Consummatory Versus
Justificatory Crisis Rhetoric

RICHARD A. CHERWITZ and KENNETH S. ZAGACKI

The question posed in this study is: Are there differences in rhetorical strategy and tactic between discourse initially constituting the sole response of our government to states of emergency and discourse accompanying, justifying, and rationalizing specific military moves undertaken in response to crises? To provide a partial answer to this question, five presidential messages were analyzed and placed into two categories: consummatory rhetoric—where presidential discourse initially constituted the only official reply made by the American government; and justificatory rhetoric—where presidential discourse was part of a larger, military retaliation taken by the government. Differences and similarities between these two kinds of talk are detailed, and implications for crisis rhetoric are presented.

The subject of international crises is the focus of significant scholarly investigation: historians examine selected episodes where the U.S. was attacked by foreign governments; political scientists analyze various moves and countermoves comprising international crises; and rhetorical critics scrutinize the wealth of discursive features constituting the genre of crisis rhetoric. Underpinning these investigations is the claim that rhetoric plays an important role in framing national responses to international emergencies. In fact, it is widely held that international crises are rhetorical artifacts: events become crises, not because of unique sets of situational exigencies, but by virtue of discourse used to describe them.

Previous research suggests or implies that all crisis rhetoric, regardless of differences in situational factors and/or accompanying policies, shares certain overriding discursive features. Yet it might be asked: Are there differences in rhetorical strategy and tactic between discourse initially constituting the sole response of our government to states of emergency and discourse accompanying, justifying and rationalizing specific overt military moves undertaken in response to crises? To provide a partial answer to this question, several presidential messages were subjected to rhetorical analysis. Chosen speeches

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represent official replies issued by chief executives following direct attacks on U.S. property and/or people by foreign governments during the latter part of the twentieth century. Messages investigated were placed into two categories: consummatory rhetoric—where presidential discourse initially constituted the only official reply made by the American government; and justificatory rhetoric—where presidential discourse was from the very beginning part of a larger, overt military retaliation taken by the government of the U.S.

Our rationale for studying these two categories of rhetoric stemmed from an interest in message variables. We did not explore varying effects of discourse; nor were we concerned with historical particulars that uniquely occasion each type of rhetoric. Rather, we wanted to know whether or not there are certain invariant discursive patterns inherent in each of the two varieties of rhetoric—features remaining constant within and between categories irrespective of more specific and subtle differences in rhetorical situation and effect, and despite dissimilarities in time frame and presidential style. Our purpose was to investigate rhetorical messages intrinsically.

The value of a message-centered approach is premised on Arnold's and Zyskind's contention that rhetorical messages "create" issues that come to dominate the national agenda, along with the more specific claim that discourse creates crises. If presidents offer interpretations of reality that take precedence over other interpretations, thereby ordering public perceptions of what should be attended to most closely, an analysis of messages alone is apropos. For it is not the characteristics idiosyncratic to individual presidents that set precedent; we believe that presidential messages contain discernible and recurring features that shape public expectations regarding crisis management. These rhetorical patterns are so etched in public consciousness as to create immediate recognition and attention when present in presidential discourse.

By looking at messages exclusively we can learn something about the type of speech act engaged in by presidents when coping with crises. The utterance of words in response to crises may constitute a form of rhetorical action as important, if not more important, than the implementation of other policies, such as the use of military force. It is our suspicion that, along with these other policies, words perform acts significant to the management of crises. In a sense, presidents "do by saying" when responding to international crises; their words constitute an identifiable set of actions complementing, and in some cases supplementing, other nondiscursive policies. Investigating messages, therefore, allows exploration of the subtle, though perhaps overriding, function performed by discourse in crisis situations—a function transcending individual presidential style and personality.

We would caution readers, however, that our study of presidential messages is not intended to be a genre analysis. While we are in
agreement with previous writers that crisis rhetoric is constitutive of a genre of presidential discourse, the labels "consummatory" and "justificatory" reference differences in technique and strategy. The meaning and significance of these categories is the specific subject of our essay.

