

SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON'S CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY: AN  
INVESTIGATION OF GENDER AND NATIONAL SECURITY DISCOURSE

by

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(Under the Direction of Belinda Stillion Southard)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines three different hearings in which the United States' third female secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, testified before Congress: her confirmation hearing, an annual budget approval hearing, and the hearings investigating the attack in Benghazi, Libya. Clinton's position as a uniquely gendered political figure demanded she respond as both secretary of state and gendered subject. Throughout these hearings, Clinton negotiated the gendered constraints of the femininity/competency and aging/visibility double binds, the "exceptional woman" frame, and her first lady ethos as a power-hungry "bitch" or feminist icon. This thesis finds that Clinton prioritized diplomacy over defense and development, adopted a military ethos, and shifted generic expectations. These strategies allowed Clinton to assert superior competency as a secretary of state, in ways that both highlighted and resisted her gendered identity. Broadly speaking, this thesis contributes to the ongoing task of understanding the tensions created when gender, politics, and public discourse intersect.

INDEX WORDS: Gender, National Security, Hillary Clinton, Congressional Hearing, Secretary of State

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## CHAPTER 1

### HILLARY CLINTON'S CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY: POLITICAL COMMUNICATION, GENDER, AND NATIONAL SECURITY

**Senator John McCain:** “Thank you, Madam Secretary, and it’s wonderful to see you in good health and—

**Clinton:** “Thank you”

**McCain:** “as combative as ever.”

On January 23, 2013, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton testified before both the US House of Representatives and the US Senate regarding an attack on the diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya—an attack that left four Americans dead, including the Ambassador to Libya. In the short exchange noted above, Senator John McCain (R-AZ) reinforced several conflicting assumptions about women in politics, including the assumptions that they are overly aggressive and that they are physically and emotionally weak. Labeling Clinton as combative perpetuated the stereotype that she, as a female politician, was too “manly” and yet, is not in full control of her emotional responses. McCain’s statement also helped perpetuate the view that Clinton could not handle her national security responsibilities. Likewise, his reference to Clinton’s health also worked to undermine her position as secretary of state. Shortly before the hearing, Clinton had been hospitalized for a blood clot near her brain. McCain joined several members of Congress who mentioned her health scare over the course of the hearing. While seemingly positive, these comments suggested that Clinton was weak. To the rhetorical critic, it’s not hard to see that McCain marked Clinton as both weak and overly emotional, which, in the highly gendered discursive arena of national politics, accentuated Clinton’s gendered identity and in turn, undermined her authority during the hearing.



McCain's exchange with Clinton was just one of several moments during the Benghazi hearings that exposed the tensions between gender, politics, and public discourse. Much scholarly attention has been paid to the rhetorical force of these tensions. The Clinton testimony, however, points to an understudied source of public discourse: the secretary of state. In light of the robust scholarship attending to gender and US politics, and the fact that Clinton was the third woman to hold this position, it's surprising that scholars have little or nothing to say about gender and the secretary of state position. Also, considering the wealth of scholarship that examines Clinton as a first lady and presidential candidate, it's surprising that this attention has not extended to her tenure as secretary of state. Attempting to fill these gaps, this project explores three of Clinton's congressional hearings in order to draw conclusions about the intersection of gender, national security, and Clinton's rhetorical leadership. In brief, this thesis argues that through these hearings, Clinton negotiated the limits and possibilities of her gendered identity. In turn, Clinton asserted her authority within the highly masculine discursive arena of national politics and security rhetoric. Specifically, this thesis finds that she constituted these hearings as a site of rhetorical invention in which she: prioritized diplomacy in order to assert her competence; moved in and out of a military-like persona to assert her experience and knowledge; and, reframed the hearing's exigency to assert her patriotism and endurance as a leader. All three strategies dually respond to the exigencies typically confronted by secretaries of state *and* women in national politics. Considering Clinton's highly mediated and highly contested gendered identity—one shaped over the course of at least two decades in the public eye—Clinton's secretary of state discourse offers a unique site of critical inquiry. Thus, the following offers a brief overview of how this study can extend key conversations, as well as more in-depth

reviews of literatures on gender, national politics, and national security discourses. Last, this chapter offers a précis of this thesis's case studies and the questions each chapter aims to answer.

### **Introduction to Study**

In 2009, following President Barack Obama's nomination of his fellow Democratic Party presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton was confirmed as secretary of state. Clinton became the third woman to hold the office. She joined Dr. Condoleezza Rice, who was appointed by George W. Bush in 2005, and Madeleine Albright, the first female secretary of state, appointed by Bill Clinton in 1997. The office of secretary of state demands substantial and ongoing rhetorical efforts, making it a key discursive site for exploring how women manage the constraints and possibilities tied to gender and politics. As the State Department's official website explains, the secretary of state's duties require a range of tasks including negotiating foreign affairs abroad, advising the president on matters of foreign policy, and informing Congress and the American people on issues pertaining to foreign relations.<sup>1</sup> Typically, a secretary of state achieves these tasks through a combination of public addresses and written statements. For example, the public daily schedule for Secretary John Kerry, from the week of September 9-16, 2013, included a joint press conference with the UK Foreign Service Secretary, testimony in front of the House Armed Service Committee, a speech to the Foreign Affairs Policy Board, several briefings on Capitol Hill, and travel to Geneva to discuss issues related to Syria. Adding to this list of more notable events, Kerry's schedule also included several meetings, press releases, and even a Google+ Hangout where he discussed Syria live on the Internet.<sup>2</sup> As this list of duties demonstrates, the secretary of state is frequently called upon to navigate the rhetorical demands of a range of institutions and organizations. Often, this navigation takes place at congressional

hearings, which, as was the case in the McCain-Clinton exchange noted above, can be a site where gender, power, and rhetoric undergo constant negotiation.

While Clinton's testimony draws attention to the rhetorical functions of a secretary of state, it also suggests that studying these functions cannot take place without engaging ongoing conversations about politics and gender. A wealth of rhetorical scholarship addresses gender in relation to the office of the presidency, as well as in relation to office-seeking processes. However, little work explores the relationship between gender and the office of secretary of state. Significant works on gender and the presidency include projects on the rhetoric of First Ladies,<sup>3</sup> the gendering of Sarah Palin by the media,<sup>4</sup> and several efforts to analyze Hillary Clinton's senatorial and presidential campaigns<sup>5</sup> as well as her portrayals by the media.<sup>6</sup> Notably, one book chapter looked at gender and secretaries of state, analyzing Albright's and Rice's political discourse. Although this study analyzed interviews, press conferences, prepared statements, and testimonies, it draws conclusions without situating the secretaries' rhetoric in context, and thus, a sustained study of these discourses and how they managed political *and gendered* exigencies represents a gap in the study of female secretaries of state.<sup>7</sup> The appointment of three female secretaries of state to date points to the need to expand upon rhetorical scholarship attending to the politics and gender at play in this highly esteemed position in American politics.

Compounding the significance of a study of secretaries of state are the mediated constraints that must be managed by women in politics. Indeed, the media is notorious for depicting women as too aggressive, and not feminine enough, or too feminine, and not assertive enough. Several projects have explored this interactive process and the ways in which it constructs women's gendered identities. For example, previous studies have examined how a

gendered identity can be co-produced in the interaction between an interviewer and a subject.<sup>8</sup>

Other works, more explicitly directed at women in politics, have explored how the media contextualized Sarah Palin's gender performance in the 2008 election,<sup>9</sup> and how the media framed Hillary Clinton as her career progressed.<sup>10</sup> Finally, some scholars have suggested that female politicians may use the media in an attempt to modify or improve an existing gender identity.<sup>11</sup> As prominent political figure, Clinton has been particularly susceptible to gendering by the media and would need to navigate these constraints in the production of her testimony.

Further constraining women in political office—especially secretaries of state—are the masculine ideals attached to national security discourses. Scholars demonstrate how the very notion of citizenship is tied to masculine, militarized, worldview,<sup>12</sup> how the marginalization of women's voices in security discourse is deeply rooted in institutional practice,<sup>13</sup> how women engaged in military tasks are marked as children, mothers, or imposters,<sup>14</sup> and finally, that the American people view female politicians as less trustworthy and competent at handling national security issues.<sup>15</sup> Secretaries of state must confront these issues, especially in light of the purview of their position. The secretary of state is required to spend significant time engaging in international relations abroad. Often, this diplomacy takes place in countries that are openly hostile to the idea of a woman in a leadership position. Compounding this discrimination, secretaries of state are expected to engage in the creation and revision of domestic policies regarding national security and foreign affairs, two areas that have traditionally devalued women's voices. Considering these tasks, it's surprising that scholars of rhetoric have yet to explore *how* women have successfully accomplished them.

Broadly speaking, this thesis explores how gender and national security discourses complicated and informed Clinton's congressional testimonies. I turn to three different case

studies in order to more fully unpack how Clinton negotiated the rhetorical constraints and possibilities that lie at the intersection of gender and politics. First, I explore her confirmation hearing. Since confirmation hearings focus on the personal qualifications of a secretary of state, the extent to which Clinton's gender shaped and was shaped by the discourse of this hearing will be examined. Next, I investigate an annual hearing to approve the State Department's budget. Since seeking budget approval is a standard task of the secretary of state, an analysis of this hearing exposes Clinton's strategies at play absent a specific crisis. Finally, I turn to testimony delivered in response to a national security crisis. This case study explores Clinton's testimony on the attack in Benghazi and analyzes her rhetorical strategies that managed a highly mediated crisis. As a whole, this thesis's fusion and extension of existing work on gender and security discourse contributes to the ongoing task of understanding the tensions created when gender, politics, and public discourse intersect.

### **Literature Review**

This thesis's study of secretary of state testimonials is grounded in and aims to extend two bodies of rhetorical scholarship. These are: the rhetoric of national politics, and the rhetoric of gender and national security discourse.

#### ***Political Communication***

An examination of existing political communication scholarship indicates that secretary of state rhetoric has yet to be the focus of extended, systematic rhetorical study. Instead, the largest area of focus in political communication literature centers on the rhetorical demands of the presidency. Examining this body of literature illuminates the kinds of questions asked when studying the rhetoric of a high-profile office in US politics and points to the ways in which a study of Clinton's secretary of state rhetoric can tell us more about political rhetoric. Throughout

the history of presidential studies, several paradigms have been proposed for understanding presidential discourse. While not the first scholar to approach the rhetoric of the American presidency, Jeffrey Tulis's 1987 book, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, serves as one of these foundational documents, establishing the concept of the rhetorical presidency. He explained, "Most students of the presidency view the political system from the perspective of the presidency. I call this stance 'institutional partisanship' because it takes the side of the president in the executive's contents with other institutions."<sup>16</sup> Tulis's central argument was that the rhetorical presidency marks a shift in presidential practice from speaking primarily to other branches of government to speaking directly to the public.<sup>17</sup> While many rhetorical scholars have amended Tulis's original framework, particularly to show that the presidency has always been rhetorical, most scholars agree that currently, the president must "go public" in order to arouse some degree of support for his policy agenda.<sup>18</sup>

Several notable scholars have taken up the idea of the rhetorical presidency. For example, David Crockett clarified the construct saying, "Under the demands of the rhetorical presidency, it is the president's job to seek out public opinion and be responsive to it, aided by all the tools modern technology now provides."<sup>19</sup> In his analysis of George W. Bush's rhetoric, Crockett explored how the rhetorical presidency construct does not judge the oratorical skill of the office holder, but rather, the structure of political communication.<sup>20</sup> Shawn J. Parry-Giles further extended the concept of a rhetorical president to explain the use of propaganda in the Cold War, calling for an expansion of the theory to cover covert communication.<sup>21</sup> In addition, Martin J. Medhurst demonstrated the comprehensive nature of the rhetorical presidency construct in his book, *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, where notable scholars were invited to explore case studies and conduct criticism of presidential public address.<sup>22</sup> Finally, other scholars have

used the concept of the rhetorical presidency as a touchstone for criticizing the nature of the institution. For example, Mary E. Stuckey argued that the rhetorical presidency promotes a white, male, voice and needs to be examined in terms of how it privileges class.<sup>23</sup> Vanessa B. Beasley added that the rhetorical presidency might also be productively studied in comparison to “the unitary executive,” a concept which argues that, at times, a president might choose not to engage in public discourse, and instead, make the decision to rely on the power of the executive office.<sup>24</sup> This ongoing conversation constitutes much of the rhetorical scholarship on national political communication.

That level of systematic study is not found in the treatment of other political institutions. In fact, in rhetorical studies, very little literature exists on political offices outside of the presidency, including the secretary of state. This thesis’s treatment of Clinton’s secretary of state testimony before congress will rest, in part, on the literature that tends to congressional hearings and the questioning of witnesses. Although these works have not addressed the rhetorical situations in which a secretary of state is called to testify, several scholars have established the general importance of studying the discourse of a congressional hearing and its influence on public opinion. In 1995, Jeffrey C. Talbert, Bryan D. Jones, and Frank R. Baumgartner argued for the importance of studying non-legislative congressional hearings. A non-legislative hearing is defined as any congressional hearing where a specific policy is not up for approval. These non-legislative proceedings include oversight, investigation, and confirmation hearings. The authors argued that these events serve an important role in shaping national debate. They claimed, “Non-legislative hearings are an important part of the process through which issues are raised, redefined, and put on the table for serious consideration.”<sup>25</sup> Linda Miller continued this conversation, and argued that the nature of public deliberation is changing, and therefore is

worthy of ongoing study. She drew attention to the myth that legislative rhetoric mirrors the will of the people, and claimed instead, “In the present fragmented political climate legislative debate may be increasingly regarded as generative, constructing policy which can depart in important respects from mediated public consensus.”<sup>26</sup> Miller explained that separation from public consensus results in hearings that have the power to, “represent, omit, or modify” public argument and policy.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, Hakimeh Saghayeh-Biria argued that congressional hearings can shape various aspects of public discourse. She said, “The context of congressional hearings is, therefore, a suitable place to look for how discourse is used to enact, reproduce, or resist specific approaches to societal problems, including minority issues.”<sup>28</sup> While not specifically directed at the rhetoric of secretaries of state, these works establish the important role congressional hearings have in shaping the public’s understanding of political communication.

The scholarship on the rhetoric of the congressional hearing can be divided into projects on legislative investigation and oversight hearings, and those on confirmation hearings. Tarla Rai Peterson’s study of legislative hearings examined how committee members relate to one another. Peterson identified three communication strategies: the use of position markers, which were used to establish the hierarchy of committee members; pseudo-requests, which maintained levels of authority by framing demands as questions; and images of order, in which communication took place in ways that project the stability of the institution as a whole.<sup>29</sup> Placed together, these communication strategies worked to establish the norms of discourse used by committee members during congressional hearings. To Peterson, congressional hearings operated in a fairly predictable fashion. Most of the responsibility for the management of these hearings fell to the committee chairperson who was determined based on party affiliation, seniority, and political reputation. This chairperson was responsible for determining the list of



witnesses, convening the hearing, and presiding over the proceedings.<sup>30</sup> In general, the internal workings of an investigation or oversight congressional hearing are based on hierarchical relationships among committee members that privilege some members and committee positions over others. These relationships could work to shape the hearings at which Clinton appeared. Therefore, Clinton would need to be aware of existing hierarchical relationships between members and committee leadership when crafting her testimony.

Hierarchy not only structures committee relationships, it also works to establish the authority of committee members over witnesses. Since this thesis examines statements made by Clinton as well as her interactions with committee members, the norms of witness treatment will play an important role. Kristine M. Davis created a system for coding congressional hearings that determined the speaker's goal at a sentence-by-sentence level. Davis found that witnesses were most frequently asked closed questions that only require confirmation or qualification. Davis continued, "Rather than allow witnesses many opportunities for extended responses, members lead the discussion through assertions and specific questioning."<sup>31</sup> Likewise, Lisa Gring-Pemle exposed how members of Congress manipulated the testimony of witnesses during the 1992-1996 welfare debates. Gring-Pemle found that, since Congress had control over the witness list, it resulted in an elitist interpretation of the overall narrative.<sup>32</sup> Pointedly, she concluded that testimony "privileges the interpretations of the elite audience of legislators who are able to invite witnesses, structure the hearings, evaluate the 'narrative rationality' of testimony and develop policies in line with their agendas."<sup>33</sup>

Literature on congressional hearings also attends to confirmation hearings, looking primarily at the processes through which Supreme Court Justices are confirmed. Several authors

have noted that the confirmation process has become more arduous in recent years. Per Fjelstad summarized this shift saying,

Since 1987, when the Senate dramatically rejected the nomination of Judge Robert Bork, nominees have become less forthcoming, questioning by Senators more ideological, and issues more contrived. The hearings have seen an increase in acts of political differentiation, often communicated in sound bites, and a related decrease in discussion of common ground and shared interests. Related to this rise political posturing, the hearings also show signs of having become political spectacle.<sup>34</sup>

In a subsequent analysis of the Sotomayor confirmation hearing, for example, Fjelstad highlighted a shift to adversarial cross-examination, allegations of insincerity, and prompts for alternative testimony.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, Christopher Darr noted a turn away from civility in the discourse of the confirmation hearing, claiming that the process is now marked with ideological and partisan differences.<sup>36</sup> Benjamin Bates suggested that the confirmation hearing is not about verifying claims or deliberation, but rather, serves as a medium for justifying opinion. He said,

Instead of being about truth-seeking, the Ashcroft nomination seems to be about justification. That is, arguments were made to make different positions equally valid, and the aim of each rhetor was to show that her choice was reasonable. The role of argument here was not to persuade other senators to change their votes. It was to persuade the public that each Senator had a justifiable reason for voting.<sup>37</sup>

Taken together, these authors suggested that the confirmation hearing process functions as a location of political spectacle and ceremony, rather than a site of deliberation. Trevor Parry-Giles added that fear of this spectacle constrains the number of viable nominees. Because of partisan tensions and media scrutiny, he contended, presidents now seek nominees who would be approved with minimal controversy.<sup>38</sup>

Nowhere is the shift to political spectacle more visible than in the proceedings of Clarence Thomas's confirmation hearing for Supreme Court Justice. Alison Regan explored how "the process" of a confirmation hearing impacted Thomas's testimony as well as the testimony of Anita Hill, who accused Thomas of sexual harassment. Regan found that "the

process” could serve as an ultimate term. In the case of Thomas, he was able to use “the process” as a devil term, or scapegoat, in order to avoid uncomfortable questions. Hill, on the other hand, seemed to believe in the objectivity of the congressional proceeding and therefore was harmed by her earnest, rather than strategic, responses.<sup>39</sup> Ashley Armstrong argued that the treatment of Hill’s testimony could best be defined as adversarial. Armstrong suggested that the adversarial questioning of Hill employed “selective representation,” or referring to past events and testimony through partial and out of context descriptions. This testimony could also be labeled “interdiscursive,” meaning that it attends to conventions that limit the range of discursive strategies.<sup>40</sup> In her treatment of confirmation hearings more generally, Per Fjelstand summarized the treatment experienced by Hill and recent politicians up for confirmation: “Thus, although the hearing technically was not a trial, and as a result did not avail parties to resources of counsel or acts of procedural adjudication, the Senators still conducted the hearing as though they were trying the nominee, seemingly for dispositional indiscretion.”<sup>41</sup> Hill’s treatment during her testimony points to the potentially exploitive and adversarial nature of current congressional hearings.

