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US Undeclared Wars : Presidential Requests for Congressional Authorization

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Marta Rzepecka*

**US UNDECLARED WARS:
PRESIDENTIAL REQUESTS FOR CONGRESSIONAL
AUTHORIZATION/SUPPORT FOR USE OF FORCE**

**AMERYKAŃSKIE „CICHE” WOJNY:
JAK PREZYDENCI PRZEKONUJĄ KONGRES
DO AUTORYZACJI/POPARCIA UŻYCIA SIŁY**

Abstrakt

Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony jest prezydenckiej retoryce wojny, a w szczególności prezydenckiej retoryce użycia siły. Na przykładzie prezydenckich wniosków do Kongresu o autoryzację/poparcie użycia siły artykuł analizuje elementy, które definiują i kształtują retorykę użycia siły, porównuje jej elementy z elementami retoryki wojny i ocenia znaczenie wyników analizy dla badań nad prezydenckim językiem wojny.

Słowa kluczowe: prezydent, Kongres, retoryka wojny, dyskurs użycia siły, przedłużona misja wojskowa

Introduction

As a 2014 Congressional Research Service report informs, during the course of US history, Congress and the president have used US armed forces in hundreds of instances (Elsea and Weed 2014: 1–23; Torreon 2017: 1). These have differed in scope, purpose, significance, and legal authorization. In eleven instances, Congress and the president have declared wars against foreign nations. Congress and the president have also authorized the use of force. In eight instances, force was used in extended military engagements that might be considered undeclared wars.

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A declaration of war differs from an authorization for the use of force in a number of respects. A declaration is based on findings that US territory or its citizens were attacked or US rights or interests were directly threatened, while an authorization is justified on the grounds that the interests of the US in a foreign ongoing conflict or potential conflict or engagement need to be promoted, supported or protected or a friendly state needs to be defended. In contrast to an authorization for the use of force, a declaration of war is a legal requirement for war, creates a state of war, legitimates war actions, and terminates relations and treaties between the belligerents. Under domestic law, it triggers standby statutory authorities, granting the president special powers.

All congressional declarations of war have been preceded by a specific presidential request. By contrast, only half of congressional responses to presidential recommendations to authorize/support the use of force in undeclared wars have been preceded by a presidential request. Primary inclusion criteria for the recommendations were formal submission of the request to the US Congress. Recommendations to both authorize and support the use of force were selected based on the assumption that the central objective in both instances was for the president to demonstrate that the use of force was the result of collective action and that the president and members of Congress stood together on the issue. While presidents who requested congressional support argued that it did not affect their war-making authority, they did take steps to secure it. The selected recommendations include President John Adams' request for congressional authorization for the use of force in 1798 to defend American shipping and citizens against the French, President Thomas Jefferson's request for congressional authority to use force in 1801 to protect US shipping and citizens against the Tripolitans, President Lyndon B. Johnson's request for support for the use of force in 1964 to act in response to the North Vietnamese actions in Southeast Asia, and President George H. W. Bush's request for support for the use of force in 1991 in reaction to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Although President James Madison sought authority to take action against the Regency of Algeria in the Second Barbary War (1815), his request was a recommendation for a declaration of war not for an authorization for the use of force. President Harry S. Truman's request for authority to use force in the Korean War (1950-1953) was submitted to the United Nations Security Council rather than the US Congress. In the cases of the War on Terror (2001) and the Iraq War (2003), no formal requests for authority to use force were submitted. Instead, President George W. Bush and his representatives held consultations and discussions with congressional leader-

ship and negotiated the language of a joint resolution, which authorized the president to take military action to deal with the situation confronting the US after the September 11 attacks and with a threat posed to the US by Hussein's regime. The article therefore draws its material from four requests: President Adams' Special Message of 19 March 1798, President Jefferson's First Annual Message of 8 December 1801, President Johnson's Special Message to the Congress on US Policy in Southeast Asia of 5 August 1964, and President Bush's Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Persian Gulf Crisis of 8 January 1991.

To date, the subject of presidential war rhetoric during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has received little attention. It appears that only one study has analyzed President Adams' war discourse (Farrell 2002) and none has examined the war rhetoric of President Jefferson. While some research focuses on the president's rhetoric in general (Davidson and McClintock 1947), no investigation has targeted the president's language of war in particular.

