggling and how much struggling is necessary to achieve those goals. The magnitude of America's military action "for the present," says Johnson, "will be limited and fitting"; however, who will establish these limits and how long "the present" will last is unknown. As for identifying who is in support of the goals of "freedom" and "peace," Johnson cites the "determination of all Americans to carry out our full commitment to the people and to the Government of South Vietnam." But what does this commitment entail, and does it extend to all of the people of South Vietnam? What if, in carrying out this commitment, the freedom and peace of *North Vietnamese* citizens is compromised?

In his speech, LBJ makes use of a common linguistic device called the passive voice. In the paragraph below, LBJ provides an outlook on the military situation in the Tonkin Gulf by describing present and future plans for the U.S. Navy and Airforce; the underlined words are examples of his use of the passive:

...repeated acts of violence against the Armed Forces of the United States must be met not only with alert defense but with positive reply. That reply is being given as I speak to you tonight. Air action is now in execution against gunboats and certain supporting facilities in North Vietnam which have been used in these hostile operations. (emphasis added)

In the prototypical passive voice, the agent (or doer of the verb's action) is not the most topical in a sentence.

Instead, some "non-agent" is the most topical participant (Givon, 566). To illustrate this, compare the following sentences:

Active voice: Mary ate the kumquat.

Passive voice: The kumquat was eaten. (by Mary)

The passivization of the active sentence effectively eliminates the agent, Mary, and moves the patient, kumquat, to subject position. One possible use of the passive voice in discourse is that, when the agent is not included, it makes it easier for a speaker to slip certain implications right by the listener- especially if the speaker is Mary and she doesn't want you to know that she ate the last kumquat. With that in mind, let us apply the active/passive model to the above sample of Johnson's language. Johnson's actual words are represented by the passive voice:

1. Active voice: The Airforce is giving that reply as I speak to you tonight.
Passive voice: That reply is being given as I speak to you tonight. (given by the Airforce)
2. Active voice: U.S. Military must meet the repeated acts of violence...
Passive voice: ...repeated acts of violence must be met. (met by the U.S. Military)
3. Active voice: ...and certain supporting facilities in Vietnam which [North Vietnamese?] have used in these hostile operations.
Passive voice: ...and certain supporting facilities in Vietnam which have been used in these hostile operations. (used by North Vietnamese?)

Thus, the passive voice eliminates an active statement's key actor, which is the agent. The result is a shift in

topicality, as well as ambiguity as to who or what specifically is involved in the situation. For example, in situation #2 emphasis is drawn away from the agent, the U.S. Military, and shifted to the phrase "repeated acts of violence." In situation #3, Johnson's deficit of solid facts is reflected in his failure to cite an agent, which we can only assume he means to be the North Vietnamese. While the passive voice is not inherently a Doublespeak device, here it results in the de-emphasizing or concealment of facts.

Finally, because of Johnson's simplistic black-and-white view of the communist-capitalist struggle, he tends to paint the major players in the episode as such: he believes that "firmness in the right is indispensable today for peace," and he has instructed the Secretary of State to make this position totally clear to "friends" and to "adversaries." The President will determine the right, the wrong, the friend and the foe.

This analysis of the Address to the Nation, August 4, 1964, reveals a possible conflict between what President Johnson's real intentions might have been, and his apparent intentions. The apparent aim of this speech, as outlined above, is to prepare and inform the American public; however, in affirming the existence of an attack based on doubtful evidence, avoiding details, using vague quantitative terms and using nouns and verbs which foster a

biased view, the speech does not inform but instead conceals. Thus, the criteria for analyzing language (who is saying what to whom, under what conditions and circumstances, with what intent, and with what results), reveal the Doublespeak. Here is the gap between the speaker's real and declared aim.

The second document to be examined is the Address by President Johnson at Syracuse University, August 5, 1964 (see Appendix B). It was designed to describe the severity of the Tonkin Gulf situation to the American public. The setting of the Address is as follows:

Who is saying what to whom? LBJ is addressing a guest audience at Syracuse University; he is sharing his perception of the past, present and future goals of the United States when dealing with situations like Vietnam.