As examples of consummatory discourse, we analyzed Ronald Reagan's September 5, 1983 response to the downing of Korean jetliner 007 and Jimmy Carter's November 16, 1979 discourse following the seizure of American hostages. Examples of justificatory discourse included Lyndon Johnson's August 4, 1964 explanation of the Gulf of Tonkin naval attack, John F. Kennedy's October 22, 1962 response to deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba, and Gerald R. Ford's May 15, 1975 reply to the Mayaguez incident. While there are other cases of crisis rhetoric, we selected these speeches because they represent some of the most visible and widely discussed foreign policy crises in the past twenty-five years. Despite some of the more subtle and theoretical problems associated with defining "crises," few could doubt that these episodes in U.S. history constitute profound crises in foreign policy. Moreover, the selected speeches are representative, being chosen primarily because they span over two decades and five presidencies.*

Initially, we hypothesized that there would be clear and significant rhetorical differences between these two types of discourse. In justificatory rhetoric, for example, presidential remarks focus on explanation and rationalization of military retaliation. Presidents tell us how we were attacked and explicate the rationale for military countermoves. This type of rhetoric, we inferred, portrays attacks on the U.S. as unprovoked, aggressive and hostile offenses perpetrated by ruthless, savage and uncivilized enemies; America's responses, in turn, are depicted as retaliatory, provoked, and retributive, designed to punish evil forces who assaulted innocent victims. On the other hand, we hypothesized that in consummatory discourse there is no need to justify American response: discourse is the response. Consummatory messages endeavor to show the people of the U.S., as well as the world community, that enemy attacks were hostile and unprovoked, and that despite such aggression the U.S. will not respond in kind, for to do so would justify violence. Nevertheless, consummatory discourse serves to warn—and often threaten—that future occurrences of violence will not go unanswered.

Despite differences, we also speculated that there would be similarities between the two types of discourse: both employ deliberate, hard-hitting, offensive language to dramatize perpetration of crises; while attempting to create crisis atmospheres, both seek resolution, eliminating the need for further moves and countermoves which could escalate emergencies to dangerous if not catastrophic levels; and both underscore the importance of American ideals and values, using crises to reinforce and reaffirm the superiority of American democratic
principles to aggressive, terroristic and uncivilized attributes exemplified by perpetrators.

DIFFERENCES

While the rhetorical tone of consummatory discourse is \textit{circumspect}, justificatory discourse is \textit{irrevocable}. Consummatory rhetoric emphasizes the importance of caution, patience, resolve and inner strength in reacting to wrongful deeds perpetrated by adversaries; patience is portrayed as a virtue and strength rather than a sign of indecision and weakness. Jimmy Carter, for instance, urged Americans not "to condemn every person who has connections with Iran." "I hope," said Carter, that "you will caution all Americans... not to abuse the fine tens of thousands of Iranians who live in our country." We are trying "to act with circumspection, but also with firmness." Addressing a shocked and outraged audience following the downing of commercial jetliner 007, Ronald Reagan sounded a similar note of caution: "From every corner of the globe the word is defiance. With our horror and sorrow, there is a righteous and terrible anger. It would be easy to think in terms of vengeance, but that is not the proper answer. We want justice and action to see that this never happens again."

Conversely, justificatory rhetoric is irrevocable, direct and decisive, announcing concrete, definitive, military moves taken in response to malevolent actions of foreign nations. Because of its irrevocable and definitive posture, justificatory discourse is less ambiguous, having an air of finality about it. To be sure, justificatory rhetoric maintains that patience is a virtue; but it also makes clear that beyond a certain point, patience must give way to direct, decisive action. Faced with Soviet intransigence surrounding the placement of missiles in Cuba, John F. Kennedy announced that "our policy has been one of patience and restraint, as befits a peaceful and powerful nation, which leads to worldwide alliance... But now further action is required—and it is under way; and these actions may only be the beginning."

After American warships were allegedly attacked in Tonkin Gulf, Lyndon Johnson eschewed talk of patience, stating forcefully that "renewed hostile actions against United States ships... have required me to order the military forces of the United States to take action in reply... Repeated acts of violence against the Armed Forces of the United States must be met not only with alert defense, but with positive reply. That reply is being given as I speak tonight." In a terse statement to Congress following the seizure of the Mayaguez, Gerald Ford explained that "in view of this illegal and dangerous act, I ordered... United States military forces to conduct the necessary reconnaissance and to be ready to respond if diplomatic efforts... were not successful." These efforts were not successful, prompting Ford to order
isolation of Koh Tang island by U.S. military forces and interdiction of Cambodian forces to the island. Ford informed the nation of the assault by United States Marines on the island of Koh Tang to "search out and rescue such Americans as might be still held there" and the "retaking of the Mayaguez by other marines boarding from the destroyer escort Holt."  

The above distinction indicates that justificatory rhetoric may have greater propensity to alleviate dissonance and reduce anxiety of a concerned public; it is far easier, after all, to convince the public that swift and decisive measures have been taken to terminate crises if discourse is used to announce particular military retaliations or countermoves. In consummatory discourse, however, where the dominant theme is one of restraint and caution, it is a more difficult rhetorical challenge to persuade the citizenry that responses made or to be contemplated sufficiently address and answer original moves constituting perpetration of crises. Dissonance and anxiety may still reign because of the inherent incapacity of consummatory discourse to disambiguate volatile situations.

