LINGUISTICS AND VIETNAMESE LINGUISTICS

ETHOS, PATHOS, LOGOS AND KAIROS IN THE UNITED STATES' STRATEGIC DISCOURSE: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF REMARKS BY THE UNTIED STATES' LEADERS AT THE SHANGRI-LA DIALOGUE

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the deployment of Aristotle's rhetorical strategies in the United States' strategic discourse at the Shangri-La Dialogue, one of the most influential security mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific region. The study aims at examining how the United States (the US) constructs legitimacy, reinforces their strategic credibility to mobilize regional support and reframes geopoliticfal urgency through persuasive discourse. The study adopts a sequencial explanatory mixed-method in which adopts a qualitative dominant approach supported by corpus-assisted rhetorical analysis. The corpus consists of remarks delivered by senior US defence officials at the Shangri-La Dialogue between 2011 and 2025. The findings demonstrate that rhetorical strategies are systematically realized through linguistic features including pronouns, modality, evaluative adjectives, stance verbs, discourse markers, and lexical fields. Ethos primarily functions to project strategic reliability and leadership legitimacy; Pathos mobilizes emotional solidarity and geopolitical anxiety; Logos rationalizes military presence and strategic initiatives through evidence-based argumentation; while Kairos frames geopolitical developments as historically decisive and strategically urgent. The study further reveals that rhetorical strategies are closely associated with broader communicative purposes such as creating diplomatic rapport, diagnozing regional contexts, reassuring alliance, reaffirming policy and leadership legitimazation. Rhetorical interact dynamically with each other to construct cohenrent strategic narratives concerning rules-based order, collective security, and Indo-Pacific stability.

KEY WORDS: Rhetorical strategies; Ethos; Pathos; Logos; Kairos; strategic discourse of the United States; Shangri-La Dialogue; communicative purposes.

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1. Introduction

In the context of modern international relations and increasingly complex security developments, political and diplomatic discourse is not merely a means of conveying each nation's policy message but has become an indispensable component of the international relations stage. High-level security forums such as the Shangri-La Dialogue are ideal destinations for countries to exchange policy views and build their identity, legitimize their behavior, and strategies through speech acts. Nicholas Onuf asserts that *"words are deeds"* (Onuf, 1989, p. 82), emphasizing that language not only reflects but also constructs social reality. This perspective has laid the foundation for later discourse studies in international relations.

Within the Indo-Pacific context, the Shangri-La Dialogue organized annually by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) has emerged as one of the most influential platforms for strategic communication and defense diplomacy. Since its establishment in 2002, the forum has become a

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major venue through which political leaders, defense ministers, military officials, and policymakers articulate strategic visions, respond to geopolitical developments, and communicate national priorities to regional audiences. For the United States, the Shangri-La Dialogue serves as a particularly important mechanism for projecting strategic commitment toward the Indo-Pacific while simultaneously reassuring allies and responding to regional concerns regarding strategic competition and security instability.

The remarks delivered by the United States' reprentatives are significant as they are published within a context characterized by intensifying geopolitical rivalry, maritime disputes, technological competition, and shifting regional alignments. Consequently, such remarks often perform multiple communicative purposes simultaneously. The United States (the US) must reassure allies regarding American commitment, legitimize military presence, frame regional challenges, justify strategic initiatives, and reinforce broader narratives concerning the rules-based international order. These strategic intents are accomplished not only through policy contents but also through rhetorical construction.

Although previous studies have focused on strategic narratives, political discourse, and security communications in the Indo-Pacific region, relatively limited attention has been paid to the rhetorical strategies by which strategic legitimacy is constructed in remarks of the US at the Shangri-La Dialogue. Existing studies often emphasize policy statements or geopolitical implications while neglecting the persuasive means embedded within the discourse itself. Moreover, rhetorical analyses of political communications often focus primarily on ethos, pathos, and logos, except kairos despite its relevance to contemporary geopolitical discourse.

Therefore, this study investigates how Aristotle's rhetorical strategies are deployed in the American political discourse at the Shangri-La Dialogue. Specifically, this study tends to examine how ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos are linguistically realized and strategically deployed to support broader communication purposes. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how persuasive communication functions in contemporary Indo-Pacific regional geopolitics.

2. Literature review

2.1. Concept of rhetorical strategies

Aristotle's rhetorical triangle is a foundational framework in the study of persuasion, emphasizing how speakers and writers can effectively influence their audience through three core appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos. These modes of persuasion are grounded in the speaker's credibility (ethos), the emotional engagement of the audience (pathos), and the logical structure of the argument (logos). As Aristotle (2004) explains, "the three means of persuasion are: the character of the speaker (ethos), the emotional state of the audience (pathos), and the logical arguments presented (logos)" (p. 8). In addition to these three appeals, Aristotle also later introduces the concept of Kairos.,

Ethos: Persuasion through credibility. Ethos refers to the speaker's or writer's character as perceived by the audience. According to Aristotle (2004), persuasion depends significantly on whether the audience views the speaker as credible and trustworthy: "the character of the speaker [is] a cause of persuasion when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible" (p. 8). This appeal is constructed through tone, authority, moral stance, and appropriate references. Ethos is especially effective in political or diplomatic communication where legitimacy and integrity are paramount (Purdue OWL, n.d.).