Under what conditions and circumstances? It is as yet unclear what exactly transpired in the Tonkin Gulf. Although mixed stories are still circulating, the desire in Washington to make a major move has gained momentum and eclipsed the Tonkin Gulf incident; administration officials are advising Britain and West Germany to be ready for secret briefings and arguments are being drawn up to be presented to the United Nations. Johnson has sent his resolution to Congress for approval.

With what intent? Johnson wishes to prepare the American public as well as justify U.S. action and the

Tonkin Gulf Resolution by reminding his audience of American values and ideals.

With what result? The Tonkin Gulf Resolution is passed.

Like the Address to the Nation, the Syracuse Address is based on action already taken by President Johnson as Commander-in-Chief. It, too, opens with Johnson's explanation that he has ordered air raids on North Vietnam. American retaliation and the justification of that retaliation are at issue. This address is well-known, by scholars who study Johnson, for being filled with vivid and evocative language. Rhetorician Richard Cherwitz writes of the address:

...Johnson spoke of 'repeated attacks' by 'hostile vessels.' This attack, declared the President was an 'act of aggression.' Couched in this language was the threat or danger of direct aggression against the United States and its people. This language contributed to an overall impression of crisis. (Cherwitz, 98)

What is more, the sentence structure of the speech is highly stylistic. For example, Johnson describes the disputable August 4th attack against the two United States destroyers:

The attacks were deliberate.
The attacks were unprovoked.
The attacks have been answered.

The words appear to be plain enough, but beneath their simplicity lies an arresting design. It was stated earlier that euphemisms cause problems to be explained too simply; complementing this is Johnson's parallel structuring of

sentences, as the example above shows. He repeats the technique:

President Eisenhower sought -and President Kennedy sought- the same objective that I still seek:
That the governments of Southeast Asia honor the international agreements which apply in the area.
That those governments leave each other alone.
That they resolve their differences peacefully.

These are simple sentences, iconic of a simple situation, and suggestive of a solution which may be too simple.

When political rhetoric comes to be characterized by such simplicity and iconicity, as is the Syracuse Address, then it comes to resemble a political slogan. A political slogan is used as a sort of "shorthand" for defining the beliefs of a people. But often the slogans come to define the people. Dan Hahn illustrates this process:

The slogan *America- Love it or Leave It* originated in reaction to criticism of the country. But as the slogan was repeated again and again, it became a statement with which to taunt the critics. Beliefs about the country were forgotten; what was left was a shouted alternative. The slogan ceased to express any beliefs about the goodness of the country and came, itself, to be a belief. (Hahn, 115)

A similar phenomenon occurs as a result of Johnson's infamous use of "aggression/aggressor" (a word which occurs fourteen times in the Syracuse Address). Rhetorical research indicates that American media as well as many political dignitaries internalized and copied Johnson's attitude on this issue. Congressman Edward Reush's telegram to the President, dated August 5, 1964, is particularly revealing:

I want to assure you of my complete support for the action you have taken in retaliation to the unprovoked attacks made in international waters...this new act of aggression demanded a firm response. Your decision to bomb the North is decisive and fitting, and will be supported by all Americans. (Cherwitz, 47) (emphasis added)

The vocabulary used in this telegram reflects President Johnson's very words. Even though the Congressman's knowledge of the Tonkin Gulf situation may not extend any further than the news he has heard on the television or from the President himself, he is convinced that what is going on in Vietnam is an example of "aggression. Hence, it appears that Johnson's speech has noticeably influenced public opinion. But there is a problem: the media and the people have absorbed an ambiguous political symbol. The symbol, "aggression," is a simplistic categorization of what is actually a highly complex political and human drama; therefore, the symbol does not extend the thought of the audience, but limits it. The result is Doublespeak.

The Address to Syracuse University is rich with examples of euphemism, jargon, and linguistic complexity. Again, euphemism makes a situation that is intolerable seem tolerable, thus lessening one's inclination to resist it. When the bombing of North Vietnam is called "appropriate armed action," it gives reality a better face. Johnson says:

For 10 years, three American Presidents -President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, and your present President- and the American people have been actively concerned with threats to the peace and security of the

peoples of Southeast Asia from the Communist government of North Vietnam. (emphasis added)

United States concern with peace in Southeast Asia is being portrayed as a time-honored American tradition.