By contrast, a considerable amount of literature has been published on presidential war rhetoric during the twentieth century. Studies on Johnson's Vietnam war rhetoric concentrate specifically on the formulation of the president's language in relation to the public (Yuravlivker 2006; Windt 1990; Sigelman 1980; Miller and Sigelman 1978; Brock and Scott 1968; Bunge et al. 1968; Phelps and Beck 1965), to the press (Turner 1985, 1978), to the president's public persona (Patton 1978), and to his political policy (Logue and Patton 1982). Considerable attention has been given to Johnson's rationale for war and justification of war policies (Lordan 2010; Hess 2001; Ivie 1989, 1980, 1974; Sigelman 1978; Smith 1972) as well as to the character of the president's response to a foreign crisis (Bostdorff 1994; Cherwitz and Zagacki 1986; Cherwitz 1980, 1978a, 1978b; Pratt 1970). The role of rhetoric in the administration's internal decision-making processes and the impact of presidential language on decision-making groups (Ball 2000, 1992) have also been examined.

Scholarship on the George H. W. Bush Persian Gulf war rhetoric is largely the work of rhetoricians who have studied how the president communicated his war policy to various audiences, and how his rhetorical choices affected the perception of and support for the war at home and abroad. Some authors demonstrate interest in the way the president made the case for war to the American public (Lordan 2010; Hurst 2004; Hall 2002; Ivie 1996; Winkler 1995; Olson 1991). Others have been concerned with how the president presented and promoted the American-led offensive against Iraq to Congress (Hess 2006) and to the international audience (Bates 2004). Scholars have considered the role of

Bush's rhetoric in US foreign policy in general (Cole 1996) and in the Gulf War in particular (Harlow 2006; Brands 2004; Stuckey 1995, 1992). They have analyzed presidential rhetorical choices in the context of a national crisis (Pollock 1994), in the framework of the post-Cold War era (Rangel 2007), and in relation to previous US wars and military engagements (German 1995).

Of the literature pertaining to the presidents' war rhetoric, only one article traces presidential dealing with Congress over authority to use force (Hess 2006) and none critiques their statements requesting congressional authorization/support for the use of force in states of undeclared wars. The present article attempts to fill this gap in the literature by describing and examining the elements that define and shape this rhetorical type. Its central objective is to compare the language used by presidents seeking declarations of war and those asking for authority/support for the use of force to demonstrate that types of messages that constitute the genre differ. Contrasting the characteristics and themes of presidential requests for a congressional declaration of war with the elements that define presidential requests for congressional authorization/support for the use of force is important for our increased understanding of presidential war language. The study of a rhetorical type within the genre, the article suggests, offers an insight in how presidents make a compelling case for use of force. It explains how they carry out their use of force agendas through congressional action as conditions that necessitate them, purposes that motivate them, and interpretations of presidential war powers change. The main questions posed in this article are: How were the messages requesting congressional authorization/support for the use of force in states of undeclared wars constructed? Which elements recurred throughout the messages and which showed only in specific messages? How were the elements similar to or different from the characteristics and themes of war rhetoric? What are the implications of the findings for the generic tradition? In what follows, the article argues that presidential requests for the authorization/support for the use of force in states of undeclared wars employ six elements: (1) defense; (2) use of force as a prerequisite for development of peace; (3) inadequacy of past measures; (4) presidential exercise of military power; (5) countermeasures; (6) and authorization as a form of manifestation. It is suggested that while some of these elements occur in presidential war discourse in general, others are elements typical for this type of presidential discourse, giving it a distinct shape and character. The article considers these elements in three parts. The first part describes and exemplifies the elements typical of presidential messages requesting congressional

authorization/support for the use of force in states of undeclared wars. The second part compares the elements with the typologies of war rhetoric as defined by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1990) and Edward J. Lordan (2010). It measures the messages against Campbell and Jamieson's characteristics of (1) deliberate and thoughtful consideration; (2) chronicle or narration of events; (3) call to unanimity of purpose and commitment; (4) legitimization of presidential role of the commander in chief; and (5) strategic misrepresentation as well as against Lordan's themes of (1) self-protection; (2) enemy as the aggressor; (3) Just War Theory; (4) moral superiority; (5) the inevitability of conflict; (6) and guaranteed victory. The third part discusses the implications of the findings for the study of presidential war language.