As a political actor, frequently called to testify, Secretary Clinton would be susceptible to the implications of this turn to political spectacle and adversarial questioning and thus, needed to navigate these complex factors through rhetorical invention. The existing literature of political communication, while heavily focused on the presidency, and in some part, on congressional hearings, provides valuable insight into the strategic communication practices found in the rhetorics of secretaries of state.

### ***Gender, National Security, and the Media***

The second body of literature that informs this thesis centers on rhetoric and gender. The following discusses how gender frames and constrains the discourses of security and defense and how the media compounds the gendering of female politicians.

To begin, several scholars have conducted work explaining how women in politics are constrained by gender stereotypes and expectations. In her book, *Beyond the Double Bind*, Kathleen Hall Jamieson explored how the rhetoric of women in politics is constrained by what she defined as “double binds,” or contradictions that restrict women’s rhetorical options by reifying gender stereotypes. Jamieson argued that there are five primary double binds that constrain women’s voices. These binds, Jamieson contended, position women in contradictory ways. She argued, “Women who speak out are immodest and will be shamed, while women who are silent will be ignored and dismissed.” Further, she said, “Women who are considered feminine will be judged incompetent, and women who are competent, unfeminine.”<sup>42</sup> Likewise, Diana B. Carlin and Kelly N. Winfrey noted the presence of four pervasive, and constraining, stereotypes in the media’s depiction of female politicians. In their analysis of the 2008 presidential election, they expose how women in politics are framed as either a mother who is too caring to take on a difficult leadership role, a pet who is too naïve or childlike to accomplish difficult tasks, a sex object who is overly feminine and easily objectified, or an iron maiden who is too masculine and aggressive.<sup>43</sup> Double binds and stereotypes serve to restrict the rhetoric of women in politics by reinforcing historically discriminatory gender roles. As a powerful political actor, as well as a woman, Clinton needed to manage these constraints in her role as secretary of state.

That said, Bonnie J. Dow and Mari Boor Tonn argued that women in politics have altered the grounds of political judgment and what counts as persuasive political rhetoric. Some women in politics, they argued, craft a “feminine style” of political rhetoric, grounded in women’s shared experiences of oppression and participation in a feminist counter-public sphere. They asserted, “The complexity of women’s social roles, and their influence on communication, may be an asset in the public sphere, rather than an obstacle.”<sup>44</sup> They added that scholars “must revise paradigms that view female or feminist rhetorical action simply in terms of its adaptation to obstacles posed by patriarchy (usually in the context of feminist movements) and more in terms of its attempts to *offer alternatives* to patriarchal modes of thought and reasoning.”<sup>45</sup> In their subsequent analysis of Ann Richards’s rhetoric, the authors explained how a contemporary “feminine style” is created by combining narrative, concrete examples, a personal tone, and encouragement of audience participation with an alternative political philosophy that suggests gendered norms in politics must—and can—be revised through rhetoric.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, Jane Blankenship and Deborah Robson argued that women in politics must negotiate the discursive demands of both masculine and feminine rhetorical styles.<sup>47</sup> To these ends, the authors said, women in politics turned to five key rhetorical strategies: basing political judgments in concrete, lived, experience; valuing inclusivity; interpreting the role of public office as a capacity to empower others; approaching policy formation holistically; and pushing women’s issues to the forefront.<sup>48</sup> While these strategies “intertwine in a number of empowering ways,” the authors maintained that women in politics continue to be hindered by gendered expectations and stereotypes.

These expectations and stereotypes are particularly acute when women in politics enter the discursive arenas of the military and national security. Several scholars noted how the

rhetoric of the military restricts and excludes women—owed in great part to the historical and contemporary exclusion and abuses women and minorities suffer at the hands of the US military.<sup>49</sup> In Claire Snyder’s view, for example, US citizenship was and is dependent upon “armed masculinity,” which links ideal citizenship with militarization. Since the military has historically barred women from participation,<sup>50</sup> these definitions leave little space for women to become ideal citizens, or rise to positions of power in militarized institutions.<sup>51</sup> In her book, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, Cynthia Enloe explained that this exclusion is not accidental, but rather, a product of institutions that systematically devalue female participation. She argued,

It’s not a matter of chromosomes or her menstrual cycle. It’s a matter of social process and structures that have been created and sustained over generations - sometimes coercively - to keep most women out of any political position with influence over state force. On occasion, elite men *may* let in a woman here or a woman there, but these women are not randomly selected.<sup>52</sup>

Snyder and Enloe clearly exposed how the norms of our political institutions limit the roles that are available for women in politics, especially when it comes to the military.

Several authors explored how women are explicitly marginalized and silenced during military conflict. For example, John W. Howard, III and Laura C. Prividera explained how common archetypes of men and women during wartime devalue women’s voices. They argued that the male soldier archetype is one of the most highly ranked in society. In comparison, female archetypes during wartime, such as the women waiting at home, weaken the position of women by portraying them as in need of protection by the stronger soldier archetype.<sup>53</sup> Enloe added that women are portrayed as voiceless bodies in the discourse of militarization. She argued that women’s bodies become a symbol of national identity during war. They are something to protect or conquer but not a site of independent agency.<sup>54</sup> Deepa Kumar clarified and added that, “The most prominent role that women play in war narratives is that of victim. Women can suffer

rape, torture, or death during war, giving the male soldier the special duty to protect her from such consequences.”<sup>55</sup> Likewise, Carol Stabile and Deepa Kumar emphasize the paternalistic force of national security rhetoric. They found that the rhetoric used to justify American involvement in Afghanistan once again erased the voices of women and instead, portrayed them as oppressed and in need of protection. This paternalist rhetoric not only erased the efforts Afghan women have made for their own equality, it also undermined the agency of women in the United States.<sup>56</sup> Nadjie Al-Ali added that even during the Arab Spring, a movement in Egypt that began with and included the voices of many women, the masculinity of military rhetoric had a silencing effect. The author argued: “Militarization and a militarized masculinity privileges authoritarianism, social hierarchies, and tries to marginalize and control not only women but also men, who by virtue of their class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, or politics, do not fit into the image of the normative ideal man.”<sup>57</sup> Taken together, these authors point to the exclusionary and silencing force of militarized rhetoric. Since secretaries of state are frequently called upon to speak on military matters, this trend towards the marginalization of women’s voices in national security rhetoric is an issue that Clinton would need to contend with in her testimonies.

National security rhetoric not only limits the ways women can participate in the military, it also constrains women to particular subject positions. In her analysis of female interrogators at Abu Ghraib, for example, Marita Gronnvoll found that media commentary typically highlighted women’s gender, while the gender of male military personnel went without comment. To explain this phenomenon, Gronnvoll suggested that women engaging in acts considered violent, especially in the context of security and defense, are forced into a gendered subject position while men are allowed to operate without this constraint.<sup>58</sup> Jennifer Lawless explored how

gendered military discourse negatively impacts the chances of success for a female politician.

She explained,

The language of war is tough, aggressive, and uncompromising. The rhetoric of “invasion,” “regime change,” and “deployment” must be spoken with decisiveness. Male leaders have dominated war rhetoric in every conflict in U.S. history. Presidents have made the case for war, and generals and cabinet secretaries, virtually all of whom have been male, have voiced support for president’s positions. Citizens are accustomed to the words of war belonging to men.<sup>59</sup>

Lawless found that citizens are unlikely to vote for a female president in a post 9/11 national security environment. She showed that Americans view men as better able to handle a military crisis, more prepared to protect the United States, and more likely to bring peace to the Middle East.<sup>60</sup> Heather Aldridge Bart and Heidi Hamilton addressed how the first two female secretaries of state, Albright and Rice, handled this lack of confidence. The authors argued that, when speaking of military matters, the women were more likely to adopt traditional, masculine, conceptions of security and power.<sup>61</sup> As one of only a few projects that address how gender interacts with the rhetoric of female secretaries of state, their essay offers a starting point for understanding how women in politics negotiate the gendered terrain of militaristic and national security discourses.

The most recent studies on women in politics point to a third force in the gendering of female political speech: the media. Many projects, for example, looked at the media frenzy surrounding the 2008 presidential election and the gendered performances of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin. For example, Kristina Horn Sheeler and Karrin Vasby Anderson noted the media’s recent celebration of Clinton while they cautioned that the her candidacy does not mark a positive trend for women in politics. They warned, “A postfeminist view of the US presidency embraces the conventional wisdom that ‘anyone’ can be president and even promotes individual women candidates while denying, downplaying, or dismissing the structural and cultural



inequities that contribute to women's political underrepresentation.”<sup>62</sup> Dustin Harp, Jamie Loke, and Ingrid Bachmann, showed how women like Clinton and Palin chose to walk the line between masculinity and femininity in their performance of gender.<sup>63</sup> They argued that Palin performed both stereotypically male and female traits in her first weeks on the campaign trail. The authors saw this blurring of lines as having a strategic benefit: “We can begin to see how female politicians might perform a blend of idealized gendered roles in order to promote a (re)contextualized mediated discourse that serves to avoid some of the problems female politicians face within the public space of politics.”<sup>64</sup> Hillary Clinton's relationship with the media exposes many of the tensions faced by women at high levels of politics. Shawn J. Parry-Giles explained that during Clinton's tenure as first lady, the media vilified her for being too assertive and unfeminine, and yet, following her husband's involvement with Monica Lewinsky, the media framed her more positively, as a vulnerable wife and mother.<sup>65</sup> Other scholars showed how Clinton learned to manipulate the media to her advantage as her career progressed.<sup>66</sup> These authors, for example, suggested that, during her 2008 presidential campaign, Clinton employed a strategy of “charismatic leadership” in order to overcome the double bind of gender stereotypes by appealing to voters on both masculine and feminine levels.<sup>67</sup> Denies Oles-Acevedo agreed and added that over the course of her Clinton's career, Clinton strategically transformed herself from a first lady known for political gaffes into a political powerhouse.<sup>68</sup>

Media coverage of the 2008 election points to the ways that women in politics, and Clinton specifically, worked to negotiate gendered constraints. However, scholars have yet to address how these constraints shape the rhetoric of women who are appointed, rather than elected to office. The difference between these two types of political involvement creates different rhetorical demands. For example, it is not as critical for political appointees to establish

their credibility, since, presumably, their appointment demonstrates that those who appointed and confirmed them, have vetted their abilities and found them fit for the job at hand. Furthermore, public approval ratings are less important for appointees because the continuation of their political careers is not tied to reelection—though, as is the case with Clinton, election to another office may be greatly anticipated. The way gender shapes these different exigencies has yet to be examined. Therefore, a study of Clinton’s discourse as a political appointee can provide further insight into the relationship between gender, national security, political rhetoric and Clinton’s rhetorical leadership.

### **Précis**

This thesis examines three different hearings in which Clinton was called to testify before Congress. Each of these case studies unpacks the ways gender and national security discourses interacted with Clinton’s rhetoric as secretary of state. These case studies build upon one another in order to establish the various subtleties of Clinton’s testimony. These case studies represent not only three different exigencies, but also, three different periods from her time in office, spanning from her first to her last hearing. To begin, Chapter 2 turns to Clinton’s confirmation hearing in which the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved her as the president’s nomination for secretary of state. Clinton testified on January 13, 2009, and was approved with a vote of 94 to 2.<sup>69</sup> This hearing, like all hearings, included prepared statements by Clinton and committee leadership followed by an extensive question and answer period during which committee members interrogated Clinton. This chapter first addresses how Clinton’s gendered identity created a rhetorical situation that was uniquely gendered. Next, chapter 2 turns to the three strategies Clinton employed to manage the constraints of gender and national security discourse. Ultimately, Clinton’s testimony prioritized diplomacy over defense

in order to bolster her credibility as a female politician, shared authority with Obama's position on national security to manage the perception that she lacked national security credibility, and emphasized cooperation on issues of development to distance her rhetoric from association with her husband, President Bill Clinton, and her previous identities as first lady and as a feminist icon. As a whole, chapter 2 concludes that female political leaders, when defining their political priorities, must simultaneously combat constraints such as the femininity/competency double bind by making concerted efforts to establish and support their credibility.

Chapter 3 addresses an annual budget hearing from the middle of Clinton's tenure. The budget hearing for the State Department is an annual meeting where secretaries of state are expected to engage in a congressional hearing. Secretary Clinton provided testimony on March 2, 2011 to the Senate Subcommittee on Appropriations. This budget hearing took place in a political climate that differed significantly from Clinton's confirmation hearing. Clinton's confirmation hearing allowed her to appeal to a predominantly democratic and supportive committee, while she engaged the budget hearing after the Tea Party's success in the 2010 election, and thus, addressed a more conservative committee. After assessing these contextual factors, this chapter turns to the three rhetorical strategies Clinton employed to negotiate her gendered identity. She first appropriated a military-like hierarchy to improve her national security credibility. Second, she invoked military-like protocols to justify the State Department budget. Finally, she demilitarized issues of defense in order to manage the perception that women lack national security credibility. In general, chapter 3 demonstrates that when high profile women engage in partisan politics, they can manage perceived gaps of credibility by simultaneously deploying and resisting military rhetoric.

Chapter 4 turns to hearings held under intense media scrutiny, in response to a national security crisis. On January 23, 2013, Secretary Clinton addressed both the House and Senate Committees on Foreign Relations regarding the attack on the US mission in Benghazi, Libya. As Clinton's final hearing as secretary of state, this chapter studies how gender and national security shaped Clinton's rhetorical strategies at the end of her secretary of state tenure. While the confirmation and budget hearings included the survey of several national security issues, the Benghazi hearing was held in response to a single national security crisis. As such, this chapter offers a more detailed study of Clinton's gender management strategies crafted for a specific event. This chapter finds that Clinton employed two strategies in the Benghazi hearing. First, she manipulated generic norms to avoid the demands of war rhetoric and reframe the hearing as a deliberative, rather than forensic event. Second, she invoked the authority of the Accountability Review Board Report to obfuscate her gendered identity and to reframe the event from a site of interrogation to a site of Clinton's rhetorical leadership. In turn, committee members who sought Clinton's culpability not only appeared out of step with the hearing's purpose, but also sought answers to questions Clinton had rendered moot. As a whole, this chapter argues that women can manage the gendered constraints of the aging/invisibility or femininity/competency double binds by manipulating genres and reframing rhetorical situations and thus, the appropriate rhetorical responses to them.

In conclusion, this thesis's analysis of Hillary Clinton's rhetoric as secretary of state complicates what we know about her rhetorical leadership, especially as a prominent figure in late twentieth and early-twentieth century US politics. Scholars have paid close attention to her rhetorical leadership and her mediated identity, but have yet to tend to her most recent political role. Thus, this study begins to fill the gap in the literature on this prominent US political figure.

Further, this thesis contributes to what we know about how women manage and engage the constraints of gendered and national security discourses in high ranked political offices. The final chapter of this thesis offers some suggestions for understanding the development of Clinton's rhetoric across her time in office and then turns to how the implications of this study might be productively extended to address the rhetoric of other female politicians. As women seek political office with increasing frequency and success, including Hillary Clinton who, although undeclared, is seen as a 2016 presidential frontrunner, it is important to continue to develop theories that address their political rhetoric. In the hopes of contributing to this necessary endeavor, this thesis explores the rhetoric of Clinton as secretary of state and in order to better understand how women can negotiate gender and national security rhetorics.

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**Notes**

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<sup>2</sup> US Department of State, “Daily Schedule: September 2013,” last accessed on October 21, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Diane M. Blair “The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women’s Voice, 1789-2002,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 5 (2002): 565-600.

<sup>4</sup> Dustin Harp, Jamie Loke, and Ingrid Bachmann, “First Impressions of Sarah Palin: Pit Bulls, Politics, Gender Performance and a Discursive Media (Re)contextualization,” *Communication, Culture & Critique* 3 (2010): 291-309.

<sup>5</sup> Denise Oles-Acevedo, “Fixing the Hillary Factor: Examining the Trajectory of Hillary Clinton’s Image Repair from Political Bumbler to Political Powerhouse,” *American Communication Journal* 14 (Winter 2012): 33-46.

<sup>6</sup> Diana B. Carlin and Kelly L. Winfrey, “Have you Come a Long Way, Baby? Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and Sexism in 2008 Campaign Coverage,” *Communication Studies* 60 (2009): 326-343.

<sup>7</sup> Heather Aldridge Bart and Heidi Hamilton, “Madame Secretary: Is the Female Voice a Difference that Makes a Difference in National Security Discourse?,” in *Gender and Political Communication in America: Rhetoric, Representation, and Display* edited by Janis L. Edwards (Lexington Books, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Kim Golombisky, “Gendering the Interview: Feminist Reflections on Gender as Performance in Research,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 29 (2006): 165-192.

<sup>9</sup> Dustin Harp, Jamie Loke, and Ingrid Bachmann, “First Impressions of Sarah Palin...”

<sup>10</sup> Shawn J. Parry-Giles, “Mediating Hillary Rodham Clinton: Television News Practices and Image-Making in the Postmodern Age,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 17 (2000): 205-226.

<sup>11</sup> Ryan Shepard, “Confronting Gender Bias, Finding a Voice: Hillary Clinton and the New Hampshire Crying Incident,” *Argumentation and Advocacy* 49 (2009): 64-77.

<sup>12</sup> Claire R. Snyder, *Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (University of California Press, 2000).

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<sup>14</sup> Marita Gronnvoll, *Media Representation of Gender and Torture Post 9/11* (Routledge, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Jennifer L. Lawless, "Women, War and Winning Elections: Gender Stereotyping in the Post-September 11<sup>th</sup> Era," *Political Research Quarterly* 57 (2004): 479-490.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffery K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1987): 9.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Leroy G. Dorsey, Edited *The Presidency and Rhetorical Leadership* (Texas A&M University Press, 2008); Martin J. Medhurst, Edited *Before the Rhetorical Presidency* (Texas A&M University Press, 2008); Mel Laracey, *Presidents and the People: The Partisan Story of Going Public* (Texas A&M University Press, 2002); Samuel Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership, 4th Edition* (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> David A. Crockett, "George W. Bush and the Unrhetorical Rhetorical Presidency," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 6 (2003): 470.

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<sup>21</sup> Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945-1955* (London: Praeger Series in Presidential Studies, 2002): xx.

<sup>22</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, Edited, *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996).

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<sup>24</sup> Vanessa B. Beasley, "The Rhetorical Presidency Meets the Unitary Executive: Implications for Presidential Rhetoric on Public Policy," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 13 (2010): 7-36.

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<sup>26</sup> M. Linda Miller, "Public Argument and Legislative Debate in the Rhetorical Construction of Public Policy: The Case of Florida Midwifery Legislation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 85 (1999): 361.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>28</sup> Hakimeh Saghaie-Biria, "American Muslims as Radicals? A Critical Discourse Analysis of the US Congressional Hearing on 'The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and That Community's Responses'," *Discourse Society* 23 (2012): 510.

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<sup>29</sup> Tarla Rai Peterson, "The Rhetorical Construction of Institutional Authority in a Senate Subcommittee Hearing on Wilderness Legislation," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 52 (Fall 1988): 259-276.

<sup>30</sup> Judy Schneider and Michael L. Koempel, "House Committee Chairs: Considerations, Decisions, and Actions as One Congress Ends and a New Congress Begins," *Congressional Research Service*, October 5, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Kristine M. Davis, "A Description and Analysis of the Legislative Committee Hearing" *The Western Journal of Speech Communication* 45 (Winter, 1981): 100.

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<sup>34</sup> Per Fjelstad, "Trying Testimony in Sotomayor's Senate Confirmation Hearing: Prejudice, Spectacle, and Disavowal of Intent," *Ohio Communication Journal* 48 (October 2010): 10.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Christopher R. Darr, "Civility and Social Responsibility: 'Civil Rationality' in the Confirmation Hearings of Justices Roberts and Alito," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 44 (Fall 2007): 57-74.

