



9-2011

# Presidents and the Rhetoric of Recessions

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## Recommended Citation

Hoffman, Donna R. and Howard, Alison D., "Presidents and the Rhetoric of Recessions" (2011). *Collected Faculty Scholarship*. Paper 6.  
<http://scholar.dominican.edu/all-faculty/6>

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## **Presidents and the Rhetoric of Recessions**

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Prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association,  
Seattle, WA, September 1-4, 2011.

## **Presidents and the Rhetoric of Recessions**

Are presidents reticent during recessions? Some research indicates that presidents make fewer major and minor speeches when economic conditions worsen (Ragsdale 1984; Eshbaugh-Soha 2010). We examine whether this holds true with major discretionary speeches utilizing recessions as the indicator of poor economic conditions. In addition, we also investigate the subject matter of major discretionary speeches given during both economic expansions and contractions. Presidents potentially have an incentive during a recession to focus the attention of the public away from economic concerns, where they have little command and control ability, to foreign policy, where they do have more power to act unilaterally. We find that presidents are not reticent during recessions. During recessions, fewer average months elapse between major discretionary speeches than we find elapse during economic expansions. Furthermore, while presidents never talk about the economy at high rates overall, they do focus more than twice as many major discretionary speeches on economic topics during recessions than they do during expansions. We also find no evidence that presidents attempt to ratchet up the rate at which they discuss foreign policy during recessions in an attempt to divert attention from economic matters.

## **Presidents and the Rhetoric of Recessions**

Are presidents reticent during recessions? Perhaps for good reason, presidents may tread carefully in making economic remarks during recessionary periods. To present the situation as too dire could negatively affect the public's prospective economic view; yet, to sugar coat or gloss over the situation may not give a president the leverage he needs with various actors (in both the public and private sectors). In fact, Ragsdale (1984) found evidence that presidents make fewer major speeches when inflation and consumer prices worsen. More recently, Eshbaugh-Soha (2010) found evidence that presidents make fewer minor policy speeches when the misery index (a combination of unemployment and inflation) increased. But, does it hold that presidents are reticent during identified economic recessions, a different, and perhaps more meaningful, economic indicator when one considers discretionary major speechmaking? Furthermore, when a president does deliver a speech during a recession, perhaps he seeks to change the subject by talking about non-economic issues, such as foreign policy. After all, presidents have few economic tools to affect the economy in the short term, but the public will hold them responsible for the state of the economy regardless. Presidents who face recessions on their watch, therefore, might have an incentive to rhetorically emphasize issues in which they have more short-term ability to exercise leadership, such as in the foreign policy realm. We are interested in the ways presidents rhetorically react during economic contractions. In particular, we examine the following:

1. When confronting an economic recession, do presidents choose to make major

discretionary speeches, or do they choose to remain silent?

2. If they choose to make discretionary speeches during recessions, do they address economic policy/concerns?

3. Do presidents, during recessions, seek to divert attention away from the economy by focusing their speeches on foreign policy?

To answer these questions, we examine major discretionary speeches given by presidents from November 1948 (the beginning of the first post-war economic contraction) and June 2009 (the ending of the latest economic contraction).

We find that presidents actually are not reticent during recessions. Fewer months elapse between major discretionary speeches during recessions than during expansions. They also address economic concerns more during recessions than expansions, although they still prefer to talk about foreign policy. But, they focus on foreign policy at roughly the same rate as during an expansion. Thus, there is little evidence of a strategy of seeking to divert attention away from the economy by ramping up the rate at which they address foreign policy.

Almost 50 years ago, Aaron Wildavsky (1966) first put forth the notion of the two presidencies, where one presidency dealt with domestic matters and presidential influence was constrained by Congress, while a more powerful presidency, less constrained by Congress, dealt with foreign policy. Over the years, there have been many assessments and reassessments of this thesis, many of them finding evidence for skepticism about the idea (see many of these collected in Shull 1991; Fleisher et al. 2000). Most recently, however, new life was breathed into the notion that presidents do have more influence in foreign policy (Binder 2003; Canes-Wrone, Howell, and Lewis 2008). Most of these studies, however, have dealt with presidential influence

vis a vis Congress. Lewis (1997) also applied the two presidencies notion to presidential rhetoric, finding that when speaking on economic issues, presidents asked for support from the public and Congress. When speaking on foreign policy matters, however, the president did not make such appeals. Given the nature of presidential power, this finding intuitively makes sense. The president has certain constitutional powers that give him the prerogative to act in foreign policy (Peterson 1994). The public pays little attention to foreign policy until events bring media attention to the topic (Wittkopf 1990). Congress, as an institution, concerns itself mostly with domestic policy, and the incidence of gridlock between Congress and the president is less for foreign policy (Binder 2003, 52-53). We also know that the act of giving a major speech can boost presidential approval (Ragsdale 1984; Brace and Hinckley 1992; but also see Edwards 2003). In addition, we also know that there exists an expectations gap; the public has unrealistic expectations of what presidents can actually accomplish (Waterman, Jenkins-Smith, and Silva 1999). The expectations gap can be exacerbated by campaign rhetoric, where presidential hopefuls have an incentive to offer cures for all ills, while ignoring the reality of shared congressional responsibility for policy making. Recent presidents, especially, have begun treating governing like campaigning, carrying over campaign tactics (especially rhetorical ones) to the task of governing (Ornstein and Mann 2000; Edwards 2007). Once elected, the president may find the expectations gap especially acute in the area of economic policy, where the president has little short term ability to affect the state of the overall economy, but is held responsible for aspects of it, nonetheless (Sigelman and Knight 1985). Conversely, the president does have some foreign policy tools that he can exercise unilaterally, or with fewer constraints from Congress. Might this give a president, during economic recessions, an incentive to remain