Logos: Persuasion through reason. Logos is the appeal to logic and reason, commonly realized through the use of evidence, structured argumentation, and causal relationships. Aristotle (2004) highlights that "proof by argument is the most legitimate and natural of the means of persuasion" (p. 9). Logical appeals may be inductive—drawing general conclusions from specific cases—or deductive, proceeding from general premises. According to Lutzke and Henggeler, logos, ethos, and pathos make up the rhetorical triangle and can overlap in many persuasive texts (Lutzke & Henggeler, 2009).

Pathos: Persuasion through emotion. Pathos engages the audience's emotions to support the speaker's message. Aristotle (2004) states that persuasion also arises by "putting the audience into a certain frame of mind" (p.8). Emotional appeals may evoke empathy, anger, pride, or fear, depending on the rhetorical situation. For instance, pathos is frequently used in humanitarian or advocacy rhetoric, where emotional identification is crucial to mobilizing public support (Gagich & Zickel, 2018). However, effective use of pathos requires balance to avoid manipulation or undermining the audience's rational engagement.

Kairos: Persuasion through timing and context. While often considered an essential component interwoven with ethos, pathos, and logos, kairos refers to the opportune moment or the situational context in which communication occurs. The effectiveness of kairos lies in its responsiveness to timing, context, and audience. Public speakers, diplomats, and politicians frequently use kairos to align their messages with prevailing social moods or critical events, thereby enhancing persuasive impact (Aristotle, 2004). Though Aristotle makes only indirect references to kairos, later scholars such as (Kinneavy & Eskin, 1994) argue that understanding rhetorical success requires "attention to the rhetorical moment" (p.136). In diplomacy and public discourse, kairos governs when a message should be delivered, and how it should be adapted to changing circumstances or audiences.

2.2. Rhetorical analysis in political discourse

The study of rhetorical strategies in political discourse often originates from classical rhetoric of Aristotle's theory of persuasion. They are particularly salient, as they serve not only to persuade but also to project national identity and manage international perceptions. Aristotle's rhetorical triangle - comprising ethos, pathos, and logos -remains foundational to the study of rhetoric as he writes "of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds" (Aristotle, 2004, p.37). These elements represent the main modes of persuasion: ethos refers to the credibility of the speaker, pathos appeals to the emotions of the audience, and logos involves logical reasoning (Aristotle, 2004). Aristotle also discussed *kairos*, the opportune moment or timing of speech, which is critical in determining rhetorical effectiveness. *Kairos* is particularly relevant in political discourse, where timing can align a message with public sentiment or global events (Kinneavy & Eskin, 1994).

- *Ethos and political credibility:* Ethos always plays a vital role in political discourse as political leaders must establish their legitimacy, authority and trustworthiness. Charteris - Black (2011, p.13) once explains that "Political leaders construct ethos by presenting themselves as credible, trustworthy and authoritative." To apply effectively ethos into the speech, it has to be constructed through references to institutional authority, leadership credibility and experience, or moral values, national interests and political responsibility.

- *Pathos and emotional persuasion:* Pathos is a strategy designed to appeal to the emotions and attitudes of the audience. Any words or images evoked are intended to exploit the emotional element, whether it's empathy, agreement, or indignation, of the recipient regarding a particular situation or event. Aristotle (2004, p.39) notes that "The orator persuades by means of the hearers, when they are led to feel emotion by the speech". Respectively, in political discourse, emotional appeals migh include different kinds of hope, pride, anger, fear, empathy or solidarity. Later in 2005, Chateris-Black (2005, p.13) argues that emotional persuasion is important in political rhetoric as it can orient how receivers perceive political developments: "Emotion plays a central role in political persuasion beacause it shapes how audiences interpret political reality". Therefore, pathos is often used when the speaker of a political discourse wishes to evoke a shared understanding among listeners about ongoing political and international events through emotional elements (empathy, indignation, a sense of shared responsibility in addressing issues of common concern). In political discourse, pathos also aim to emphasize national security, international cooperation, or collective consciousness.

