

Political Persuasion: Adopting Aristotelian Rhetoric in Public Policy Debate Strategies

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Abstract

This study explores the content of ethos, pathos, and logos in Taiwan's President Ma Ying-Jeou's political discourse on the cross-strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). Ma's discourse during the ECFA Debate was coded to identify statements pertaining to ethos, pathos, and logos. The findings indicate that pathos is the most prevalent rhetorical strategy that Ma adopts during the cross-strait ECFA Debate; whereas, ethos was found to be the least rhetorical strategy used. The results indicate that fear and anger were the negative elements of pathos used by Ma, while hope and security were the positive elements of pathos used. Results show that among these four components of pathos, appealing to the security of the public was dominant throughout the debate, particularly during the question-and-answer section. This study contributes both to the public policy debate in Taiwan and to the study of political rhetoric. It also provides an empirical and theoretical account of public debates on rhetorical strategies adopted by political leaders, particularly that of a president or a leader of a political party.

Keywords: persuasion; political rhetoric; Aristotelian rhetoric; public policy debate.

1. Introduction

On April 25th, 2010, a 150-minute televised Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) Debate was held between Taiwan's President Ma Ying-Jeou and Tsai Ing-wen, the Chairperson of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). This cross-strait ECFA Debate was described as the "great debate of the century" by the dominant media in Taiwan, as it marked the first policy debate in the nation's history between the President and the chair of the opposition party. The significance of this event centers on several controversial aspects. Proponents of the ECFA believe that it will prevent Taiwan from being marginalized in Asia; whereas, skeptics argue that it will encourage cheap mainland imports to enter Taiwan, significantly impacting Taiwan's industries. Additionally, Ma's Kuomintang Party (KMT) claimed that signing the cross-strait ECFA would reduce cross-strait tensions and enhance Taiwan's economy, while the DPP argued that it would bring Taiwan closer to China. Furthermore, the majority of people in Taiwan were quite concerned with the public interest, welfare, and sovereignty. Together, the ability to persuade the public, garner a consensus, and reduce discord was essential for Ma during the cross-strait ECFA Debate.

Persuasion is fundamental to public policy debates. This is because a policy debate engages both the supporters and opponents of a proposed policy, in which the two sides deploy any means available to persuade the audience to support and identify with the opinion of interest. Nelson (2004) asserted that persuasive communication is aimed at altering the subjective beliefs that the audience holds towards a particular political issue or policy. Thus, creating convincing arguments and discourse worthy of the public's beliefs is critical to persuasion. Mastering the employment of rhetorical strategies is necessary to achieve the goals or interests of political elites when addressing and debating policy issues. Political persuasion can be explored in the context of a presidential campaign debate, as well as by studying political speeches, campaign websites, blogs, or Facebook pages using a single rhetoric, such as emotional appeal (i.e., pathos).

To date, few studies have been conducted via the application of the three Aristotelian rhetorical strategies: 1) ethos; 2) pathos; and 3) logos, to examine political discourse with respect to public policy debates.

This study focuses on Ma's political discourse during the cross-strait ECFA Debate in an attempt to elucidate the primary arguments used by political elites regarding public policy issues. Furthermore, the present study examines how rhetorical strategy is employed to achieve various political or policy goals. Specifically, the language used by Ma in his discourse during the ECFA Debate on May 25th, 2010, is considered to determine precisely how he applied Aristotelian rhetoric strategies by addressing three main questions: 1) what are the main themes that Ma presents in his statements and conclusions during the ECFA Debate?; 2) which of the Aristotelian rhetoric elements are used by Ma during the ECFA Debate?; and 3) how does Ma utilize Aristotelian rhetoric strategies during the ECFA Debate?

The ECFA Debate comprised three parts: 1) a statement; 2) an interrogation; and 3) a conclusion. In the first section, both parties had eight minutes to make their statement. This was followed by the second part, in which each side had five opportunities to interrogate the opposition. Finally, the debate was completed with six minutes of concluding remarks made by both Ma and Tsai.