Formation of Rhetoric Intended for Congress

All four presidential requests for congressional authorization/support for the use of force were made in writing. Adams' and Johnson's requests were submitted in a form of a special message to the US Congress, Bush's request took the form of a letter addressed to congressional leaders, and Jefferson's request constituted an inclusion within the president's First Annual Message also addressed to the US Congress. The timing of the requests varied. With the exception of Johnson who asked Congress for support for the use of force a few days after an attack, all presidents waited a few months before they requested congressional action. Adams' and Jefferson's requests were responded to by Congress within a few months and Johnson's and Bush's requests received congressional approval within a few days. With the exception of Bush, all presidents worked with Congress under the control of their party. When seeking congressional action, only Adams explicitly referred to a domestic public opinion and only Bush mentioned an international audience.

Central to all four messages is the element of defense based on the assumption that presidential requests for congressional action regarding the use of force are necessitated by the circumstances of an enemy's attack. President Adams asked Congress to adopt measures "for the protection of [US] seafaring and commercial citizens, for the defense of any exposed portions of [US]territory" when the French attacked US ships. Similarly, President Jefferson called Congress to authorize measures that would "place [US] force on an equal footing with that of its adversaries" when the Tripolitans attacked US shipping. President Johnson requested "action to protect [American] armed forces" and "defend freedom" in

Southeast Asia following North Vietnamese attacks on US vessels. In the same vein, President Bush asked Congress to “protect America’s security” and “safeguard [America’s] vital interests” after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. A seemingly similar language of presidential requests illustrates a process at work in this rhetorical type. While the requests continue to link presidential call for action to an enemy’s attack, they shift on the specificity and the scope of their reach. Requests for narrow authority to use force in defense of US citizens and territory expand to include calls for broad authority/support for the use of US forces to defend foreign nations and protect US interests, preserve US values, and continue US policies. The broader the authority, the more extended the rationale. Johnson mentioned US obligation to meet its commitments in Southeast Asia first made in 1954 and further defined in the Manila Pact in 1955 and to fulfill America’s responsibility assumed in agreements signed in Geneva in 1954 and in 1962. Bush warned against Congress failure to support the United Nations position on Iraq and UN Security Council resolutions relating to Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait. Yet, beyond expansive interpretation, all requests position the US as a party to the conflict that avoids war, protects life, and observes law. They impose framing within which the American action is described as reactionary and its measures are explained as countermeasures.

The use of force as a prerequisite for development of peace is intertwined with the element of defense. It runs through all four requests, clarifying US intentions, setting straight its objectives, and justifying its means. In his request, President Adams explained that the US government stood on the side of peace by trying “to avoid by all reasonable concessions any participation in the contentions of Europe.” Similarly, President Jefferson assured that in its actions against Tripoli the US was guided primarily by “sincere desire to remain in peace.” President Johnson repeatedly stated that the US was resolved to protect and preserve peace in Southeast Asia and emphasized that the United States’ “purpose is peace.” In like manner, President Bush stressed that US efforts were made to “enhance the chances” and “strengthen the prospects for peace.” Noteworthy is the presidents’ effort to make US intentions clear and set the record of its commitment to peace straight. To that end, President Adams denied that the failure to accommodate the differences between the two nations could be “attributed to any want of moderation on the part of this Government, or to any indisposition to forego secondary interests for the preservation of peace.” President Jefferson trusted that “The bravery exhibited by our citizens . . . will . . . be a testimony to the world that it is not the want of that virtue . . . but a conscientious desire

to direct the energies of our nation to the multiplication of the human race, and not to its destruction.” President Johnson persuaded that the US “seeks no wider war” in Southeast Asia and has “no military, political or territorial ambitions in the area.” President Bush urged Congress “to go on record supporting the position adopted by the UN Security Council” because “such an action would underline that the United States stands with the international community and on the side of law and decency.” Tying the notion of force to the notion of peace is a tactic in presenting the US as a nation committed to the peace of construction not the peace of devastation, the peace by compromise not the peace by ultimatum, the peace of justice not the peace in breach of law. At the same time, linking the concept of force with the concept of peace dispels any doubt that the US lacks the willingness to act with power. President Johnson’s and President Bush’s requests for support for “all necessary action” and for “the use of all necessary means,” respectively, make it clear that the US is ready act decisively addressing the perceived threat and the need to meet it.