Furthermore, Richard Cherwitz suggests that this strategy "allowed Johnson to bring the crisis into the homes of every American citizen." By capturing the essence of the situation in terms of good/bad ideology (e.g. security, peace/ communism, threats), Johnson succeeds in making things more global, dramatic, and real.

LBJ challenges the world to "make its will against war known and to make it known clearly and to make it felt and to make it felt decisively." Again, Johnson employs parallel clause structures which, because they are short and terse, "stick out" and make a lasting impression. That technique is combined with the use of strong adjectives such as "clearly" and "decisively." Interestingly, his persuasive strategy is to appeal to anti-war feelings; however, the words "make its will...known clearly and...felt decisively" actually propose that America use some sort of force in order to prevent war. If, by "making its will known," Johnson means to use military force, then his persuasive strategy and real intentions are in conflict. This type of euphemism, then, leads the audience to believe that a politician agrees with them when, indeed, the politician may have other policies in mind.

To create an image of America searching for peace,

Johnson uses single and multiple abstractions. He stacks words on words as a means of heightening metaphoric generalizations: "Aggression -deliberate, willful, and systematic aggression- has unmasked its face to the entire world"; he also declares that the North Vietnamese government has "struck out on the high seas in an act of aggression."

Johnson uses the above rhetorical technique in the Syracuse Address. He also shows a preference for abstract nouns throughout the speech- such as "talents," "poverty," "responsibilities," and "ignorance." This is a feature of jargon, another form of Doublespeak. When a rhetor such as Johnson uses the specialized vocabulary that has risen from a political situation like that in the Tonkin Gulf, and uses this vocabulary with the knowledge that his audience will likely be confused or misunderstanding of the language, then he is using jargon. For example: Johnson expresses the desire that Southeast Asia devote its "talents" to "bettering the lives of their peoples by working against poverty and disease and ignorance." He neglects to tell the public how his administration defines such things as "poverty" or "ignorance" in a third-world, Southeast Asian context. After detailing the aggressive acts of North Vietnam in its neighboring countries, he immediately states: "There can be and there must be no doubt about the policy and no doubt about the purpose. So there can be no doubt

about the responsibilities of men and the responsibilities of nations that are devoted to peace." Here, he speaks of such crucial things as policies, purposes and responsibilities, but leaves them as they are: ambiguous, undetailed, and abstract.

In sum, Johnson strategically guides his audience's moral judgement and sense of duty by denying them specific facts and objective accounts of the international situation.

Finally, we turn to President Johnson's Remarks of August 10, 1964, in Signing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (see Appendix C). The speech was televised, and the actual signing of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution took place on the same program. The historical context of the speech is as follows:

Who is saying what to whom? LBJ is telling the American public that, since the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was approved by Congress, he will begin to bomb Vietnam.

Under what conditions and circumstances? 15,000 American military advisors are in South Vietnam, which has received \$500 million in aid in the year of '63. Communist leadership in Hanoi has decided to step up the struggle in the south. North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked U.S. destroyer in Tonkin Gulf, August 2. A doubtful second incident reported two days later has led to the drafting of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution.

With what intent? Johnson wants to inform the American

public of the implications of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution.

With what result? America begins bombing of North Vietnam.

President Johnson's Remarks Upon Signing the Resolution is not unlike the Address to the Nation and the Address to Syracuse in that it contains examples of jargon, euphemism, abstract nouns, and ambiguity. Indeed, many of the same words and phrases used in the last two Addresses are "recycled" in his televised speech; nevertheless, the rhetorical methodology revealed by the speech is no less interesting. Let us look at a few examples of each type of Doublespeak.

In the speech, LBJ's opening remarks briefly review the events of the past several days:

My fellow Americans, 1 week ago, half a world away, our nation was faced by the challenge of deliberate and unprovoked acts of aggression in Southeast Asia. The cause of peace clearly required that we respond with a prompt and unmistakable reply.