2. Rhetoric and Aristotelian Rhetoric

Corax and Tisias were the first to define rhetoric as the "artificer of persuasion" (Lin, 2000). Aristotle regarded rhetoric as a discipline, describing it as the art and power of discovering the best among all available means of persuasion. Burke defined rhetoric function as the "use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other agents" (Lin, 2000). Based on these definitions, the major characteristics of rhetoric can be summarized as follows: 1) rhetoric is the art of using language; 2) the goal of rhetoric is to persuade others; and 3) rhetoric involves using the organization and style of language to shape or induce attitudes and actions in other agents. Therefore, rhetoric constitutes a transmission process through which language systematically influences the interpretative systems of others. As Berger (1969) noted, orators utilize language to impose order on reality, and thus the use of language guides physical reality (cited in des Neiges Léonard, 2015, p. 6). Under a given circumstance or setting, an orator can use language, power relations, signs, and logic to selectively alter perspectives, preferences, and attitudes of an audience towards a certain issue (Peng, 2007). Therefore, rhetoric is a deliberate form of persuasive communication (Higgins & Walker, 2012).

Aristotle asserted that three distinct elements are essential to achieving effective persuasion: 1) the orator's character (i.e., ethos); 2) the emotions of the audience (i.e., pathos); and 3) the rationality of the orator's arguments (i.e., logos) (Beiner, 1983, as cited in Triadafilopoulos, 1999, p. 745). According to Aristotle, through using these artistic proofs, orators can sell their views and affect decision-making (Aristotle, 1984). These arguments reveal that, when delivering a persuasive speech or discourse, an orator must demonstrate his or her character, evoke the audience's emotions, and appeal to the audience's natural instinct for what is true by stating facts.

3. Aristotelian Rhetoric and Political Discourse

Few studies have investigated the political discourse and Aristotelian rhetoric demonstrated in the arguments mentioned above. Some scholars have explored public speeches made by presidents, political leaders, or campaign candidates (Erisen & Villalobos, 2014; Jay, 2006; Mshvenieradze, 2013). Other publications have examined the social media discourse (e.g., Samuel-Azran, Yarchi, & Wolfsfeld, 2015; Brostein, 2013) of various politicians. Mshvenieradze (2013) explored the strategies of Aristotelian rhetoric (i.e., logos, ethos, and pathos) used by the candidates, Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, during the French presidential elections in 2002 and 2007. In this study, it was found that these two candidates employed logos, ethos, and pathos in their political discourse with some differences. Nicolas Sarkozy tended to draw comparisons and use stylistic techniques that evoked the audience's emotion, while Jacques Chirac emphasized values and repetitively used phrases to appeal to the audience's emotion. Additionally, both candidates established their ethos by utilizing personal and possessive pronouns. Jay (2006) applied Aristotle's rhetoric to the speeches of two North American Native leaders, Tecumseh and Pushmataha. It was found that the utilization of ethos, logos, and pathos, as well as enthymemes and examples between these two leaders in their discourse was very resembling. This was particularly evident by the similarity in structures, proofs, and topics adopted by both Tecumseh and Pushmataha. He further concluded that "Aristotle's theories defy time and place; they are work, which explains the continuing interest in his observations of the art of rhetoric" (Jay, 2006, p. 114).

Bronstein (2013), using Aristotelian rhetoric, analyzed the Facebook pages of the 2012 U.S. presidential candidates. The findings revealed that both Obama and Romney used emotional appeal to create social investments towards their campaign. Moreover, pathos was the most pervasive element utilized in both candidates' Facebook pages, while a logo was the least prevalent strategy used. An impressive finding in this study is that both candidates used pathos to appeal to the audience's emotions in an attempt to discourage discord and encourage effective alliances. Another study that examined political candidates' Facebook pages using Aristotelian rhetoric was conducted by Samuel-Azran et al. (2015), in which five major Israeli politicians' posts on Facebook during the 2013 election campaign were investigated. Differing from Bronstein's (2013) findings, Samuel-Azran et al. (2015) found that ethos is the most prevalent appeal used by these politicians. According to Samuel-Azran et al. (2015), cultural values and political systems may account for the rhetorical differences between U.S. and Israeli politicians. Their results also indicate that pathos constitutes the most powerful strategy for mobilizing followers. Although there are some differences between the two studies, important similarities also exist: 1) logos is the least used strategy; and 2) pathos is the rhetorical strategy that draws the attention of the most followers.

4. Methods

4.1 Data Collection

This study conducted a rhetorical analysis of the language used by Ma during his discourse in the ECFA Debate to analyze, investigate, and address the specific research questions of this study. This investigation of political rhetoric used in the ECFA debate was selected as the topic of this study for several reasons: 1) opposition parties and the media had vigorously attacked the ECFA since it was initially proposed; 2) the ECFA triggered public disorder because the signing of the agreement did not require approval from the Legislative Yuan; 3) Ma claimed that this debate was the first ever held between the President and the chairperson of the opposition party, since the second change in ruling party; and 4) the signing of the ECFA is a decided policy. Taken together, it is important to elucidate how Ma used rhetorical strategies in his discourse to reduce the public's fear and to gain support.