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin R. Bates, "Ashcroft Among the Senators: Justification, Strategy, and Tactics in the 2001 Attorney General Confirmation Hearing," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 39 (Spring 2003): 254-273.

<sup>38</sup> Trevor Parry-Giles *The Character of Justice* (Michigan State University Press, 2006).

<sup>39</sup> Alison Regan, "Rhetoric and Political Process in the Hill-Thomas Hearings," *Political Communication* 11 (1994): 277-285.

<sup>40</sup> Ashley S. Armstrong, "Arlen Specter and the Construction of Adversarial Discourse: Selective Representation in the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill Hearings," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 32 (1995): 75-89.

<sup>41</sup> Per Fjelstad, "Trying Testimony in Sotomayor's Senate Confirmation Hearing," 21.

<sup>42</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 16.



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<sup>43</sup> Diana B. Carlin and Kelly L. Winfrey, "Have you Come a Long Way, Baby? Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and Sexism in 2008 Campaign Coverage," *Communication Studies* 60 (2009): 326-343.

<sup>44</sup> Bonnie J. Dow and Mari Boor Tonn, "'Feminine Style' and Political Judgment in the Rhetoric of Ann Richards," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79 (1993): 299.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Jane Blankenship and Deborah C. Robson, "A 'Feminine Style' in Women's Political Discourse: An Exploratory Essay," *Communication Quarterly* 43 (1995): 353-366.

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<sup>49</sup> Deepa Kumar, "War Propaganda and the (Ab)Uses of Women: Media Constructions of the Jessica Lynch Story," *Feminist Media Studies* 4 (2004): 297-313; John W. Howard, III and Laura C. Privera, "Gendered Nationalism: A Critical Analysis of Militarism, Patriarchy, and the Ideal Soldier," *Texas Speech Communication Journal* 30 (2006): 134-145; Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (University of California Press, 2000); Stacie R. Furia and Denise D. Bielby, "Bombshells on Film: Women, Military Films and Hegemonic Gender Ideologies," *Popular Communication* 7 (2009): 208-224; Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Judith Reppy *Beyond Zero Tolerance: Discrimination in Military Culture* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999); Ronald R. Krebs *Fighting for Rights: Military Service and the Politics of Citizenship* (Cornell University Press; New York, 2006).

<sup>50</sup> While it wasn't until January 2013 that women were allowed to serve on the front lines of military operations, they have always participated in military efforts, sometimes disguised as male soldiers, but more often as nurses, laundresses, cooks, or military spouses. While it has become more commonplace for women to take an active role in military operations, they continue to be vulnerable to sexual and psychological abuse. Evelyn M. Monahan and Rosemary Neidel-Greenlee *A Few Good Women: America's Military women from World War I to the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan* (Anchor Books; New York, 2010); Mic Hunter *Honor Betrayed: Sexual Abuse in America's Military* (Barricade Books, 2007).

<sup>51</sup> Snyder, *Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors*.

<sup>52</sup> Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, 6.

<sup>53</sup> John W. Howard, III & Laura C. Privera, "Gendered Nationalism: A Critical Analysis of Militarism, Patriarchy, and the Ideal Soldier," *Texas Speech Communication Journal* 30 (2006): 134-145.

<sup>54</sup> Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*.

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<sup>55</sup> Kumar, "War Propaganda and the (Ab)Uses of Women."

<sup>56</sup> Carol Stabile and Deepa Kumar, "Unveiling Imperialism: Media, Gender, and the War on Afghanistan," *Media, Culture & Society* 27 (2005): 765-782.

<sup>57</sup> Nadjie Al-Ali, "Gendering the Arab Spring," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 5 (2012): 31.

<sup>58</sup> Gronnvoll, *Media Representations of Gender and Torture Post-9/11*.

<sup>59</sup> Lawless, "Women, War, and Winning Elections," 487.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Aldridge Bart and Hamilton, "Madame Secretary."

<sup>62</sup> Kristina Horn Sheeler and Karrin Vasby Anderson, *Woman President: Confronting Postfeminist Political Culture* (Texas A&M University Press, 2013), 2.

<sup>63</sup> Dustin Harp, Jamie Loke, and Ingrid Bachmann, "First Impressions of Sarah Palin."

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Parry-Giles, "Mediating Hillary Rodham Clinton."

<sup>66</sup> Michelle Bligh, Jennifer Merolla, Jean Schroedel, and Randall Gonzalez, "Finding her Voice: Hillary Clinton's Rhetoric in the 2008 Presidential Campaign," *Women's Studies* 39 (2010): 823-850.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Oles-Acevedo, "Fixing the Hillary Factor."

<sup>69</sup> Paul Richter, "Hillary Clinton Approved as Secretary of State," *LA Times* January 22, 2009.

## CHAPTER 2

### GENDER AND NATIONAL SECURITY DISCOURSE: HILLARY CLINTON'S CONFIRMATION HEARING

On January 13, 2009, Hillary Clinton appeared before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to deliver testimony in her secretary of state confirmation hearing. On January 24, Clinton was confirmed by a senate vote of 94-2.<sup>70</sup> Clinton's tenure as secretary of state was only the most recent event in a long career of political service. After her time as first lady, she served nine years in the Senate, and led a historic campaign for president, which she lost to Barack Obama in the democratic primary. Soon after the 2008 election, President Obama nominated Clinton for the position of secretary of state. Throughout Clinton's political life and more specifically, throughout her 2008 campaign for the presidency, her gendered identity played a central role in the way the media defined her, the way Americans understood her, and the ways in which she defined herself.

During her confirmation hearing, Clinton advanced a three-pronged plan for her secretary of state tenure. On multiple occasions she noted that her job would necessitate a balance of defense, diplomacy, and development, or, as Clinton explained: "We will use all the elements of our power—diplomacy, development, and defense."<sup>71</sup> Although Clinton asserted the need for balance between these three tenants, her rhetoric displayed a marked imbalance. Specifically, Clinton prioritized diplomacy over development and defense. I argue that this functioned as one of Clinton's key rhetorical strategies to manage the gendered constraints of the confirmation hearing and assert her competency as a potential secretary of state. To make this case, this

chapter first explores how Clinton prioritized diplomacy over defense and development to establish her credibility as a secretary of state. In so doing, she managed the gendered constraints and possibilities at play when a woman addresses the military, particularly as she did not engage military discourse. Second, she shared in the authority of the Obama administration on matters of defense or national security in order to obfuscate the question of her national security ethos. Considering that women's voices are marginalized in national security discourses, this strategy simultaneously functioned as a performance of competency and subordination. Last, when addressing development, Clinton highlighted cooperation. This strategy allowed her to distance herself from her husband's political career and avoid some of the implications of her role as first lady and feminist icon. Taken together, these strategies accentuate the gendered and contextual tensions at play in Clinton's confirmation hearing. The study of these strategies reveals that Clinton possessed the rhetorical abilities to manage and overcome the constraints of gender and the rhetorical situation. These abilities make the confirmation hearing a key site for the study of gender negotiation in the rhetoric of secretaries of state.

### **Context: The Confirmation Hearing**

Like any secretary of state confirmation hearing, the current political climate creates a rhetorical situation that both committee members and the candidate must negotiate. Unlike other confirmation hearings, however, Clinton's created a rhetorical situation that was distinctly gendered. No previous secretary of state, male or female, entered a confirmation hearing with such a strong gendered identity—positive or negative. Thus, the discourse of the confirmation hearing must be read through the lens of gender. In what follows, I will characterize Clinton's gendered identity and its force as a factor in the hearing's rhetorical situation. Then, I will address the political exigencies of the hearing and how they cannot be divorced from the force of

Clinton's gendered identity. In sum, the complexities of Clinton's rhetorical situation help us better appreciate her rhetorical strategies.

At the time of her nomination, Clinton was most recently the first viable female presidential candidate. As such, the media primarily defined her in terms of gender. The commentary on her gender was arguably at the forefront of people's minds when Clinton was nominated for secretary of state just months after she withdrew from the presidential race. Several scholars have studied the gendering of Clinton as both a first lady and presidential candidate. For example, Karrin Vasby Anderson traced the use of "bitch" in coverage of Clinton as first lady.<sup>72</sup> She argued, "'Bitch' not only is a defining archetype of female identity, but also functions as a contemporary rhetoric of containment disciplining women with power."<sup>73</sup> This disciplining function was also at work during Clinton's presidential campaign. First, Clinton's sexuality, or perceived lack thereof, was frequently a source of criticism, used to both highlight her gender as a woman and critique her for not conforming to traditional notions of femininity. For example, *The Washington Post* led with the observation: "There was cleavage on display Wednesday afternoon on C-SPAN2. It belonged to Senator Hillary Clinton."<sup>74</sup> A second site of sexualized commentary was the Internet and radio. A well know example came from political radio program host Rush Limbaugh, who famously asked, "Will Americans want to watch a woman get older before their eyes on a daily basis? . . . [I]t will impact poll numbers. It will impact perceptions."<sup>75</sup> The Internet also disseminated sexist and sexualized jokes about Clinton. A popular image throughout the campaign (which can still be purchased as a bumper sticker, mug, or T-shirt) was an image of a Kentucky Fried Chicken bucket that advertised: "Hillary Meal Deal: 2 fat thighs, 2 small breasts, and a bunch of left wings."<sup>76</sup>

A second type of gendering more obviously framed Clinton as a bitch or iron maiden. Put simply, Clinton was described as a woman who was too aggressive and masculine. On multiple occasions, MSNBC's Tucker Carlson said: "When she comes on television, I involuntarily cross my legs."<sup>77</sup> This was one of several comments that suggested Clinton's castrating power. For example, Chris Matthews, host of MSNBC's *Hardball*, asked an interviewee about Clinton supporters: "[A]ren't you appalled at the willingness of these people to become *castratos* in the eunuch chorus here or whatever they are?"<sup>78</sup> Likewise, Tucker Carlson said in March of 2007, "There's just something about her that feels castrating, overbearing, and scary."<sup>79</sup> Rush Limbaugh repeatedly claimed that Clinton had a "testicle lockbox."<sup>80</sup> Clearly the bitch narrative, at play since her time as first lady, was just as pervasive in her run for the presidency.

Clinton's gender was not just a source of negative discipline; she was also constrained by her positive image as a feminist icon and champion for women's issues. Ever since Clinton's 1995 speech in Beijing, where she proclaimed that, "human right's are women's rights and women's rights are human rights,"<sup>81</sup> she has carried a reputation as a strong advocate for the rights of women and girls.<sup>82</sup> Committee members indicated through their comments that they expected this reputation to inform Clinton's secretary of state tenure. Further, Clinton's confirmation hearing had to manage her recent "groundbreaking" presidential campaign. As the first serious female presidential candidate, many saw Clinton as a feminist icon. As one news outlet explained: "She was not 'a' woman, she was 'the' woman."<sup>83</sup> A poll conducted after Clinton's campaign found that people overwhelming agreed that she had made it easier for women to run for president in the future. While many female politicians have suffered negative gendering, similar to that faced by Clinton, her notoriety as "the woman" is singular. Just as she needed to manage negative perceptions of her gender created by the 2007 campaign, Clinton's

confirmation testimony also needed to negotiate her positive image as a feminist icon and champion for women.

Clinton's gendered identity, thus, cannot be separated from the political exigencies of the hearing. Specifically, the rhetorical situation was shaped by the 2008 election, the make up of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and her connection to the Clinton Foundation. The 2008 election marked a shift in the influence of several voting demographics including young, minority, and female voters.<sup>84</sup> The historic nature of the 2008 election, marked by a democratic primary with candidates from two marginalized groups, worked to motivate underrepresented voting blocks and change the balance of political power. Most significant for Clinton's confirmation was the influential role women played in the election. Instead of viewing a female running mate as a hindrance, many saw it as the key to victory in 2008. *The Guardian* reported on the widespread belief that Obama should select Clinton as his vice presidential candidate in order to secure the important female vote.<sup>85</sup> While Obama made a different choice for running mate, the level of support for Clinton and female politicians in general, is instructive in understanding the political climate of her confirmation hearing. Clinton was arguably nominated during a time of extreme popularity for both herself and the idea of a woman in a position of political power. The shifting political climate, which can, in part, be attributed to Clinton's presidential campaign and ability to motivate female voters, put the Democratic Party firmly in control of both legislative and executive branches of government. After the election, democrats controlled the executive office with Obama receiving 53% of the popular vote over republican candidate John McCain.<sup>86</sup> Further, both House and Senate democrats significantly increased their control over the balance of power. The Senate democrats gained eight additional seats and the House earned twenty-one. These results put democrats comfortably in control of both houses

of congress as well as the presidency, insuring that Clinton's testimony was delivered in a political climate that saw her favorably.<sup>87</sup>

This political climate also worked to influence the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, the body responsible for conducting Clinton's confirmation hearing. This congressional body was significantly shaped by the 2008 election and the democratically controlled committee celebrated Clinton as a symbol of the values that contributed to their success. The committee praised her role as a feminist icon on several occasions, giving the hearing an overall epideictic tone. The epideictic nature of this hearing extended to other democratic figures. Most notably, both Barack Obama (D-IL) and Joe Biden (D-DE) were members of the committee before winning the election and John Kerry (D-MA) was promoted to fill Biden's empty chairmanship.<sup>88</sup> Clinton's confirmation hearing not only celebrated her nomination to secretary of state, it was also a celebration for the Democratic Party as a whole. In comparison, the republican portion of the committee had little to celebrate and experienced significant turnover prior to Clinton's nomination. In fact, only four of the ten republican committee members from the 110<sup>th</sup> congress were still on the committee during Clinton's hearing in front of the 111<sup>th</sup> congress. These remaining members were Richard Lugar (R-ID), Bob Corker (R-TN), Jim DeMint (R-SC), and Johnny Isakson (R-GA).<sup>89</sup> Clinton's role in the democrat's 2008 success, her embodiment of the values she contributed to that success, the positive political shifts for democrats on the committee, and the loss of power by the committee's republicans all worked to give this hearing a celebratory or epideictic tone.

Finally, Clinton's involvement with the Clinton Foundation impacted her confirmation hearing. The foundation, founded by President William (Bill) Jefferson Clinton, works primarily to provide health care and promote economic growth in underdeveloped countries. Clinton's



connection with this organization further emphasized her gendered identity by drawing attention to her status as a feminist icon. The Clinton Foundation makes significant efforts to alleviate global poverty and empower minority groups. The beneficiaries of these efforts are most often women who face the most oppression globally. Considering Clinton's expressed interest in working to improve the lives of women, several senators in the confirmation hearing noted concern that her relationship with the foundation would damage her credibility as secretary of state. In this case, Clinton's role as an advocate for women shifted from a source of celebration to a cause for discipline. Specifically, committee members worried that businesses and organizations would use donations to the Clinton Foundation as a means of gaining favor with the secretary of state.<sup>90</sup> Concerns over the impact of the Clinton Foundation were found on both sides of the political aisle. Even John Kerry expressed worry over the speed at which donations to the foundation could be disclosed.<sup>91</sup> In fact, the issue of the Clinton Foundation was so central to the confirmation process that it held up the final full Senate vote. John Cornyn, Head of the National Senatorial Republican Committee, delayed the proceedings by demanding a roll call vote and more time to discuss the role of the Clinton Foundation.<sup>92</sup> Despite these concerns, Clinton's approval for secretary of state never seemed to be in question. Even Cornyn admitted:

My concern is not whether our colleague Senator Clinton is qualified to be secretary of state or not. She is. But we should not let our respect for Senator Clinton or our admiration for the many good works of the Clinton Foundation blind us to the danger of perceived conflicts of interest caused by the [foundation's] solicitation of hundreds of millions of dollars from foreign and some domestic sources.<sup>93</sup>

Clinton's confirmation process ended with a vote of 94-2 in favor of her appointment. It was her role as a women's advocate, previously celebrated and now a constraint that was the source of objection. One vote against her came from David Vitter (R-LA), a former member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. He voted against Clinton because he felt further

restrictions were needed on donations to the Clinton Foundation. The second negative vote came from Jim DeMint (R-SC) who was a current member of the Committee on Foreign Relations and took part in Clinton's confirmation hearing. He cited concerns over Clinton's position on abortion as the reason for his vote.

Clinton's confirmation hearing, while generally positive, was informed by several contextual factors influenced by her complex gendered identity. These factors included her gendered identity throughout the 2008 election cycle, and several political issues, such as a shift in the political power of women, the make up of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and her relationship with the Clinton Foundation.

### **Rhetorical Strategies: The Confirmation Hearing**

Over the course of her confirmation hearing, Clinton crafted three rhetorical strategies to negotiate the gendered constraints placed on her as a potential secretary of state. First, Clinton prioritized diplomacy over issues of defense. While this strategy was a fitting response for an appointee perceived as "weak" on defense, perceptions of Clinton as incompetent or too masculine suggests that this strategy also helped her establish her credibility as a female secretary of state. Second, Clinton relied on Obama's authority when addressing issues of national security. This strategy helped mitigate the perception that she was overly aggressive and bolstered her national security credibility. Finally, Clinton employed a rhetoric of cooperation when addressing issues of development. This not only worked to separate her from the controversy surrounding the Clinton Foundation, but it also distanced her from her gendered identity as a president's wife, and feminist icon.

### ***Prioritizing Diplomacy***

Clinton prioritized diplomacy over development and defense, especially when asked about issues of defense or national security, in order to establish her credibility as secretary of state. Throughout the hearing, Clinton made significant efforts to emphasize her extensive diplomatic experience over her limited national security credentials. While it is important for all secretaries of state to establish their credibility and build a strong diplomatic ethos, especially because diplomacy is a central task of the office, Clinton's gendered identity made her task of establishing credibility especially difficult. Kathleen Hall Jamieson argued that the femininity/competency double bind forces women to meet a higher threshold in order to establish competency. Jamieson addressed several ways in which this double bind is perpetuated, including the frame of "the 'exceptional' woman," or the portrayal of credible women as outliers, rather than the norm.<sup>94</sup> Committee members frequently employed this frame in their questions. For example, three committee members who delivered opening remarks before Clinton had the opportunity to speak framed her as an exceptional woman. First, the Committee Chair, John Kerry (D-MA) noted, "[I]n Senator Clinton, we have a nominee who is extraordinarily capable and smart."<sup>95</sup> Ranking Member, Richard Lugar (R-IN), later added, "Her qualifications for the post are remarkable."<sup>96</sup> And finally, Clinton's official introduction was from Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) who argued, "Hillary has demonstrated the equanimity, the prudence, the fortitude that has made her an exceptional leader and public servant."<sup>97</sup> Before Clinton uttered a single word she had been framed as "the 'exceptional' woman" a frame that, while seemingly positive, ensured her position as a gendered actor in the following question and answer session.

To manage this gendered frame, Clinton prioritized diplomacy. Considering her strong credentials as a diplomat, developed over her career as a first lady and senator, Clinton's prioritization of diplomacy over defense emphasized the one area where she had amassed the most experience. As Mary E. Stuckey argued in her analysis of presidential rhetoric, instrumental rhetoric that, on the surface, seems to be crafted with expediency in mind might actually have, "a combination of more subtle, indirect, and long-term effects."<sup>98</sup> In the confirmation hearing, then, Clinton's strategy of prioritizing diplomacy had the more subtle effect of establishing her ethos as a female secretary of state, a task that was especially important considering the constraining frame that communicated she was an "exceptional" woman, who was "competent" *for a woman*.