Johnson refers to Vietnam as being "half a world away," instead of using the more direct and accurate label "North Vietnam." The ambiguity of "half a world away" draws emphasis away from an actual country and its people, depriving it of its name and effectively de-humanizing it. By viewing the country as more alien than it actually is, Americans can more easily accept the simple solution of bombing North Vietnam. By definition, this is euphemism at work. To accompany the allegory, Johnson describes the

bombing as something for which

Americans of all parties and philosophies can be justly proud and justly grateful: proud that democracy has once again demonstrated its capacity to act swiftly and decisively against aggressors...this is a great strength that we must preserve.

Looking beyond the euphemisms, one may interpret Johnson to be saying, "Americans ought to feel proud and grateful that the United States has once again demonstrated its ability to use swift and overwhelming military violence against those whom they judge to be aggressive threats."

LBJ makes references to such elusive concepts as "democracy," "the wisdom and judgement God grants to me," and "our friends." The philosophical attraction of Constitution, God and friendship is central to traditional American society. Thus, to use them as part of an ideological appeal helps dramatize a highly local event and "drive it home" to an average American. These concepts are, however, purely subjective terms; President Johnson reserves the ability to decide who is friend to America. He may use whatever judgement he sees fit -because God grants it to him. If he decides to involve America in a particular operation, he involves "democracy" in America's place.

Finally, the phrase "defending their freedom" performs a function through which inconvenient facts (i.e., to defend a country involves the use of force) are excluded, and in which self-serving courses of action (i.e., to uphold America's role as democracy watchdog for the world) are

justified. It suggests a friendly interest in a foreign land; however, in this case, it necessarily involves the stationing of military forces as a threat to indigenous political groups or to those in neighboring countries. References to being "the most powerful of all nations" (which can be translated into the power to kill people) provide another example of the metaphoric erasure of disturbing values.

In light of the above analysis, it can easily be concluded that the rhetoric of Lyndon Johnson contained many revealing examples of what is called Doublespeak. Although Doublespeak has not been positively portrayed in the examination of the above three documents, we must remember that, while Doublespeak is inherently inaccurate, inaccuracy is not inherently dangerous. An inaccuracy which leads us to act more humanely may be beneficial, while one that leads to an inappropriate solution is obviously harmful. The rhetor who is predisposed to the latter is the unethical rhetor.

V.

CONCLUSION

No rhetorical act can reveal the whole truth; even highly informative discourse addressed to experts can reflect only the "reality" it seeks to encompass selectively, obscuring, at least through emphasis, some elements of whatever is being discussed. When that is taken into account, however, presidential war rhetoric evinces an unusual tendency to misrepresent the events described therein in ways strategically related to the president's desire to stifle dissent and unify the nation for immediate and sustained action. That tendency has little to do with presidential character but rather reflects the unusual rhetorical situation in which presidents find themselves in this discourse. Because the president assumes extraordinary, even, near-dictatorial, powers in assuming the office of commander in chief, and because war rhetoric seeks unanimity of conviction and action, temptations to misrepresent are heightened. In effect, presidents seek a degree of support that, except as a response to invasion, is virtually impossible in a democracy, but one that is vital to the legitimation of their extraordinary powers as Commander-in-Chief.

-Karlyn Campbell
(Campbell, 118)

Appendix A

2. Address to the Nation by President
Johnson, August 4, 1964*

My fellow Americans: As President and Commander in Chief, it is my duty to the American people to report that renewed hostile actions against United States ships on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin have today required me to order the military forces of the United States to take action in reply.

The initial attack on the destroyer *Maddox*, on August 2, was repeated today by a number of hostile vessels attacking two U.S. destroyers with torpedoes. The destroyers and supporting aircraft acted at once on the orders I gave after the initial act of aggression. We believe at least two of the attacking boats were sunk. There were no U.S. losses.

The performance of commanders and crews in this engagement is in the highest tradition of the United States Navy. But repeated acts of violence against the Armed Forces of the United States must be met not only with alert defense but with positive reply. That reply is being given as I speak to you tonight. Air action is now in execution against gunboats and certain supporting facilities in North Viet-Nam which have been used in these hostile operations.

In the larger sense this new act of aggression, aimed directly at our own forces, again brings home to all of us in the United States the importance of the struggle for peace and security in Southeast Asia. Aggression by terror against the peaceful villagers of South Viet-Nam has now been joined by open aggression on the high seas against the United States of America.