Directly tied to this first observation is the related claim that two separate speech acts are being performed in the two modes of crisis rhetoric. In consummatory discourse, presidents call for and often demand that perpetrators take specific actions to close out crises, including reparations, documented explanations, or official apologies. Crises remain crises pending future moves made by those instigating states of emergency. Reagan, for example, claimed the Soviets owed "the world an apology and an offer to join the rest of the world in working out a system to protect against this ever happening again." Carter admonished the Iranians to be fully "responsible for the well-being and the safe return of every single person," or face "the grave consequences which will result if harm comes to any of the hostages." Simultaneously, the President assured reporters that all was being done to obtain peacefully the safe release of hostages but that responsibility for ending the crisis rested with the Iranian government.

On the other hand, justificatory rhetoric is presented as the potential end-point of crises; specific retaliations announced count as the verbal act of closing out crises, placing the onus on adversaries to reopen or escalate conflict. Responses to crises announced in justificatory discourse are defended as fitting and limited, requiring no additional moves or countermoves. In 1964, Johnson asserted that "the determination of all Americans to carry out our full commitment to the people and to the government of South Viet-Nam will be redoubled by this outrage. Yet our response, for the present, will be limited and fitting. We Americans know, although others appear to forget, the risks of spreading conflict. We still seek no wider war." The crucial sentence here is "We still seek no wider war." For Johnson, given the apparent
Vietnamese action, our response was appropriately "limited and fitting"—a fair and gentlemanly countermove designed to prevent further conflict. If the Vietnamese are smart and equitable (if they know what is good for them), implied Johnson, they will close out the crisis, foregoing future military aggression and a wider war. The chief executive’s verbal commitment to a limited conflict is important, since it allows opportunity for face-saving if adversaries choose to stop conflict; it places blame for continued hostilities on adversaries if conflict is dragged out. Accordingly, Kennedy challenged the Soviets "to halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless, and provocative threat to world peace and to stable relations between our two nations." Chairman Khrushchev "has an opportunity now to move the world back from the abyss of destruction... by refraining from any action which will widen or deepen the crisis—and then by participating in a search for peaceful and permanent solutions."

Consummatory discourse, then, is analogous to the speech act of demanding while justificatory rhetoric has more in common with the speech act of announcing. In the parlance of language theorists, consummatory discourse is illocutionary, while justificatory rhetoric is perlocutionary. Consummatory discourse is but one linguistic step designed to effect change or induce action to alleviate crises. Justificatory discourse as linguistic act is itself the effect or action, verbally terminating crises pending the decision by others of whether or not to reopen hostilities.

Unlike justificatory rhetoric, consummatory discourse employs arguments issuing from a higher moral ground. In consummatory responses to crises, presidents describe enemy actions as more than violations of international law and accepted diplomatic protocol; adversaries’ deeds are designated violations of some larger moral code shared by all civilized beings. In this way, alleged crimes become more heinous, demanding the outrage and indignation of all—regardless of political ideology and affinity—who respect and hold sacred the fundamental human rights of those inhabiting the world. Hence it is not surprising that Ronald Reagan labeled the Soviet attack on flight 007 a "massacre," a "crime against humanity," an act with no "legal or moral" justification. "This was the Soviet Union against the world and the moral precepts which guide human relations among people everywhere. It was an act of barbarism, born of a society which wantonly disregards individual rights and the value of human life and seeks constantly to expand and dominate other nations." Jimmy Carter was equally condemning: "The actions of Iran have shocked the civilized world. For a government to applaud mob violence and terrorism, for a government actually to support and, in effect, participate in the taking and the holding of hostages is unprecedented in human history. This violates not only the most fundamental precepts of international law but the
common ethical religious heritage of humanity." Consummatory crisis rhetoric, then, draws upon a universally held Judeo-Christian system of ethics, proclaiming the importance of avoiding vengeance and military retribution. In addition, by firmly implanting responses to crises within accepted constitutional principles, presidents can successfully defend the merits of not responding to perpetrators in kind. For such responses would make us equally culpable to the charge of wrongdoing, thus reducing the impact of claims regarding moral and ethical impropriety of enemies. Thus Reagan claimed that "we and other civilized countries believe in the tradition of offering help to marines and pilots who are lost or in distress on the sea or in the air. We believe in following procedures to prevent a tragedy, not to provoke one." Carter's appeal to fundamental principles and the need to avoid vengeance was even clearer: "This is a serious matter .... It's not a reason for panic. It's not reason to abandon the principles or laws or proprieties in our own country. We do not want to be guilty of the same sort of improper action which we are condemning in Iran." In short, unlike justificatory discourse, consummatory rhetoric argues from a higher moral plane, one where the cliché that two wrongs don't make a right constitutes a significant and overriding moral canon. This is not to say that human rights and ethical malpractices are not discussed in justificatory rhetoric; it is to say, however, that such arguments are less endemic to justificatory rhetoric owing to its more pragmatic/strategic and retributive tone. No matter how rhetorically adept or correct presidents may be, it is philosophically inconsistent to condemn violence and deprivation of human rights initiated by others when our responses appear equally suspect.