4.2. Rhetorical Analysis

Aristotelian rhetoric strategies ethos (i.e., ethical appeals), logos (i.e., rational appeals), and pathos (i.e., emotional appeals) are the foundation for the data analyses of this study. Additionally, the recent studies using Aristotelian rhetoric are referred to here as the research approach used for analyzing political discourse (e.g., Samuel-Azran et al., 2015; Brostein, 2013; Erisen & Villalobos, 2014) to construct an analytical framework for the present study. Critical elements of an analytical, rhetorical framework are identified as follows:

- 1) Ethos: an ethical appeal that refers to the credibility and trustworthiness of an orator. Ethos emphasizes the character of the speaker by deliberately establishing his or her image in such a way that convinces the audience through an argument, that they are competent, reliable, fair, and honest.
- 2) Logos: a rational appeal that stresses reason and logic. In addition, this trait refers to the clarity and integrity of the argument itself (Higgins & Walker, 2012, p. 198). In political persuasion, political elite will often use facts and figures to convince the audience of his or her position.
- 3) Pathos: an emotional appeal that denotes the arguments appealing to the audience's compassion or evokes their emotions (e.g., fear, anger, sadness, contempt, satisfaction, sympathy, happiness, and hope). According to Aristotle (1984), "the emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments and that are also attended by pain or pleasure. Such are anger, pity, fear, and the like, with their opposites" (pp. 91-92). Hope is a positive emotion that is conceptualized with arguments relating to enthusiasm, optimism, and other affirmative feelings (Erisen & Villalobos, 2014).

4.3 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed following three steps: 1) the text from the transcripts was examined to identify the subjects presented by Ma during the statement and conclusion; 2) the text was examined to determine the themes or issues in Ma's response to Tsai's questions or challenges during the interrogation; and 3) data were coded through a line-by-line analysis to identify the elements of Aristotelian rhetorical language utilized by Ma. This language was itemized based on subject and theme for further qualitative descriptive and interpretative analyses.

5. Findings and Discussions

The data analysis found that Ma skillfully adopted the Aristotelian rhetoric strategies of ethos, pathos, and logos throughout the entire ECFA Debate. Moreover, the results indicate that rationalization, promoting security, and the strategic vision of the ECFA were the main themes presented by Ma throughout the statement and conclusion sections. In addition, the primary concerns posed to President Ma by Chairperson Tsai during the section of interrogation were: 1) the transparency of the ECFA; 2) China's conceded benefits to Taiwan; 3) signing an ECFA with China as a presumptuous policy; 4) the ECFA decision-making process; and 5) the detrimental effects of the ECFA on Taiwan. This study reports and discusses the results of our data analysis in a qualitative and interpretative approach following the central themes identified in the statement and conclusion sections. Furthermore, we highlight the concerns that Tsai posed to Ma during the interrogation to answer specific research questions.

5.1 Main Themes and the Utilization of Aristotelian Rhetoric Strategies in the Statement and Conclusion Sections

The analysis of Ma's discourse in the sections of statement and conclusion found that Ma adopted ethos, logos, and pathos to promote the policy of signing the ECFA with China as a rational, secure, and strategic vision, aimed at persuading the public to support his policy.

5.1.1 Rationalizing the Cross-strait ECFA

Ma uses emotional and rational appeal to address the urgency and necessity of signing the ECFA with China. By doing this, he both attempts to garner the resonance and support from the public, as well as to evoke the people's fear about the future.

Logos. To appeal to logos, Ma develops the following arguments by enthymemes, facts, and figures. He stresses that "the number of countries participating in the Free Trade Agreement in Asia has dramatically increased from three in 2000 to 58 in 2009" in an attempt to persuade the public that the ECFA is a trend in the international market. In addition, he uses enthymeme to stress that "trade is the life of Taiwan; if Taiwan does not have trades, Taiwan will not exist". He also deploys several comparison and contrasting examples to establish past facts and, in doing so, create future truths. An example of this is his statement that "in facing the ever-changing global market, should you choose the DPP's isolationist policy or the KMT's open strategy, DPP's marginalization, or KMT's internationalization".

Pathos. In his attempt to evoke feelings of fear regarding the future, Ma deploys emotional tactics to address the urgency and importance of signing the ECFA. He warns that "Taiwan will be marginalized", "our industries will move out", "Taiwan will become an isolated island in Asia", and "the world will forget Taiwan" if Taiwan does not sign the ECFA with China.