The determination of all Americans to carry out our full com-

* Source: *Department of State Bulletin*, August 24, 1964, vol. 51, p. 259.

mitment to the people and to the Government of South Viet-Nam will be redoubled by this outrage. Yet our response, for the present, will be limited and fitting. We Americans know, although others appear to forget, the risks of spreading conflict. We still seek no wider war.

I have instructed the Secretary of State to make this position totally clear to friends and to adversaries and, indeed, to all. I have instructed Ambassador Stevenson to raise this matter immediately and urgently before the Security Council of the United Nations. Finally, I have today met with the leaders of both parties in the Congress of the United States, and I have informed them that I shall immediately request the Congress to pass a resolution making it clear that our Government is united in its determination to take all necessary measures in support of freedom and in defense of peace in Southeast Asia.

I have been given encouraging assurance by these leaders of both parties that such a resolution will be promptly introduced, freely and expeditiously debated, and passed with overwhelming support. And just a few minutes ago I was able to reach Senator Goldwater, and I am glad to say that he has expressed his support of the statement that I am making to you tonight.

It is a solemn responsibility to have to order even limited military action by forces whose overall strength is as vast and as awesome as those of the United States of America, but it is my considered conviction, shared throughout your Government, that firmness in the right is indispensable today for peace. That firmness will always be measured. Its mission is peace.

APPENDIX B

4. Address by President Johnson, Syracuse University, August 5, 1964*

Dr. Newhouse, Chancellor Tolley, Governor and Mrs. Rockefeller, Members of the Congress, distinguished guests, members of the faculty, ladies and gentlemen:

I know that you share with me the great admiration and pride that the generosity of Dr. Newhouse has made possible for this area of our nation and for this great institution. We all are in his debt, and in the years and generations and centuries to come we will see the products of this great adventure.

On this occasion it is fitting, I think, that we are meeting here to dedicate this new center to better understanding among all men. For that is my purpose in speaking to you.

Last night I spoke to the people of the Nation. This morning I speak to the people of all nations—so that they may understand without mistake our purpose in the action that we have been required to take.

On August 2d the United States destroyer *Maddox* was attacked on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin by hostile vessels of the Government of North Viet-Nam.

On August 4th that attack was repeated in those same waters against two United States destroyers.

The attacks were deliberate.

The attacks were unprovoked.

The attacks have been answered.

Throughout last night, and within the last 12 hours, air units of the United States 7th Fleet have sought out the hostile vessels

*Source: *Department of State Bulletin*, August 24, 1964, vol. 51, pp. 260-261.

and certain of their supporting facilities. Appropriate armed action has been taken against them. The United States is now asking that this be brought immediately and urgently before the Security Council of the United Nations.

We welcome—and we invite—the scrutiny of all men who seek peace, for peace is the only purpose of the course that America pursues.

The Gulf of Tonkin may be distant, but none can be detached about what has happened there.

Aggression—deliberate, willful, and systematic aggression—has unmasked its face to the entire world. The world remembers—the world must never forget—that aggression unchallenged is aggression unleashed.

We of the United States have not forgotten. That is why we have answered this aggression with action.

America's course is not precipitate.

America's course is not without long provocation.

For 10 years, three American Presidents—President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, and your present President—and the American people have been actively concerned with threats to the peace and security of the peoples of Southeast Asia from the Communist government of North Viet-Nam.

President Eisenhower sought—and President Kennedy sought—the same objective that I still seek:

—That the governments of Southeast Asia honor the international agreements which apply in the area;

—That those governments leave each other alone;

—That they resolve their differences peacefully;

—That they devote their talents to bettering the lives of their peoples by working against poverty and disease and ignorance.

In 1954 we made our position clear toward Viet-Nam.

In July of that year we stated we would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the 1954 agreements “with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security.”

In September of that year the United States signed the Manila Pact, on which our participation in SEATO is based. That pact recognized that aggression by means of armed attack on South

Viet-Nam would endanger the peace and the safety of the nations signing that solemn agreement.

In 1962 we made our position clear toward Laos. We signed the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos. That accord provided for the withdrawal of all foreign forces and respect for the neutrality and independence of that little country.

The agreements of 1954 and 1962 were also signed by the government of North Viet-Nam.