The element of inadequacy of past measures relates to the US will to act with strength and determination. It informs that force is an option to be used because political solutions have failed to bring the desired results, not because there were no attempts to explore them. Commenting on US envoys’ negotiations with France, President Adams declared: “the powers vested in our envoys were commensurate with a liberal and pacific policy and that high confidence which might justly be reposed in the abilities, patriotism, and integrity of the characters to whom the negotiation was committed.” Describing his efforts to avoid the use of force, President Jefferson reported: “Tripoli . . . had come forward with demands unfounded either in right or in compact, and had permitted itself to denounce war on our failure to comply before a given day. The style of the demand admitted but one answer. I sent a small squadron of frigates into the Mediterranean The measure was seasonable and salutary. The Bey had already declared war.” Similarly, President Johnson showed restraint in the use of force when in circumstances of new acts of aggression against the US, he “responded by furnishing escort fighters with instructions to fire when fired upon.” President Bush also expressed his desire for non-military solutions when he referred to the UN Security Council resolutions adopted with an aim to place political pressure upon Iraq to move Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. In two instances, explicit deterioration in the conflict situation constitutes reinforcement for the requests for the authorization/support for the use of force. President Adams observed that “The present state of things is so essentially different from that in which instructions were given to the collectors to

restrain vessels of the United States from sailing in an armed condition that the principle on which those orders were issued has ceased to exist.” Likewise, President Johnson noted that “These latest actions of the North Vietnamese regime have given a new and grave turn to the already serious situation in Southeast Asia.” Admitting failure to settle conflicts peacefully is a strategy that clearly works to the presidents’ advantage. It puts in perspective their rhetoric of war, emphasizing their efforts for conflict management without the use of force, reflecting their adaptation to the emerging needs of the situation, and outlining their planned course of action. Requests for the authorization/support for the use of force are presented as rational reactions to the risk of wider war, as informed decisions supported by solid evidence, and as political moves made with a plan in place.

The element of presidential exercise of military power tends in a similar direction. It focuses on the role of the president in decision-making on the use of force policy, defining the scope of the executive’s war powers against that of the legislature’s. When President Adams wrote that “After a careful review of the whole subject, with the aid of all the information I have received . . . I can not forbear to reiterate the recommendation which have been formerly made, and to exhort [Congress]to adopt with promptitude, decision, and unanimity such measures as the ample resources of the country afford,” he expressed the view that the use of force authority was a cooperative process in which Congress held an advantage over the president in exercising military power. When President Jefferson concluded: “I communicate all material information on this subject, that in the exercise of this important function confided by the Constitution to the Legislature exclusively their judgment may form itself on a knowledge and consideration of every circumstances of weight,” he considered the power to use force to be primarily congressional authority. When President Johnson declared: “After consultation with the leaders of both parties in the Congress, I further announced a decision to ask the Congress for a Resolution,” he revived the view that there was cooperation between the executive and the legislature involved in taking the decision to use force except that the president had an advantage over Congress in exercising military power. President Bush expressed a yet different opinion when he stated: “I can think of no better way than for Congress to express its support for the President at this critical time,” indicating that the executive had the authority to fully use force without congressional authorization. The wording of presidential requests reveals that a change in understanding of presidential use of force authority has taken place. What began as a process in which the president felt bound by the legislature in the exercise of the use of force

power has become a solely executive function independent of the legislature. A pattern of presidential restraint, in which presidents recognized limitations on their exercise of military power and refrained from an unauthorized use of force, has shifted into a mode of presidential activism, prompting presidents to take action to defend the nation or intervene militarily irrespective of congressional stand.