Clinton emphasized diplomacy as her preferred response at least three times in her opening statement, and frequently throughout her interrogation. For example, her opening statement proclaimed that, "diplomacy will be the vanguard of our foreign policy."<sup>99</sup> Clinton further established diplomacy over defense when she asserted, "We will lead with diplomacy, because that's the smart approach, but we also know that military force will sometimes be necessary, and we will rely on it to protect our people and our interests, when and where needed, as a last resort."<sup>100</sup> While any secretary of state might privilege diplomacy as an instrumental choice, based on their job description, Clinton's choice to do so also worked to manage her identity as gendered secretary of state. As Mary E. Stuckey argued, "had Hillary Rodham Clinton been elected, her triumph would not have been enough to disinter patriarchal norms from the White House."<sup>101</sup> It follows then that Clinton's rhetoric as secretary of state needed to do work other than the instrumental tasks of the office. Clinton's prioritization of diplomacy did the additional work of establishing her credibility as a female secretary of state. For example, when

Kerry asked what her response would be if Iran acquired nuclear weapons, Clinton replied:

But, I think, as the President-elect said just this past weekend, our goal will be to do everything we can pursue, through diplomacy, through the use of sanctions, through creating better coalitions with countries that we believe also have a big stake in preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear-weapon power, to try to prevent this from occurring.<sup>102</sup>

Likewise, Senator Robert Casey (D-PA) questioned Clinton on the complicated relationship between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India, and the threat those tensions might present for American security. In response to his question: “how do you think we need to approach meeting or being focused on those various concerns that I just outlined?” Clinton said, “So I’m hopeful that we will have a very active positive relationship with the new Pakistan Government.”<sup>103</sup> This exchange highlighted how Clinton emphasized “relationships,” or diplomacy, instead of defense policy. Considering Clinton’s strong ethos as a diplomat, this strategy worked to not only fulfill the task of answering questions, but also, established her credibility as a female office holder. While Clinton’s prioritization of diplomacy advanced a political priority, it also worked to overcome the femininity/competency double bind by emphasizing her diplomatic competency.

### ***Sharing Obama’s Authority***

Second, Clinton managed gendered constraints by relying on the Obama administration’s position on defense. When asked her opinion on issues of defense or national security, Clinton often referred to statements Obama had issued, instead of offering her own, independent opinion. Considering Clinton’s gendered identity, this sharing of authority could be read as a symptom of women’s marginalization from political and national security discourse or as a sign of a weak leader. However, I argue that Clinton’s shared authority functioned as a strategy to sidestep these gendered constraints. It worked in two ways. First, it strengthened her national security

credibility by linking her assertions to those of the “Commander-in-Chief,” and second, it helped negate her negative gendering from the presidential campaign.

Considering that the discursive arena of defense often negates or silences women, Clinton needed to bolster her credibility on defense. To these ends, she turned to Obama’s ethos. When faced with questions of national security, for example, she offered limited responses. Compare, for example, her responses to diplomatic and defense questions asked by a single senator. In her exchange with Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Clinton was asked two questions, the first about ocean conservation and the second on US negotiations with North Korea, an obvious national security threat at the time. Senator Murkowski asked, “Will ratification of the Law of the Sea Treaty be a priority for you?” Clinton responded, “Yes; it will be. And it will be because it is long overdue, Senator.”<sup>104</sup> Compared to this clearly articulated position on a diplomatic matter, Clinton answers the national security question with much more ambivalence. The senator asked Clinton about the future of the six-party-talks, which have tried to resolve North Korea’s nuclear weapons programs. She said:

Senator, I’ve had several lengthy conversations with Secretary Rice, who has brought me up to date on the status of the six-party talks, it is a framework that the President-elect and I believe has merit, but it also provides an opportunity, as Secretary Rice has testified before this committee, for bilateral contact, as well, between North Korea and the United States.<sup>105</sup>

Compared to Clinton’s response to the first question, in this response, Clinton resisted taking an independent position on a question of defense or national security. She described a transfer of knowledge from Rice to herself—suggesting that her position followed Rice’s position—or, that it was Rice’s position. Further, she situated her position as one that she and President-elect Obama shared. Deferring her authority to Rice and Obama worked to align her with the only two people whose authority on the matter might outweigh hers.

Existing scholarship on Clinton does not note deference or sharing authority as a key strategy in Clinton's previous rhetoric, indicating that it was employed strategically here. If anything, scholarship on Clinton's presidential campaign found that she was more likely to appear overly assertive rather than timid or hesitant. For example, Michelle Bligh, Jennifer Merolla, Jean Reith Schroedel, and Randall Gonzalez suggested that Clinton manipulated gendered rhetorical norms in order to appear more feminine during her presidential campaign.<sup>106</sup> They argued that her tears when answering questions at a dinner in New Hampshire might have been an attempt to adopt a strategy of charismatic leadership, which, according to the authors, "straddles or transcends the double-bind of gender stereotypes."<sup>107</sup> This exploration of Clinton's campaign rhetoric has two implications for understanding her shared authority as a strategy of ethos improvement in the confirmation hearing. First, this existing literature established that relying on the authorities of others was not a typical response for Clinton, and second, she had the ability to manage and manipulate her gendered positioning in an extemporaneous setting.

Despite these rhetorical strategies, it was impossible for Clinton to fully manage her gendered constraints when she was tasked with accounting for national security or defense policy. As Jennifer Lawless established, "Citizens are accustomed to the words of war belonging to men."<sup>108</sup> In order to manage this gendered constraint, Clinton linked her position on defense to Obama's national security ethos, which, upon assuming the presidency, became the ethos of the "commander-in-chief" a position that is inherently tied to the military. Clinton first used this strategy early in the confirmation hearing, which began with her opening statement. Regarding the Middle East she said, "The President-elect and I understand, and are deeply sympathetic to Israel's desire to defend itself."<sup>109</sup> When answering the senator's questions, Clinton continued to invoke Obama as someone who shared her decision-making authority. When Senator Feingold

(D-WI) asked for options to end the conflict in Darfur, for example, Clinton responded, “Senator, again this is an area of great concern to me, as it is to the President-elect. We are putting together the options that we think are available, and workable.”<sup>110</sup> To answer Senator Jim DeMint’s question about how to deal with the terrorist group Hamas, Clinton once again included Obama’s position in her response: “I think on Israel, you cannot negotiate with Hamas until it renounces violence, recognizes Israel, and agrees to abide by past agreements. That is just, for me, an absolute. That is the U.S. Government’s position; that is the President-elect’s position.”<sup>111</sup> Invoking Obama’s position on national security and defense topics allowed Clinton to negotiate the constraint of gendered conceptions of national security. It linked her ethos to Obama’s presidential, and therefore more militarily credible, ethos. This allowed Clinton to bolster her national security credibility, which was arguably her weakest area of expertise in the confirmation hearing. Doing so helped subvert the “exceptional woman” frame, as it demonstrated that she was doing exactly what she was supposed to—demonstrate unity with the president’s policies.

The second strategic function of Clinton’s shared authority was to frame herself as Obama’s ally and supporter instead of his opponent. Because Clinton’s confirmation hearing took place so soon after the 2008 election, an election where she frequently debated and disagreed with Obama, it was important that Clinton appeared as a supporter of the administration. This shared authority had the added benefit of mitigating the gendered frames that positioned Clinton as too assertive or too castrating. Clinton’s deference to the administration’s position on national security issues could be read as Clinton transitioning from a presidential candidate to a secretary of state, a position where support for the president is expected. Clinton’s navigation of these two positions was the cause of some confusion and



humor when questioned by Senator Kerry. Kerry asked Clinton about her thoughts on Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon. The confusion in her answer highlighted her reliance on Obama's opinion in answering the question.

Clinton: Well, Mr. President—the President-elect—Mr. Chairman——

Kerry: I'll take that.

Clinton: Yes, it was a Freudian slip. The President elect——

Kerry: We're both subject to those, I want you to know.

Clinton: Yes. Indeed. [Laughter.] On this subject, especially. The President-elect has said, repeatedly, it is unacceptable. It is going to be United States policy to pursue diplomacy, with all of its multitudinous tools, to do everything we can to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear-weapons state.<sup>112</sup>

Although this exchange was humorous, it drew attention to both Clinton's strategic support for Obama as well as her recent presidential campaign. Kerry was not the only committee member whose national security questions drew attention to Clinton's failed presidential campaign. John Isakson (R-GA) used his time to question Clinton on the issue of preconditions for negotiating with groups that presented a national security threat. In his comments, Isakson noted Clinton's discussion of the issue during a presidential debate, adding, "I hope you still feel that way."<sup>113</sup> Clinton quickly agreed and then reiterated Obama's position on preconditions saying, "Well, I certainly do, as does the President elect. I think that his commitment to vigorous and effective diplomacy is in context of his understanding that there are different ways for us to engage."<sup>114</sup> When Isakson highlighted the fact that Clinton and Obama had recently been opponents, and at times disagreed with each other on important national security issues, Clinton was quick to reassert her agreement with, and support of, the president's position. This alliance with Obama further combated Clinton's previous gendering as a presidential candidate as she was able to distance herself from the claim that she was overly assertive by showing how she could work as a team player—not just as a singular, "exceptional" woman.

While Clinton's strategy of shared authority could be read as a symptom of women's

marginalization from national security discourse, an analysis of Clinton's previous strategies of rhetorical leadership suggest that sharing authority was not common in Clinton's previous political rhetoric. Therefore, I interpret her sharing authority on issues of defense as strategic rather than symptomatic. In her confirmation hearing, Clinton's deferral to Obama's positions on defense served two purposes. First, Clinton bolstered her credibility and managed the gendered constraints inherent to women who engage in national security discourse. Second, her referral to, and agreement with, Obama helped Clinton transition from Obama's opponent to his supporter, a shift that moved her rhetoric into a more secretarial position and distanced Clinton from gender discipline of the 2008 campaign.

### ***Cooperating on Development***

Clinton's final strategy in her confirmation hearing advanced a rhetoric of cooperation, particularly when discussing issues of development. Put differently, Clinton frequently pledged to support committee members' existing projects for international development instead of advancing independent developmental initiatives. While the tactics of cooperation and the affirmation of others are common components of a "feminine style,"<sup>115</sup> I will argue in this section that Clinton's strategy of cooperation worked to avoid the constraints presented by her relationship with the Clinton Foundation and distanced her rhetorical leadership from that of her husband's, and by extension, her previous political role as first lady and feminism icon in which she was frequently gendered.

Jane Blankenship and Deborah Robson identified five rhetorical strategies used by women in politics, two of which are valuing inclusivity and using the public office to empower others.<sup>116</sup> Clinton combined these as a strategy of cooperation, used when confronted with questions on developmental initiatives. Bonnie J. Dow and Mari Boor Tonn also argued that

women's discourse often emphasizes participation, cooperation, and relationship maintenance. They added that these characteristics are frequently used to criticize women's rhetoric as ineffective but instead, "may be an asset in the public sphere, rather than an obstacle."<sup>117</sup> In her confirmation hearing, Clinton's use of cooperation and affirmation was an asset in that it helped her to avoid some of the controversy about her role in the developmental activities carried out by the Clinton Foundation. Senators worried that Clinton's association with her husband's foundation might present a conflict of interest where foreign organizations or businesses could use donations to the foundation as a means to gain influence over Clinton. In order to alleviate some of these concerns, Clinton avoided a strong position on development, and instead, prioritized cooperation. For example, Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) asked her about economic initiatives in Latin America. Clinton responded, "That is particularly a mission of mine, and I share your concern about Haiti. It is, as you say, one of the poorest nations in the world—the poorest in our hemisphere. I hope that we can have a comprehensive approach that could alleviate the suffering of the people of Haiti. And I look forward to working with you on that."<sup>118</sup> Clinton responded in a similar fashion to several committee members when asked about developmental projects. In these comments Clinton both affirmed the credentials of the senators and emphasized cooperation to answer their questions.

While Clinton's strategy of cooperation can be read as an effort to allay the senators' concerns about a conflict of interest, it also worked to distance Clinton's rhetorical leadership from her husband and her previous role as first lady. As first lady, Clinton was known as a global advocate for women's rights, as articulated in her speech in Beijing. By creating rhetorical distance between her role as first lady and secretary of state, Clinton mitigated some of the effect of her status as a feminist icon and established her career as independent from her

husband. Clinton made several efforts to clarify that the foundation was her husband's work and not her own. These statements highlighted her unique gendered position as a female politician whose husband is a former president of the United States. She said, "I am very proud of what my husband and the Clinton Foundation and the associated efforts he's undertaken have accomplished as well. It is not unique, however, for spouses of government officials to work and there are very well-established rules for what is expected when that occurs."<sup>119</sup> Here, Clinton directly confronted her unique gendered position and worked to overcome it by differentiating herself from her husband and his work with the Clinton Foundation

Many of Clinton's efforts to distance her rhetorical leadership from her husband and her role as first lady emphasized how she was not directly responsible for the management of the Clinton Foundation. Over the course of the hearing, senators questioned Clinton extensively on how donations to the Clinton Foundation would be disclosed and managed so that donors would be unable to use their money to influence the secretary of state. In response, Clinton repeatedly asserted how those decisions were under her husband's purview and that she would simply cooperate with what the Obama administration and foundation administrators negotiated. While this strategy could be interpreted as Clinton deferring to her husband, it worked to separate their political careers. For example, to Senator David Vitter's (R-LA) question about disclosures, Clinton replied, "Well, I think that the MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] and the other undertakings that have been worked out between the President-elect and the Transition and the Foundation and my husband have looked very broadly at all of the questions that you're raising."<sup>120</sup> Clinton placed the responsibility for managing her relationship with the Clinton Foundation in the hands of Obama, the transition team, the foundation itself, and President Clinton. In this statement Clinton removed herself from the decision making process in favor of

simply cooperating with the decisions made by others, and in the process, separated her career as secretary of state from that of her career as the president's wife.

While on the surface Clinton's strategy of cooperation could be read as her use of a "feminine style," it also worked to distance her career as secretary of state from her husband and her previous role as a first lady, known as both a "bitch" and "a feminist icon." Either role connotes fierce individualism. Thus, her emphasis on cooperation worked against these frames. Because the Clinton Foundation plays such a large role in international development and improving the lives of women, a strong assertion by Clinton in that area could have aggravated concerns over her relationship to the foundation as a potential conflict of interest. Instead, Clinton stressed cooperation. This cooperation helped isolate Clinton from some of the most pointed questions in the confirmation hearing because she was able to shift responsibility for the Clinton Foundation onto her husband and distance herself from the constraints presented by the perceptions of her as a first lady who was overly assertive.

### **Conclusions**

Even though Clinton's confirmation hearing was marked as an epideictic occasion, in that many senators celebrated her nomination and wished her luck as secretary of state, a closer analysis exposes how gender, national security discourse, and her history as a political actor constrained Clinton's rhetorical choices. In light of these constraints, Clinton emphasized diplomacy over defense and development in order to confront her position as a female leader and establish her credibility as incoming secretary of state. First, Clinton's prioritized diplomacy in order to overcome the femininity/competency double bind and meet the higher competency threshold to which women are held. Second, Clinton shared authority with Obama on issues of defense to both bolster her national security ethos and distance herself from gendering that

framed her as too aggressive. Finally, Clinton emphasized cooperation to avoid controversy surrounding the Clinton Foundation and to separate her rhetorical leadership from her husband and time as first lady.

While Clinton's testimony needed to manage gendered constraints, it also worked to establish her political priorities as secretary of state, priorities that would inform her subsequent congressional appearances. Clinton's establishment of these priorities, coupled with her strategies of gender management, indicates that women in positions of political power must always attend to both. Female politicians must assert political arguments in ways that also confront the constraints they face as women. For example, Clinton accomplished this task by emphasizing shared responsibility or a group identity, a strategy that worked to distance her from strong individualism that could be used to label her as a bitch or feminist icon. Clinton's rhetorical strategies in the confirmation hearing simultaneously offered political arguments while confronting gender stereotypes, bolstering her credibility, or negotiating her gendered identities.

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**Notes**

<sup>70</sup> Kate Phillips, "Senate Confirms Clinton as Secretary of State," *The New York Times*, January 21, 2009.

<sup>71</sup> Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Nomination of Hillary R. Clinton to be Secretary of State: Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate*, 111<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Sess., January 13, 209, 23.

<sup>72</sup> Karrin Vasby Anderson "Rhymes with Rich": "Bitch" as a Tool of Containment in Contemporary American Politics," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 2 (1999): 599-623.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 600.

<sup>74</sup> Deborah Howell, "A Column Prompts a Dressing Down," *The Washington Post*, July 29, 2009.

<sup>75</sup> Lindsey Ellerson, "Is it Sexist to Discuss Hillary's Wrinkles?" *ABC News*, December 19, 2007.

<sup>76</sup> Amanda Fortini, "The Feminist Reawakening: Hillary Clinton and the Fourth Wave," *New York Magazine*, April 13, 2008.

<sup>77</sup> Ryan Chiachiere, "Tucker Carlson on Clinton: "[W]hen she comes on television, I involuntarily cross my legs," *Mediamatters.org*, July 18, 2007.

<sup>78</sup> Brian Levy, "Matthews asked about Clinton endorsers' "willingness" "to become *castratos* in the eunuch chorus," *Mediamatters.org*, December 17, 2007.

<sup>79</sup> Ryan Chiachiere, "Tucker Carlson on Clinton."

<sup>80</sup> Brian Levy, "Matthews asked about Clinton."

<sup>81</sup> Hillary Clinton, "Women's Rights are Human Rights," (Speech, U.N. 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women, Beijing, China September 5, 1995).

<sup>82</sup> Patrick E. Tyler, "Hillary Clinton, In China, Details Abuse of Women," *The New York Times*, September 6, 1995.

<sup>83</sup> Liz Halloran, "How Much did Hillary Clinton's Historic Run Really Break the Glass Ceiling?," *US News and World Report*, August 25, 2008.

<sup>84</sup> "Election Polls—Vote by Group 2008," *Gallup*.

<sup>85</sup> Sarah Wildman, "The Sarah Palin Effect," *The Guardian*, November 5, 2008.

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<sup>86</sup> “Election Center 2008,” *CNN*.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> “Congressional Directory,” *US Government Printing Office*.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Paul Richter, “Hillary Clinton Approved as Secretary of State,” *LA Times*, January 22, 2009.

<sup>91</sup> Kate Phillips, “Senate Confirms Clinton as Secretary of State,” *The New York Times*, January 21, 2009.

<sup>92</sup> “Hillary Clinton Sworn in as Secretary of State,” *CNN*, January 22, 2009.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 127.

<sup>95</sup> Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 1.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>98</sup> Mary E. Stuckey, “Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and Instrumental Effects of Presidential Rhetoric,” in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address* ed. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael. Hogan (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

<sup>99</sup> Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 18.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Mary E. Stuckey, “Rethinking the Rhetorical Presidency and Presidential Rhetoric,” *The Review of Communication* 10 (January 2010): 41.

<sup>102</sup> Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 33.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.



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<sup>106</sup> Michelle Bligh, Jennifer Merolla, Jean Schroedel, and Randall Gonzalez, "Finding her Voice: Hillary Clinton's Rhetoric in the 2008 Presidential Campaign," *Women's Studies* 39 (2010): 823-850.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Jennifer L. Lawless, "Women, War and Winning Elections: Gender Stereotyping in the Post-September 11th Era," *Political Research Quarterly* 57 (2004): 479-490.