In 1954 that government pledged that it would respect the in no hostile act against the other party.

territory under the military control of the other party and engage In 1962 that government pledged that it would "not introduce into the Kingdom of Laos foreign troops or military personnel."

That government also pledged that it would "not use the territory of the Kingdom of Laos for interference in the internal affairs of other countries."

That government of North Viet-Nam is now willfully and systematically violating those agreements of both 1954 and 1962.

To the south, it is engaged in aggression against the Republic of Viet-Nam.

To the west, it is engaged in aggression against the Kingdom of Laos.

To the east, it has now struck out on the high seas in an act of aggression against the United States of America.

There can be and there must be no doubt about the policy and no doubt about the purpose.

So there can be no doubt about the responsibilities of men and the responsibilities of nations that are devoted to peace.

Peace cannot be assured merely by assuring the safety of the United States destroyer *Maddox* or the safety of other vessels of other flags.

Peace requires that the existing agreements in the area be honored.

Peace requires that we and all our friends stand firm against the present aggressions of the government of North Viet-Nam.

The government of North Viet-Nam is today flouting the will of the world for peace. The world is challenged to make its will

against war known and to make it known clearly and to make it felt and to make it felt decisively.

So, to our friends of the Atlantic alliance, let me say this this morning. The challenge that we face in Southeast Asia today is the same challenge that we have faced with courage and that we have met with strength in Greece and Turkey, in Berlin and Korea, in Lebanon and in Cuba, and to any who may be tempted to support or to widen the present aggression I say this: There is no threat to any peaceful power from the United States of America. But there can be no peace by aggression and no immunity from reply. That is what is meant by the actions that we took yesterday.

Finally, my fellow Americans, I would like to say to ally and to adversary alike: Let no friend needlessly fear—and no foe vainly hope—that this is a nation divided in this election year. Our free elections—our full and free debate—are America's strength, not America's weakness.

There are no parties and there is no partisanship when our peace or the peace of the world is imperiled by aggressors in any part of the world.

We are one nation, united and indivisible. And united and indivisible we shall remain.

Appendix C

5. President Johnson's Remarks of August 10, 1964, in Signing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution*

My fellow Americans, 1 week ago, half a world away, our nation was faced by the challenge of deliberate and unprovoked acts of aggression in Southeast Asia. The cause of peace clearly required that we respond with a prompt and unmistakable reply.

As Commander in Chief, the responsibility was mine—and mine alone. I gave the orders for that reply, and it has been given.

But, as President, there rested upon me still another responsibility—the responsibility of submitting our course to the representatives of the people for them to verify it or veto it. I directed that to be done last Tuesday, too.

Within 24 hours, the resolution before me now had been placed before each House of Congress. In each House, the resolution was promptly examined in committee and reported for action. In each House, there followed free and serious debate. In each House, the resolution was passed on Friday last—with a total of 502 votes in support and 2 opposed.

Thus, today our course is clearly known in every land. There can be no mistake—no miscalculation—of where America stands or what this generation of Americans stand for. The unanimity of the Congress reflects the unanimity of the country.

This resolution is short. It is straightforward. I hope it will be read around the world. The position of the United States is stated plainly.

To any armed attack upon our forces, we shall reply.

*Source: *Department of State Bulletin*, August 24, 1964, vol. 51, pp. 302–303.

To any in Southeast Asia who ask our help in defending their freedom, we shall give it.

In that region, there is nothing we covet, nothing we seek—no territory, no military position, no political ambition. Our one desire—our one determination—is that the people of Southeast Asia be left in peace to work out their own destinies in their own way.

This resolution stands squarely within the four corners of the Constitution of the United States. It is clearly consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

This is another new page in the outstanding record of accomplishment the 88th Congress is writing.

Americans of all parties and philosophies can be justly proud and justly grateful: proud that democracy has once again demonstrated its capacity to act swiftly and decisively against aggressors; grateful that there is in our National Government understanding, accord, and unity between the executive and the legislative branches—without regard to partisanship. This is a great strength that we must preserve.

This resolution confirms and reinforces powers of the Presidency. I pledge to all Americans to use those powers with all the wisdom and judgment God grants to me.