Ethos. In addition to logos and pathos, Ma also establishes his own ethos by referring to his responsibility as president: "As the President of Taiwan, I care very much for the welfare of laborers, farmers, as well as small and medium-sized businesses". He also emphasizes that "as the President of Taiwan, I must try my best to prevent our industries from moving out of Taiwan. I must maintain their presence in Taiwan and protect every laborer's employment opportunity".

5.1.2 Envoking Security Regarding the Cross-strait ECFA

As mentioned above, one of Ma's primary purposes is to convince the public that signing the ECFA with China is a secure and safe policy. Logos, pathos, and ethos were deliberately used to achieve this objective.

Logos. Using facts, Ma explains the content of the Cross-strait ECFA to enhance the public's understanding of the policy. Then, he adopts enthymeme to demonstrate that the Cross-strait ECFA will not impact Taiwan's industries and agriculture, by stating that:

We have reached a consensus with China that the import of the agricultural products of mainland China to Taiwan will not be increased and we will not open China's labor to Taiwan. We have also reached the consensus that we will do our best to prevent damage to Taiwan's weak industries when Chinese products are exported to Taiwan.

Ma also uses the budget figures that his administration prepared for helping these weak industries. He states that "we will be well-prepared for dealing with each of these weak industries with a 10-year budget of 95 billion NT dollars to assist them in their survival and development".

Pathos. Emotional appeals were adopted to reduce the public's fear about the impact of the Cross-strait ECFA on Taiwan's interests and sovereignty. By appealing to security, Ma emphasizes that the Cross-strait ECFA "will be signed under the principles of dignity and reciprocal", promises that "we will report to the Legislative Yuan before and after each negotiation and open the progress of each negotiation to the public". He further guarantees that "the Cross-strait ECFA will be presented to the Legislative Yuan for scrutiny after it is signed, and it will only take effect if it is passed".

Ethos. Ma establishes his ethos by claiming his determination to protect Taiwan's interests. He seriously announces that "we cannot accept (the result) and would rather break the negotiation without any regret if the negotiations of the Cross-strait ECFA fail to benefit Taiwan as a whole". He also builds his ethos by appealing to his credibility as president:

I, as the President of Taiwan, want to announce here that I will defend the sovereignty of Taiwan, defending the dignity of Taiwan while signing the Cross-strait ECFA or any negotiation. This standpoint will never change.

5.1.3 Visualizing the Cross-strait ECFA

In his statement, Ma aims to depict a beautiful picture of Taiwan's future by using pathos and to establish his image of responsibility and forward-thinking by implementing ethos.

Pathos. In appealing to hope, Ma asserts that "Taiwan's trade and economy will become a live dragon if we sign the Cross-strait ECFA". Additionally, he states that "we want to say goodbye to the last eight years and to create 10 golden years so as to re-make Taiwan's economy and reach the pinnacle as the first among the Four Asian Dragons".

Ethos. Using ethical petitions, Ma constructs his ethos by referring to his responsibility as president. He stresses that "we cannot wait anymore, I want to lead Taiwan in the search for the last eight years" in an attempt to highlight his responsibility. Then, at the end of the statement segment, he claims that "I must take the responsibility in this critical time, helping Taiwan to step out into the world. We want to strengthen Taiwan, connect with the Asia Pacific, and globally integrate".

5.2 Main Themes and Utilization of Aristotelian Rhetoric Strategies in the Interrogation Section

The central themes raised in the question-and-answer section include: 1) the transparency of the ECFA; 2) China's conceded benefits to Taiwan; 3) the ECFA as a presumptuous policy; 4) the formation of the ECFA decision-making; 5) the impact of the ECFA on Taiwan; (6) whether to re-negotiate should the ECFA fail to pass in the Legislative Yuan; and 7) China's political ambition. Themes related to alternative plans of negotiations, an overall policy formulated for the impact of the Cross-strait ECFA, the redistribution of wealth, and the construction of a social security protection system are excluded in the present study, as Ma did not respond to these issues posed by Tsai. Therefore, there are a total of seven themes, comprising 11 topics. The Aristotelian language of persuasion used by Ma to respond to these 11 topics is analyzed below.

5.2.1 The Transparency of the Cross-strait ECFA

Ma appeals to facts and emotions to alleviate the public doubts regarding the transparency of the Cross-strait ECFA.

Logos. Regarding the facts concerning the international practice of negotiations, Ma uses logos in defense against the notion that the Cross-strait ECFA is a black box operation. He states:

You mentioned that we are not transparent enough. As a former negotiation adviser to the Bureau of Foreign Trade, you should know that information should not be made public during negotiations.