While both modes of rhetoric focus, to an extent, on perpetration of crises, consummatory discourse more extensively identifies particular details and nuances responsible for states of emergency. In justificatory rhetoric, more time is spent outlining the nature of countermoves and their appropriateness and fittingness as responses to crises. Sixty percent of Kennedy's text, for instance, was devoted to explanation of countermoves; and eighty percent of Ford's address dealt with defense of retaliation. Thus, while both consummatory and justificatory rhetoric may be kinds of epideictic oratory—where the ritual of identifying and blaming adversaries is performed—sharp differences emerge. Consummatory discourse also accords with the principles of forensic rhetoric; considerable and concerted efforts are made to present a prima facie case for guilt to the American public and world; perpetrators stand mock trial for specific charges, and evidence is marshalled on behalf of the case for conviction. Viewed in this way, the president becomes the prosecutor, the perpetrators the accused, and the public the adjudicating body. Using rhetorical maneuvers similar to the levels of legal stasis, presidents analyze facts of cases, examine those facts vis-à-vis defined crimes, and argue for a lack of reasonable justification,
concluding that convictions are demanded. Unlike Kennedy, Johnson and Ford, Presidents Carter and Reagan extensively employed forensic language. Reagan contended that the Soviet Union had "absolutely no justification, either legal or moral," for their action.28 Recognizing that Moscow "refused to admit" any wrongdoing, Reagan presented "the incontrovertible evidence" and "the evidence of... complicity" for the "Soviet crime against humanity." Interspersed throughout Carter's speech are familiar legal terms, including "kidnapping," "blackmail," "guilty," "proven," "enforce," "violated," "legality," and more.27 In justificatory rhetoric, though, less effort is made to indict perpetrators; instead, discourse transforms from epideictic to deliberative oratory, where official military responses of the U.S. government (both present and future) are explicated and defended. Admittedly this is a difference in degree, but it is a significant difference. The focus of consummatory discourse is on those accused of wrongdoing, while the attention of justificatory rhetoric extends to particulars of countermoves.

That the above difference is not categorical is clear given another important dissimilarity between the two species of crisis rhetoric. As noted above, justificatory rhetoric explains the fittingness of policies implemented as immediate and direct responses to crises. Dropping bombs, blockading islands or dispatching American marines are specific instances of retaliation emerging as direct responses to foreign aggression, violence and terrorism. This immediacy and directness may be contrasted with a special—albeit limited—deliberative function often performed in consummatory crisis rhetoric. Frequently, discourse becomes an opportunity or persuasive impetus for more indirect and less immediate policy proposals. The plea for adoption of a previously debated energy plan or change in posture regarding commitment to military expenditures are examples of how consummatory rhetoric, by capturing the urgency of a moment, can trigger more vigorous consideration of tangentially related issues. Such policies are not seen as specific countermoves chosen to meet exigencies of particular crises, but rather are policies whose philosophical rationales are embedded in lessons and principles emerging from crises. Reagan, for instance, cleverly used the 007 crisis to justify his defense policies. The President cited the admonition of Henry Jackson (a Democrat, no less) that the Soviet Union posed the greatest threat to United States security. Reagan then mentioned Jackson's support of the MX missile program, something "he considered vital to restore America's strategic parity with the Soviets." For Reagan, the downing of flight 007 was another example of the blatant Soviet threat, justifying implementation of the President's defense initiatives—including the MX missile program. Carter, too, used the hostage crisis to justify recent energy policies. Faced with exacerbation of the energy crisis during the Iranian situation, Carter maintained that "because of actions you and I and others have taken in the past few months, we have a fairly good supply of crude oil, gasoline, [and] home..."
heating oil on hand." Thus, consummatory rhetoric is not without a deliberative dimension, but such a deliberative forum is more remote, extending beyond the moves and countermoves constituting crises.

