

Critical Discourse Analysis of the Speeches of the Presidents' Declaration of War

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Abstract

The current paper examines the speeches of President Trump, Putin, and Obama, in which they declared war and referred to it as a "special military operation," through the lens of Van Leeuwen's (2007) critical discourse analysis. The study compares declarations of war with those made by the Russians on Ukraine and American presidents on Arab countries and Ukraine at the beginning of the U.S. military conflicts. The study analyzed all three speeches in light of the hypothesis (Just War Theory). They aim to justify their decisions to the public and persuade them of the necessity of these actions. To explore this, the study enhances our qualitative and quantitative analysis of each speech with data from The New York Times, The Washington Post, and El Diario. The findings revealed slight differences and big similarities among the three speeches, which emerged in the rationale for the attacks and in the perceived threats to their adversaries.

Keywords: Just war theory, CDA, Vladimir Putin, Obama, and Trump.

التحليل النقدي للخطاب في خطابات إعلان الحرب للرؤساء

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المخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة خطابات الرؤساء ترامب وبوتين وأوباما، التي أعلنوا فيها الحرب أو أشاروا إليها بوصفها «عملية عسكرية خاصة»، وذلك من خلال توظيف منظور التحليل النقدي للخطاب عند فان ليوون (2007). وتقارن الدراسة بين إعلانات الحرب المختلفة، ولا سيما تلك التي صدرت عن الجانب الروسي تجاه أوكرانيا، وتلك التي صدرت عن الرؤساء الأمريكيين تجاه دول عربية وأوكرانيا في بدايات النزاعات العسكرية الأمريكية. وقد حلت الدراسة الخطابات الثلاثة في ضوء فرضية «نظرية الحرب العادلة». وتهدف هذه الخطابات إلى تبرير القرارات المتخذة أمام الرأي العام وإقناعه بضرورة هذه الإجراءات. ولتحقيق ذلك، عززت الدراسة تحليلها النوعي والكمي لكل خطاب ببيانات مستمدة من صحف نيويورك تايمز وواشنطن بوست وإل دياريو. وقد أظهرت النتائج وجود اختلافات طفيفة وتشابهات كبيرة بين الخطابات الثلاثة، تجلت في مبررات شن الهجمات وفي التصورات المتعلقة بالتهديدات التي يمثلها الخصوم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية الحرب العادلة، التحليل النقدي للخطاب، فلاديمير بوتين، أوباما، ترامب.

1. Introduction

February 24, 2022, goes down in history because on that day, Russian leader Vladimir Putin broadcast a message, which quickly spread worldwide, in which he declared the start of a “special military operation,” a euphemism to avoid using the word “war.” He justified it as the only means to achieve a peaceful outcome, which reminds us of Orwell’s (1949) words, when, in his work 1984, he satirically stated that war was peace, since political leaders used it to manipulate the people, making them believe it was protecting them from potential external dangers, when in reality, it was a mechanism to distract from the existing internal problems in the country.

This study continues the research started in [1] in which we conducted a contrastive analysis of the war speeches made in March 2003 by the then heads of government of the United States (George W. Bush), the United Kingdom (Tony Blair), and Spain (José María Aznar), with which they announced the beginning of the war in Iraq. Their main justification for the war was based primarily on two reasons: to overthrow Saddam Hussein’s regime, which they accused of hiding weapons of mass destruction, and to save the world from nuclear danger.

On this occasion, the study takes as a starting point the war declarations by Vladimir Putin, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump regarding Ukraine and the Arab countries, respectively. According to our initial hypothesis, all three speeches contain, just as observed in the speeches of Bush, Blair, and Aznar, the principles that govern “just wars,” in line with the so-called Just War Theory [2-5], although specifically focus on the ones related to *ius ad bellum*, that is, the requirements that must be considered before starting a “just war.” In other words, the aim is to determine whether the parameters established by this theory are explicitly or implicitly present in the messages of these three leaders. To achieve this, drawing on fields of pragmatics and critical discourse analysis, the study contrasts the three selected speeches, with the qualitative analysis complemented by data from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *El Diario*). Then it focuses on their use within the scope of critical discourse analysis as tools for media manipulation by people in power, aimed at justifying and legitimising [6] their actions before the public. After addressing the methodological aspects, the study analyses each declaration to find its similarities and differences, and concludes with the corresponding conclusions.