Pathos. Ma uses the element of pathos to attribute this issue to the DPP's poor performance in the Legislative Yuan by developing the arguments indicated below to induce the public's anger:

In the two formal cross-strait negotiations, we reported to the Legislative Yuan prior to and following the negotiations. The DPP refused to attend the session and you blamed it on us. When we hold the third formal cross-strait negotiations, please ask the DPP legislative caucus members to listen to our report alright? It is not very rational if you do not attend the meeting.

Additionally, Ma also promotes the sense of security in his efforts to convince the public to believe in his administrative proposals. He emphasizes that the results of the cross-strait negotiations will be made available to the public and promises that "the list of the early harvest will be announced before the outcome of the negotiations is presented to the Legislative Yuan".

5.2.2 China's conceded Benefits to Taiwan

Using logos and pathos, Ma attempts to explain that the Cross-strait ECFA is beneficial to both sides, and he will defend and protect Taiwan when negotiating with China.

Logos. Ma refers to facts and figures in his oration to show the facts that China didn't concede benefits to Taiwan. He states that "the estimation of the investment from Taiwan to China may total over 200 billion NT dollars. This creates many employment opportunities for China and tax benefits to China." Thus, he emphasizes that "it is mutually beneficial".

Pathos. Promoting the feeling of security, Ma asserts that the Cross-strait ECFA is "mutually beneficial because both sides will gain". He also promises that the ECFA negotiation will be processed based on the principles of "protecting Taiwan's sovereignty" and "Taiwan's dignity". Moreover, pathos is also used to create hope for the audience regarding Taiwan's future development. He claims that the highlighted tourism opportunity from China's tourists will bring more than 400 billion NT dollars to Taiwan.

5.2.3 The Cross-strait ECFA is a Presumptuous Policy

Logos, pathos, and ethos are utilized by Ma in the defense that the Cross-strait ECFA is a policy made with careful consideration and to enhance his leadership as president.

Logos. Ma employs logical appeals, referring to facts pertaining to the wave of economic integration in Asia to explain the urgency of the Cross-strait ECFA and to declare that Taiwan cannot wait any longer. He explains:

ASEAN Plus ONE took effect in January. ASEAN plus Japan will take effect in 2012, ASEAN Plus India will take effect in 2016, while ASEAN Plus New Zealand and Australia will commence in 2018....We must have strategies for when other countries sign an FTA with ASEAN. He also uses examples of other countries to demonstrate that signing an ECFA is an international trend. As he states, "Countries around the world are seeking to sign FTAs. In Asia, South Korea signed seven, Mainland China signed nine, and Singapore signed 14". Therefore, he declares "can we keep waiting? We cannot".

Pathos. Using the element of pathos, Ma tries to evoke the emotion of anger, in an attempt to gain the audience's understanding that the necessity and urgency of the Cross-strait ECFA resulted from the DPP's incompetence and inaction while they were in power. First, he condemns the DPP by stating that "the former DPP government did nothing but wait, stalling the process for eight years" thereby resulting in Taiwan's slipping global trade status and negatively influencing Taiwan's export market. He then blamed the DPP for continuing to boycott and reject attendance for the joint legislative committee meetings. He finally states that "I think you owe the people and Taiwan an apology". In addition, Ma tries to raise the emotion of security in an attempt to persuade the audience to believe that the Cross-strait ECFA is a policy that has been well-prepared and carefully considered. He stresses that he would integrate expert opinions, as well as "follow the procedures and take steady steps, rather than making a giant leap".

Furthermore, through using the emotion of fear, Ma warns the public that Taiwan will be at an even greater disadvantage if the market is seized by other countries. He also points out that "you will lose considerably if you think you can wait another two years". Additionally, appealing to anxiety, Ma exclaims that "Taiwan is the only country that is not signing FTAs. Can we keep waiting? We cannot. Other countries are off and running while we are still arguing about this".

Ethos. Ma establishes his ethos through drawing upon his responsibility as the President of Taiwan. He announces that "as a responsible government, shouldn't we take precautions"? He further claims that "I will lay the groundwork and when the time comes, it will take no time to push ahead step by step". He then states "this is what I call a responsible government and that is what I think a president should do".

5.2.4 How is the Decision-making of the Cross-strait ECFA Conducted?

Ma uses pathos and ethos to address this issue.