Stemming from our conclusion that consummatory discourse is more circumspect, ambiguous, and less direct is another essential distinction. Realizing that in the absence of clear-cut military retaliation public dissonance may not be reduced appreciably, presidents must necessarily spend considerable time and energy in consummatory discourse outlining various economic and diplomatic actions taken in the wake of crises. The lengthy listing of predictable actions allows the public to see presidents doing everything within their power to remain in control, to portray a posture of resolute firmness, and to demonstrate the gravity of situations. Hence, in the absence of in-kind responses, presidents can communicate to the public and to foreign aggressors their decisiveness, leaving little doubt that hostile activities have not and will not be tolerated. Reagan, therefore, refused the Soviet Airline Aeroflight access to American airports, called for an official condemnation of the Soviet attack, suspended negotiations on several bilateral arrangements, requested an end to the sale of military and strategic items to the Soviet Union, and asked Secretary of State Shultz to demand that Soviets disclose the facts surrounding the 007 incident, take corrective action, issue concrete assurances that similar incidents could not happen again and guarantee restitution. Similarly, Carter refused shipment of Iranian oil into the U.S., called for the examination of visas of Iranian students and other Iranians in America, froze Iranian assets, and discouraged any meeting of, or debate in, the United Nations Security Council regarding the Iranian problem. Accompanying delineation of economic and diplomatic sanctions, consummatory discourse references the ambiguous, yet in some senses clear, possibility of more stringent and severe future countermoves that may be employed should enemies ignore the onus placed on them.

Although spending considerable time outlining economic and diplomatic sanctions taken against aggressors, consummatory rhetoric also hints at the possibility of military retaliation. Carter, for instance, warned the Iranians that "grave consequences" would befall them if they refused to release the hostages. When asked about the possibility of a military strike, Carter explained that the U.S. preferred a peaceful resolution to the crisis, but it did have "other options available to it, which will be considered, depending upon the circumstances." Confronted with the Soviet Union, a more imposing bully than Iran, Reagan linked military retaliation to future U.S. policy: "Until they are willing to join the rest of the world community, we must maintain the strength to deter their aggression." The ploy here was to create an indirect threat: Moscow was told that no immediate military retaliation would be carried out, but Americans stood ready to defend themselves
should the Soviets continue such unruly behavior. This resolve was demonstrated in Reagan's ominous closing remark: "...history has asked much of the American of our own time. Much we have already given; much more we must be prepared to give."35

Consummatory rhetoric, therefore, establishes a qualified decisiveness, one making clear the intent of presidents to hold adversaries accountable and one retaining the kind of firmness and flexibility potentially useful to resolve crises. This type of posturing is less necessary in justificatory rhetoric, where communication of military countermoves or retaliations directly accomplishes the goal of documenting firmness and reducing ambiguity and dissonance. Yet even in justificatory discourse, presidents seek to maintain flexibility.

A final difference between the two modes of crisis rhetoric is the existence and relative importance of implied audiences. In justificatory rhetoric, the American public and instigators of crises are the two major audiences for presidential addresses. Although discourse may make some appeal to the world community, the decisiveness of retaliation causes crises to become more regional involving two primary parties. Rather than appealing for outside adjudication or conflict resolution, justificatory rhetoric localizes conflicts, allowing disputants to square off like pugilists. In consummatory discourse, though, appeals are made to impartial nations and peoples; appeals are designed to seek more global reaction to and resolution of hostilities. Notice, for example, that Reagan believed the Soviets owed an apology to "the world," and not just to South Korea and the United States.36 Reagan asked that "other countries [press] the International Aviation Organization to investigate this crime."37 He also noted that other nations, including Japan, Canada, Great Britain, China, and West Germany "all join us in denouncing the Soviet action and expressing our horror."38 Carter, too, claimed that "we have the full support of our allies ... . There is no civilized country on Earth which has not condemned the seizure and the holding of the hostages by Iran."39 Consummatory discourse, therefore, seems intent on polarizing participants in crises, setting foreign adversaries against the rest of "the civilized world." Such tactics signal enemies that the world views instigated actions as abhorrent. It also shows adversaries that any future aggression might be met by retaliation from the U.S. and its many allies. In short, in consummatory rhetoric, persuasion becomes more universal because of an expanded definition of audience. While justificatory rhetoric underscores the fact that disputants are addressing one another directly, consummatory discourse underscores the significant role of third parties. This dissimilarity is attributable to distinct conceptions of audience reflected, in part, by unique rhetorical appeals. While justificatory rhetoric is more specific, the appeals of consummatory discourse are more universal.
SIMILARITIES