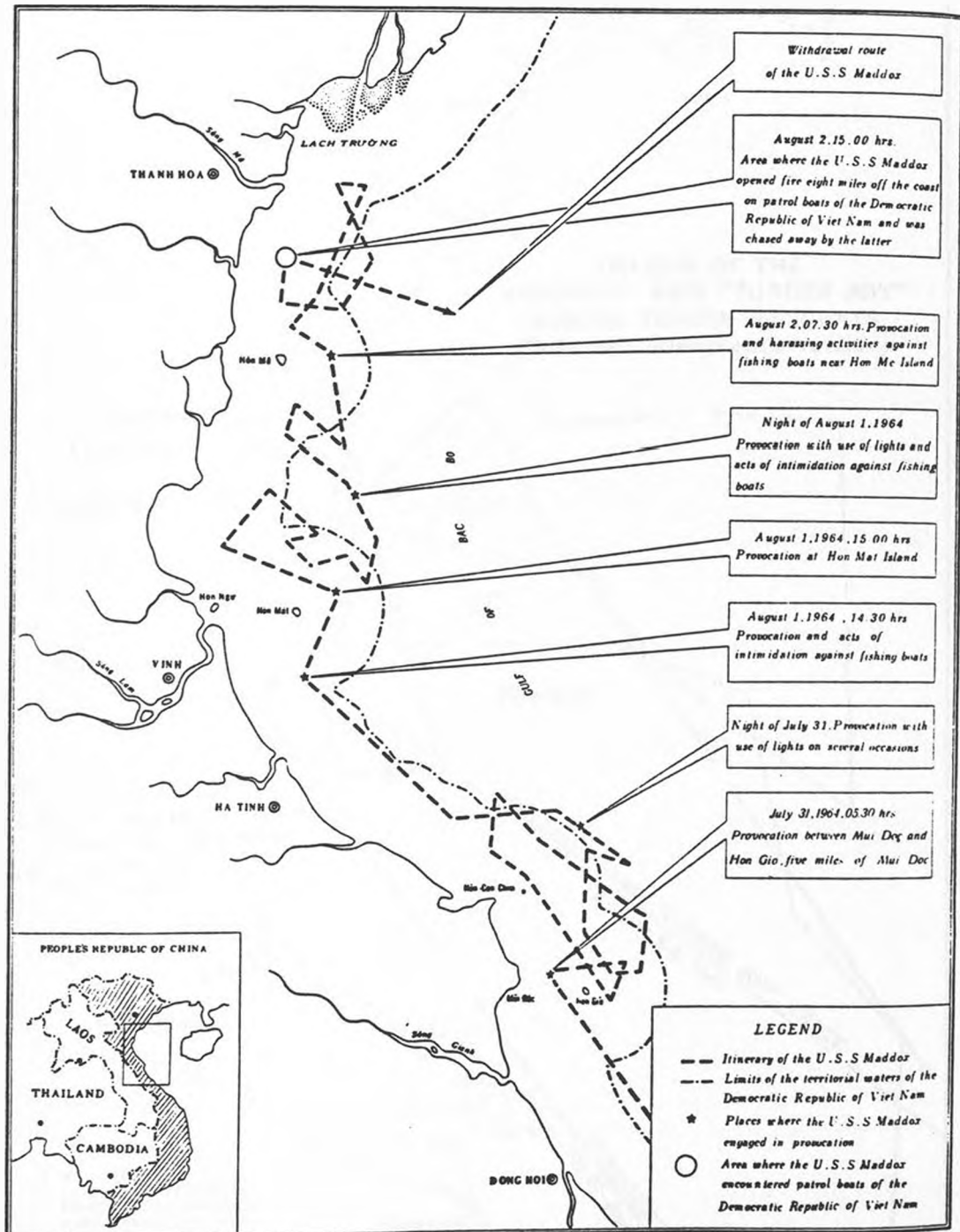
It is everlastingly right that we should be resolute in reply to aggression and steadfast in support of our friends.

But it is everlastingly necessary that our actions should be careful and measured. We are the most powerful of all nations—we must strive also to be the most responsible of nations.

So, in this spirit, and with this pledge, I now sign this resolution.