The element of countermeasures describes the action in more details. It specifies why it matters what presidents ask Congress for, when they submit their requests, and how they word them. President Adams urged Congress “to manifest a zeal, vigor, and concert in defense of the national rights proportioned to the danger with which they are threatened.” President Jefferson asked the legislature to “consider whether . . . they will place our force on an equal footing with that of its adversaries.” President Johnson turned to Congress to demonstrate “the resolve and support . . . for action to deal appropriately with attacks against our armed forces and to defend freedom and preserve peace in southeast Asia.” President Bush requested “that Congress supports the use of all necessary means to implement UN Security Council Resolution,” stressing that “Anything less would only encourage Iraqi intransigence; anything else would risk detracting from the international coalition arrayed against Iraq’s aggression.” In contrast to the exercise of military power, expression of the measures to be authorized or supported by Congress to repel attacks, avert wars, or end aggression has stayed relatively the same: formal and broad in scope. Asking for “proportioned,” “equal,” “appropriate,” and “necessary” measures, presidents have revealed the same degree of confidence and trust in congressional decision regarding the allocation of resources adequate to the situation. It should be noted that Presidents Jefferson and Johnson asked for authority and support, respectively, for the use of force having already taken military means against the enemy; moreover, President Johnson assured Congress that “any avenues of political solution” would continue to be explored along military paths. No other president referred to the use or continuation of any appropriate diplomatic ways to attempt to settle conflict peacefully, thus making it clear that, in their understanding, only force provided decisive and ultimate conclusion. President Johnson was alone in proposing the language of the resolution for congressional consideration, playing a part in constructing the legislative act, if not taking the lead on the practical side of the things.

All presidents, however, made suggestions as to the meaning of the resolution. President Adams urged Congress to adopt measures “with promptitude, decision, and unanimity.” President Jefferson conveyed his expectation that the resolution would make it possible for the US to achieve military parity with the enemy and would keep US forces in

strategic equilibrium. For President Johnson, the resolution was to communicate “the unity and determination of the United States in supporting freedom and in protecting peace in Southeast Asia.” It meant to “make it clear to all that the United States is united in its determination to bring about the end of Communist subversion and aggression in the area.” The President hoped that the resolution would “give convincing evidence to the aggressive Communist nations, and to the world as a whole, that our policy in Southeast Asia will be carried forward – and that the peace and security of the area will be preserved.” He argued that “Hostile nations must understand that in such a period the United States will continue to protect its national interests, and that in these matters there is no division among us.” This line of argumentation appeared also in President Bush’s message who persuaded that the resolution should “help dispel any belief that may exist in the minds of Iraq’s leaders that the United States lacks the necessary unity to act decisively in response to Iraq’s continued aggression against Kuwait.” The president persuaded, it should “send the clearest possible message to Saddam Hussein that he must withdraw without condition or delay from Kuwait.” The formulation of the suggestions indicates at least three things. First, it informs that requests openly addressed to Congress seem to have indirectly been written for dual audiences: President Adams’ message appears to have also been directed to the French Republic, President Jefferson’s to the world community, President Johnson’s to the Communist/hostile nations, and President Bush’s to the international community and the president of Iraq. Second, the requests build congressional reactions and interpretations on core American values. Writing explicitly about unity, determination, and strength, the presidents implicitly stirred up the fears of division, resignation, and weakness to reinforce the case for the use of force and generate support for it. Hoping that a US victory was the only conclusion of the conflict situations, they stimulated Congress to have the US regain the initiative and take the offensive. Third, drawing on core American values was a move made with an aim to promote a perception of the presidents’ credibility and integrity. Evoking the feeling of what it meant to be American, they emphasized their personal loyalty, patriotism, and dedication to duty.