silent during bad times as some previous research supports? After all, a president would not want to increase expectations by potentially fostering the notion that economic problems were tractable. Or, it could be a situation in which a president seeks some potential short term advantage with the public by seeking to focus their attention on something other than economic conditions and policy? Foreign policy is an obvious choice if one wants to project an aura of being “presidential” due to the nature of roles such as head of state, commander in chief, and chief diplomat. In these areas, presidents can generally act more decisively, with dispatch, and with less involvement of Congress.

### **Economic Contractions and Expansions**

To examine these questions, we must first establish a time line for economic contractions and expansions. The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) defines an economic contraction, or recession, as “a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in real GDP, real income, employment, industrial production, and wholesale-retail sales” (NBER 2010).<sup>1</sup> During the time period under examination, there have been 11 recessions (Table 1). We rely on the beginning and ending months of economic contractions and expansions as determined by NBER and major discretionary speeches are categorized as to whether they occur during a recessionary or expansionary time period. One potential problem with using the actual dates of a recessionary period is that the dating of both the beginning and ending of economic contractions lags, sometimes substantially. For example, the most recent recession was judged to have begun in

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<sup>1</sup>NBER, a private, nonprofit research group, was formed in 1920 to further the study of economics and was particularly organized around the study of business cycles (Fabricant 1984). For the history of business cycles in the U.S., see NBER 2010.

December 2007, but NBER did not announce this date until 12 months into the recession as shown in Table 1. If, however, one examines public perceptions and sentiment, using the identified dates of recessions is much less problematic. As Howrey (2001) illustrates, a decline in the University of Michigan's Index of Consumer Sentiment (ICS) (based on five attitudinal survey questions) and identified recessions track closely together (Howrey 2001, Figure 1, 180). Therefore, even though it takes NBER many months to pinpoint the starting month of a contraction, consumer sentiment (tracked monthly) will begin to register a significant decline. Despite not being told a recession has officially begun, consumers "feel" it as tracked through the ICS. The same is true as the contraction ends; despite not being told of its ending by official channels, consumer sentiment will register improvement. Thus, as an administration is considering whether a president should choose to make a major speech, they may not have a determination from NBER as to whether the country is in the throes of a recession, but they certainly do have reams of economic data and measures of public opinion, such as the influential ICS (and many data analysts). Presidents and their administrations are going to know, therefore, when times are hard. One question, then, becomes whether they want to acknowledge this in a major speech. Calculations about whether to make a major speech, and whether or not to focus it on economic matters, thus are made with lots of information about economic conditions and public opinion, even in the absence of NBER determinations. Given that we need a firm timeline of recessions and expansions in order to categorize speeches, we use the peak and trough dates as determined by NBER. We believe this indicator is a better measure of poor economic conditions, than previous uses of separate economic indicators that capture short term fluctuations (both positive and negative) within a recessionary period.



The workings of the business cycle are unpredictable in terms of when a contraction will emerge and how long it will last, but as its nature is cyclical, we know that a recession will occur following a peak of economic activity. Most presidents will be unlucky enough to have recessions occur on their watch (Truman, Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, GHW Bush, GW Bush, and Obama); some are fortunate enough to serve only during economic expansions (JFK, Johnson, and Clinton). During recessions, presidents must react to economic events. They must carefully measure their reaction and speculate about what the public's reaction may be. After all, the public's perceptions and expectations about the economy affect their voting (Lewis-Beck 1988; Lewis-Beck and Tien 1996), presidential approval (MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1992), and their economic behavior (see Wood, Owens, and Durham 2005 for a review of this literature). There are any number of reactions to economic conditions a president may have, but we are only concerned with his rhetorical reactions. The president can choose to address the public, or not. Before choosing to make a major speech, any administration is going to weigh: 1) how presidential remarks may impact the economic behavior of consumers, and relatedly, markets, 2) how remarks may impact presidential standing with the public, and 3) how presidential remarks may affect any coming midterm or presidential election. Given the potential and varied effects, which are difficult to predict, the president may choose to remain silent. Thus, we arrive at our calculus of interest. When Americans are confronting hard times, what do presidents choose to do rhetorically?