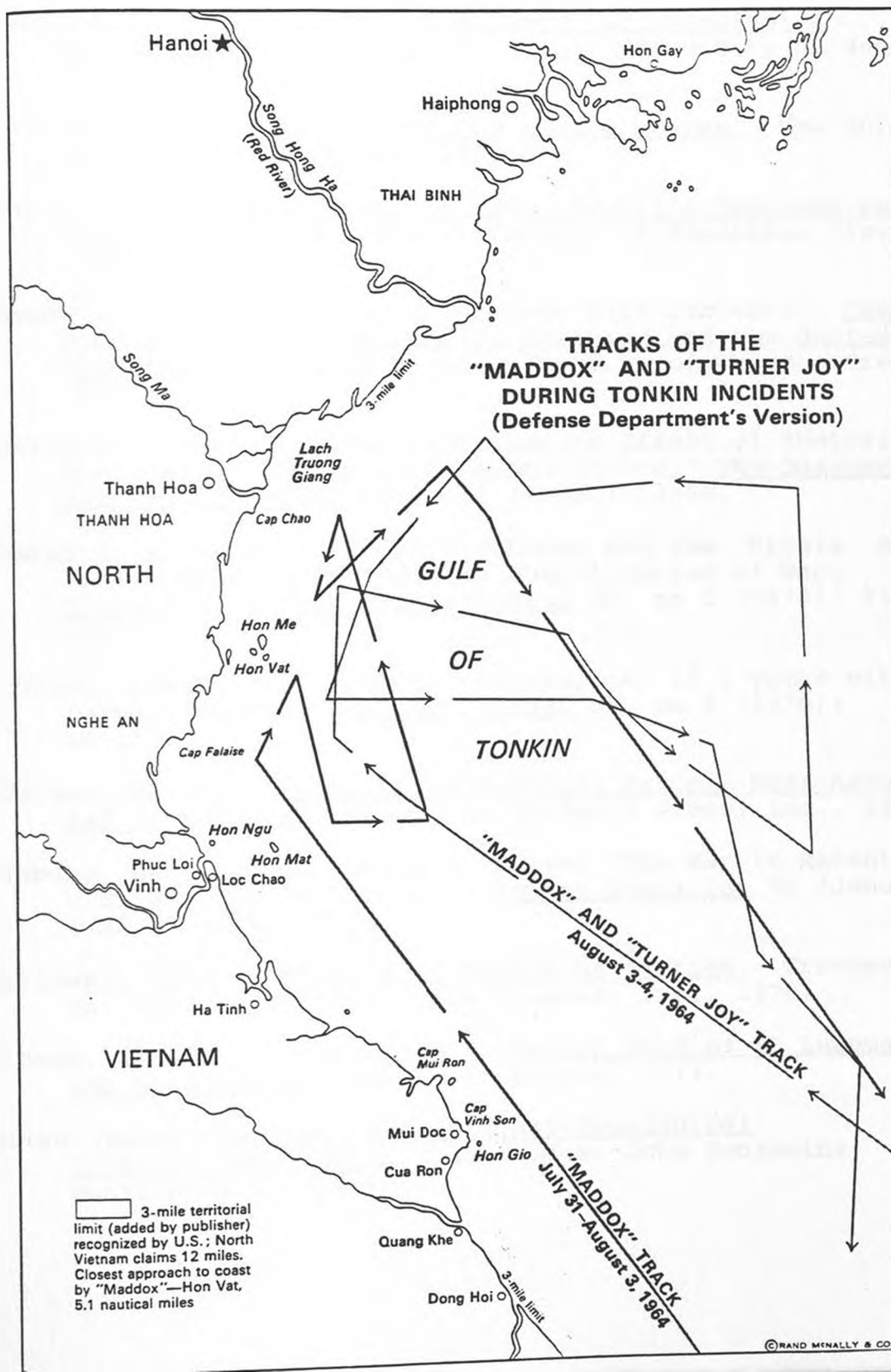
Appendix D

PROVOCATIONS BY THE U. S. S. MADDOX IN THE TERRITORIAL WATERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM FROM JULY 31 TO AUGUST 2, 1964



Source: North Vietnamese White Paper on the Tonkin Incidents
Circulated September 1964 (Reproduction unedited)

Appendix E



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