Rhetoric Analysis of Atoms for Peace Speech by Eisenhower

Posted on May 8, 2018

View this essay online:
https://academic-master.com/rhetoric-analysis-of-atoms-for-peace-speech-by-eisenhower/

Historical Context of Atoms for Peace

President Dwight Eisenhower, the 34th president of the US, delivered the Atoms for Peace speech in 1953 (Eisenhower, 1953). After the speech, the president launched the Atoms for Peace program to facilitate institutions such as schools, hospitals, and research institutions in the US and other nations. The speech was part of the meticulously prearranged media campaign known as “Operation Candor” to raise public awareness of the benefits and detriments of nuclear use in the future (Chernus, 2002).

Cold War Propaganda and Public Reassurance

The campaign was part of the propaganda that accompanied the Cold War (Osgood, 2006). Eisenhower’s speech initiated media crusades that lasted for several years and whose main goal was to manage emotions and stabilize fears of the continuing rearmament with the hope that there would be a peaceful usage of nuclear materials in the forthcoming days. Atoms for Peace speech was the turning point for all nations in the peaceful uses of atomic energy (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2013). The speech was an attempt by Eisenhower to console a terrified world after nuclear assaults in Japan and nuclear tests that took place in the 1950s (Hewlett & Holl, 1989).

Rhetorical Significance of the Speech

Atoms for Peace speech demonstrates an ostensible antithesis to politics and the worldwide machination that almost plunged the world into war. The speech had a substantial impact owing to the warfare atmosphere that prevailed at the time, and it reflects how things were during that time. The speech gave people and nations a dream for the future. Eisenhower’s speech appears to have touched the hearts of many countries, and this made them reconsider the way they used atomic energy. Within the few minutes that he used to deliver his speech, President Eisenhower probably influenced and enlightened the world about how people can peacefully use nuclear weapons. Atoms for Peace speech demonstrates a spectacular success of rhetoric. Eisenhower makes use of various rhetorical modes like ethos, pathos, logos, and antithesis. He also underpins the rhetoric modes with different rhetoric devices as well as schemes, shaping his name in history (Medhurst, 1987).

Speech Organization and International Audience

The organization of a speech determines how good it is. The Atoms for Peace speech is well organized, and this ensures that it meets its goal of emphasizing the need for the peaceful use of atomic energy. Fundamentally, the structure of the speech as intended to appeal to an important type of audience that will possibly pay attention to the international community. At the beginning of the speech, Eisenhower skillfully paints his image as a peace ambassador. For example, he says that before he was asked to deliver the speech during the General Assembly meeting, he had convened a meeting with leaders from other nations, such as the United Kingdom and France, where they discussed matters troubling the world. That way, he assures the international community that the US is devoted to upholding global peace. Eisenhower also thanked other nations for their efforts in maintaining global peace. He says that gathering together in a single organization to deliberate on how to maintain global peace gives people hope for a better tomorrow. He commends the efforts and decisions by the international community that have promoted global peace, meaning that he is appreciative of other nations in promoting peace (Eisenhower, 1953).

Pathos and Shared Nuclear Anxiety

To back up the plain structure of the speech, President Eisenhower used rhetoric modes. One of the modes that he uses is Pathos which utilizes human emotions. Eisenhower demonstrates the use of pathos when he emphasizes the importance of joint efforts to uphold global peace. For example, Eisenhower says that "…. if a danger exists in the world, it is a danger shared by all; and equally, that if hope exists in the mind of one nation, that hope should be shared by all." President Eisenhower also says that people need to be armed with important facts about the way the world is today so that they will be able to carry out a smart search for global peace. Eisenhower uses pathos here to inform his listeners that they should not circumvent the debate on the peaceful use of atomic energy, which was among the main topics when he delivered the speech. Eisenhower also uses pathos to express his concern that the US is no longer the only country in possession of nuclear weapons and that everyone might end up owning the weapons, including those with ill motives. Again, Eisenhower employs pathos to emphasize the need for continued efforts to promote peaceful coexistence among nations. He says that if nations abandon the fight for nonviolent use of nuclear energy, it will show that the world is giving in to the likelihood of a damaged civilization. It will also indicate the obliteration of the unique culture of humankind that would compel it to begin all over again the extended struggle from violence via civility and right to justice. No one would wish to experience that. This example, together with several other instances, exhibits the effective use of pathos in the Atoms for Peace speech (Medhurst, 1987).

Ethos Logos and Presidential Credibility

Apart from pathos, Eisenhower uses ethos in his speech. Ethos utilizes social ethics, and it helps Eisenhower to shape the organization of his speech. Ethically, it is of paramount importance for nations to uphold global peace. He describes his military profession and his understanding of atomic warfare to show the audience that he knows what he has enough knowledge about all that he is saying. By doing that, he boosts the listeners' confidence that he has sufficient knowledge of atomic warfare and military operations, and this reinforces the credibility of his speech. Eisenhower makes ethos appeals by making reasonable appeals to logos. He refers to the nuclear bomb attacks in Japan in 1945. He describes how the US set the biggest atomic explosion in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and its devastating effects in his attempt to emphasize the importance of the peaceful use of atomic energy in the coming days. The reference strengthens the credibility of the speech (Chernus, 2002).

Antithesis and Strategic Language

To enhance the structure of the speech and the use of the various rhetoric modes, Eisenhower also makes use of the rhetoric trope. There are several instances in the speech where the author uses rhetorical tropes to elevate it and give it an influential and lasting feel. An example of the device that Eisenhower uses for the rhetoric trope is the antithesis. Antithesis refers to the art of juxtaposing two contrasting opinions that are normally in a parallel organization. Eisenhower used this device severally in the Atoms for Peace speech. For instance, he says that it is with the history books and not with the isolated pages. By this, he is trying to say that the US wants to be conspicuous throughout the world's history. Another instance of antithesis is evident when Eisenhower says that his country wants to be constructive rather than destructive. By using antithesis, Eisenhower can emphasize the fact that his country is willing to promote global peace and not warfare. Another instance of antithesis is when Eisenhower says that his country wants agreements instead of war among the countries of the world. The statement puts together the idea and reason for the US commitment to global peace despite being the most powerful nation globally. The nation is willing to do all that it can to uphold global peace in the world. Eisenhower used antithesis as a way of making his speech great and memorable. It is a good demonstration of how important rhetoric devices, among other devices, are when writing a speech (Medhurst, 1987).

Conclusion on Rhetorical Effectiveness

In sum, President Eisenhower used different rhetoric modes in his speech. There are also several instances of the rhetoric trope in the speech. He uses pathos, ethos as well as logo appeals to ensure that his speech is great and memorable. Pathos utilizes human emotions, and Eisenhower uses it to emphasize the importance of joint efforts in maintaining global peace. He also uses rhetoric tropes to enhance the various rhetorical modes used in the speech. Eisenhower uses antithesis, which involves

the use of contrasting words in a sentence to emphasize something. The author uses the device repeatedly in the speech.

References

Chernus, I. (2002). *Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace*. Texas A&M University Press.

Eisenhower, D. D. (1953, December 8). *Atoms for Peace address before the General Assembly of the United Nations*. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

Hewlett, R. G., & Holl, J. M. (1989). *Atoms for peace and war, 1953–1961: Eisenhower and the Atomic Energy Commission*. University of California Press.

International Atomic Energy Agency. (2013). *Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace*.

Medhurst, M. J. (1987). Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" speech: A case study in the strategic use of language. *Communication Monographs, 54*(2), 204–220.

Osgood, K. (2006). *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's secret propaganda battle at home and abroad*. University Press of Kansas.