Situations threatening American property or personnel abroad inspire presidents to remind the public of its deep ideological commitments. These commitments usually entail America’s responsibility to ensure the security of foreign nations. Crisis rhetoric rings of traditional post-World War II “Pax Americana,” where emphasis is placed on America’s ability to endure hardship, to sacrifice, and to act aggressively (or passively) when necessary. Kennedy, for example, spoke of “our character and courage as a nation and our commitments around the world.” He reminded watchful Americans that “the cost of freedom is always high—but Americans have always paid it.” Similarly, Johnson spoke of American global commitments: “In the larger sense this new act of aggression, aimed directly at our own forces, again brings home to all of us in the United States the importance of struggle for peace and security in Southeast Asia.” “The determination of all Americans,” continued Johnson, “to carry out our full commitment to the people and to the government of South Viet Nam will be redoubled by this outrage.” Reagan echoed a similar ideological call regarding world responsibility: “We preach no manifest destiny. But like Americans who began this country and brought forth this last, best hope of mankind, history has asked much of the Americans of our own time. Much we have already given, much more we must be prepared to give.” Finally, Carter exhorted the need for American resolve: “I am proud of this great Nation, and I want to thank all Americans for their prayers, their courage, their persistence, their strong support and patience. During these past days our national will, our courage, and our maturity have all been tested, and history will show that the people of the United States have met every test.” In every case, crises are posed as tests of national will. The feeling is impressed upon the public that commitments to protect world peace are anchored to the nation’s sacred principles. Failure to enact ideological pronouncements in the empirical world would not only betray international law but also the nation’s most fundamental ideological tenets. Such failure would, in effect, make citizens of the United States no better than crisis conspirators.

Crises also give presidents opportunities to unite the country around a single theme or to report that the public is rallying around presidential decisions. Reagan argued that “as we work with other countries to see that justice is done, the real test of our resolve is whether we have the will to remain strong, steady, and united. I believe more than ever—as evidenced by your thousands and thousands of wires and phone calls in these last few days—that we do.” Carter observed, “However hard it might be to see into the future, one thing tonight is clear: We stand together. We stand as a nation unified, a people determined to protect the life and honor of every American.” By relying on phrases like “brings home to all of us in the United States” and “the determination
Johnson fostered the perception that all Americans support his action.

Thus, whether or not presidents take military action, the very act of discoursing allows rekindling of ideological fervor and use of this fervor to rally public opinion around a central issue. To be sure, crisis rhetoric fulfills its forensic and deliberative functions, but it also "ceremonializes" crises. Crisis rhetoric celebrates American principles and the willingness to act upon these principles when duty calls.

Crisis rhetoric assumes the world is a relatively stable place, that countries get along with each other by following pre-established international laws and codes of action. It does recognize, however, that certain nations refuse to abide by regulatory codes. The major culprit is usually the Soviet Union, though smaller countries (like Iran and North Vietnam) are recognized as unruly sorts. The world of crisis rhetoric is systemic, where premium is placed on cooperation among interdependent nations, even among nations maintaining tenuous relationships. Interdependence has two faces: on one hand, it encourages cooperation; on the other, it recognizes "inevitability" of conflict when nations refuse to cooperate. The problem is that cooperation implies vulnerability. As Carter explained, "We must also recognize now, as we never have before, that it is our entire nation which is vulnerable, because of our overwhelming and excessive dependence on oil from foreign countries." Reagan seemed determined to suggest that the Soviet action inevitably flowed from a society where "shooting down a plane—even one with hundreds of innocent men, women, children, and babies—is a part of their normal procedure if that plane is in what they claim as their airspace." Kennedy chastised the Soviets for similar behavior: "our history—unlike that of the Soviets since the end of World War II—demonstrates that we have no desire to dominate or conquer any other nation or impose our system upon its people." The tone here is one of inevitability and preparedness. If the U.S. lives in a cooperative environment, yet certain nations prefer domination over cooperation, the U.S. must stand ready to exercise its substantial military, political and economic influence when the inevitability of conflict looms.

Crisis rhetoric does not occur in a dramatic vacuum. The recognition that there are forces in the world that deny international cooperation, that seek to conquer and dominate others, implies a world of heroes and villains. Hence, crisis rhetoric is a logical extension of foreign policy rhetoric in general where, as Wander explains, the world consists of those who "are good, decent, and at one with God's will" and those who act directly opposite. In crisis rhetoric, the United States is pictured as a relatively passive agent. This passive stance is indicative of a nation that recognizes its vulnerability, time and time again publicly announcing its peaceful intentions. Listening to presidents during times of crisis, one notices the United States as a nation interested in
maintaining world peace and enhancing the welfare of other nations—a natural position for a country that is good, decent, and living in accordance with God's will. In this scheme, instigators are easily pictured as active, aggressive agents intent on undermining the almost predetermined world order. The U.S., by virtue of its passive stance, can only be the innocent victim. But when culprit nations strike, the U.S., the hero, transforms into an active, retaliatory party. This "victimlike" persona lends credence to the U.S. when it fails to flex its considerable military muscle in response to adversaries and uses diplomatic and/or economic sanctions instead. It also justifies U.S. military interventions as morally appropriate acts of self-defense.