Pathos. Appealing to the emotions of anger, fear, and security, Ma uses pathos to attack the DPP's irresponsibility, promoting the urgency and necessity of the Cross-strait ECFA, and defending the safety of the Cross-strait ECFA. He first uses the element of pathos when he states that "the DPP turned a blind eye to the development of the Asia-Pacific region, pretending that nothing happened", in the anticipation of inducing anger from the audience with the former DPP's administration.

Next, he tries to evoke the fear of the public regarding the future if Taiwan does not sign the Cross-strait ECFA. He emphasizes that “it is a matter of life and death” for Taiwan’s small business, stressing that “Taiwan will not have another eight years” if the Cross-strait ECFA is not signed. Furthermore, Ma appeals to the sense of security to establish the audience’s confidence in the Cross-strait ECFA. He promises that “I will not accept the results if the agreement does not benefit the entire economy of Taiwan”.

Ethos. Ma establishes his ethos by highlighting his foresight. He emphasizes that “the agreement we will sign with China did not start after my term in office began”. It started many years ago, Ma continues to say, “when I went to Singapore to attend an Asian economic summit conference”. Additionally, Ma appeals to leadership and responsibility to establish his ethos by: “We have to make up for the eight years that we lost; we have the responsibility to move Taiwan forward because growth remained stagnant during the eight years that the DPP was in power”.

5.2.5 The Impact of the Cross-strait ECFA on Taiwan

5.2.5.1 The Impact on Agriculture

Logos. Ma uses rationalization to demonstrate that Taiwan should not reject signing the Cross-strait ECFA based solely on the open rules of agricultural products set by the WTO because Taiwan “cannot commit the same error made by the DPP during their eight-year administration”. He also utilizes the fact that “Taipei and Beijing agreed during the first round of negotiations on an ECFA that agricultural products would not be included”. He continues to stress that “both sides understand each other’s particular situation”. Furthermore, he employs the example of Taiwan joining the WTO to imply that signing the Cross-strait ECFA will benefit agriculture from a long-term perspective: “Was the impact of joining the WTO not a greater concern? However, the value of our agricultural products has increased from 350 billion NT dollars to 410 billion NT dollars”. He further uses an enthymeme to illustrate that if the Taiwanese survived and adapted for the better after Taiwan joined the WTO, they would overcome any impact resulting from signing of the Cross-strait ECFA. Ma emphasizes, “of course there are impacts, but you forget that the Taiwanese people are brave and practical. No one is as pessimistic as you”.

Pathos. Ma uses an emotional appeal to arouse the audience with images of hope for the future and to reduce the audience’s fear about the impact of the Cross-strait CEFA on agriculture. As he declares:

My administration does not discuss only with Mainland China, but also tried to sign economic agreements with other countries. Our goal is to strengthen Taiwan and connect with Asia and other foreign countries.

5.2.5.2 The Impact on Traditional industries

Logos. Appealing to logos, Ma uses the example of Taiwan joining the WTO to make an enthymeme that the Taiwanese will adapt well if they sign the Cross-strait ECFA. He demonstrates this by stating:

When we joined the WTO, the damage businesses suffered was greater than that of an ECFA, but we overcame these difficulties....The impact of becoming a WTO member was not as substantial as many had expected and Taiwan responded well. Thus, Ma confirms that “it shows that Taiwanese adapt well to different situations” and argues that “since there is an example for us to follow, why do we not have more faith in the Taiwanese and believe that they have courage, abilities, and perseverance to overcome additional difficulties”?

In addition, Ma establishes the facts regarding the tasks that his administration has completed and plans for the future in dealing with the impact of the Cross-strait ECFA on weaker traditional businesses. He states that “we are well prepared for the difficulties that our weaker traditional businesses will face after the ECFA is signed. We have classified these issues into 17 categories”, emphasizing that “we will provide guidance and help them revive these businesses”, promising that “we plan to set aside a total of 95 billion NT dollars to cope with the problem, and we are ready”.

Pathos. Ma deploys emotional appeals to stimulate the public to panic and to distract the audience’s attention. He claims that “you will lose substantially if you think you can wait another two years. It will be harder to catch up if your market share is seized by someone else”. He further appeals to sympathy: “As our market share in many countries has continued to fall over the last few years, should we not move rapidly and attempt to catch-up? ”.

Ethos. By accentuating his foresight and responsibility, Ma establishes his ethos by emphasizing that “what is more important is that we must have enough foresight to predict what lies ahead five or 10 years down the road”, exclaiming that “if a government does not show it’s resolve to march ahead at this critical time, how can we face the people?”.