<sup>109</sup> Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 19.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Jane Blankenship and Deborah C. Robson, "A 'Feminine Style' in Women's Political Discourse: An Exploratory Essay," *Communication Quarterly* 43 (1995): 353-366.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Bonnie J. Dow and Mari Boor Tonn, "'Feminine Style' and Political Judgment in the Rhetoric of Ann Richards," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79 (1993): 286-302.

<sup>118</sup> Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 52.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 73.

CHAPTER 3  
GENDER AND NATIONAL SECURITY DISCOURSE: HILLARY CLINTON'S  
ANNUAL BUDGET HEARING

On March 2, 2011, Hillary Clinton sat before the Senate Subcommittee on Appropriations to testify in the hearing to approve the State Department budget for the 2012 fiscal year. While Clinton testified in several budget hearings during her tenure, this particular hearing is worth examining for several reasons. First, this budget approval hearing took place about halfway through Clinton's tenure, and thus functions as an index of how her rhetorical strategies progressed since her confirmation. Second, this hearing's political environment differed significantly from the environment of her confirmation hearing, as it was given to a markedly more conservative committee. At the hearing, Clinton needed to address national security issues pertaining to ongoing protests in the Middle East and shifting US military activity abroad. Clinton employed three rhetorical strategies to manage her gendered subject position and the constraints women confront when speaking on national security topics. In part, these strategies are an extension of the strategies she developed in her confirmation hearing, while they also prefigure the strategies she employed in the Benghazi hearing. First, Clinton appropriated a military like hierarchy, which allowed her to transcend the age/invisibility double bind, as it situated her as an experienced leader with command over subordinates. Second, Clinton invoked military like protocols to justify her budget and the actions of the State Department. In so doing, Clinton likened the State Department to the military, an institution viewed more favorably by the Tea Party, and improved her credibility as a national security leader. Finally, Clinton advocated

solutions to national security issues as non-military actions. While Clinton's first two strategies were to appropriate military rhetorics when addressing non-military issues, her third strategy was to avoid military rhetorics when addressing military or national security issues. These strategies helped Clinton move in and out of the discursive arenas typically unwelcome to women. Doing so allowed her to address diplomatic issues with the efficiency and credibility of the military, and enabled her to address military issues with diplomacy—and thus demonstrate that she can competently address national security issues and do so without appearing too masculine. This chapter first outlines the contextual factors that shaped Clinton's budget hearing and then addresses the strategies she used manage the demands of the specific situation, her gendered identity, and the norms of military rhetoric. Finally, I offer some conclusions for how this hearing is situated in the larger framework of Clinton's secretary of state rhetoric.

### **Context: The Budget Hearing**

Understanding Clinton's budget approval hearing requires a review of key contextual factors including the Democratic Party's loss of power in the 2010 midterm elections, the increased political power of the Tea Party, the emphasis on gender in the 2010 elections, and finally, economic conditions.

First, the 2010 midterm elections resulted in a sharp decrease of power for the Democratic Party. This decrease was shown most clearly in the House, where democrats lost 63 seats and left the Republican Party with the majority vote of 24 seats.<sup>121</sup> Democrats also lost the majority of gubernatorial elections with six previously democratic states electing republican governors.<sup>122</sup> While the democrats maintained their majority in the Senate, they also suffered significant losses. In the Senate, the democrats lost six seats to republicans, reducing their control from nine seats to a much less secure three.<sup>123</sup> This loss of power is reflected in

congressional approval ratings surrounding the 2010 election. Gallup polls indicated that the periods before and after the 2010 election were marked with widespread dissatisfaction with Congress. Approval ratings ranged from 21% approval during the election in November 2010, to 18% in March 2011, the month in which Clinton testified.<sup>124</sup> While congressional approval ratings are never very high, these results indicate a level of satisfaction that was significantly less than the 34% congressional average.<sup>125</sup>

Despite the loss of power and trust in the Democratic Party, Clinton maintained a consistently high level of approval. Over roughly the same period of time, Clinton's approval ratings ranged from 61%, in July of 2010, to a near record high of 66% in March of 2011, making her significantly more popular than Obama, Joe Biden, and Defense Secretary Robert Gates.<sup>126</sup> The midterm election results, coupled with widespread distrust of Congress, suggested that democrats did not enjoy the same level of power that they did during Clinton's confirmation hearing. This implies that Clinton may not have had the same level of support she did during her confirmation hearing. However, Clinton remained incredibly popular throughout the midterm elections and the months preceding her budget hearing. Nonetheless, her testimony was delivered in a period of shifting political power and widespread distrust for Congress.

While the democrats generally lost political power in the 2010 election, the Tea Party gained political influence by electing several members to political office. The Tea Party is an offshoot of the Republican Party that formed in April 2009, when thousands of people gathered to protest increased spending by the Obama administration.<sup>127</sup> However, it was in 2010 that the Tea Party gained significant momentum. First, in January, a self-proclaimed Tea Party member, Scott Brown, won the special election to fill the late Ted Kennedy's Senate seat.<sup>128</sup> Next, in July, Michelle Bachman formed an official Tea Party caucus that was joined by 28 republican

members of the House and Senate. This momentum worked to get more than 30 Tea Party politicians elected to national office,<sup>129</sup> and more than 700 politicians elected to state legislatures.<sup>130</sup> Of these elected officials, several influenced Clinton's budget approval hearing as well as the Benghazi crisis hearing. Specifically, freshman Senator Ron Johnson (R- WI) had been assigned to the subcommittee tasked with conducting the hearing on the State Department budget. Statements made by Johnson prior to the hearing highlighted the potential tensions between Clinton, representing the administration, and the Tea Party movement. Johnson explained, "The reason I ran for the U.S. Senate was to not only stop the Obama agenda but reverse it."<sup>131</sup>

Not only was the Tea Party openly antagonistic to the Obama administration, and by extension, Clinton, but also its beliefs contradicted Clinton's and the idea of government spending in general. These beliefs had the potential to complicate Clinton's task of justifying an increased State Department budget. A CBS poll of more than 880 Tea Party members revealed significant differences between Tea Party affiliates and average Americans. Some of these results directly impacted the budgetary issues Clinton addressed in the hearing. For example, 78% of Tea Party members were more concerned with the economy than social issues, 93% described the economy as at least "somewhat bad," and 42% thought that the economy was getting worse.<sup>132</sup> Much of the blame for these perceived problems was placed on the Obama administration, since 89% of respondents believed that the president expanded the role of government too far, and 92% believed if given the choice between a large government (with the ability to provide more services) or a small government (that was unable to provide as many services), they would prefer a small government that needed to limit the services provided.<sup>133</sup>

Thus, Clinton's tasks, to appeal for increased funding and to carry on developmental initiatives, would face opposition from a congressional committee heavily influenced by the Tea Party.

Many of the power negotiations during and after the 2010 elections dealt with issues directly affecting women. Considering Clinton's position as a high ranking female politician, it is important to situate her budget hearing in what was commonly referred to as the "war on women."<sup>134</sup> The American Civil Liberties Union explained:

The "War on Women" describes the legislative and rhetorical attacks on women and women's rights taking place across the nation. It includes a wide-range of policy efforts designed to place restrictions on women's health care and erode protections for women and their families. Examples at the state and federal level have included restricting contraception; cutting off funding for Planned Parenthood; state-mandated, medically unnecessary ultrasounds; abortion taxes; abortion waiting periods; forcing women to tell their employers why they want birth control, and prohibiting insurance companies from including abortion coverage in their policies.<sup>135</sup>

The more conservative congress, elected in 2010, perpetuated discrimination against women by proposing several pieces of legislation that would limit women's access to health care. For example, a 2011 budget bill passed in the House but not the Senate would have defunded Planned Parenthood and eliminated health support for low-income women.<sup>136</sup> Clinton, a frequent activist for women's rights and health care, was opposed to the policies advanced by a more conservative congress. In fact, at the height of the "war on women," Clinton increased her efforts to advocate for women around the world. She said she wanted to move her work on women, "out of the interpersonal and turn it into the international."<sup>137</sup> Thus, Clinton's gendered politics were at odds with more conservative beliefs that buttressed the "war on women."

Not only did a more conservative congress impact women's rights legislation, it also shaped the gendered culture within political institutions. The 2010 election marked the first time since 1987 that women did not increase their congressional membership.<sup>138</sup> Compounding this

problem, women lost several important leadership positions within congress, including Nancy Pelosi's position as Speaker of the House and three women who served as House committee chairs.<sup>139</sup> Of the women elected to Congress, there were more republicans than democrats.<sup>140</sup> This prompted some to question whether the "war on women" was also being fought in politics. After the 2010 election, and during the time of Clinton's budget hearing, many expressed concern that the newly elected women in the Republican Party would reverse feminist advances made in politics. For example, several news stories predicted that the newly elected women would follow the footsteps of Sarah Palin and Michelle Bachman, both of whom were known for "conservative feminism," which embraced traditional roles like motherhood.<sup>141</sup> Palin predicted that the 2010 election would herald, "the year of the commonsense, conservative women get[ting] things done."<sup>142</sup> Clinton clearly did not fit this picture of the new female politician. Not only was her testimony delivered at a time of more conservative thought in congress, she also had to manage a resurgence of traditional gender values championed by men and women in congress.

Finally, much debate preceded this budget hearing, centered particularly on cutting the budget. Before the hearing Obama proposed to increase the State Department budget by 1%, and to add \$8.7 billion to fund the transition in Iraq as troops withdrew.<sup>143</sup> Once this budget proposal was released, republicans and democrats began discussing possible cuts to foreign policy sections of the president's fiscal year 2012 budget. However, almost no cuts were suggested for the defense department, and instead, many targeted the State Department for cuts.<sup>144</sup> Prior to the hearing, Clinton publicly objected to the proposed cuts. In a letter delivered to Speaker of the House Boehner, Clinton claimed, "Cuts of this magnitude will be devastating to our national security, will render us unable to respond to unanticipated disasters, and will damage our

leadership in the world.”<sup>145</sup> Many of the proposed cuts to the State Department budget focused on developmental or aid programs, with some republicans advocating the elimination of wide scale foreign aid programs altogether. Therefore, prior to the hearing, Clinton worked to establish how developmental and diplomacy programs worked to support defense.<sup>146</sup>

Clinton’s budget approval hearing was informed by several contextual factors that shaped both the political, gendered, and economic culture of the time. Unlike her confirmation hearing, the budget hearing was delivered to a congress where the Democratic Party no longer had control. Furthermore, the Tea Party rose as a significant political force. Its influence led to a more economically and socially conservative Congress and the prioritization of beliefs that contradicted Obama’s and therefore Clinton’s economic policy. This conservative shift also worked to shape gendered political culture on a national scale, as evidenced by the “war on women.” Finally, Clinton’s budget hearing was informed by the debate about proposed budget cuts leading up to the hearing itself.

### **Disciplining Clinton’s Gender**

The ensuing analysis demonstrates how Clinton navigated the constraints of her rhetorical situation. Before fully unpacking these rhetorical strategies, it’s important to demonstrate how committee members viewed Clinton through a gendered lens. Thus, Clinton’s rhetorical strategies needed to function on at least two levels: they needed to address the post-2010 midterm conservative climate and they needed to manage the ways that committee members disciplined her gendered subjectivity. As previously argued, Clinton is unique as a secretary of state in that no other secretary before (or after) her has had to contend with the limits of such a high-profile gendered identity. Whether as working mother, grieving wife, feminist bitch, or feminist icon, Clinton was attached to a host of gendered perceptions and expectations.



Indeed, committee members made several comments throughout the budget hearing that framed Clinton in relation to two gender double binds. First, comments were made that perpetuated the femininity/competency double bind used previously to constrain Clinton in the confirmation hearing. Again, Clinton was framed as the “exceptional” woman, furthering the idea that women face a higher threshold to be considered competent.<sup>147</sup> Committee members consistently praised Clinton for going “above and beyond” in service of the State Department. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) began this trend in his opening statement: “Senator Graham and I kind of whispered to each other that we don’t know how you handle the jet lag with the amount you travel, but I feel fortunate this country has you representing us in the parts of the world where you go.”<sup>148</sup> Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) followed the trend of highlighting Clinton’s “exceptional” amount of travel: “My gosh, 79 countries, 465,000 miles, I mean, that’s a lot of travel to advance America’s interest, but it is not only the time you spent, the mileage you travel and the energy you put into it, but the results that you’ve demonstrated.”<sup>149</sup>

Murkowski’s comment on Clinton’s exertion of energy hinted at the second double bind used to constrain Clinton: the aging/invisibility bind. One assumption that underlies the aging/invisibility double bind is that women lose power as they age. While older men are seen as powerful, older women are interpreted as frail or weak.<sup>150</sup> Several committee members expressed worry that Clinton’s frequent travel must have negatively impacted her health, perpetuating the stereotype that she, as an older woman, was weak. While Clinton’s health as a constraining factor is more fully articulated in her Benghazi hearing, comments made in the budget hearing worked to establish her health as a concern. For example, Lindsey Graham (R-SC) was concerned that, “It’s not good for your health to constantly be in the air, I cannot tell you how I am impressed with your personal energy and the engagement you’ve offered on behalf

of our country, and I really do appreciate it.”<sup>151</sup> Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) later added, “It’s been terrific to see your energy and your vitality taking you to places, and, as I said when you were here for a moment, you don’t even look tired, which is amazing.”<sup>152</sup> Both comments framed Clinton as the “exceptional” woman, while they also highlighted her age and health. Throughout the budget hearing, Clinton crafted strategies to manage both of these double binds as well as the conservative climate that shaped the hearing’s political contours.

### **Rhetorical Strategies: The Budget Hearing**

Clinton’s rhetorical strategies in the budget hearing both reified and resisted traditional ideas of gender and national security discourse. Over the course of the hearing Clinton relied on three rhetorical strategies. First, Clinton invoked a military like hierarchy, which managed the age/invisibility double bind. Second, Clinton appropriated military protocols to justify budgetary decisions and manage the contextual force of the Tea Party’s dislike of developmental initiatives. Finally, Clinton framed solutions to national security issues as non-military actions, allowing her to avoid the constraints found when a woman speaks about national security.

#### ***Appropriation of Military Hierarchy***

Clinton’s first strategy was to articulate a military like hierarchy for the State Department. Throughout the hearing, Clinton framed herself as a general with subordinates or “troops,” that she directed and oversaw. This appropriation of military hierarchy managed Clinton’s gendered identity in two ways. First, by highlighting the hierarchical nature of State Department operations, Clinton was able to bolster her credibility as a leader. Second, a military hierarchy helped Clinton manage the age/invisibility double bind, insofar as Clinton framed her age as a source of wisdom and power, rather than a sign of weakness.

Clinton's strategy of appropriating a military hierarchy straddled the traditional norms of masculine and feminine rhetorical leadership. Jane Blankenship and Deborah Robson summarized the difference between a masculine and feminine approach to rhetorical leadership as the difference between emphasizing having "power over" people vs. the ability, or "power to," get things done.<sup>153</sup> Clinton's use of a military like hierarchy can be read as operating on both sides of this binary. To begin, she framed herself as a general with the power to command her subordinates. However, by highlighting the successes of those who work for her, Clinton's leadership could also be understood as conforming to tenets of the feminine style in which, "authority is used for the purpose of fostering the growth of the other toward the capacity for independent action."<sup>154</sup> Over the course of her testimony, Clinton invoked a military hierarchy to improve her own credibility. Considering that, as military troops left Iraq, the State Department would take over more responsibility in that region, it was important for Clinton to be able to speak as a credible military leader. Her exchange with Senator Graham (R-SC) shows why it was important for Clinton to frame herself as a military leader:

Graham: Now, come 2012, there's a lot still to be done in Iraq, and you will be the lead organization. Is that correct?

Clinton: That's right, Sir.

Graham: That is a major obligation.

Clinton: Yes, it is.

Graham: Are you worried about the safety of your people——

Clinton: Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir, we are worried.

Graham: I am, too.

Clinton: We are worried.

Graham: How many people would you envision being in Iraq to do the jobs that you'll be tasked to do?

Clinton: I think we're looking at thousands.

Graham: I mean like more than 10,000?

Clinton: More than 10,000, yes.

Graham: And we've got to realize, as a subcommittee, we're going to have 10,000 American citizens, all civilians, trying to do business in Iraq, all over the place, with no troops.

Clinton: Well, in fact, we have a total of about 17,000 civilians and the great proportion of those will be private security contractors.

This exchange highlights Clinton as the general of the State Department. While she did not have military training, she was expected to command the people taking over the management of Iraq. This would be a daunting task for any secretary of state, however, as a woman, Clinton had to contend with the added hindrance of women's marginalization from national security discourse. Therefore framing herself as a general situates her as a competent leader in command of a military operation.

While this exchange shows how a senator contributed to Clinton's framing as a general, she repeatedly invoked military hierarchy throughout the hearing. For example, Clinton frequently made statements that emphasized the people and initiatives that operated under her leadership. In her opening statement, when explaining what the budget would fund, she noted: "this budget funds the people and platforms that make everything possible that I've described. It allows us to sustain diplomatic relations with 190 countries. It funds political officers defusing crises, developmental officers spreading opportunity, economic officers who wake up every day thinking about how to put Americans back to work."<sup>155</sup> Here, Clinton speaks of the department's "officers," who make sacrifices in the name democracy. Thus, Clinton's militaristic persona aligned her closely with more traditionally masculine discursive arenas, such as defense and national security.

Clinton's appropriation of a military hierarchy also worked to spread responsibility among many State Department mechanisms, and in the process, managed the age/invisibility double bind, which suggests women lose power as they age.<sup>156</sup> By framing herself as a general leading her subordinates, Clinton became wise and powerful with her age, instead of weak. Clinton managed her age by relying on her younger subordinates. For example, when Senator

Patrick Leahy (D-VT) asked Clinton about supporting Internet freedom, her response was, “Yes, and we, I have all these young tech experts who are doing this. So I’m just repeating what they tell me, but we are moving as fast as we can to deal with situations that are totally unprecedented.”<sup>157</sup> In this example, Clinton accounted for both a flaw in her leadership, not quickly responding to Egypt shutting down their Internet during the overthrow of President Mubarak, and managed the aging/invisibility double bind by relying on the efficiency of the young employees she managed. Clinton again turned to this strategy when asked a specific question about comparing the proposed budget to those in the past. When she was not prepared to answer specific appropriation questions, as they are usually not raised during a secretary of state’s testimony, she relied on those working for the department to manage this gap in her knowledge. Her response shifted the focus to her subordinates who were responsible for the more detailed components of the budget proposal: “Let’s see. Let me turn to my staff here and- ...They’re looking at that little tiny print. They’ll get it.”<sup>158</sup> Once again, Clinton, by enacting the role of a general who oversaw the work of others, maintained a position of power when potentially constrained by the age/invisibility double bind because she was able to rely on the people she managed. Further, she had faith in her subordinates to complete the task at hand. The use of a military hierarchy not only helped Clinton eschew the perception that she was incompetent, it also manage the gendered constraint of aging/invisibility by relying the knowledge of young “tech experts” and for commanding and trusting her “staff” to provide her with the minutiae of the case at hand. Further, as a general, Clinton remained “aged,” or experienced and respected by subordinates, and “visible,” as the rhetorical agent at the center of the State Department.