### **Major Discretionary Speeches**

We examine all major discretionary speeches given by presidents from November 1948 to June 2009. These dates are significant as November 1948 is the month the first post-war

recession began; June 2009 is the month in which the most recent recession ended. A discretionary speech is one a president chooses to make. This excludes such speeches as inaugurals, State of the Union addresses, and farewell addresses where there is a general expectation that a president will give these at particular points in time. We use this as our criteria because we are concerned with whether a choice is made to give a speech, and what kind of speech is given (economic, foreign policy, or other). Second, we isolate our examination to major discretionary speeches; that is, speeches broadcast to a national audience during prime-time hours.<sup>2</sup> These are high impact speeches crafted primarily to address the American public and have the largest potential viewing audiences. Finally, once major discretionary speeches were identified, we determine whether the speech had a substantial economic component, a substantial foreign policy component, or whether a speech was on other or multiple subjects (See Appendix 1 and 2). In determining whether the content was “substantial,” we used the criterion

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<sup>2</sup>There is some disagreement over the nature of what constitutes a major speech (Kernell 2007, 115, 144-45 n2-3). Furthermore, as noted by Simon and Ostrom (1989, 65, n5), “there is little consistency among” the various lists of televised presidential speeches. Baum and Kernell (1999) voice a similar concern, noting “frankly, we have found no completely reliable and exhaustive listing of presidential appearances on network television.” While Ragsdale (2009) identifies major addresses (Table 4-1) and defines them as those “delivered to a national audience during evening listening hours,” the table includes speeches that were, in fact, not delivered during prime-time hours. We have excluded any speeches from Ragsdale’s list that were not given at, or after, 7 p.m. eastern time (or the equivalent). In addition, we updated the list to the present time. Furthermore, we excluded speeches where other policy-makers also delivered remarks (two Eisenhower speeches). Lastly, we only included speeches that all three major networks covered. As a further precaution, we cross checked the various lists that exist (Kernell 2007; Ragsdale 2009; Baum and Kernell 1999; Simon and Ostrom 1989) with the *Public Papers of the Presidents* (at the American Presidency Project <http://presidency.ucsb.edu>) and the Vanderbilt Television News Archive (<http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/>). With the checking and cross-checking, we are reasonably sure that our list of major discretionary speeches (Appendix 1) is complete.

of at least half of the speech being devoted to either economic or foreign policy.<sup>3</sup> While most major discretionary speeches are primarily on a single subject matter, there are a few that span more than one policy area. For example, George H.W. Bush gave a speech on September 11, 1990 on both the Persian Gulf and the federal budget. However, the majority of the speech deals with happenings in the Persian Gulf, and only a minority of it deals with the budget; it, therefore, was classified as a foreign policy speech.

During the time period under study, presidents have delivered 180 major discretionary speeches (Table 2). There is considerable stability from president to president in terms of the months that typically elapse between discretionary speeches. As others have noted (Kernell 2007), there are only so many major speeches a president can give.<sup>4</sup> Nixon averaged the fewest months between discretionary speeches; about two months typically separated. This is influenced by the number of events taking place during Nixon's tenure (active foreign policy agenda, Vietnam, and Watergate), which he chose to address with major discretionary speeches. Clinton had the most average months between speeches with 6.4 months typically elapsing. Finally, at the point in which the Great Recession of 2007-09 ended, Obama had only been in office for five months; while he did deliver the equivalent of a State of the Union address in February 2009 (and thus, not discretionary), he had not given a major, discretionary address by the end of the recession in June 2009. Given, however, that this was only the fifth full month of

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<sup>3</sup>Economic policy included anything related to the control of business cycles, fiscal policy, and monetary policy. Foreign policy included issues of defense, diplomacy, and relations with nations. These categorizations were guided by Pomper 1980.

<sup>4</sup>Using months in office as a predictor of the number of major discretionary speeches given by a president will explain 61% of the variance in number of speeches.

his term, this is not out of the ordinary. During the period under study, an average of 4.4 months elapsed between major discretionary speeches given by presidents. Ragsdale's similar measure found an average of 3.3 months between discretionary speeches, but her study ended in 1980 (1984, 973). One should note in Table 2 that three of the four presidents in office since 1981 have higher average months elapsing between speeches, influencing the overall mean and accounting for the difference.<sup>5</sup>

### **Recessionary Rhetoric**

Do presidents make fewer major discretionary speeches during recessions? Previous research determined that, "presidents, it seems, become less likely to make major public addresses when economic bad times face their audiences" (Ragsdale 1984, 977). Ragsdale, however, measured bad times by unemployment and consumer prices.<sup>6</sup> We determined above that during our time period, one could expect, on average, a major discretionary speech every 4.4 months. If one considers the months of recession in our time period (122) as consecutive, and the number of months of expansion (594) as consecutive, then we arrive at a rough measure of determining whether the rates of speeches are similar or dissimilar in these two categories. There are 42 discretionary speeches given during recessions (see Appendix 1). Thus, there is an average of one discretionary speech every 2.9 months during recessionary months. There are 138 discretionary speeches given during expansions (see Appendix 2). During expansions, presidents

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<sup>5</sup>As Baum and Kernell (1999) note, the "golden age of presidential television" was affected by the rise of cable outlets and both presidents and networks reacted by becoming more strategic.