- *Logos and political argumentation:* Aristotle (2004, p.38) explains that persuasion may also be gained by presenting logical arguments and practival evidence. Logos at the same time refers to logical reasoning and evidence's presentation. In political discourse, logos often is interpreted

through policy explanations, statistical and practical evidence (implementation of current policies, events of cooperation) or strategic targets and reasoning. Political discourse frequently relies on practical argumentation linking goals, strategic context and circumstances, and corresponding proposed actions. As (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p.45) explains that "Political discourse is largely concerned with practical argumentation about what should be done". This form of persuasive acts is essential in political speeches as in which leaders would provide evidence from real-world situations and arguments supported by clear datas.

- *Kairos and rhetorical timing in political discourse:* In modern political rhetoric, many scholars add kairos as an weighty rhetorical convention for timing, appropriateness and exigence. However, kairos actually is not one of Aristotle's three original appeals, but rather a classical rhetorical concept related to the "opportune moment" as mentioned above. In fact, every political calculation is based on the three dimensions of favorable timing, advantageous location and harmonious human relations. That would explain why kairos even though is not a elementary strategy, still contributes its own values to persuasive effects of speeches.

In classical rhetoric, kairos denotes the ability of a speaker to respond cogently to a set of specific circumstances in which communicative actions occur. As (White, 1987, p.13) expresses that "kairos refers to the right or opportune moment for persuasion, the time when an argument or message is most likely to be effective". In political discourse, kairos is significant because political communication is closely tied to recent developments such unfolding events, crises, and strategic contexts. Political speeches are also often delivered under the pressure of specific historical moments such as hot conflicts, diplomatic statements, policy announcements, or international negotiations. Therefore, to achieve a deeper effect of persuasion, not only the content but also the timing and contextual relevance of a political speech should be presented.

According to (Kinneavy, 2002, p.58), kairos highlights the relationship between rhetoric and situational context as he notes that "kairos is the situational context that makes a particular discourse appropriate or persuasive at a given moment". Kairos in political speeches is reflected in how the speakers would like to frame their messages in relation to contemporary developments, strategic priorities and public sentiment. Senior leaders with a strong capability of situational responsiveness can easily align their rhetorical strategies along with the audiences' expectations and each other's common concerns.

2.3. Linguistic features to diagnose rhetorical strategies

In genre-based discourse studies, linguistic features are not viewed as individual formal elements but as resources that enable speakers to achieve specific communicative goals within given institutional contexts (Biber & Conrad, 2009) and (Hyland, 2005). From the perspective of English Specialized Subject Matter (ESP) genres, linguistic choices serve as the surface realization of rhetorical intentions and thus provide valuable evidence for determining how rhetorical strategies are constructed in discourse (Hyland, 2005) and (Paltridge, 2013).

Based on genre analysis and systems functional linguistics, this study examines linguistic features as diagnostic indicators of rhetorical strategies. Because language simultaneously performs conceptual functions, interpersonal communication, and textual communication (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), repetitive linguistic patterns can reveal how speakers establish authority, construct arguments, evoke emotions, and respond to contextual situations. Accordingly, six groups of linguistic features were selected for analysis.

First, discourse markers help organize information, signal logical relationships, and contribute to coherence, thereby supporting the development of argumentative structures primarily related to logos and kairos (Fraser, 1999) and (Hyland, 2005). *Second,* form and mitigating/intensifying words indicate levels of certainty, obligation, and commitment, reflecting the speaker's position and strategic management of diplomatic relations (Hyland, 1998) and (Palmer, 2001). *Third,* evaluative cues and stances reveal attitudes, judgments, and policy preferences, making them important

indicators of ethos and pathos (Hunston & Thompson, 2000) and (Hyland, 2005). *Fourth,* references to participants, including pronouns and proper names, help construct collective identity, establish relationships, and position actors in the international arena (van Djik, 1998). Fifth, nominalization contributes to abstraction, depersonalization, and the presentation of policy issues as objective realities, often supporting the power and legitimacy of institutions (Halliday, 1994) and (Fairclough N., 2003). Finally, lexical fields reveal recurring thematic domains and policy priorities, reflecting how speakers shape international issues and strategic concerns (Wodak, 2009) and (Partington, Duguid, & Taylor, 2013).

These linguistic features provide observable textual evidences for identifying rhetorical strategies in political discourse and for examining how persuasion is employed in remarks delivered at the Shangri-La Dialogue.

3. Research methodology

This study employs a qualitative-dominant research design, combined with corpus-assisted discourse analysis. The main objective is to identify and interpret rhetorical strategies in remarks by the US at the Shangri-La Dialogue, while corpus-assisted techniques are used to provide linguistic evidence to support the analysis.

The data source consists of speeches by senior US officials at the Shangri-La Dialogue between 2011 and 2025, including the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of Defense. These remarks are collected from official transcripts published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and US Department of Defense.