### ***Faith in Military Protocol***

Clinton's second gender management strategy continued to rely on military norms. Throughout her testimony Clinton put her faith in military like protocols to defend and justify the State Department budget. This strategy worked to frame diplomatic and economic action as equally urgent as military action. Considering the Tea Party's dislike of large government's social and developmental spending, Clinton's framing of budgetary needs in terms of military protocol can be viewed as a strategy to overcome some of the obstacles presented by Tea Party committee members and assert her competency. Clinton first noted her use of military protocols in her opening statement:

I launched the first ever Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) following on my experience when I served with Senator Graham on the Armed Services Committee, what the Pentagon had done with its QDDR. So this QDDR helped us maximize the impact of every \$1 we spend. We scrubbed the budget. We made painful, but responsible cuts.<sup>159</sup>

Clinton later added, "The second part of our request funds the extraordinary, temporary portion of our war effort that we are responsible for in the same way the Pentagon's request is funded, in a separate Overseas Contingency Operations account, known as OCO."<sup>160</sup> These statements framed Clinton's budgetary demands as equally important to the military's demands. Just like military personnel, State Department personnel have followed protocols that resulted in sacrifice, such as the "painful, but responsible cuts" Clinton noted in her opening statement. Also like military leaders, Clinton is willing to make these sacrifices because they feel a "great sense of mission."<sup>161</sup>

Through military metaphors, Clinton framed the State Department, not as a body of bureaucrats, but as soldiers following military like protocols and willing to make sacrifices. This faith in military protocol, and the subsequent reframing of the State Department in relation to

military organization, can be read as an effort to manage some of the constraints presented by the Tea Party influenced congressional committee. As a whole, Tea Party affiliates were relatively hostile to the idea of a large bureaucratic government and relatively more receptive to the idea of a powerful military.<sup>162</sup> Therefore, by framing budget reduction protocols as military protocols, Clinton positioned herself as the leader of an efficient department—a more palatable department to the more conservative committee. In fact, Clinton invoked military protocol to counter the image of the State Department as a bloated bureaucracy and assert herself as a competent leader. She argued that passing the State Department OCO would result in a \$45 billion decrease of the military's budget and only a \$4 billion increase to the State Department budget. She then joked, "Every business owner I know would gladly invest \$4 to save \$45."<sup>163</sup> Clinton argued that not only could she successfully follow military protocol, but she could also do it better than the military. Clinton's faith in military protocol ideally assuaged the Tea Party's resistance to her politics and to her department's bureaucratic functions, especially as she framed the State Department as a militaristic rather than bureaucratic organization.

This faith in protocol also worked closely aligned her with military institutions and leadership. For example, Clinton argued that the proposed cuts to the State Department budget would force her to cut initiatives that were, "absolutely supported by Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen, General Petraeus and others."<sup>164</sup> In this statement, Clinton placed herself in the company of representatives of masculine military institutions, establishing her leadership ethos as equal to theirs. Clinton further linked the State Department to the military, in order to justify the State Department's diplomacy initiatives, by reiterating several times that she was, "working with the department of defense."<sup>165</sup> Invoking male military leaders and the Department of Defense associated Clinton with the structures and practices of the military while she addressed

non-military issues. In a discursive arena unkind to women, this association lent her credibility as a leader without positioning her as too masculine—especially since she focused on State Department issues, not national security issues.

### *A Non-Military Response to National Security*

Unlike Clinton's first two strategies, which embraced military hierarchy and protocol to address non-military issues, her third strategy framed military issues in non-military terms. Specifically, Clinton addressed issues of national security as questions of economics, diplomacy, development, or beyond her jurisdiction. By framing national security questions in non-defense terms, Clinton tempered the perception that women aren't competent military leaders. This strategy not only helped Clinton manage gendered national security constraints, it also helped her to separate her department from the department of defense, a critical task in justifying her budget.

Like her confirmation hearing, where Clinton advocated a three-pronged approach to managing the duties of secretary of state, her budget testimony also relied on the combination of diplomacy, development, and defense. In her opening statement, Clinton established how these tenants worked holistically to manage security threats. When Clinton explained the steps the State Department would take to mitigate the violence in Libya between Muammar Gaddafi and those who seek to remove him from power, she argued:

This is an unfolding example of using the combined assets of diplomacy, development and defense to protect our interests and advance our values. This integrated approach is not just how we respond to the crisis of the moment. It is the most effective and most cost-effective way to sustain and advance our security interests across the world, and it is only possible with a budget that supports all the tools in our national security arsenal.<sup>166</sup>

The national security “tools” that Clinton emphasized in the remainder of the hearing were not our military capabilities, but rather, things like diplomatic negotiation, developmental aid, and



economic assistance. To manage her national security responses, Clinton prioritized the types of arguments that have been deemed more acceptable for women. In her study of people's willingness to vote for a female president in a time of war, Jennifer Lawless concluded that the highest levels of negative female stereotyping occurred when people were asked questions about military leadership ability.<sup>167</sup> When asked about men and women's ability to handle domestic issues, or their general levels of qualification to be president, the same level of statistical significance was not reached.<sup>168</sup> Clinton, in part, navigated this constraint by refusing to directly engage in military discourse, the area where women are perceived to be the least credible. Instead, she framed her responses in terms widely accepted for female politicians. For example, Blankenship and Robson argue that women typically approach problems more holistically than men which includes, "recognizing the fuller system from which a particular problem arises and the interdependencies within that system."<sup>169</sup> Clinton's above iteration of her "integrated approach" to answering national security questions demonstrates how Clinton negotiated the tensions between military rhetoric, as advanced in her first two rhetorical strategies, and her position as a woman in national politics. Clinton balanced these demands by framing non-military issues, like diplomacy and development, through military like processes and answering questions directly pertaining to the military with an approach considered more typical of women's leadership.

Clinton used this strategy when answering national security or military questions from committee members. For example, Senator John Hoeven (R-ND) questioned Clinton on exactly what the United States was doing to prevent extremist groups from influencing the outcome of protests and elections in the Middle East. After pressing Clinton for a more specific answer on

how she was counteracting that possibility, she emphasized the State Department's diplomatic efforts:

Well, in every way we can. That's why we are in these countries with our teams of experts, our aid experts, our diplomats. I sent Under Secretary Bill Burns, a former ambassador to Jordan, into the region to do a full survey. I've got Assistant Secretary Jeff Feltman in Bahrain as we speak working with the government there to try to help them understand what it's going to take to resolve this political standoff... So, I mean, we have diplomats. We have development experts. We have military. We have an enormous outreach that is working right now.<sup>170</sup>

Clinton's reliance on non-military solutions to military issues is more fully illustrated in her exchange with Senator Mark Kirk (R-IL) over the issue of piracy off the coast of Somalia. This exchange, marked by frequent interruptions from both the Senator and Clinton, shows two drastically different approaches to piracy. Clinton, again looked at the issue collectively and highlighted non-military factors like diplomacy, "We have put together an international coalition"; economics, "major shipping companies in the world think it's the price of doing business"; and the bureaucracy of working with other governments where, "when push comes to shove, they're not really producing."<sup>171</sup> In comparison, Senator Kirk saw the issue in purely military terms, "Once they come on the high seas, they're in our territory. We have overwhelming military advantage... And a standard procedure would be just to put a round into the rudder of the ship. At that point, they run out of food and water."<sup>172</sup> This example illustrates that Clinton was not simply adapting to the tone of the hearing, but rather, strategically answered military questions with suggestions other than military involvement. This strategy highlights how Clinton confronted the dual demands of managing her gendered identity and her military credibility.

Clinton's use of this strategy had the added benefit of helping to distance her position from the department of defense. This distancing further removed Clinton from traditional forms

of masculine military rhetoric and helped to justify the State Department's budgetary request. On multiple occasions, Clinton answered questions about the United States' military involvement by explaining how military activity was not under the jurisdiction of the State Department. For example, when Senator Lautenberg (D-NJ) asked Clinton about the process of setting up no fly zones over Libya, she explained, "So I don't want to substitute, certainly, my judgment for our professional military's assessment. I want to focus on what I can do, which is the humanitarian mission, and I think having military assets support us is a really strong message about who we are as a people."<sup>173</sup> In statements such as this, Clinton further distanced herself from military rhetoric by arguing that those questions should be addressed to an entirely different department. This separation had a second advantage of helping Clinton to justify why there was so much overlap between the budgets of the State Department and the department of defense. Clinton maintained that the two departments had complementary but separate missions and that, "if it appears as though nondefense discretionary means that the Defense Department keeps getting what they need to fulfill their mission for America and we've been running as hard as we can to be the partners that our military wants from us and we don't get that kind of support, well, obviously, that's going to send a very loud message."<sup>174</sup> Clinton's distinction between the State Department and issues of the military worked in two ways. It first worked to manage her position as a woman speaking on national security by firmly situating those questions as outside of her jurisdiction, and therefore not a constraint upon her rhetoric. Second, it helped to justify her budget request by drawing clearer boundaries around the State Department's mission. By using this strategy, Clinton avoided directly speaking as a female military leader; a position that studies show is fraught with gendered constraints.

## Conclusions

Clinton's use of gender and national security management strategies during the budget approval hearing not only helps us understand how she responded to specific contextual factors, it also has implications for understanding her rhetoric as a whole. Clinton's testimony in the budget approval hearing shows that gender and the norms of national security discourse continued to shape Clinton's rhetorical choices. Thus, in order to manage these constraints, Clinton developed three rhetorical strategies. These strategies resisted and reified traditional conceptions of a feminine speaking style and the norms of national security discourse. Clinton first resisted the norms of a feminine style by taking on the role of general and appropriating military hierarchies. This strategy worked to manage the age/invisibility double bind and bolstered her credibility as a military leader. Second, Clinton invoked military protocols to defend the State Department budget. This strategy had the effect of negotiating the contextual challenges presented by the Tea Party-influenced committee and further managed her national security credibility linking it to masculine military institutions. Finally, Clinton answered military questions with non-military solutions. This strategy demonstrates the tensions Clinton faced between appearing as a strong military leader and managing her gender. Clinton's use of non-military solutions served to distance her from engaging in explicit military discourse and had the added benefit of clearly delineating the State Department from the Department of Defense.

Over the course of the budget hearing, Clinton crafted strategies to combat several contextual factors specific to the 2010 election as well as the ongoing challenge of maintaining her credibility as a gendered agent. Specifically, Clinton established a place for the State Department, and herself as secretary of state, by utilizing the norms of the military. Because the

rising force of conservatism was openly hostile to the idea of large government bureaucracies, Clinton turned to military protocol to establish the importance and necessity of the State Department. Further, Clinton's rhetorical choices combated the war-on-women. Instead of embracing the trend of republican women to frame politics through women's traditional roles, Clinton made the opposite choice and framed herself through a military hierarchy where she became a general. This choice directly confronted the movement by conservative women in politics to highlight their femininity. Finally, Clinton's rhetoric demonstrated, that despite these savvy political choices, she continued to be constrained by her gendered identity. Clinton's refusal to directly engage military discourse reveals that the tensions between gender, national security, and political leadership were forces that presented challenges and needed to be managed in Clinton's budget testimony. This chapter suggests that women can selectively engage the norms of national security discourse in order to resist their marginalization from the discursive areas of the military, security, and defense.

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**Notes**

<sup>121</sup> “Election 2010: Election Results,” *The New York Times*, last updated November 2010.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, “Congressional Approval Back Below 20%,” *Gallup Politics*, March 11, 2011.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Rachel Weiner, “Hillary Clinton’s Popularity Reaches Near-record High,” *The Washington Post*, March 11, 2011.

<sup>127</sup> Jessica Durando, “Five Key Moments from Five Years of the Tea Party,” *USA Today*, February 27, 2014.

<sup>128</sup> Rebecca Ballhaus, “A Short History of the Tea Party Movement,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 27, 2014.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Sam Tanenhaus, “History vs. the Tea Party,” *The New York Times*, January 14, 2012.

<sup>131</sup> Philip Rucker, “Senate Tea Party Caucus Holds First Meeting Without some who had Embraced Banner,” *The Washington Post*, January 28, 2011.

<sup>132</sup> Brian Montopoli, “Tea Party Supporters: Who They Are and What They Believe,” *CBS News*, December 14, 2012.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> “The War on Women,” *The New York Times*, February 25, 2011.

<sup>135</sup> “War on Women,” *American Civil Liberties Union*.

<sup>136</sup> Editorial, “The War on Women,” *The New York Times*, February 25, 2011.

<sup>137</sup> Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, “Hillary Clinton’s War for Women’s Rights,” *The Daily Beast*, March 6, 2011.

<sup>138</sup> Linda Feldmann, “Republican Women Gain in Congress, but Women Overall May Lose Ground,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 5, 2010.

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<sup>139</sup> Dana Bash, “Despite New Female Faces in Congress, Numbers in Decline,” *CNN*, November 10, 2010.

<sup>140</sup> Linda Feldmann.

<sup>141</sup> Sandhya Somashekhar, “Conservative Women Enthusiastic About Bachmann, Palin,” *The Washington Post*, June 5, 2011.

<sup>142</sup> David Brody and Dana Ritter, “Election 2010: The Year of the ‘Mama Grizzly.’” *CBN News*, October 8, 2010.

<sup>143</sup> Nicole Gaouette, “State Department Plans Cuts in Security Funding, Aid,” *Bloomberg News*, February 14, 2011.

<sup>144</sup> Joshua Foust, “Gutting the State Department,” *PBS*, April 15, 2011.

<sup>145</sup> Kirit Radia and John Parkinson, “Clinton Praises Iran Protests, Raises Alarm Over Budget Cuts,” *ABC News*, February 14, 2011.

<sup>146</sup> Nicole Gaouette, “State Department Plans Cuts in Security Funding.”

<sup>147</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 126.

<sup>148</sup> Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2012*, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong., March 2, 2011, 9.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>150</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind*, 149.

<sup>151</sup> Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 11.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>153</sup> Jane Blankenship and Deborah C. Robson, “A ‘Feminine Style’ in Women’s Political Discourse: An Exploratory Essay,” *Communication Quarterly* 43 (1995), 361.

<sup>154</sup> Bonnie J. Dow and Mari Boor Tonn, “‘Feminine Style’ and Political Judgment in the Rhetoric of Ann Richards,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79 (1993), 297.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind*.

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<sup>157</sup> Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 11.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>162</sup> Brian Montopoli, “Tea Party Supporters: Who They Are.”

<sup>163</sup> Senate Subcommittee on the Committee on Appropriations., 7.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>167</sup> Jennifer L. Lawless, “Women, War and Winning Elections: Gender Stereotyping in the Post-September 11th Era,” *Political Research Quarterly* 57 (2004): 479-490.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 486.

<sup>169</sup> Jane Blankenship and Deborah C. Robson, “A ‘Feminine Style’ in Women’s Political Discourse,” 362.

<sup>170</sup> Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 35.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.



## CHAPTER 4

### GENDER AND NATIONAL SECURITY DISCOURSE: HILLARY CLINTON'S BENGHAZI HEARINGS

On September 11, 2012, a group of heavily armed militants attacked the US diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya. Over the course of events, the mission was burned and four Americans killed: Ambassador Chris Stevens, Foreign Service Officer Sean Smith, and former Navy SEALs Tyrone Woods and Glen Doherty. This attack marked the first time since 1979 that a US ambassador was killed in an attack on an embassy or consulate.<sup>175</sup> On January 23, 2013, Clinton testified in front of the House Foreign Relations Committee, and immediately after, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. She delivered this testimony weeks after she was released from medical treatment for a blood clot near her brain, and just nine days before she officially resigned the position of secretary of state. Unlike Clinton's confirmation and budget hearings, which included a survey of several issues related to American national security, the Benghazi hearing dealt with a single national security crisis. As such, the Benghazi hearing allows for a more detailed examination of how Clinton managed gendered national security constraints. This chapter first unpacks the contextual influences on Clinton's final act of testimony, next, establishes how congressional committee members gendered Clinton through their questioning, and finally, analyzes the two rhetorical strategies Clinton created to negotiate these constraints. Specifically, I argue that Clinton reframed the hearing from a forensic to a deliberative event and assumed the voice of the Accountability Review Board Report.

### **Context: The Benghazi Hearing**

An understanding of the Benghazi hearing depends on several contextual factors. Of the three hearings studied in this thesis, the Benghazi hearing garnered the most controversy and was heavily covered by the media. The contextual factors that informed Clinton's testimony included, the events that took place in Benghazi (and prompted the need for a hearing), the focus on Benghazi in the 2012 presidential election, Clinton's health crisis prior to the hearing, criticism of the State Department before the hearing, and speculation about Clinton's political ambitions following the conclusion of her secretary of state tenure.

First, Clinton's testimony was delivered in response to a specific national security crisis, the attack on the US Mission in Benghazi, Libya. The specific events informing the attack on September 11, 2012, trace back to February 16, 2011, when protests erupted in Benghazi and spread to other Libyan cities. These protests, initiated to remove President Moammar Gadhafi from power, transformed into what is now labeled the Libyan Civil War.<sup>176</sup> In February 2011, the United States officially issued sanctions against Libya and temporarily closed the US Embassy in Tripoli.<sup>177</sup> A US diplomatic presence was reinstated in Libya in November 2011, when the US Special Mission in Benghazi was established. Chris Stevens, who had previously served as the Special Envoy to the rebel-government that eventually displaced Gadhafi, was appointed as the ambassador.<sup>178</sup> The State Department mandated Accountability Review Board Report, produced after the attack, found that, "Special Mission Benghazi's uncertain future after 2012 and its 'non-status' as a temporary, residential facility made allocation of resources for security and personnel more difficult."<sup>179</sup> The mission did not meet the security standards that are typically required of locations where the State Department intended to have a permanent

presence.<sup>180</sup> This lack of security made the attack on September 11<sup>th</sup> more damaging than it might otherwise have been.

The Senate Intelligence Committee's report on the attack included a very detailed report of how events unfolded on the night of September 11<sup>th</sup> and morning of September 12<sup>th</sup>. This report explained that the attack on the mission unfolded in three waves of military engagement. First, the initial attack began around 9:40 PM on the night of September 11<sup>th</sup> when a group of at least 60 assailants breached the mission's front vehicle gate. Ambassador Stevens and State Department Information Management Officer Sean Smith were secured in a "safe area" while reinforcements were transported from a nearby CIA Annex. Over the course of the attack, fires caused Stevens and Smith to leave the "safe area" and lose contact with security guards. When the reinforcements from the CIA Annex prepared to evacuate the mission they found Officer Smith dead and were unable to locate Ambassador Stevens before being forced to evacuate.<sup>181</sup> After mission personnel reached the Annex, attacks slowed for about an hour. In this period of time it was determined that Ambassador Steven's body had been pulled from the mission by looters and transported to a Benghazi hospital as an unidentified patient. Calls between the hospital and those at the CIA Annex confirmed that the patient was Ambassador Stevens and that he had died.<sup>182</sup> A final attack on the CIA Annex in the early morning of September 12<sup>th</sup> resulted in the two additional deaths of Security officers Tyrone Woods and Glen Doherty.<sup>183</sup> Soon after, transportation was secured to the airport and all American personnel evacuated.<sup>184</sup> The goal of the hearing in which Clinton testified was to understand what flaws of security and State Department management allowed these attacks to succeed.