America's passive but heroic posture is also significant because it denies what might be construed as imperialistic foreign policies by the U.S. government. Remember Reagan's "we preach no manifest destiny," and Carter's claim that "the United States has neither the ability nor the will to dominate the world, to interfere in the internal affairs of other nations, to impose our will on other people whom we desire to be free." Recall, as well, Kennedy's insistence that "we have no desire to dominate or conquer any other nation or impose our system upon its people." These positions may be contrasted with Reagan's accusation that Moscow seeks "to expand and to dominate other countries," and Kennedy's charge that the Cuban people are "the puppets and agents" of a Soviet "international conspiracy" and are being "imprisoned" by their Soviet captors.

IMPLICATIONS

It could be argued that the differences and similarities uncovered by our investigation are merely an artifact—a function of presidential style and personality. While it is certainly true that personality and style are manifested discursively in presidential rhetoric, the regularity and consistency of differences and similarities within and between consummatory and justificatory rhetoric are suggestive of a more fundamental distinction. All of the instances of justificatory rhetoric, for example, contained a number of important and similar message features clearly distinguishing this type of talk from consummatory discourse, and vice versa. Had personality and style been dominant factors, the clustering of differences and similarities would not have emerged with the degree of regularity and invariance we discerned.

What is important rhetorically, therefore, is not that the U.S. responds militarily to some crises and purely discursively to others; what is noteworthy is that, regardless of more specific situational and personality considerations that potentially influence the president's choice of what kind of response to make, crisis rhetoric is predictably and regularly crafted commensurate with the larger situational response (i.e.,
the decision of whether to respond with deeds and/or words). This is significant given the presumption that rhetoric is quintessential in creating crises. For if our analysis is accurate, how presidents talk, that is, how they choose to speak about crises is as, if not more, important than physical/situational characteristics leading up to and following states of international emergency. In part what our study implies is that it is ultimately discourse that explains and shapes U.S. responses to foreign policy crises, for rhetorical forces are operative even when those responses are military (justificatory discourse). Presidential talk, whether justificatory or consummatory, is not only constrained by the particular situation spawning it, but to a great extent is and frames the response to the crisis. In a more specific manner than previous research, then, our study lends additional credence to the observation that rhetoric plays a paramount role in defining, shaping and responding to international crises.

Perhaps the most intriguing implication emerging from our analysis, however, is the recent trend by U.S. presidents to use consummatory as opposed to justificatory rhetoric when crises arise. This trend is especially evident in cases where the instigator is the Soviet Union or one of its satellite countries. Even Iran, a country blamed for recent attacks on U.S. military and civilian personnel in Lebanon, seems imperious to direct U.S. military retaliation since such action could conceivably move the Iranians closer to the Soviet camp.68 Our penchant for consummatory rhetoric not only seems more rational than relying primarily on military responses but is also premised on a pragmatic imperative: the U.S. and Soviet Union know that full-scale military confrontation benefits neither side and would likely lead to a nuclear nightmare. Admittedly, a move by the Soviets today similar to their placement of troops and nuclear missiles in Cuba in 1962 might precipitate a response much like Kennedy’s reply. However, we would wager that such a response would be preceded, if not replaced by energetic consummatory appeals. Importantly, the fact that the Soviets have been prudent when flaunting their military might in the southern hemisphere suggests that Moscow recognizes that certain conflicts cannot be handled in conventional military fashion and are best left either uninhibited or maintained at covert levels. Of course, the force of consummatory rhetoric stems from the ability and willingness of one side to use its military resources if pushed too far by the other. Instances of military resolve are, nevertheless, best demonstrated by relatively small-scale engagements. Thus, we have episodes like the U.S. invasion of Grenada, the Soviet war in Afghanistan, and the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. These military ventures indicate the resolve of major powers to use military force when circumstances dictate its use in a relatively risk-free manner. In the context of armed interventions like these, consummatory discourse appears more forceful.
It could be, then, that given the state of nuclear parity between ma-
jor powers, contemporary disputes can only be defused at the consum-
matory level. World leaders, even the sometimes bellicose President
Reagan, realize that contemporary world wars are best waged on sym-
bolic fronts: the alternative is nuclear genocide. And judging from the
history of the American/Soviet dialogue, battling can indeed be fierce.\textsuperscript{59}
Thus, despite protestations by some that Reagan's rhetorical response
to the downing of flight 007 was inadequate, Reagan is due hearty praise:
his rhetoric may not have set Soviet cities ablaze, but it did express na-
tional outrage and vent American anger in the only way feasible dur-
ing a thermonuclear age.\textsuperscript{60} Indeed, Reagan's discourse illustrates the
important "therapeutic" function of crisis rhetoric. By discoursing first,
and holding military options in check, presidents express America's
discontent and verbally release violent outrage. Presidents' words, in
this sense, are substituted for military firepower. Verbal responses
alleviate fear of crises escalating into unresolvable military conflicts,
while simultaneously giving form to public anger and longing for forceful
retaliation. Stated differently, consummatory discourse acts as a
therapeutic "buffer" between the desire for revenge and the necessity
of rational deliberation. Consummatory discourse gives people time to
regain control over their anger so that more rational, less violent solu-
tions to crises can be obtained.