The analytical framework is based on Aristotle's rhetorical theory with four main rhetorical strategies: Ethos, Pathos, Logos, and Kairos. These strategies are implemented through a system of linguistic indicators such as pronouns, stance verbs, evaluative adjectives, modality, nominalization, temporal expression reflecting the urgency of the context and relevant lexical fields. The analysis process is carried out in three steps. First, all data are entered into Taguette for manual coding according to different rhetorical strategies. The encoding is performed on thematic units rather than individual sentences to fully reflect the rhetorical function of each discourse segment. Second, the coded text segments are exported from the Taguette and are organized into subcorpora corresponding to each rhetorical strategy (codetext). These subcorpora are then analyzed using AntConc, primarily through the Concordance function (KWIC - key word in context), to identify recurring linguistic patterns and prominent linguistic features of each rhetorical strategy. Finally, the results of qualitative coding and corpus analysis are synthesized to interpret rhetorical trends and communicative purposes in US strategic discourse.

Although rhetorical analysis is interpretive, the combination of systematic coding using Taguette and corpus analysis using AntConc contributes to the consistency, transparency, and reliability of the study.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Findings

The research results will not be presented horizontally according to different rhetorical strategies but will first analyze the use of linguistic features in the text to discover how these strategies are used, thereby attaching them with specific communicative purposes.

4.1.1. Pronouns

The analysis results show that pronouns are one of the most prominent linguistic cues in the corpus. As shown in Table 1, first-person plural pronouns are clearly dominant, with "we" appearing 412 times (42.5%), followed by "our" with 276 times (28.5%). In contrast, the first-person singular pronoun "I" appears only 50 times (5.1%).

***Table 1**. Pronouns used in remarks of the United States*

Pronoun	Freq.	%	Dominant RS	Communicative purpose
America	73	7.5	Ethos/Kairos	Leadership projection
I	50	5.1	Ethos	Personal credibility
our	276	28.5	Ethos	Collective identity construction
the US	62	6.4	Ethos	Strategic legitimacy
us	97	10.0	Ethos	Coalition building
we	412	42.5	Ethos	Alliance reassurance
Total	**970**	**100**	-	-

The overwhelming use of collective pronouns indicates that US speakers tend to build a sense of community identity rather than emphasizing individual roles. This reflects an effort to position the US as both a member and a leader of the regional security community. In many cases, "we" (exclusive) refers not only to the United States but also encompasses allies and partners, thereby fostering a sense of collective responsibility and shared interests.

Rhetorically, collective pronouns primarily realize ethos, as they contribute to building the image of the United States as a reliable and responsible partner. Simultaneously, the frequent use of expressions such as "America" and "the United States" reinforces the strategic legitimacy and leadership role of the US in the region.

4.1.2. Stance verbs

Table 2 shows the stance verbs that are used frequently throughout the entire corpus. The most prominent verbs include *remain, support, strengthen, maintain,* and *stand*.

***Table 2**. Stance verbs used in remarks of the United States*

Verb	Freq.	%	Dominant RS	Communicative purpose
appreciate	33	6.1	Ethos	Diplomatic courtesy
deploy	28	5.2	Logos	Force posture justification
enhance	39	7.2	Logos	Capability development
express	23	4.3	Ethos	Diplomatic courtesy
invest	33	6.1	Logos	Resource allocation
maintain	59	10.9	Ethos	Strategic continuity
modernize	21	3.9	Logos	Defense modernization
remain	74	13.7	Ethos	Commitment projection
stand	54	10.0	Ethos	Leadership projection
strengthen	65	12.1	Logos	Security enhancement
support	68	12.6	Ethos	Alliance reassurance
thank	42	7.8	Ethos	Diplomatic rapport
Total	**539**	**100**	-	-

Stance verbs such as *remain, support, maintain, strengthen* and *stand* reflect the speakers' ongoing efforts to reaffirm the US's commitment to the region. These verbs frequently appear in themes concerning allies, partnerships, and regional stability, thereby serving the function of alliance reassurance and strengthening the use of ethos.

Conversely, verbs such as *deploy, invest, modernize,* and *enhance* appear primarily in policy presentations. These lexical choices emphasize concrete action rather than symbolic commitment. Therefore, they are linked to logos and serve the purpose of explaining policy, justifying military presence, and describing strategic deployment.

The other words (appreciate and express) usually are used to create diplomatic rapports in which speakers show their gratitudes towards the host organization and country, to further solidate ethos (diplomatic courtesy).

It is noteworthy that the boundary between ethos and logos is not entirely separated. In many cases, the reaffirmation of commitment is supported by concrete action plans, suggesting that these two strategies often work simultaneously to increase the persuasiveness of ethos.

4.1.3. Evaluative adjectives

Table 3 shows the simultaneous presence of two main groups of evaluative adjectives: the positive evaluation group and the strategic environment evaluation group.