<sup>6</sup>A similar finding, using minor discretionary policy speeches and the misery index (a combination of inflation and unemployment), was found by Eshbaugh-Soha (2010); presidents made fewer minor speeches during bad economic times.

average one speech every 4.3 months. Thus, on this measure, presidents tend to actually choose to talk MORE during recessions than expansions, when one considers the months consecutively.

We can also consider recessionary months non-consecutively. Table 3 shows, given the length of each recession and the overall rate of one discretionary speech every 4.4 months, what we would expect in terms of the number of speeches made during each recessionary period. This is then compared to the number of actual speeches given during the recession. We would expect a total of 27.7 speeches to be given over the course of the 11 recessions, and there are actually 42 speeches that are given. In addition, if one examines each recession, there are only four instances in which the actual number of speeches falls below expectations for that recession. In two of these instances (1960-61; 2007-09), the recession encompasses a presidential election and transition period with an outgoing, lame-duck Republican president, and an incoming Democratic president. The 1980 recession also falls slightly below expectations, but it is also the shortest recession during our period of study (six months) and occurs as the 1980 presidential campaign is taking place.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in three of the four recessions where we see fewer speeches than expected, there is a presidential campaign and/or election taking place. It would seem, then, that if a campaign/election is intervening, presidents tend to be a little more reticent than expected during the recession. In addition, as Baum and Kernell (1999) note, networks seem to be skeptical of giving prime network time to lame-ducks. Overall, however, when treating recessions as separate entities, we also find that presidents tend to talk MORE during recessions; in seven of eleven recessions, presidents are exceeding the number of speeches one would

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<sup>7</sup>In addition, since it is impossible to give 0.4 of a speech, if one were to round the expected number of speeches to make this meaningful in the context of the unit of analysis (speech), 1980 would not classify as being below the expectation.

normally expect. Thus on two measures, one treating recessionary months consecutively, and another treating recessions non-consecutively, we find that presidents aren't reticent at all during recessions. In fact, they give discretionary major speeches at a higher rate than they do overall.

We are also interested in what subjects presidents choose to address when they decide to take to the airwaves. As noted above, if half or more of a speech was about economic matters, we judged it to have a substantial economic component; if half or more of a speech was about foreign policy, it was judged to have substantial foreign policy content. These determinations can be found in Appendix 1 and 2. A majority of major discretionary speeches during our time period are foreign policy speeches; fully 56% of all speeches contain substantial foreign policy content. Only 19% of all major discretionary speeches had substantial economic content. In general, presidents do not focus many discretionary speeches on economic content; they are much more likely to choose to take to the airwaves and address foreign policy matters. Since these speeches are speeches of choice, do presidents choose different content depending on whether the country is in a recession or in an expansion?

To test this proposition, we utilize a chi-square test of independence to establish if there is a relationship between two nominal variables.<sup>8</sup> Is there an association between the economic condition and the content of speeches? Our first hypothesis is that economic content of a speech is associated with the economic condition; Table 4 presents the results. The chi-square statistic is significant, thus we can reject the null that there is no association between the two variables. Phi indicates, however, that the relationship is relatively weak. Furthermore, knowing the

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<sup>8</sup>For the utility of using tests of significance on population data, see Blalock 1979 and Rubin 1985.

economic condition reduces our proportion in making an error of predicting economic content of a speech by only 6%. Note above that we saw economic speeches being somewhat uncommon during our time period. We would expect there to be 8 speeches during recessions that had substantial economic content; we had, however, 15 speeches with economic content. Finally, a speech with economic content is more than twice as likely to appear in a recession than in an expansion.

Our second hypothesis is that the foreign policy content of a speech is associated with the economic condition. As shown in Table 5, the chi-square statistic is not significant, thus we cannot reject the null hypothesis that there is no association between these variables. Presidents are just as likely to give a foreign policy speech during an expansion, as during a recession.

Thus, we find that presidents, under any economic condition, are not that prone to making speeches that are substantially about the economy; only 19% of discretionary major speeches meet this criterion. However, when the economy has been in recession, 36% of the discretionary speeches given have been about the economy; during expansions, only 14% contained substantial economic content. Thus, not only do presidents tend to talk more frequently under recessionary conditions (by averaging fewer months between speeches during recessions), but they are also more than twice as likely during recessions to focus their content on economic matters than they are during expansions. Presidents do not, however, seek to change the subject to foreign policy during recessions. While they give more foreign policy speeches during recessions, the same is true during expansions. Their choice to give a foreign policy speech bears no association with the economic condition. Presidents, regardless of economic condition, prefer to wear the foreign policy hat in major discretionary speeches. But, when the economic situation deteriorates, they

do step up the rate of economic speeches. While we have examined under what economic conditions presidents are choosing to make major discretionary speeches, future research needs to examine more specifically what presidents are choosing to say in recessionary economic speeches.