Elements of War Discourse vs. Characteristics and Themes of War Rhetoric

Scholars in the field of rhetorical studies have presented several typologies designed to capture the nature of presidential war rhetoric (Ivie 1980; Campbell and Jamieson 1990; Benjamin 1991; Lordan 2010). For

this analysis, two classifications has been used: Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson's (1990:101-126) characteristics of thoughtful consideration, narration of events, a call to unanimity and dedication, legitimization of the role of the commander in chief, and strategic misrepresentations; and Edward J. Lordan's (2010:10-15) themes of self-protection, the enemy as the aggressor, Just War Theory, moral superiority, the inevitability of conflict, and guaranteed victory. According to Campbell and Jamieson, presidential war rhetoric stresses the seriousness and rationality of the president's decision making. Its narrative form details events that lead to the existence of the threat and its exhortative tone calls the public to unite. Presidential war discourse legitimates the president's assumption of war powers and uses misrepresentation of events to suppress opposition and ensure sustained support from Congress and the public for action. Lordan, in turns, finds that presidential war rhetoric assumes that the US has been provoked to take action, that its system and leadership are morally superior to the enemy's, that its actions are justified and its cause is right, that the circumstances warrant its use of force, and that its side will prevail.

Both typologies constitute the backdrop against which a presidential request for a congressional authorization/support for the use of force can be understood as a type of message distinct within the genre of presidential war discourse, with some of its elements characteristic for presidential war rhetoric in general, while with other elements typical for this type of presidential discourse. Both classifications draw on a wide range of works that constitute presidential war rhetoric, including presidential requests for a congressional declaration of war and presidential requests for congressional authorization/support of military action. Both consider the rhetorical continuity and shifts in presidential war discourse, demonstrating consistency in the elements that make up the genre as well as change in the rhetorical type (Campbell and Jamieson 1990:104-105, 125; Lordan 2010:15).

A comparative analysis of the elements of the requests for the authorization for the use of force and the characteristics and themes of presidential war rhetoric has indicated that some elements, characteristics, and themes connect. More specifically, the analysis has shown that defense (self-protection) relates to enemy as the aggressor, that presidential exercise of military power relates to legitimization of presidential role of the commander in chief, and that authorization as a form of manifestation relates to call to unanimity of purpose and commitment.

For enemy as the aggressor and defense (self-protection), the framing is similar: the United States is put on the defensive and is taking

military action in response to an enemy's attack (Lordan 2010:11). The attack is understood, in broad terms, to include a deliberate military offensive as well as inactivity considered to be a form of hostility. Within the framing, the use of force is a matter of necessity not of choice; the US is forced to get involved as a result of the circumstances that were imposed upon it. It is legitimate and justified. Shared is both the understanding of the reasons for the use of military power or military intervention and the goals which the military action is designed to accomplish. The US plays the role of a guardian of peace, a defender of freedom, and a warrior on the righteous side in the struggle between the forces of good and evil. Its actions are designed to protect nations and territories as well as systems of beliefs, areas of influence, and courses of government policy.

Presidential exercise of military power relates to legitimization of presidential role of the commander in chief in terms of a pattern of the executive interaction with the legislature over war powers (Campbell and Jamieson 1990:103, 112-118). The pattern has changed over the years in the direction of presidents keeping the power to repel attacks and assuming the power to initiate attacks independently of congressional opinion. Joint action of the president and Congress has been replaced by unilateral executive action. Appeals for a declaration of war have been dropped in favor of requests for the authorization/support for the use of force. Requests for future action have evolved into requests for legitimization of action that had already been taken. In the pattern of change, the role of Congress has largely been limited to appropriation of funds for continued military engagements, with little room for maneuvering, given that the vote on the funds has often been tied to congressional job approval rating.

Authorization as a form of manifestation and call to unanimity of purpose and commitment are similar in the sense that they operate on the basis of American values (Campbell and Jamieson 1990:111-118). They appeal to the addressee by cultivating common ground and highlighting obvious relationships. Their goal is to unify the nation and help the president establish a bond of commonality with it. Moreover, they strengthen the developed arguments, reinforce the presented evidence and simultaneously silence the opposition and discourage it from challenging the proposed course of action. The implied interpretation is this: to oppose presidential view means opposing the principles and ideals that America stands for; to vote against the executive's proposal is comparable to a deliberate action taken to undermine America's unity and question its readiness to act with strength and resolve.