Table 3. *Evaluative adjectives used in remarks of the United States*

Adjective	Freq.	%	Dominant RS	Communicative purpose
challenging	52	9.7	Pathos	Threat awareness
complex	43	8.0	Logos	Situation assessment
complicated	17	3.2	Logos	Problem framing
deep	28	5.2	Ethos	Partnership strengthening
enduring	38	7.1	Ethos	Long-term commitment
evolving	31	5.8	Kairos	Geopolitical change
foundational	34	6.3	Ethos	Normative legitimacy
important	73	13.6	Ethos	Issue legitimization
incredible	11	2.1	Pathos	Positive engagement
long-standing	25	4.7	Ethos	Historical continuity
quintessential	5	0.9	Ethos	Identity construction
remarkable	17	3.2	Ethos	Diplomatic appreciation
significant	38	7.1	Kairos	Strategic importance
strong	58	10.8	Ethos	Alliance reassurance
thoughtful	9	1.7	Ethos	Diplomatic recognition
vital	44	8.2	Kairos	Strategic urgency
wonderful	12	2.2	Pathos	Positive engagement
Total	**535**	**100**	-	-

Adjectives such as *important, strong, enduring, foundational*, and *long-standing* appear frequently when speakers refer to alliances, international principles, or the role of the US in the region. These elements contribute to the construction of ethos by affirming the legitimacy and sustainability of strategic commitments.

Meanwhile, adjectives such as *challenging, complex, evolving*, and *significant* are primarily used to describe the regional security context. They reflect an awareness of ongoing geopolitical changes and help create a sense of uncertainty and complexity of the upcoming future. This group of adjectives is often associated with pathos and kairos, as they both create an awareness of risk and emphasize the urgency of strategic responses.

4.1.4. Nominalization

Nominalization is one of the prominent linguistic features of political and strategic discourse because it allows actions, processes, or relationships to be presented as objective and stable entities. The data shows that nominalizations appear throughout the corpus, reflecting the institutional and policy-oriented tone of the US remarks at the Shangri-La Dialogue.

Table 4. *Nominalization used in remarks of the United States*

Nominalization	Freq.	%	Dominant RS	Communicative purpose
adherence	18	2.9	Ethos	Norm compliance
alliance	66	10.6	Ethos	Security commitment
capability	47	7.6	Logos	Defense justification
commitment	58	9.4	Ethos	Credibility construction
competition	31	5.0	Kairos	Strategic rivalry framing
coercion	11	1.8	Pathos	Threat amplification
cooperation	74	11.9	Ethos	Coalition building
engagement	51	8.2	Ethos	Regional presence and interaction
independence	14	2.3	Ethos	Sovereignty discourse
institution	33	5.3	Logos	Institutional legitimacy
investment	42	6.8	Logos	Resource commitment
modernization	37	6.0	Logos	Defense transformation
partnership	69	11.1	Ethos	Alliance reassurance
presence	28	4.5	Logos	Force posture justification
resolution	16	2.6	Logos	Conflict management
responsibility	25	4.0	Ethos	Leadership legitimacy
Total	**620**	**100**	-	-

Nominalizations are often used to denote cooperation, partnership, alliance, commitment, and engagement. These are all core concepts in the US strategic discourse, reflecting a focus on security cooperation, partnerships, and alliance networks. The repeated use of these nouns allows speakers to present strategic objectives as established values widely recognized by the international community.

Rhetorically, this group of nominalizations primarily support ethos. By emphasizing concepts such as *cooperation, commitment,* and *responsibility*, speakers build an image of the US as a responsible power, respecting international law and willing to cooperate with regional nations. These nominalizations also serve the communicative purpose of strengthening the trust of allies and reaffirming U.S. leadership.

In addition, nouns such as *capability, investment, modernization, institution,* and *presence* appear with significant frequency in policy presentations. These units reflect priorities related to defense modernization, enhancing military capabilities, and maintaining a strategic presence in the region. Unlike nominalizations related to cooperation, this group primarily reflects logos because they are associated with explaining, justifying, and specifying strategic policies.

Notably, nouns such as *competition* and *coercion,* while appearing less, are significant in reflecting the increasingly competitive strategic landscape in the Indo-Pacific region. In these cases, the nominalizations not only serve a descriptive function but also contribute to building awareness of the strategic challenges facing the region.

4.1.5. Discourse markers

Discourse markers play a crucial role in organizing information, shaping listeners' interpretation, and establishing connections between the present, past, and future. Analysis reveals that temporal and strategically oriented discourse markers appear with significant frequency within the corpus.