The “bully pulpit” has developed as a leadership tool for presidents. Yet, whether or not presidents have an ability to unilaterally change policy or solve highly complex and inter-related economic problems is not something about which the public has a good understanding. What the public does have, however, is a conception of our government as seemingly presidency-centered and a corresponding expectation that the president exercise leadership and solve the problems facing the country. This conception is due, in part, to the rhetorical powers that have developed in the presidency (Tulis 1987). These expectations on the part of the public are something from which the president cannot escape. As a result, it is important to examine the conditions under which presidents exercise their rhetorical power, especially in regard to major speeches of choice and the topics they choose to address. We now know that they do rhetorically react to recessions by not becoming reticent, but by slightly increasing the rate at which they address the public. In addition, they choose to address economic topics at significantly higher rates than during expansions. In addition, they do not ratchet up the rate at which they talk about foreign policy during recessions in an attempt to divert attention, although foreign policy is always the most popular subject to address, regardless of economic condition.



### Appendix 1: Major Discretionary Speeches Given During Economic Contractions

<u>Dates of Contraction</u>	<u>president/date of speech</u>	<u>subject</u>	<u>Substantial Economic Component?</u>	<u>Substantial Foreign Policy Component?</u>
11/1948 - 10/1949	Truman/ July 13, 1949	National Economy	Yes	No
7/1953 - 5/1954	Eisenhower/ July 26, 1953	Korean Armistice	No	Yes
	Eisenhower/ Aug 6, 1953	Achievements	No	No
	Eisenhower/ Jan 4, 1954	Purposes & Accomplishments <sup>9</sup>	No	No
	Eisenhower/ March 15, 1954	Tax program	Yes	No
	Eisenhower/ April 5, 1954	Goals & Problems	No	No
8/1957 - 4/ 1958	Eisenhower/ Sept 24, 1957	Little Rock Desegregation	No	No
	Eisenhower/ Nov 7, 1957	National Security	No	Yes
	Eisenhower/ Nov 13, 1957	National Security	No	Yes
4/1960 - 2/1961	Eisenhower/ May 25, 1960	Events in Paris	No	Yes
12/1969 - 11/ 1970	Nixon/Jan 26, 1970	Veto of Approp. Bill	Yes	No
	Nixon/ April 20, 1970	Vietnam	No	Yes
	Nixon/ April 30, 1970	Cambodia	No	Yes
	Nixon/ June 3, 1970	Cambodia	No	Yes
	Nixon/ Oct 7, 1970	Vietnam	No	Yes
11/1973 - 3/1975	Nixon/ Nov 7, 1973	Energy shortage	No	No
	Nixon/ Nov 25, 1973	Energy policy	No	No
	Nixon/ Apr 29, 1974	Watergate tapes	No	No
	Nixon/ July 3, 1974	Soviet Union	No	Yes
	Nixon/ July 25, 1974	Economy	Yes	No
	Ford/ Aug 12, 1974	Jt. Session address	Yes	No
	Ford/Oct 15, 1974	Remarks to FFA	Yes	No

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<sup>9</sup>Precursor to State of the Union Address to be given three days later

### Appendix 1: Major Discretionary Speeches Given During Economic Contractions (con't)

<u>Dates of Contraction</u>	<u>president/date of speech</u>	<u>subject</u>	<u>Substantial Economic Component?</u>	<u>Substantial Foreign Policy Component?</u>
	Ford/ Jan 13, 1975	Energy & Economy	Yes	No
	Ford/ March 29, 1975	Signing of Tax Bill	Yes	No
1/1980 - 7/1980	Carter/ Jan 4, 1980	Afghanistan	No	Yes
7/1981 - 11/1982	Reagan/ July 27, 1981	Tax policy	Yes	No
	Reagan/ Sept 24, 1981	Economy	Yes	No
	Reagan/ Dec 23, 1981	Christmas and Poland	No	Yes
	Reagan/ April 29, 1982	Budget	Yes	No
	Reagan/ Aug 16, 1982	Budget	Yes	No
	Reagan/ Sept 1, 1982	Middle East	No	Yes
	Reagan/ Oct 13, 1982	Economy	Yes	No
	Reagan/ Nov 22, 1982	Foreign Policy	No	Yes
7/1990 - 3/1991	Bush/ Sept 11, 1990	Persian Gulf & Budget	No	Yes
	Bush/ Oct 2, 1990	Budget	Yes	No
	Bush/ Jan 16, 1991	Persian Gulf	No	Yes
	Bush/ Feb 23, 1991	Persian Gulf	No	Yes
	Bush/ March 6, 1991	Persian Gulf	No	Yes
3/2001 - 11/ 2001	Bush, GW/Aug 9, 2001	Stem cell research	No	No
	Bush, GW/ Sept 11, 2001	Terrorist attacks	No	No
	Bush, GW/ Sept 20, 2001	Terrorist attacks	No	Yes
12/2007 - 6/2009	Bush, GW/ Sept 24, 2008	Economy	Yes	No