By contrast, use of force as a prerequisite for development of peace, inadequacy of past measures, and countermeasures do not form part of

the typologies of war rhetoric but are distinct elements of presidential requests for the authorization/support for the use of force. At the same time, the characteristics of thoughtful consideration, narration of events, and strategic misrepresentation (Campbell and Jamieson 1990:105-111, 118-122) as well as the themes of Just War Theory, moral superiority, the inevitability of conflict, and guaranteed victory (Lordan 2010:11) are not consistently manifested in the requests. While some presidents remark that their decisions to ask Congress for the authorization/support for the use of force have been made upon reasoned reflection on the situation, they do not explicitly advise members of Congress to put emotions away and address the issue at hand in a sound manner. While some presidents briefly narrate events leading to a decision, their narratives are not central to the justification for the use of force. The failure of past measures taken to avert the danger of aggression and the threat of war, the intention to make and keep peace, and the understanding of the US action only in terms of a reaction are key elements. While all requests seek to win unified congressional support, only one message hints at the possibility of misrepresenting events to achieve strategic purpose. The wording of President Adams' requests reveal the use of sources and services that are available only to the president and the potential such access to data creates to present the received information in a selective and obscure manner.

Similar observations can be made on the themes. Just War Theory and moral superiority, which use religious references, define conflicts in terms of a struggle between the forces of good and evil, and present the US as morally superior, are not reflected in the language of the requests. Framing of ideas is replaced by context of facts, evidence, and analysis. The inevitability of conflict and guaranteed victory are not stated in the requests for the authorization/support for the use of force either. While presidents use decisive and clear language, explain the steps that their administration had taken to reduce tensions, and stress US defensive posture, they do not conclude that war is unavoidable, that the existing conflict will only escalate, or that it will end with indisputable victory over the enemy. On the contrary, the wording of the requests suggests an interpretation that the use of force will prevent conflict escalation into a full-scale war and that the force applied will deter new attack and prevent offensive action.

Conclusion

This article has offered a critique of presidential statements requesting congressional authorization/support for the use of force in states of undeclared wars. It has examined four presidential messages for ele-

ments that define and shape this type of presidential discourse and has found six elements that recur in the requests, including defense, use of force as a prerequisite for development of peace, inadequacy of past measures, presidential exercise of military power, countermeasures, and authorization as a form of manifestation. A comparative analysis of the elements with the characteristics and themes of presidential war rhetoric has shown that some elements, characteristics, and themes interrelate. Defense, presidential exercise of military power, and authorization as a form of manifestation have been found to be similar to some characteristic and themes of war rhetoric, but use of force as a prerequisite for development of peace, inadequacy of past measures, and counter measures have been identified to be distinct for presidential requests for the authorization/support for the use of force.

This analysis contributes to existing knowledge of presidential war rhetoric and proves useful in expanding our understanding of how presidential statements that constitute the genre are similar and different at the same time. Similarities have confirmed the findings of Campbell and Jamieson (1990) and Lordan (2010) who have described recurring characteristics and themes of presidential war rhetoric. Differences have indicated that types of messages that constitute the genre – presidential requests for a congressional declaration of war and presidential requests for congressional authorization/support for the use of force – vary. The fact that the discourse designed to convince Congress to grant the president the authorization/support for the use of force differs in many respects from the rhetoric formulated to persuade Congress to declare war points to the complexity and diversity of presidential war language and argues in favor of further detailed investigation into the area. Although much research has been undertaken on the subject, there remains work to be done upon understanding how presidents have communicated with Congress regarding use of force issues.

The most important limitation lies in the scope of the study, which could encompass only half of the cases in which Congress enacted authorizations/lent support for the use of force in extended military engagements that might be considered undeclared wars. In the remaining cases, presidential requests were either recommendations for a declaration of war, or were submitted to the United Nations Security Council rather than the US Congress, or were not submitted at all and authorizations for the use of force were enacted based on presidential and congressional negotiations.

Despite these limitations, the study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of presidential war discourse. Further re-

search in this field could usefully explore the language of presidential requests for the authorization/support for the use of force in instances other than extended military engagements that might be considered undeclared wars. These could include brief military engagements, involvement of US forces in multinational operations, covert actions, disaster relief, or alliance stationing and training exercises. Such explorations could produce interesting findings that could shed more light on presidential war rhetoric in general.

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