Table 5. *Discourse markers used in remarks of the United States*

Marker	Freq.	%	Dominant RS	Communicative purpose
a generation from now	7	2.9	Kairos	Future projection
as I conclude	11	4.6	Kairos	Strategic closure
in recent years	21	8.8	Kairos	Historical transition
in this context	31	13.0	Kairos	Situational framing

in this regard	28	11.7	Logos	Policy elaboration
now	53	22.2	Kairos	Immediate action framing
today	88	36.8	Kairos	Urgency framing
Total	**239**	**100**	-	-

Among the identified discourse markers, *today* is the most frequently used, followed by *now*, *in this context*, and *in this regard*. These expressions often appear in context-setting or policy explanation sections to emphasize that the issues discussed are not merely theoretical but directly relevant to the region's current challenges.

From a rhetorical perspective, temporal discourse markers primarily realize Kairos. The consistent use of expressions like *today, now, or in recent years* allows speakers to emphasize the urgency of the current strategic environment and create a sense that policy decisions need to be made immediately. This constitutes a crucial rhetorical strategy for enhancing the persuasiveness of calls for cooperation and security initiatives.

Meanwhile, expressions like *in this regard* typically appear in specific policy presentations. These expressions tend to realize Logos because they help organize arguments, connect points, and explain how strategic goals are implemented.

Overall, the results show that discourse markers not only perform the function of organizing text but also play a crucial role in shaping the perception of urgency and strategic direction of US discourse.

4.1.6. Modal auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries constitute an important linguistic resource in political discourse because they allow speakers to express commitment, obligation, possibility, and future intentions. The analysis of modal auxiliaries in the present corpus reveals how US speakers communicate varying degrees of certainty, necessity, and strategic commitment, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. *Modal verbs used in remarks of the United States*

Modal	**Freq.**	**%**	**Dominant RS**	**Communicative Purpose**
can	52	11.1	Logos	Capability projection
could	21	4.5	Logos	Strategic possibility
must	86	18.3	Kairos	Strategic urgency
shall	13	2.8	Logos	Formal commitment
will	298	63.5	Logos/Kairos	Future commitment
Total	**470**	**100**	-	-

The results show that *will* is the most prominent modal verb in the corpus, appearing 298 times (63.4%). The dominance of *will* reflects a future-oriented trend and emphasizes strategic commitment in the US discourse. Unlike possibility modal verbs like *can* or *could*, *will* is often used to express policy commitments, strategic forecasts, and anticipated future actions.

In addition, *must* appears 86 times (18.3%), indicating that speakers frequently emphasize the necessity and urgency of collective action in the context of a rapidly changing regional security environment. This suggests that kairos is realized not only through time indicators but also through structures indicating obligation and urgency.

The remaining modal verbs (*can, could, shall*) appear less and primarily serve logos by expressing capacity, capability, and formal commitment. Overall, the modal auxiliaries within the corpus reflect a combination of forward-looking orientation, policy reasoning, and a sense of strategic urgency.

4.1.7. Lexical fields

Lexical fields provide valuable insights into the thematic priorities and persuasive orientations of political discourse. By examining clusters of semantically related vocabulary, it is possible to identify the major strategic concerns emphasized by US speakers at the Shangri-La Dialogue.

Table 7. *Significant lexical fields in remarks of the United States*

Lexical field	Representative items	Dominant RS	Communicative Purpose
Alliance & partnership	alliance, cooperation, engagement, partnership	Ethos	Alliance reassurance and coalition building
Future & transformation	future, change, transformation, decade	Kairos	Future projection and strategic adaptation
Regional stability	peace, stability, prosperity, security	Ethos	Regional reassurance and leadership projection
Rules-based order	freedom, openness, principles, rules	Ethos	Normative legitimacy and value promotion
Security & defense	capability, modernization, deployment, presence	Logos	Defense justification and policy implementation
Strategic competition	competition, coercion, challenge, rivalry	Kairos/ Pathos	Threat framing and strategic urgency

Table 7 highlights the major lexical fields that characterize the US strategic discourse at the Shangri-La Dialogue. The identified semantic domains reveal that the speakers consistently frame regional security issues through themes of alliance-building, security cooperation, rules-based order, and strategic competition. The prominence of the *alliance & partnership* and rules-based order lexical fields suggests a strong emphasis on credibility, cooperation, and normative legitimacy, which are closely associated with ethos. Meanwhile, the *security & defense* lexical field reflects the importance of policy implementation and capability development, thereby reinforcing logos through concrete strategic initiatives and defense commitments. The presence of the *strategic competition* and *future & transformation* lexical fields further indicates an increasing focus on geopolitical change and emerging challenges, contributing to Kairos through the framing of urgency and strategic adaptation. Overall, the lexical fields demonstrate that the US strategic discourse combines credibility construction, policy justification, and temporal urgency to support its broader strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific region.