## Appendix 2: Major Discretionary Speeches Given During Economic Expansions

<u>Dates of Expansion</u>	<u>president/date of speech</u>	<u>subject</u>	<u>Substantial Economic Component?</u>	<u>Substantial Foreign Policy Component?</u>
11/1949 - 6/1953	Truman/July 19, 1950	Korean War	No	Yes
	Truman/Sept 1, 1950	Korean War	No	Yes
	Truman/Sept 9, 1950	Defense Production Act signing	Yes	No
	Truman/Dec 15, 1950	Korea (nat'l emergency)	No	Yes
	Truman/Apr 11, 1951	Korea and US Policy in Far East	No	Yes
	Truman/June 14, 1951	Inflation controls	Yes	No
	Truman/Nov 7, 1951	Arms reduction	No	Yes
	Truman/Mar 6, 1952	Mutual security	No	Yes
	Truman/Apr 8, 1952	Steel Mills	No	No
	Eisenhower/May 19, 1953	National Security costs	Yes	No
6/1954 - 7/1957	Eisenhower/Aug 23, 1954	Achievements of 83 <sup>rd</sup> Cong	No	No
	Eisenhower/July 15, 1955	Geneva Conference	No	Yes
	Eisenhower/July 25, 1955	Geneva Conference	No	Yes
	Eisenhower/Feb 29, 1956	Decision on 2 <sup>nd</sup> Term	No	No
	Eisenhower/Apr 16, 1956	Farm bill veto	No	No
	Eisenhower/Oct 31, 1956	Middle East/E. Europe	No	Yes
	Eisenhower/Jan 5, 1957	Middle East	No	Yes
	Eisenhower/Feb 20, 1957	Middle East/UN	No	Yes
	Eisenhower/May 14, 1957	Govt costs	Yes	No
	Eisenhower/May 21, 1957	Mutual security	No	Yes
5/1958 - 3/1960	Eisenhower/ March 16, 1959	Security in Free World	No	Yes
	Eisenhower/Aug 6, 1959	Labor bill needed	No	No
	Eisenhower/Sept 10, 1959	European trip	No	Yes
	Eisenhower/Dec 3, 1959	Goodwill trip	No	Yes
	Eisenhower/Feb 21, 1960	Departure for South America	No	Yes
	Eisenhower/Mar 8, 1960	Return from South America	No	Yes
3/1961 - 11/1969	Kennedy/June 6, 1961	Return from Europe	No	Yes

## Appendix 2: Major Discretionary Speeches Given During Economic Expansions (con't)

<u>Dates of Expansion</u>	<u>president/date of speech</u>	<u>subject</u>	<u>Substantial Economic Component?</u>	<u>Substantial Foreign Policy Component?</u>
	Kennedy/July 25, 1961	Berlin crisis	No	Yes
	Kennedy/Mar 2, 1962	Nuclear testing & disarmament	No	Yes
	Kennedy/Aug 13, 1962	Nat'l economy	Yes	No
	Kennedy/Sept 30, 1962	Univ. of Mississippi situation	No	No
	Kennedy/Oct 22, 1962	Cuban missile crisis	No	Yes
	Kennedy/May 12, 1963	Birmingham situation	No	No
	Kennedy/June 11, 1963	Civil rights	No	No
	Kennedy/July 26, 1963	Nuclear Test Ban Treaty	No	Yes
	Kennedy/Sept 18, 1963	Test Ban Treaty and Tax Reduction	Yes	No
	Johnson/Apr 9, 1964	Railroad labor dispute	No	No
	Johnson/Aug 4, 1964	Gulf of Tonkin	No	Yes
	Johnson/Oct 18, 1964	Events in Russia, China, Great Britain	No	Yes
	Johnson/Mar 15, 1965	The American Promise	No	No
	Johnson/Apr 7, 1965	Peace without Conquest (Vietnam)	No	Yes
	Johnson/Apr 28, 1965	Dominican Republic	No	Yes
	Johnson/May 2, 1965	Dominican Republic	No	Yes
	Johnson/Aug 30, 1965	Steel industry	No	No
	Johnson/Jul 24, 1967	Detroit riot	No	No
	Johnson/Jul 27, 1967	Civil disorder	No	No
	Johnson/Mar 31, 1968	Vietnam/will not run	No	Yes
	Johnson/June 5, 1968	Robert Kennedy	No	No
	Johnson/Oct 31, 1968	Bombing halt	No	Yes
	Nixon/May 14, 1969	Vietnam	No	Yes
	Nixon/Aug 8, 1969	Domestic policy	No	No
	Nixon/Nov 3, 1969	Vietnam	No	Yes
12/1970 - 10/1973	Nixon/Apr 7, 1971	Vietnam	No	Yes
	Nixon/July 15, 1971	China invitation	No	Yes
	Nixon/Aug 15, 1971	Economic policy	Yes	No