5.2.5.3 The Impact on Unemployment

Pathos. Through harnessing the emotion of security, he promises that “both sides have reached a consensus that will avoid causing a detrimental impact on Taiwan’s traditional industries” and asserts that he “will try his best to protect the interests of the Taiwanese”. He also stresses that he will “pay particular attention to unemployment” and claims that “we are not putting all our eggs in one basket”.

He also creates a sense of hope with the audience, trying to reduce the audience’s anxiety regarding the impact of the Cross-strait ECFA. He says, “We know unemployment is a problem.... We will not focus merely on Mainland China, because our target is the world”. He also states that “we will make similar efforts in other emerging countries, such as Brazil, India, and Russia. If we persist, we will produce better results this year. We are diversifying our market”.

5.2.6 The Decision to Re-negotiate if the Cross-strait ECFA Fails to Pass in the Legislative Yuan

Logos. Ma appeals to logos, using examples of the WTO to imply that the Cross-strait ECFA will be passed by the Legislative Yuan. He states that “272 FTAs took effect in the past few years around the world; no one was rejected after reporting to and reviewed by the WTO”.

5.2.7 China’s Political Ambition

Logos. In stating specific facts, Ma provides examples of agreements that he has signed with China to demonstrate that “nothing political appeared”. He states:

Take a look at the 12 agreements that we have signed with China. Did any pertaining to ‘one country, two systems’ and ‘peaceful reunification’ appear in the next? No, it did not, nothing political appeared. He further deployed a comparative approach to demonstrate past and current facts regarding Taiwan’s cross-strait and international relationship. As he states, “our policy of ‘no unification, no independence, and no use of force’ created space for Taiwan to forge ahead”. He continued to emphasize that because of this policy “we have changed our cross-strait relationship; we have also changed, for the better, our international relationship”. Furthermore, Ma appeals to the audience’s belief in Taiwan’s democracy, emphasizing that “we know they have ambition, but we believe in Taiwan and we have confidence in Taiwan’s democracy. We also think that we are capable of dealing with these problems”.

Pathos. Ma makes a statement that challenges Tsai, which he uses in an attempt to evoke the audience's anger about the DPP's inactions while dealing with cross-strait issues. He declares:

Of course I know China’s political ambitions - ‘one country, two systems’ and ‘peaceful reunification.’ We have known this from the start. Based on these political ambitions, however, will you just choose to ignore (Mainland China)? This is what you did during the DPP’s eight years in power.

Additionally, he states that “during your time in administration, the cross-strait and international relationships were both declining and moving in reverse”.

Table 1 presents Ma’s utilization of Aristotelian rhetoric throughout the Cross-strait ECFA Debate.

7. Conclusions

This study adopts a rhetorical analysis to focus on examining President Ma’s rhetorical persuasive language during the televised Cross-strait ECFA Debate. Here, the persuasive elements of ethos, pathos, and logos have been integrated with recent empirical research on presidential speeches and campaigns to form the analytical framework. The analysis of Ma’s discourse during the Cross-strait ECFA Debate reveals that pathos is the most pervasive appeal (see Table 1) that Ma adopts to invoke the audience’s emotions about Taiwan’s future development and further gain its support.

This finding is consistent with Baxter and Marcella (2012) and Bronstein’s (2013) studies, in which they found that an emotion-based appeal was the most frequently used throughout various presidential candidates’ Facebook pages. Fear, anger, hope, and security are the elements of pathos that Ma deploys to warn the audience of the possibility of Taiwan’s marginalization by international communities if they fail to sign an ECFA with China. Moreover, he also uses these elements of pathos to attack his opponent’s incompetence, inaction, and isolationist policies that resulted in Taiwan’s stagnation. Furthermore, he utilized this tactic to persuade the public that the Cross-strait ECFA is a well-prepared and secure policy that will bring Taiwan prosperity and establish the nation’s international status.

Results of this study indicate that among these four elements of pathos, resorting to the security of the public is dominant throughout, particularly in response to Tsai's inquiries during the question-and-answer period. The KMT's stance of pro-China and transparency of the Cross-strait ECFA has been long questioned by opposition parties, and some dominant media in Taiwan are the major cause of this unease. Hope is a positive emotion and was employed by Ma to paint a beautiful and productive picture of the "future Taiwan" if the Cross-strait ECFA was signed. This hope was in direct defense against Tsai's questions about the issues of China's conceded interests and the impact of the Cross-strait ECFA on agriculture and unemployment. This finding echoes Erisen and Villalobos's (2014) contention that hope may be induced by a president's discourse when "proposing certain policy ideas and their potential to positively impact societal conditions" (p. 475).