Second, the Benghazi attack had a large impact on the 2012 presidential election, resulting in increased media attention prior to Clinton's testimony. On September 12, 2012,

Obama delivered a speech from the Rose Garden, with Secretary Clinton by his side. He said, “No acts of terror will ever shake the resolve of this great nation, alter that character, or eclipse the light of the values that we stand for.”<sup>185</sup> The ambiguity of whether or not Obama called the attack in Benghazi an act of terror became a point of contention between Obama and republican presidential candidate, Mitt Romney. During the October town hall presidential debate, an audience member asked why security had not been improved at the mission. This led to a heated exchange between the candidates over whether or not Obama had labeled the incident an act of terror.<sup>186</sup> In the debate over whether or not the president’s statement on Benghazi signaled that he had a weak stance on terrorism, the overall events of Benghazi were lost or condensed into partisan talking points. The *New York Times* summarized, “the administration has framed the attack around the need for American outreach to the Arab world, while Republicans have focused on the perils of American weakness there.”<sup>187</sup> Clinton, as representative of the Obama administration, took steps to remedy Obama’s image prior to the election by publicly taking responsibility for the attack saying, “The president and the vice-president wouldn’t be knowledgeable about specific decisions that are made by security professionals.”<sup>188</sup> McCain later criticized Clinton for “throwing herself under the bus” to protect the president.<sup>189</sup> The 2012 election forced Clinton to defend not only the actions of the State Department, but the Obama administration as a whole. The focus on Benghazi in the 2012 election worked to ensure that the attack reached a level of news coverage that might not have existed if not for election politics. The interest created by the election ensured that Clinton’s testimony would become a national spectacle, something to be analyzed and replayed by the 24-hour media.

Other contextual factors that shaped the Benghazi hearing centered on Clinton and the State Department. Clinton was originally scheduled to provide testimony on December 20,

2012, but was forced to cancel because of health complications.<sup>190</sup> On December 9, Clinton fell and hit her head while recovering from a stomach virus that left her severely dehydrated. On December 13, she was diagnosed with a concussion during treatment for the fall. During a December 30 follow up treatment for the concussion, a blood clot was discovered in a vein near Clinton's brain, resulting in four days of hospitalization.<sup>191</sup> During these events it was unclear how Clinton's testimony would be impacted by her health crisis. Because Clinton planned to step down from office at some point in January, many news outlets wondered if her testimony was permanently canceled, would be delivered after she was no longer secretary of state, or would be rescheduled. Some conservatives worried that Clinton was using her health to avoid answering questions on Benghazi.<sup>192</sup> For example, Allen West (R-FL) said in a FOX interview, "I'm not a doctor, but it seems as though that the secretary of state has come down with a case of Benghazi flu."<sup>193</sup> Greg Gutfeld, a FOX News host, wondered on air how Clinton could, "get a concussion when she was ducking everything."<sup>194</sup> Other news outlets reported Clinton's health issues under the headline "Hillary's Head Fake," or suggested that Clinton had developed an "acute Benghazi allergy."<sup>195</sup> Clinton eventually rescheduled her appearances for January 23, 2013, just weeks after she was released from the hospital and just days before her official resignation on February 1.<sup>196</sup> Clinton's health scare brought to light criticism about her role in the Benghazi crisis, while it also worked to frame her as weak or frail.

While Clinton was heavily criticized before the hearing, the State Department, as a whole, faced significant blame for security failures. The Accountability Review Board's report, published in December of 2012, found significant problems with State Department management. The report, which was required by the Omnibus Diplomatic and Antiterrorism Act of 1986, was compiled by a five-member board. Four of the members were selected by Clinton and one by the

Director of National Intelligence. Ambassador Thomas Pickering served as Chairman with Admiral Michael Mullen as Vice-Chairman. Their report concluded that, “Systemic failures and leadership and management deficiencies at senior levels within two bureaus of the State Department (the “Department”) resulted in a Special Mission security posture that was inadequate for Benghazi and grossly inadequate to deal with the attack that took place.”<sup>197</sup>

While Clinton herself was not implicated in the report, the failings of the State Department were severe enough that four State Department officers were placed on administrative leave and eventually relieved of their duties. These officers were at the level of either assistant secretary or deputy assistant secretary with specific responsibilities for diplomatic security, embassy security, or North Africa.<sup>198</sup> While those removed from their posts were separated from Clinton by several steps in the State Department power structure,<sup>199</sup> their removal was a concrete symbol of the department’s culpability in the Benghazi attack. Clinton, as the representative of the entire department, shouldered a significant amount of this criticism.

Finally, Clinton’s Benghazi testimony coincided with speculation about her political ambitions following the end of her secretary of state tenure. As Clinton prepared to leave the State Department, several wondered if she was planning to run for president in the 2016 election. While Clinton never made her intentions clear,<sup>200</sup> several media outlets ran stories on how Benghazi would impact her chances of election. For example, one poll pitted Clinton in hypothetical presidential primary and general presidential election matchups and concluded that she would be, “the ideal Democratic presidential candidate in 2016.” Polling data put her firmly ahead of any other democrat in the primary and predicted she could win any general election matchup, with only Chris Christy approaching her in popularity.<sup>201</sup> Some worried that the speculation surrounding Clinton’s 2016 ambitions would freeze the political field for other

democratic candidates. For example, the *Washington Post* expressed concern that, until Clinton made a move, it would be virtually impossible for other notable democrats to build a financial or organizational base.<sup>202</sup> Clinton's testimony falls in the middle of this speculation. Even though she spoke as outgoing Secretary of State, her testimony was interpreted based on how it would impact her potential political future. Just as Clinton's role as a candidate in 2008 shaped her confirmation hearing, her role as a secretary of state was interpreted as a factor that could impact her future campaign. Whether running for office or not, Clinton's testimony on Benghazi would remain her last official statement as a working politician.

### **Disciplining Clinton's Gender**

Throughout Clinton's testimony, committee members contributed to Clinton's gendered identity in several ways. First, members emphasized her role as a feminist icon, and second, they frequently commented on her health. To begin, Congressional committee members highlighted Clinton's status as a role model for women and girls. Like in the confirmation hearing, this seemingly positive commentary restricted Clinton's identity to her gender. As Marita Gronnvoll and other scholars have noted, women do not get to speak from a genderless position.<sup>203</sup> One of the more obvious cases of this gendering came from Representative Juan Vargas (D-CA):

I also want to thank you for the excellent work that you have done not only here in the United States but across the world. I have to say that because it is true, one, and, secondly, I don't think that my wife, my 16-year-old daughter or my 9-year-old daughter, she would probably even turn on me and wouldn't let me in the house if I didn't say that. You are a hero to many, especially women. And you seem to bring out these deep aspirations that they have in ways that I have never seen anyone do before. So, again, thank you for your service.<sup>204</sup>

Vargas's suggestions that his wife and daughters would turn on him if he did not note Clinton's work on behalf of women, and that Clinton has inspired women in a way unmatched by other politicians, worked to highlight her unique gendered identity. Considering that issues of gender

had no bearing on the events in Benghazi, statements like this served no purpose other than to establish Clinton's gendered identity. Vargas was not alone in his establishment of Clinton's gender. For example, Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), another well known advocate for women, took time to thank Clinton for her, "advocacy in behalf of women around the globe."<sup>205</sup> Senators who followed Boxer then noted both Boxer's and Clinton's roles as women's advocates. Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) reiterated that, "Senator Boxer already acknowledged the gender equity issues that you have taken an international leadership on."<sup>206</sup> And Robert Casey (D-PA) took time to thank Clinton for, "The work that was mentioned by Senator Boxer and others on behalf of women throughout the world but also women and girls particularly in Afghanistan."<sup>207</sup> These comments worked to make Clinton and Boxer's genders visible, unlike the gender of male committee members. While the comments were framed in a way that praised Clinton, in reality, they constrained her by forcing her into a gendered position.

Another mechanism of gendering in the Benghazi hearing was congressional commentary on Clinton's recent health crisis. By pointing to Clinton's hospitalization, and subsequent recovery, committee members perpetuated the aging/invisibility double bind in which Jamieson points out that women lose the perception of power as they age.<sup>208</sup> Under the guise of wishing Clinton a full recovery, committee members continually reestablished Clinton as an aging woman. Senator John McCain's (R-AZ) comment on Clinton's health can be read as a combination of several gender stereotypes that have traditionally constrained Clinton. His joke that, "It's wonderful to see you in good health, and as combative as ever"<sup>209</sup> operated through two gender stereotypes. It first framed Clinton through the age/invisibility double bind by pointing out her weakened health. McCain's statement also framed Clinton as the overly aggressive or "combative" woman, a gender stereotype that was especially problematic for



Clinton in her 2008 presidential campaign. Considering speculation that Clinton would run for president again in 2016, the reemergence of gender stereotypes from her first campaign is worth noting.

Several Representatives and Senators joined McCain in highlighting both her weakened position as an aging woman and how her health could factor into the 2016 election. For example, Senator Rand Paul (R-KY), another speculated 2016 candidate, told Clinton that, “I’m glad to see your health improving.”<sup>210</sup> Here, Paul’s comment suggested that Clinton was still not at her best when she appeared to testify, contributing to the construction of her as a weakened woman. Statements made in the House showed concern over whether Clinton’s health could continue to be a factor in her future political career. Representative Ted Deutch (D-FL) is one example of this. In his speculation about Clinton’s future he noted that, “And I, for one, hope that after a bit of rest, you will consider a return to public service, and should that return bring you to Florida, I would look forward to welcoming you there.”<sup>211</sup> Deutch’s comment suggested that Clinton was weak enough to require rest before considering a future political career. Taken together, comments that mentioned Clinton’s recent health scare worked to perpetuate the aging/invisibility double bind by framing Clinton as an aging, and therefore weak woman.

### **Rhetorical Strategies: The Benghazi Hearing**

Over the course of nearly five hours of testimony delivered to both the House and Senate Committees on Foreign Relations, Clinton relied on two rhetorical strategies to manage both the forensic tone of the hearing, which initially framed her as a defendant on trial to determine her guilt or innocence in the Benghazi crisis, and her gendered identity created by the committee. Taken together, Clinton’s two strategies framed the hearing as deliberative, rather than forensic, which helped to manage her credibility as secretary of state and voice for national security. The

first strategy Clinton employed was the selective engagement of three rhetorical genres. This genre manipulation helped Clinton confront questions of her credibility and leadership ability and to avoid directly engaging in military discourse. Second, Clinton obfuscated her own gendered identity by assuming the voice of the genderless ARB report. This strategy worked to avoid the constraints that threatened her credibility presented by her gender and reframed the hearing as deliberative rather than forensic.

### ***Manipulation of Genres***

Clinton's first strategy worked to shift the exigency of the hearing from forensic, where she was put on trial for failures of leadership, to deliberative, where she worked proactively to prevent future security failures. In order to accomplish the exigency shift, Clinton utilized the norms of three rhetorical genres. While the national security crisis in Benghazi suggested that Clinton should utilize the norms of war rhetoric, her position as a woman, and failure to preempt the crisis, called into question her credibility as a secretary of state. In order to manage the war rhetoric genre, which seemed to force Clinton into the position of a defendant, she turned to the genres of campaign and restorative rhetoric in order to reframe the hearing as a deliberative event and confront gender and credibility criticism.

Because the Benghazi hearing was convened to investigate a national security crisis, its discourses would likely be framed in terms of war rhetoric. However, the failure of the State Department to anticipate the crisis made it difficult for Clinton to employ this genre without damaging her credibility. In her reconceptualization of war rhetoric to address terrorist threats, Carroll Winkler suggested that contemporary war rhetoric often prioritizes preemption and prevention to combat terrorism. Winkler argued, "The belief by many that preemption constitutes a new approach for handling the nation's enemies and the oft-repeated claim that the

war on terror is a different kind of war suggest that the conventions of war rhetoric may have changed.”<sup>212</sup> According to Winkler, contemporary arguments against terrorism, “involves striking first to blunt an imminent attack from one’s opponent; prevention relies on military force to counter gathering threats that will likely become more ominous and more costly to defend against in the future.”<sup>213</sup> Clinton’s failure to preempt or prevent the attack in Benghazi, then, was out of step with current norms of war rhetoric, and in turn, precluded war rhetoric as a fitting site of rhetorical invention. In fact, her failure to prevent the attack in Benghazi was a constant source of criticism from committee members. Several committee members emphasized that Clinton was not aware of cables from Benghazi asking for additional security, suggesting that if she had seen the cables she would have been able to prevent the attack. Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) was one of the more aggressive sources of this criticism:

I'm glad that you're accepting responsibility. I think that ultimately, with your leaving, you accept the culpability for the worst tragedy since 9/11. And I really mean that. Had I been president at the time and I found that you did not read the cables from Benghazi, you did not read the cables from Ambassador Stevens, I would have relieved you of your post. I think it's inexcusable.<sup>214</sup>

Thus, consistent with current norms of war rhetoric, Clinton failed as a leader. If Clinton had attempted to defend the mission’s lack of security, she would have perpetuated the forensic exigency of the hearing, which framed her as guilty and on trial. As was discussed in chapter 1, congressional hearings that take on a forensic exigency are often damaging to those testifying because they lack access, “to resources of counsel or acts of procedural adjudication.”<sup>215</sup> This framing often sets up women to appear weak and not trustworthy. Thus, Clinton’s strategic genre-shift foreclosed the possibility for her to be questioned as a defendant. Creating a new rhetorical situation, then, de-situated questions about what happened at Benghazi—that is, they

were unfit for the rhetorical situation. Clinton had commanded a new rhetorical situation in which she controlled the discourse.

Further, Clinton embraced the norms of restorative and campaign rhetoric to reframe her testimony as deliberative. The genre of restorative rhetoric draws on the foundations of apologia but deals more specifically with rhetoric delivered in response to a crisis. Donyale R. Griffin-Padgett and Donnetrice Allison argued that restorative rhetoric focuses on coping with and resolving a crisis.<sup>216</sup> Matthew Seeger and Griffin Padgett added that, unlike other forms of apologia, restorative rhetoric looks forward, instead of backwards.<sup>217</sup> The authors point out that restorative rhetoric focuses on opportunities presented by the crisis, such as the ability to re-envision or reorganize. In keeping with the restorative genre, Clinton admitted responsibility but did not use the opportunity for personal image repair, choosing instead to focus on a solution to, and trying to rise above, the allegations of wrongdoing. In her prepared testimony in front of both the House and Senate, Clinton focused on the ARB's list of recommendations and what steps she had taken and would be taking in the future to implement them. Clinton said, "We will use this opportunity to take a top-to-bottom look and rethink how we make decisions on where, when, and whether people operate in high-threat areas and then how we respond to threats and crises."<sup>218</sup> Clinton used the norms of the restorative genre to reframe her testimony as deliberative or a chance to prevent future security failures, rather than respond from the position of a defendant. Positioning herself as a forward-thinking, protocol-following leader, Clinton helped shift views of her as an incompetent or weak leader to a responsive, thorough, and responsible leader. Clinton's promise to conduct a thorough, "top-to-bottom" inspection of decision-making protocol also positioned her as a tireless leader with the stamina to conduct a rigorous and efficient review of State Department decision-making processes. With such vigor,

Clinton shifted her gendered identity from that of a weak, inadequate, and culpable leader to a strong leader whose plans for the future rendered past events irrelevant.

Clinton chose to spend a large portion of her testimony addressing how attacks like Benghazi could be prevented in the future, rather than assigning blame for the attack that had already taken place. In so doing, she simultaneously shifted the discussion away from the deaths of four Americans, and in turn, shifted focus away from her position as a weak woman leader. Even during a heated exchange with Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI), over why it took so long to determine whether or not there were protesters at the consulate in Benghazi, Clinton offered a deliberative response:

Johnson: I'm -- I -- again, we were misled that there were supposedly protests and then something sprang out of that, an assault sprang out of that. And that was easily ascertained that that was not the fact --

Clinton: But could -- but, you know --

Johnson: -- and the American people could have known that within days, and they didn't know that.

Clinton: And -- with all due respect, the fact is we had four dead Americans.

Johnson: I understand.

Clinton: Was it because of a protest, or was it because of guys out for a walk one night who decided they'd go kill some Americans? What difference, at this point, does it make? It is our job to figure out what happened and do everything we can to prevent it from ever happening again, Senator. ...But, you know, to be clear, it is, from my perspective, less important today looking backwards as to why these militants decided they did it than to find them and bring them to justice, and then maybe we'll figure out what was going on in the meantime.

Clinton maintained that it was not important to look back and establish who was to blame for failures of communication. Instead, she used the restorative genre to look forward to a solution. Clinton returned to this strategy frequently. For example, Clinton employed the same tactic with Senator Jim Risch (R-ID), who questioned her about the talking point process that led to Obama's Rose Garden speech and why Ambassador Rice was chosen to speak for the

administration. Clinton, once again, framed her response using the restorative rhetoric strategy of looking forward to a solution. She responded,

I would say that I personally was not focused on talking points. I was focused on keeping our people safe, because as I said, I have a very serious threat environment in Yemen. . . . So I was pretty occupied about keeping our people safe, doing what needed to be done in the follow-up to Benghazi. I really don't think anybody in the administration was really focused on that so much as trying to figure out, you know, what we should be doing.<sup>219</sup>

The use of restorative rhetoric worked to confront some of the criticism that suggested Clinton had failed as a leader. By reframing the Benghazi hearing as a deliberative event, Clinton was able to portray herself as forward thinking and solution oriented, as opposed to the committee who was made to look petty and vindictive by maintaining their focus on assigning blame.

Clinton further obfuscated the exigencies of war rhetoric, or a forensic exigency, by relying on the genre of campaign rhetoric. Because Clinton's testimony was delivered under speculation that she might run for president in 2016, she was able to appropriate the norms of that genre to answer questions about Benghazi. By using the norms of campaign rhetoric, Clinton avoided having to provide details about her actions that may have damaged her credibility. Specifically, Clinton performed the ritual of rehearsing shared values. According to Jennifer Jerit, referencing shared values is a cornerstone of campaign rhetoric.<sup>220</sup> Clinton frequently turned to the values of American exceptionalism and faith in the military to deflect calls to discuss the details of her actions. For example, Clinton's opening statement included: "The United States is the most extraordinary force for peace and progress the world have ever known,"<sup>221</sup> "and, "Our men and women who serve overseas understand that we do accept a level of risk to represent, and protect the country we love. They represent the best traditions of a bold, generous nation."<sup>222</sup> This strategy had the effect of casting her as a patriot who honors the sacrifices citizens make for their nation. Identifying as a patriot allowed Clinton to diffuse

perceptions of her as a failed leader, or as the cause of four American deaths. Moreover, this patriotic identity allowed Clinton to position herself as an ideal president, especially as a “Commander-in-Chief” expected to make tough calls in time of combat.

Answering questions from committee members, Clinton continued to use the norms of campaign rhetoric to avoid the forensic demand of accounting for her actions. For example, Clinton rehearsed the idea that the government should be truthful with the public. When Representative Jeff Duncan (R-SC) demanded details on Clinton’s knowledge of the threat level leading up to the attack, she deflected by using the campaign rhetoric technique of rehearsing the shared values of openness with the American people. She responded,

I think I’ve made that very clear, Congressman. And let me say that we’ve come here and made a very open, transparent presentation. I did not have to declassify the ARB. I could have joined 18 of the other ARBs of both Democratic and Republican administrations, kept it classified and then, you know, just said goodbye. That’s not who I am. That’s not what I do.<sup>223</sup>

In this exchange, Clinton avoided having to account for the specifics of her actions by relying on the campaign genre norm of rehearsing shared values of transparency and truthfulness with the people. Clinton again turned to campaign rhetoric to manage criticism from Senator Rand Paul (R-KY), that she was to blame for the “the worst tragedy since 9/11.” Clinton responded by highlighting the transparency of the ARB, “The reason I said, make it open, tell the world, is because I believe in transparency, I believe in taking responsibility, and I have done so.”<sup>224</sup> In this statement Clinton, once again, avoided the pressure to provide a detailed response on her specific actions by adhering to the norms of a different rhetorical genre. If Clinton responded to the rhetorical situation as a national security crisis, she would be expected to adhere to norms of war rhetoric. However, because the norms of war rhetoric would situate her as a failure, she turned to campaign rhetoric to bolster her credibility and distance her testimony from the

hearing's original forensic exigency. Further, Clinton's celebration of American exceptionalism and transparency aligned her with traditional American values, key values Americans would expect a president to champion. By emphasizing transparency, and not *what* was transparent, Clinton was not only able to side-step questions about what actually happened at Benghazi, but she was able to position herself as a patriotic, responsible leader.