## Appendix 2: Major Discretionary Speeches Given During Economic Expansions (con't)

<u>Dates of Expansion</u>	<u>president/date of speech</u>	<u>subject</u>	<u>Substantial Economic Component?</u>	<u>Substantial Foreign Policy Component?</u>
	Nixon/Oct 7, 1971	Economic stabilization	Yes	No
	Nixon/Oct 21, 1971	Nomination of Powell and Rehnquist	No	No
	Nixon/Jan 25, 1972	Peace plan	No	Yes
	Nixon/Feb 28, 1972	Return from China	No	Yes
	Nixon/Mar 16, 1972	Busing	No	No
	Nixon/Apr 26, 1972	Vietnam	No	Yes
	Nixon/May 8, 1972	Vietnam	No	Yes
	Nixon/June 1, 1972	Return from USSR	No	Yes
	Nixon/Jan 23, 1973	Paris peace accord	No	Yes
	Nixon/Mar 29, 1973	Vietnam and domestic probs	No	Yes
	Nixon/Apr 30, 1973	Watergate	No	No
	Nixon/June 13, 1973	Price controls	Yes	No
	Nixon/Aug 15, 1973	Watergate	No	No
	Nixon/Oct 12, 1973	Ford as VP	No	No
4/1975 - 12/1979	Ford/Apr 10, 1975	Foreign policy	No	Yes
	Ford/May 27, 1975	Energy programs	No	No
	Carter/Feb 2, 1977	Report to American people	No	No
	Carter/Apr 18, 1977	Energy plan	No	No
	Carter/Apr 20, 1977	Energy plan	No	No
	Carter/Nov 8, 1977	Energy plan	No	No
	Carter/Feb 1, 1978	Panama Canal treaties	No	Yes
	Carter/Sept 18, 1978	Camp David	No	Yes
	Carter/Oct 24, 1978	Anti-inflation program	Yes	No
	Carter/Dec 15, 1978	Diplomatic Relations with China	No	Yes
	Carter/Apr 5, 1979	Energy policy	No	No
	Carter/June 18, 1979	Report on Vienna Summit	No	Yes
	Carter/July 15, 1979	National goals	No	No
	Carter/Oct 1, 1979	Peace & National Security	No	Yes

## Appendix 2: Major Discretionary Speeches Given During Economic Expansions (con't)

<u>Dates of Expansion</u>	<u>president/date of speech</u>	<u>subject</u>	<u>Substantial Economic Component?</u>	<u>Substantial Foreign Policy Component?</u>
8/1980 - 6/1981	Reagan/Feb 5, 1981	Economy	Yes	No
	Reagan/Apr 28, 1981	Economy	Yes	No
12/1982 - 6/1990	Reagan/Mar 23, 1983	Nat'l security	No	Yes
	Reagan/Apr 27, 1983	Central America	No	Yes
	Reagan/Sept 5, 1983	Soviets/Korean Airline	No	Yes
	Reagan/Oct 27, 1983	Lebanon, Grenada	No	Yes
	Reagan/May 9, 1984	Central America	No	Yes
	Reagan/Apr 24, 1985	Budget/deficit reduction	Yes	No
	Reagan/May 28, 1985	Tax reform	Yes	No
	Reagan/Nov 14, 1985	Geneva summit	No	Yes
	Reagan/Nov 21, 1985	Geneva summit	No	Yes
	Reagan/Feb 26, 1986	Nat'l security	No	Yes
	Reagan/Mar 16, 1986	Nicaragua	No	Yes
	Reagan/Apr 14, 1986	Libyan air strike	No	Yes
	Reagan/July 4, 1986	Independence Day	No	No
	Reagan/Sept 14, 1986	Drug abuse	No	No
	Reagan/Oct 13, 1986	Meeting with Gorbachev	No	Yes
	Reagan/Nov 13, 1986	Iran-Contra	No	Yes
	Reagan/Mar 4, 1987	Iran-Contra	No	Yes
	Reagan/June 15, 1987	Venice summit, arms control, deficit	Yes	No
	Reagan/Aug 12, 1987	Iran-Contra	No	Yes
	Reagan/Dec 10, 1987	USSR Summit	No	Yes
Bush/Sept 5, 1989	Drug Control Strategy	No	No	
Bush/Nov 22, 1989	Thanksgiving address	No	Yes	

## Appendix 2: Major Discretionary Speeches Given During Economic Expansions (con't)

<u>Dates of Expansion</u>	<u>president/date of speech</u>	<u>subject</u>	<u>Substantial Economic Component?</u>	<u>Substantial Foreign Policy Component?</u>	
4/1991 - 2/2001	Bush/Sept 27, 1991	Nuclear weapons reduction	No	Yes	
	Bush/May 1, 1992	LA riots	No	No	
	Bush/ Sept 1, 1992	Hurricane Andrew	No	No	
	Clinton/Feb 15, 1993	Economic program	Yes	No	
	Clinton/Jun 26, 1993	Iraq	No	Yes	
	Clinton/Aug 3, 1993	Economic program	Yes	No	
	Clinton/Sept 22, 1993	Health care reform	No	No	
	Clinton/Sept 15, 1994	Haiti	No	Yes	
	Clinton/Sept 18, 1994	Haiti	No	Yes	
	Clinton/Oct 10, 1994	Iraq	No	Yes	
	Clinton/Dec 15, 1994	Middle class bill of rights	Yes	No	
	Clinton/June 13, 1995	Budget plan	Yes	No	
	Clinton/Nov 27, 1995	Bosnia	No	Yes	
	Clinton/Aug 17, 1998	Grand Jury/Lewinsky	No	No	
	Clinton/Dec 16, 1998	Military strikes in Iraq	No	Yes	
	Clinton/Dec 19, 1998	End of military strikes in Iraq	No	Yes	
	Clinton/Mar 24, 1999	Air strikes on Serbian targets	No	Yes	
	Clinton/June 10, 1999	Agreement on Kosovo	No	Yes	
	12/2001 - 11/2007	Bush, GW/June 6, 2002	Homeland Security Department	No	No
		Bush, GW/Mar 17, 2003	Iraq	No	Yes
Bush, GW/Mar 19, 2003		Iraq	No	Yes	
Bush, GW/May 1, 2003		Iraq (on USS Abraham Lincoln)	No	Yes	
Bush, GW/Sept 7, 2003		War on terror	No	Yes	
Bush, GW/June 28, 2005		Iraq	No	Yes	
Bush, GW/July 19, 2005		Nomination of John Roberts	No	No	
Bush, GW/Sept 15, 2005		Hurricane Katrina	No	No	
Bush, GW/Dec 18, 2005		Iraq/War on terror	No	Yes	