4.2. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that rhetorical strategies occupy a central position in US strategic discourse because geopolitical communication in the Indo-Pacific is not solely concerned with presenting policies, but also with legitimizing leadership, shaping regional perceptions, and managing strategic relationships. US leaders at the Shangri-La Dialogue consistently employed rhetorical strategies not as isolated persuasive devices, but as integrated communicative mechanisms closely associated with broader strategic objectives and policy priorities, as evidenced by the systematic use of specific linguistic features.

The linguistic features presented above indicate that rhetorical strategies do not appear independently but are realized through systematic language choices. Ethos is the most prominent strategy in the corpus, reflected in the high frequency of collective pronouns, commitment verbs, positive evaluative adjectives, and lexical items related to cooperation and alliances. This indicates that one of the most important communication goals of US speakers is to build strategic credibility, strengthen trust toward allies, and reaffirm US leadership in the region.

Logos are prominently reflected through stance verbs, policy-oriented lexical terms, and strategic explanatory structures. The frequent use of these features suggests that remarks are not merely symbolic but also aim to explain and justify specific US policies in the Indo-Pacific region.

Kairos is realized primarily through temporal cues and lexical fields related to geopolitical change. These linguistic choices help speakers build awareness that the region is undergoing a critical transition and requires timely policy responses.

Meanwhile, Pathos appears less frequently but still plays a significant role in building awareness of risk, enhancing empathy, and fostering collective responsibility. Negative evaluative adjectives and lexical fields related to strategic competition allow speakers to highlight the challenges confronting the region, thereby increasing the persuasiveness of policy proposals.

Table 8. *Distribution of rhetorical strategies in remarks of the United States*

RS	Freq.	%	Predominant Linguistic Features
Ethos	1985	58.8	Pronouns, stance verbs, evaluative adjectives, nominalizations
Logos	861	25.5	Stance verbs, modal auxiliaries, nominalizations, discourse markers
Kairos	441	13.1	Modal auxiliaries, evaluative adjectives, discourse markers
Pathos	86	2.6	Evaluative adjectives, nominalizations
Total	**3373**	**100**	-

As shown in Table 8, ethos is the most prominent rhetorical strategy in the corpus, accounting for 58.8% of the total recorded linguistic markers. Ethos is realized primarily through pronouns, stance verbs, and nominalizations related to strategic cooperation and commitment. Logos ranks second at 25.5%, reflecting the role of stance verbs, modal verbs, and political lexical fields in explaining and justifying US strategic initiatives. Kairos accounts for 13.1% and is primarily expressed through temporal discourse markers and modal verbs indicating necessity. Meanwhile, Pathos accounts for only 2.6%, indicating that US political discourse prioritizes credibility building and policy arguments over direct emotional appeals.

Another noteworthy finding is the tight integration of ethos and logos in the typical strategic discourse of the US. While ethos is the most prominent strategic element, logos still accounts for over a quarter of all recorded linguistic cues. This suggests that US speakers not only cultivate the image of a reliable partner but also consistently explain how strategic commitments will be realized through specific policies and implementation.

This integration of ethos and logos reflects a key characteristic of US strategic discourse: political commitments are always accompanied by concrete implementation plans. Verbs such as *deploy, strengthen, invest,* and *modernize* frequently appear alongside concepts like alliance, capability, and partnership, creating a link between strategic promises and practical actions. This contributes to the persuasiveness of the discourse because commitments are not only stated but also supported by clear implementation measures.

Furthermore, the significant presence of kairos indicates that US speakers are increasingly emphasizing the urgency of the regional strategic environment. Expressions such as *today, now,* and *in recent years* reflect an effort to position the Indo-Pacific region as a space undergoing significant transformations, requiring timely policy responses. This suggests that US strategic discourse is not only focused on maintaining prestige but also on mobilizing support for policy initiatives in the context of increasing strategic competition.

Another important observation is that deterrence discourse often combines logos and kairos, allowing the US leaders to present military preparedness as both rationally necessary and urgently required. Similarly, discourse concerning the rules-based order frequently combined ethos and pathos, enabling speakers to morally legitimize strategic objectives while simultaneously mobilizing emotional support.

The interaction between rhetorical strategies also contributed to broader strategic coherence across these remarks. Rather than employing isolated persuasive appeals, US leaders integrated rhetorical strategies dynamically to sustain consistent geopolitical narratives concerning regional stability, collective security, democratic values, and the rules-based international order. This rhetorical consistency reinforces broader the US efforts to maintain leadership legitimacy and strategic influence within the Indo-Pacific.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings reinforce the continued relevance of Aristotle's rhetorical strategies in contemporary geopolitical communication. Ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos

remain highly applicable to the analysis of strategic discourse because international politics are increasingly dependent on persuasive legitimacy as much as material capability.