Ironically, the problem with this primarily linguistic response to bla-
tant crisis initiation by aggressor nations, especially the Soviet Union,
is that discoursing only perpetuates already extant negative images each
side harbors of the other. The American public has long been the recip-
ient of rather skewed information about the Soviet Union. American
presidents are responsible for much of it.\textsuperscript{61} The problem, as Windt ex-
plains, is that "there is a reverence that surrounds the Presidency, and
much of this reverence comes from the fact that people believe the Presi-
dent has superior information and knowledge about national affairs."\textsuperscript{62}
He concludes, "The psychology persistent here makes the President's
decisions seem wise and prudent even when they turn out to be stupid.
The aura of reverence shapes a will to believe the President when he
speaks, and places the burden of disproving any Presidential statement
upon those who disagree."\textsuperscript{63} More importantly, presidential statements
take on added meaning when uttered during times of crisis. As Nelson
Polsby writes, "Invariably, popular response to a President during in-
ternational crises is favorable, regardless of the wisdom of the policies
he pursues."\textsuperscript{64} We do not mean to question the wisdom of American
presidents. Our point is that presidential crisis rhetoric can perpetuate
negative stereotypes of adversaries. Untempered by discourse bringing
to light other, more positive aspects of adversaries, or the possibility
of learning about them, crisis rhetoric may in the long term lead to the
very conflagration it so carefully seeks to avoid.
Additionally, though, if crisis rhetoric acts therapeutically, one wonders how long public frustration over apparent failure to strike back at aggressors can be suppressed by consummatory discourse. Does the public hold back its desire for violent retribution, despite countless presidents telling them that such retribution would make them no better than the adversary? Could small-scale engagements like Grenada, besides illustrating willful use of military power, also become opportunities to release suppressed frustration? If so, how long might it be before one such engagement, untempered, and perhaps even coaxed along by consummatory discourse, creates a larger crisis incapable of being resolved at a purely symbolic level?

For the time being, until the major powers adopt a rhetoric that ameliorates negative perceptions and stereotypes rather than perpetuating them, presidents will respond to crises with the only weapon they can conscientiously and pragmatically use, and that weapon will be a rhetorical one.

ENDNOTES


5. Our analysis consisted of a microscopic examination of presidents' use of language and various argumentative appeals. Macroscopically, we explored general speech act strategies performed by presidents to alleviate crises.


11. Kennedy, "The Cuban Missile Crisis" 38.


17. Johnson 65.


27. Carter 2132-2135; and "The President's News Conference" 2167-2173.


29. Carter, "Iranian Situation" 2133.


31. Carter, "Iranian Situation" 2133.


33. Carter 2168.

34. Reagan 1202.

35. Reagan 1202.


41. Kennedy 40.

42. Kennedy 40.

43. Johnson 65.

44. Reagan 1202.


46. Reagan 1202.

47. Carter 2168.


49. Carter 2168.

53. Reagan 1202.
54. Carter 2173.
55. Kennedy 38.
56. Reagan 1200.
60. For an insightful article on presidential military options and the possibility of nuclear war during contemporary crises, see John Walcott, "Why Reagan's Hands Are Tied," Newsweek 12 Sept. 1983: 30.
61. See Wander, "The Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy," and Bernstein and Matusow, eds., Twentieth Century America: Recent Interpretations.
63. Windt, "The Presidency and Speeches of International Crises" 8.