**Appendix 2: Major Discretionary Speeches Given During Economic Expansions (con't)**

<u>Dates of Expansion</u>	<u>president/date of speech</u>	<u>subject</u>	<u>Substantial Economic Component?</u>	<u>Substantial Foreign Policy Component?</u>
	Bush, GW/May 15, 2006	Immigration reform	No	No
	Bush, GW/Sept 11, 2006	Anniversary of terrorist attacks	No	Yes
	Bush, GW/Jan 10, 2007	War on terror in Iraq	No	Yes
	Bush, GW/Sept 13, 2007	War on terror in Iraq	No	Yes



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**Table 1: Post-War Economic Contractions (Recessions)**

Beginning	Ending	Peak Announced (lag in months)	Trough Announced (lag in months)	Length (months)
Nov 1948	Oct 1949			11
July 1953	May 1954			10
Aug 1957	Apr 1958			8
Apr 1960	Feb 1961			10
Dec 1969	Nov 1970			11
Nov 1973	Mar 1975			16
Jan 1980	Jul 1980	June 3, 1980 (6)	July 8, 1981 (12)	6
Jul 1981	Nov 1982	Jan 6, 1982 (7)	July 8, 1983 (9)	16
Jul 1990	Mar 1991	April 25, 1991 (10)	Dec 22, 1992 (10)	8
Mar 2001	Nov 2001	Nov 26, 2001 (9)	July 17, 2003 (21)	8
Dec 2007	June 2009	Dec 1, 2008 (12)	Sept 20, 2010 (16)	18

Source: NBER, Business Cycle Expansions and Contractions, [www.nber.org/cycles.html](http://www.nber.org/cycles.html) (accessed May 2011)

**Table 2. Major Discretionary Speeches, 1948-2009**

	<u>Major Discretionary Speeches</u>		<u>Average months between</u>
Truman <sup>10</sup>	10		5.1
Eisenhower	26		3.7
Kennedy	10		3.4
Johnson	13		4.8
Nixon	30		2.2
Ford	6		5.0
Carter	13		3.7
Reagan	30		3.2
Bush	10		4.8
Clinton	15		6.4
Bush, GW	17		5.6
Obama <sup>11</sup>	<u>0</u>		<u>na</u>
Total	180	Mean	4.4

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<sup>10</sup>Beginning November 1948.

<sup>11</sup>Ending June 2009.

**Table 3: Expectation of Discretionary Speeches (recession months considered non-consecutively)**

<u>Beginning</u>	<u>Ending</u>	<u>Length (months)</u>	<u>Expected # of Speeches</u>	<u>Actual # of Speeches</u>
Nov 1948	Oct 1949	11	2.5	1
July 1953	May 1954	10	2.3	5
Aug 1957	Apr 1958	8	1.8	3
Apr 1960	Feb 1961	10	2.3	1
Dec 1969	Nov 1970	11	2.5	5
Nov 1973	Mar 1975	16	3.6	9
Jan 1980	Jul 1980	6	1.4	1
Jul 1981	Nov 1982	16	3.6	8
Jul 1990	Mar 1991	8	1.8	5
Mar 2001	Nov 2001	8	1.8	3
Dec 2007	June 2009	18	<u>4.1</u>	<u>1</u>
			27.7	42

**Table 4: Substantial Economic Content by Economic Condition**

<u>Substantial Economic Content?</u>	<u>Economic Condition</u>	
	Expansion	Recession
No	119 (86.2%)	27 (64.3%)
Yes	19 (13.8%)	15 (35.7%)
Total	138	42

$X^2 = 10.12$  (p<.001)  
 $\Phi = .24$  (p<.001)

Goodman and Kruskal's tau = .06 (p<.05)

**Table 5: Substantial Foreign Policy Content by Economic Condition**

<u>Substantial Foreign Policy Content?</u>	<u>Economic Condition</u>	
	Expansion	Recession
No	56 (40.6%)	24 (57.1%)
Yes	82 (59.4%)	18 (42.9%)
Total	138	42

$X^2 = 3.58$  (n.s.)  
 $\Phi = -.14$  (n.s.)

Goodman and Kruskal's tau = .02 (n.s.)