Methodologically, the research results also suggest that analyzing rhetorical strategies should not be separated from understanding the political contexts and communicative purposes. The interplay between linguistic features, rhetorical forms, geopolitical objectives and strategic intentions, help further sketch a broader picture of strategic narratives which a nation would like to project. Therefore, intergrating rhetorical analysis with strategic discourse studies provides a more comprehensive foundation and framework for understanding contemporary international political communication in multilateral cooperation.

5. Conclusion

This study examines the use of rhetorical strategies in strategic discourse of the US in the framework of the Shangri-La Dialogue, by analyzing linguistic features including pronouns, stance verbs, evaluative adjectives, modal auxiliaries, nominalizations, discourse markers and significant lexical fields. The results show that all rhetorical strategies are implemented systematically through linguistic choices to serve their communicative purposes and policy priorities.

The analysis reveals that ethos was the most prominent rhetorical strategy in the corpus, primarily expressed through collective pronouns, stance verbs (commitment), and nominalizations related to cooperation, alliances, and international responsibility. This reflects the consistent efforts of the US to project an image of a reliable, responsible, and long-term committed partner in promoting regional peace, stability, and security. Furthermore, logos plays a crucial role in explaining policies, justifying defense initiatives, and presenting strategic objectives through stance verbs (action), modal verbs, and policy concepts. Kairos is used to emphasize the urgency of a changing strategic environment, while pathos appears to a more limited extent and primarily serves to raise awareness of security challenges and threats.

Overall, the research findings suggest that the US strategic discourse at the Shangri-La Dialogue is a form of discourse oriented towards prestige and commitment, where the building of strategic legitimacy is prioritized over forms of direct emotional appeal. Simultaneously, the study affirms the value of a combined approach of rhetorical and linguistic analysis in clarifying the relationship between language choices, persuasive strategies, and policy objectives in contemporary political discourse.

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Ethos, Pathos, Logos và Kairos trong diễn ngôn chiến lược của Hoa Kỳ: Phân tích chiến lược tu từ trong các bài phát biểu của lãnh đạo Hoa Kỳ tại Đối thoại Shangri-La

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này khảo sát sự vận dụng các chiến lược tu từ của Aristotle trong diễn ngôn chiến lược của Hoa Kỳ tại Đối thoại Shangri-La, một trong những cơ chế đối thoại an ninh có ảnh hưởng nhất ở khu vực Ấn Độ Dương - Thái Bình Dương. Nghiên cứu tập trung phân tích cách Hoa Kỳ xây dựng tính chính danh, củng cố uy tín chiến lược để huy động sự ủng hộ của khu vực, đồng thời đề cao tính cấp bách mà tình hình bối cảnh địa chính trị mang lại thông qua diễn ngôn thuyết phục. Nghiên cứu áp dụng phương pháp tiến cận hỗn hợp theo trình tự khám phá, trong đó phân tích định tính giữ vai trò chủ đạo và được hỗ trợ bởi phân tích định lượng tu từ dựa trên ngữ liệu. Phạm vi ngữ liệu bao gồm các bài phát biểu của các lãnh đạo quốc phòng của Mỹ tại Đối thoại Shangri-La trong giai đoạn 2011-2025. Kết quả cho thấy các chiến lược tu từ được hiện thực hóa một cách có hệ thống thông qua các đặc điểm ngôn ngữ như đại từ nhân xưng, động từ lập trường, động từ khuyết thiếu, tính từ đánh giá, các dấu hiệu diễn ngôn và các trường từ vựng hay sử dụng. Kết quả phân tích cho thấy ethos chủ yếu được sử dụng để xây dựng hình ảnh một quốc gia đáng tin cậy và khẳng định tính chính danh của vai trò lãnh đạo tại khu vực; pathos khơi gợi sự đồng cảm, đoàn kết và cảm quan về những thách thức an ninh; logos lý giải sự hiện diện quân sự và các sáng kiến chiến lược thông qua hệ thống lập luận và bằng chứng cụ thể; còn kairos định vị các diễn biến địa chính trị như những mốc thời điểm có tính bước ngoặt và đòi hỏi phản ứng chiến lược kịp thời. Nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra rằng các chiến lược tu từ có mối liên hệ chặt chẽ với các mục đích giao tiếp, như thiết lập quan hệ đối ngoại, định hình bối cảnh khu vực, củng cố niềm tin với mạng lưới đồng minh, tài khẳng định chính sách và củng cố tính chính danh của vai trò lãnh đạo. Các chiến lược tu từ này tương tác một cách linh hoạt với nhau để kiến tạo tự sự chiến lược mạch lạc về trật tự dựa trên luật lệ, an ninh tập thể và sự ổn định - thịnh vượng của khu vực Ấn Độ Dương - Thái Bình Dương.

Từ khóa: Chiến lược tu từ; Ethos; Pathos; Logos; Kairos; diễn ngôn chiến lược của Hoa Kỳ; Đối thoại Shangri-La; mục đích giao tiếp.