Over the course of the Benghazi hearing Clinton managed the demands of three rhetorical genres. While Clinton was expected to speak using the norms of war rhetoric, her position as a woman, a position that carried negative implications for Clinton's credibility and her failure to preempt the Benghazi crisis, insured that responding to the hearing as a discussion over national security questions would situate her as a failure—or, a weak woman unable to manage military affairs. Instead, Clinton turned to the norms of restorative and campaign rhetoric to transform the hearing from a forensic event to a deliberative occasion. The use of restorative rhetoric framed Clinton as a forward thinking, solution oriented, responsible, and vigorous leader. Clinton's use of campaign rhetoric allowed her to render the facts of past moot, and instead, positioned her as a patriot who championed American values—just as a president should.

### ***The Voice of the Accountability Review Board Report***

While Clinton's first strategy responded to the ways the rhetorical situation positioned Clinton in a highly gendered position, Clinton's second strategy used in the Benghazi hearing responded to the ways the committee members' discourse positioned her as a gendered subject. As committee members disciplined Clinton into a gendered subject position—as weak, incompetent, or celebrated feminist—, she strategically obfuscated her gendered identity in favor of speaking as the objective and genderless voice of the Accountability Review Board Report. By speaking as the voice of the ARB report, as well as frequently referencing ARB



recommendations from her own gendered subject position, Clinton managed the constraints of her gendered identity and continued to reframe her testimony as deliberative discourse.

At the beginning of the hearing, Clinton delivered a prepared statement, in which notably, she did not rely on the ARB. Indeed, that she did not rely on the ARB suggests that, when she relied on it in the latter hours of the hearings, it functioned as a rhetorical strategy, invented to manage the ways committee members forced her into gender subject positions. In fact, in her prepared statement, Clinton asserted her knowledge of national security measures in ways that were inconsistent with her previous testimonies or the subsequent question and answer sessions. For example, Clinton used a substantial portion of her prepared testimony to go step by step through her actions during and directly after the attack. During this portion of her statement Clinton framed herself as the primary actor who worked to coordinate the actions of other experts. This differs from other hearings where Clinton's rhetoric on national security shared the authority of others, or invoked a militaristic ethos. For example, she made sure to point out to both the Senate and House: "The very next morning, I told the American people, and I quote, 'heavily-armed militants assaulted our compound' and vowed to bring them to justice."<sup>225</sup> She continued, "I quickly moved to appoint the Accountability Review Board because I wanted them to come forward with their report before I left, because I felt the responsibility, and I wanted to be sure that I was putting in motion the response to whatever they found."<sup>226</sup> She ended both statements with an explicit reminder of her ethos as an established secretary of state: "So, today, after four years in this job, traveling nearly a million miles and visiting 112 countries, my faith in our country and our future is stronger than ever."<sup>227</sup> These statements demonstrate that Clinton's reliance on the ARB to obfuscate her gendered identity functioned as a direct response to the committee's gender discipline and the forensic exigency of the hearing.

Clinton's assertion of her own ethos in the discursive area of national security waned as her testimony progressed. During the lengthy question and answer sessions, Clinton moved from relying on her own subjectivity to relying on objectivity created by quoting other experts and more specifically, the Accountability Review Board itself. As the committee disciplined Clinton into a more feminine gendered position through their constant commentary, such as, remarking on her weakened state after a health crisis, or positioning her as a feminist icon, Clinton used the strategy of assuming the objective voice of the ARB and in turn, relinquished her own authority to answer the committee's questions. Toward the middle of her House testimony, for example, Clinton noted, "And I think the ARB, not I, has made its finding. The reason ARB's were created is to try to take a dispassionate, independent view of what happened and then come up with recommendations that are the responsibility of the department to implement."<sup>228</sup> She later added, "The reason we have Accountability Review Boards is so that we take out of politics, we take out of emotion what happened, and we try to get to the truth."<sup>229</sup> Clinton not only established the objectivity of the ARB, but by extension, distanced herself from the perceptions that she was an emotional, irrational leader. By characterizing the ARB as void of passion and emotion, Clinton circumnavigated the constraints her gendered subjectivity placed on her testimony. Under increasing pressure, Clinton relied more heavily on the document itself, and in some cases, answered questions about her personal actions or thoughts with references to ARB recommendations. By displacing her own agency and gendered subject position in favor of the objectivity of the ARB, Clinton helped mitigate the perception that her answers were defensive or biased. This strategy performed the dual functions of rendering the events of the past—and in turn, the forensic exigency of the hearing—moot, and displacing her gendered identity altogether.

Clinton's use of the ARB also worked to discredit the committee members who questioned her. For example, Clinton frequently reminded committee members that the ARB had already answered their questions, and that perhaps they needed to reread the document. By extension, this discretization worked to further reframe Clinton's testimony as deliberative rather than forensic because she refused to answer questions that had already been addressed. For example, during the questioning in the Senate, Clinton used the classified ARB to handle two of the most aggressive committee members, Senators John McCain and Ron Johnson. Clinton argued that, "I would urge that you look and read both the classified and unclassified versions of the ARB that tried to deal with the very questions that you and Senator Johnson are raising."<sup>230</sup> Clinton used the same strategy in the House: "And I recommend that every member read the classified version which goes into greater detail that I cannot speak to here today."<sup>231</sup> Clinton seemed to say that, had the committee members done their work and read the documents provided to them, many of their questions would be answered. In turn, Clinton appeared well informed, while committee members seemed unprepared. Clinton's discrediting of committee members worked to further distance her from the forensic exigency and reframe the hearing as a deliberative event. Clinton, instead of answering questions supposedly already addressed in the ARB, spent significant time reshaping her responses as implementing solutions. Specifically, she reiterated several times that she had already completed all 29 of the ARB's recommendations. Clinton's emphasis on her proactive activities, coupled with her discretization of committee member's questions, suggested that she had outpaced the hearing and moreover, had outprepared the committee. While committee members were still looking to assign blame, Clinton had moved past them and was already instituting solutions.

Clinton's use of the ARB had two strategic benefits. First, by obfuscating her gendered identity and assuming the genderless voice of the ARB, Clinton was able to circumnavigate the gendering from committee members. By speaking as the voice of the ARB, Clinton managed many of the constraints that gender placed on her testimony. Second, Clinton used the content of the ARB to discredit committee members, and by extension, position their questions as unfit for the rhetorical situation. By implying that committee members were uninformed and overly focused on blame, Clinton appeared more informed and more competent at handling crises than the committee.

### **Conclusions**

Clinton's Benghazi testimony was her final act as secretary of state. In fact, Clinton returned to the same Senate Committee on Foreign Relations the next morning to officially introduce John Kerry as her successor. This study of Clinton's Benghazi testimony shows how the issues of gender and national security constrained her rhetoric throughout the entirety of her secretary of state tenure. Like the hearings that came before, comments from committee members highlighted Clinton's identity as a uniquely gendered actor. In fact, the controversial and mediated nature of the Benghazi hearing seemed to result in more gender discipline than found in other hearings. This not only exposes the heightened anxieties tied to women and national security, but it also provided a site of rhetorical invention so that Clinton, once again, could manage these constraints.

Over the course of back-to-back hearings in the House and Senate, Clinton turned to two rhetorical strategies to manage the constraints of gender and national security. Clinton's first strategy was to negotiate the norms of three rhetorical genres. While the events in Benghazi created a rhetorical situation that called for norms of war rhetoric, her failure to preempt the

attack positioned her as a failed leader. Instead, Clinton turned to the restorative and campaign genres to shift the exigency of the hearing from forensic to deliberative. This reframing distanced Clinton from the role of a defendant, a role that compounded perceptions of her as a weak and incompetent leader, to a more deliberative position where she was able to move past Benghazi and look towards the future of embassy security—particularly in ways that emphasized her patriotism and presidentially. Second, Clinton used the ARB to both obfuscate her gendered identity and distance her rhetoric from sources of gender criticism, and to further reframe the hearing as deliberative. By referencing the content of the ARB, Clinton discredited committee members by suggesting they were uninformed. This worked to further distance Clinton from the hearing's original forensic exigency by implying that committee members' questions had already been answered and her responses were unnecessary. Clinton, therefore, appeared above the hearing, no longer a defendant, but a competent, vigorous, and dedicated leader.

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**Notes**

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<sup>205</sup> Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *Benghazi: The Attacks and the Lessons Learned*, 113<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Sess. January 23, 2013, 12.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>208</sup> Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind*.

<sup>209</sup> Senate Foreign Relations Committee., 28.

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 34.

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<sup>222</sup> House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Relations., 3.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 20.

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<sup>225</sup> House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Relations., 3.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>227</sup> Senate Foreign Relations Committee., 8.

<sup>228</sup> House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Relations., 17.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 20.



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<sup>230</sup> Senate Foreign Relations Committee., 29.

<sup>231</sup> House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Relations., 20.

## AFTERWORD

Broadly, this thesis argues that Hillary Clinton's rhetoric as secretary of state managed the constraints of gender and the norms of national security discourse. As secretary of state, an office that necessitates the engagement of the military and its discursive arenas, Clinton's rhetoric allowed for the productive study of how women engage military rhetoric and the masculinity of national politics. Further, as a politician that is markedly gendered, Clinton served as an appropriate case study for addressing how issues of gender interact with the office of secretary of state. Finally, situating this thesis in the congressional hearing enabled the study of how gender and national security norms are created and managed in an extemporaneous setting. Put differently, I assert that the congressional hearing is an appropriate location to study how Clinton was gendered and managed that gendering. Over the course of her tenure, Clinton crafted several strategies that negotiated her gendered identity, and in the process, reified, resisted, and rearticulated traditional conceptions of women in politics. In this afterword I summarize the arguments put forth in this thesis, offer some thoughts on how Clinton's gender management strategies evolved over multiple hearings, discuss how this study contributes to three existing scholarly conversations, and finally, offer some conclusions on how the ideas raised in this thesis could be extended in the future.

Chapter 2 studied Clinton's first act of testimony as secretary of state, her confirmation hearing. This chapter questioned how Clinton's gender identity, created during her time as a first lady and presidential candidate, constrained her rhetoric as secretary of state. Chapter 2 found that Clinton's gendered identity, contextual controversies surrounding Clinton's relationship to

the Clinton foundation, and the committee's framing of Clinton as an "exceptional woman," ensured that her testimony needed to manage the constraining forces of these factors. In order to do so, Clinton crafted three rhetorical strategies, which she employed over the course of her confirmation hearing. These strategies included: bolstering her credibility as a secretary of state by prioritizing diplomacy over issues of defense, sharing Obama's national security ethos, and emphasizing cooperation on issues of development to distance her rhetoric from her role as a feminist icon and any association with her husband's Clinton Foundation. Chapter 2, as a whole, established that female political leaders, while held to a higher standard of competence as reflected in the "exceptional woman" frame, are able to simultaneously negotiate this gendered positioning and articulate political priorities. Clinton's confirmation hearing suggests several mechanisms for accomplishing this dual task, such as emphasizing a shared responsibility or group identity. These strategies may work to distance women's rhetorical leadership from strong individualism, which could be used to label them as a bitch or a feminist icon.

Chapter 3 analyzed an annual budget hearing. This chapter explored how Clinton managed her gendered identity and the norms of national security discourse when confronted with a more hostile audience, in this case a congressional committee influenced by the Tea Party. This chapter addressed how Clinton adopted the norms of military rhetoric to assuage a conservative audience and to assert the State Department's efficiency, and in the process, managed gendered frames such as the age/invisibility double bind. Clinton used three rhetorical strategies to meet these demands. She first appropriated a military hierarchy, which framed her as a general leading subordinates. Next, Clinton used military protocols to frame the State Department as efficient and as important as the military. This worked to avoid portrayals of the State Department as a bureaucratic organization, while it also associated Clinton with high-

profile male military leaders. Finally, Clinton responded to military problems with non-military solutions, which ensured that, while she adopted norms of military rhetoric, she did not speak as a military official. Doing so would be beyond the purview of the secretary of state and would likely result in backlash against Clinton being too “manly.” Thus, taken together, Chapter 3 suggests that women in national political offices can simultaneously engage and resist the norms of military rhetoric in order to establish their credibility as military leaders while avoiding the forces that marginalize women from military discourse.

Chapter 4 turned to Clinton’s final act of secretary of state testimony, the Benghazi hearings. This chapter looked at how Clinton managed the forces of gender and national security discourse in response to a single, highly mediated, national security crisis. This chapter found that Clinton employed two rhetorical strategies to manage her gendered rhetorical leadership. Together, these techniques show that Clinton shifted the exigency of the hearing from a forensic event, where she was put on trial for her failures to prevent the attack, to a deliberative event, which rendered the interrogation moot and in turn, positioned Clinton as a patriotic, vigorous, and ideal national leader. Clinton’s first strategy manipulated the norms of three rhetorical genres. Specifically, she employed campaign and restorative rhetoric in order to shift the hearing’s exigency away from that of a war crisis. Second, Clinton used references to the ARB report in order to obfuscate her gendered identity and discredit the committee members questioning her. This worked to restore her own credibility and render moot the hearing’s forensic exigency. Overall, this chapter argued that women can successfully manage the age/invisibility and femininity/competency double binds by manipulating genres and reframing events.

Altogether, Clinton's gender and national security management strategies evolved and developed over the course of her tenure. Indeed, similarities between Clinton's rhetorical strategies indicate that she faced comparable problems in multiple hearings. One gendered constraint that Clinton continually negotiated was the need to establish credibility as a voice for national security. In all three acts of testimony, Clinton accomplished this task by relying on or sharing the voices of others. In the confirmation hearing Clinton shared Obama's presidential national security credibility, in the budget hearing she supported her arguments with the opinions of male military leaders or protocols, and in the Benghazi hearing she used the ARB report to supplement or obfuscate her gendered credibility. Throughout her tenure, Clinton either supported or blurred her gendered military credibility by relying on masculine sources of support. Further, Clinton consistently manipulated the norms of rhetorical genres. While this strategy was most fully articulated in Clinton's Benghazi testimony, its development can be traced back to her confirmation hearing where she negotiated the norms of diplomatic and defense responses. Clinton further developed this strategy in her budget hearing where she alternated between appropriating the norms of military rhetoric and relying on diplomacy. This reframing of questions and exigencies is a strategy found throughout Clinton's tenure. The analysis of three acts of congressional testimony, spanning Clinton's time in office, indicates that her rhetorical strategies were developed over multiple rhetorical situations.

Broadly speaking, this thesis contributes to and extends three scholarly conversations: feminist rhetoric, national security discourse, and political rhetoric. First, Clinton's rhetorical strategies indicate that further study is needed to unpack how issues of gender are raised and negotiated in extemporaneous settings. Clinton's testimony demonstrates that the relationship between extemporaneous political speech and gender is a complicated one deserving of more

attention. Existing studies on women's political speech tend to focus on either prepared formal speeches, where the management of gender is obscured by the collaborative speech writing process,<sup>232</sup> or, studies address the forces that silence female politicians without attending to how they manage those forces.<sup>233</sup> By studying extemporaneous speech, scholars can help fill the gap in this literature. Clinton's testimony, for example, exposes how she invented her own rhetorical strategies—not ones composed by a speechwriter. Also, the separation between studying silencing forces and management strategies is avoided because both are visible in the interaction between Clinton and committee members. While there are historic examples of how this interactive process might be productively studied, such as Angelina Grimké, who responded to the mob outside her "Speech at Pennsylvania Hall," or Susan B. Anthony's argument in response to a guilty judgment, few contemporary studies analyze gender negotiation in an extemporaneous setting. The sophisticated rhetorical strategies Clinton crafted during her testimony, such as confronting the age/invisibility and femininity/competency double binds, demonstrates that feminist rhetoric can and should be studied in extemporaneous settings.

Second, this thesis contributes to the study of national security rhetoric. A wealth of existing literature explores how women's voices are marginalized from the military and its discursive arenas. For example, studies have found that women are silenced during military conflict,<sup>234</sup> marginalized from military institutions,<sup>235</sup> and prevented from assuming political offices intersecting with the military.<sup>236</sup> However, what has not been addressed in this existing scholarship is how women combat this marginalization. Clinton's testimony provides a starting point for understanding how women may be able to resist marginalization and demand participation. For example, Clinton's testimony created a space for women's national security rhetoric by combining military rhetorical norms with diplomatic policies. These strategies could

be studied in relation to other female politicians. This thesis argues that it is not enough to point out when and how women are marginalized from national security discourse, their methods of resisting and negotiating their marginalization must also be studied.

Finally, this thesis contributes to the study of political rhetoric and argues that the form of the congressional hearing and the rhetoric of secretaries of state deserves further attention. Clinton's testimony suggests that congressional hearings are a productive site for the study of power negotiation and identity constitution and management. However, the congressional hearing has yet to be the focus of widespread rhetorical study. While some attention has been paid to Supreme Court confirmation hearings,<sup>237</sup> or hearings investigating a scandal like Watergate or Iran-Contra,<sup>238</sup> more routine acts of testimony, like budget approval or policy proposals are less frequently studied. This thesis argues that there is value in studying both routine as well as sensationalized acts of testimony. Clinton's management of her gender and national security discourse is just one example of why extemporaneous speaking situations, and especially congressional hearings, are a productive location for rhetorical study. This thesis also contributes to political rhetoric by pointing to the need for more studies of secretary of state rhetoric. Unlike the presidency, an office that is the topic of systematic rhetorical study,<sup>239</sup> the secretary of state is underrepresented in existing literature. Clinton's acts of testimony demonstrate that secretary of state rhetoric is complex and rich for further analysis. This thesis puts forth a framework for the further study of secretaries of state and congressional hearings.

While this thesis's treatment of Hillary Clinton's rhetoric as secretary of state contributes to existing scholarship, it also indicates the need for further study. Further work is needed to explore the rhetoric of secretaries of state in general, female secretaries of state more specifically, and the format of the congressional hearing. To begin, more studies of secretary of

state rhetoric are needed to fully appreciate the office's rhetorical task. Unfortunately, the strategies used by Clinton could not be compared to the rhetoric of other secretaries of state because few comprehensive studies exist. Just as studies of the "rhetorical presidency" addressed various functions and strategies found in presidential rhetoric, a similar project would be productive for the study of secretaries of state. Further, this thesis points to the need for further exploration into how gender intersects with the office of secretary of state. In the future, similar studies of Madeline Albright or Condoleezza Rice's rhetoric would help to explain not only their own relationships with gender and national security discourse, but also, contribute to the larger project of understanding women's political rhetoric. Likewise, studies of male secretaries of state would demonstrate how men are also gendered and judged against the highly masculine norms of national security rhetoric. Finally, this thesis indicates that more work is needed on extemporaneous forms of political communication, especially since extemporaneous rhetoric can serve as a site to study power negotiation and identity management. While this thesis's study of Clinton's congressional testimony begins to fill these gaps, it also establishes that further work is needed to fully understand how issues of gender, national security discourse, and political leadership intersect.



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**Notes**

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