Fear-laden rhetoric was deployed by Ma to primarily justify the Cross-strait ECFA and to deflect Tsai's challenges about the hastiness of the Cross-strait ECFA, the decision-making of the Cross-strait ECFA, and the impact of the Cross-strait ECFA on traditional industries. The results of this study show that Ma uses fear-related appeals to warn the public of economic downturns, Taiwan's marginalization, and seizure of the market by other countries. This finding is consistent with claims made by Altheide (2003) in that "the politics of fear is a decision-makers' promotion and use of audience beliefs and assumption about danger, risk, and fear in order to achieve certain goals" (p. 39). This finding is also consistent with the claims made by Erisen and Villalobos (2014), stating that "fear may be evoked by political elites when talking about an outside thread or in response to a crisis, such as an economic recession". Sentiments connected to anger are deployed by Ma in response to four essential issues: 1) the transparency of the Cross-strait ECFA; 2) the urgency of the Cross-strait ECFA; 3) the decision-making of the Cross-strait ECFA; and 4) China's political ambitions. Strategies used by Ma while appealing to anger are to deliberately attack the DPP's incompetence and irresponsibility while they were in power. Additionally, these strategies serve to explicitly condemn the DPP's boycotting and refusal to attend meetings related to the Cross-strait ECFA in the Legislative Yuan as an attitude responsible for Taiwan's stagnancy.

Logos is the second most pervasive appeal employed by Ma during the Cross-strait ECFA Debate. Results indicate that figures, facts, and the enthymeme approach are techniques that Ma utilizes to defend his policy of the Cross-strait ECFA and to make his discourse demonstrative and worthy of belief to persuade the public to support his policy.

Ethos is adopted to establish Ma's credibility and trustworthiness, to reinforce his positive character, and to build his credibility as president. Results indicate that ethos-related appeals are used to make the public believe that he, as the President of Taiwan, has the ability and responsibility to lead Taiwan forward. In particular, he aims to connect with the world and defend Taiwan's interests and sovereignty. This finding is in accordance with Triadafilopoulos's (1999) argument that an orator "should convey a positive character, worthy of respect and trust" (p. 749), and echoes Beiner's contention that a persuasive speaker should possess "the ability to show himself to be a man of moral purpose" (as cited in Triadafilopoulos, 1999, p. 745).

Taken together, from the perspective of tactics and strategies of political rhetoric, Ma masterfully makes use of three critical elements in his creation of a solid rhetorical persuasion: 1) ethos; 2) logos; and 3) pathos in the Cross-strait ECFA Debate. The evidence gained by this study leads to the conclusion (consistent with Aristotle's argument) that "the orator must not only try to make the argument of his speech demonstrative and worthy of belief; he must also make his character look right and put his hearers, who are to decide, in the right frame of mind" (as cited in Triadafilopoulos, 1999, p. 745)

The study contributes both to the public policy debate in Taiwan and to the study of political rhetoric. It also provides an empirical and theoretical account of public discussion on the various rhetorical strategies adopted by political actors, particularly a president or a leader of a political party. This study did not specifically examine public opinions regarding the results of this Cross-strait ECFA Debate. In addition, it did not include Tsai's discourse.

Furthermore, the external economic and political environment was not analyzed. Lastly, the analysis of linguistic discourse, expression, voice, and symbols were not included in this study. Further research should include Tsai's political rhetoric to make comparisons between his statements and those made by President Ma. In addition, future research could utilize the same approach to examine different political realms, such as candidates' debates, blogs, or other novel social media. Furthermore, future studies could explore the impact of political rhetoric across different types of speeches or debates on the public's opinions or attitudes.

Table 1: Ma's Utilization of Aristotelian Rhetoric in Various Themes and Issues

		Appeals	
Rationalizing ECFA	Logos	Pathos	Ethos
Envoking Security towards the ECFA	Logos	Pathos	Ethos
Visualizing ECFA		Pathos	Ethos
ECFA's Transparency	Logos	Pathos	
China's Conceded Interests	Logos	Pathos	
Hastiness of ECFA	Logos	Pathos	Ethos
Decision-making Process		Pathos	Ethos
ECFA's Impact on Agriculture	Logos	Pathos	
ECFA's Impact on Traditional Industries	Logos	Pathos	Ethos
ECFA's Impact on Unemployment		Pathos	
Re-negotiation	Logos		
China's Political Ambitions	Logos	Pathos	

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