2. Research Gap

Although Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been widely used to examine political discourse, including presidential speeches, there remains a noticeable gap in the focused analysis of presidents’ declarations of war as a distinct discourse genre. Existing studies have primarily concentrated on general political rhetoric, campaign speeches, or post-conflict narratives, often overlooking the critical moment of war declaration, where language plays a decisive role in legitimizing military action.

Furthermore, while earlier research has drawn on frameworks such as those developed by Norman Fairclough and Teun A. van Dijk, limited attention has been paid to systematically applying these models to uncover the ideological, persuasive, and manipulative strategies embedded in war declaration speeches. In particular, there is insufficient exploration of how linguistic features such as modality, transitivity, and evaluative language are strategically employed to construct legitimacy,

shape public opinion, and justify violence. Another significant gap lies in the comparative and diachronic analysis of such speeches across different political contexts and time periods. Few studies investigate how the discourse of war declarations evolves in response to changing geopolitical conditions, media environments, and audience expectations. Additionally, the intersection between discourse and broader frameworks such as international law principles (e.g., *jus ad bellum*) is often underexplored in linguistic analyses. Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by providing a systematic Critical Discourse Analysis of presidents' war declaration speeches, focusing on the linguistic and ideological mechanisms used to construct narratives of necessity, morality, and national unity. It also seeks to contribute to the literature by offering a more nuanced understanding of how discourse functions as a tool of power in moments of conflict escalation.

3. Research Questions

1. How is political power and authority constructed in the president's speeches declaring war?
2. What discursive strategies are used to legitimize military action in the Putin, Obama, and Trump presidents in declaration of war?

4. Theoretical Framework (van Leeuwen's CDA Approach)

This study adopts the framework of Theo van Leeuwen within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how discourse constructs and legitimizes social practices, particularly war. Van Leeuwen's approach focuses on two key analytical dimensions:

4.1 Representation of Social Actors

Proposes that discourse represents social actors in specific ways, including [7]:

Inclusion vs. exclusion (who is mentioned or omitted)

Activation vs. passivation (who performs actions vs. who receives them)

Nomination vs. categorization (naming individuals vs. grouping them)

This aspect helps reveal how presidents construct identities of "us" (the nation) and "them" (the enemy).

4.2 Legitimation Strategies

A central component of van Leeuwen's model is the concept of legitimation, which explains how actions are justified through discourse. He identifies four main strategies:

Authorization – referring to authority (e.g., laws, leaders, institutions, religion)

Moral Evaluation – appealing to values (e.g., freedom, justice, duty)

Rationalization – using logic, purpose, or necessity (e.g., security, defense)

Mythopoesis – using narratives or stories to justify actions (e.g., heroism, punishment, sacrifice)

By applying these categories, the study uncovers how war is framed as legitimate, necessary, and morally justified. Research on presidential war rhetoric using Critical Discourse Analysis has extensively focused on the "War on Terror" and recent conflicts, such as the wars in Iraq and Ukraine [7]. While existing literature effectively explores themes of legitimation, the "Us vs. Them"

dichotomy, and the application of Just War Theory, several critical gaps remain for further investigation [8].

5. Analysis of Putin's Discourse

The study analyses Putin's discourse and find a message, whose words constitute the CDA, in which he addresses several recipients: the Russian people as a whole ("Dear citizens of Russia"; "Dear compatriots"); the Ukrainian army, whom he refers to as "Dear comrades," in a clear attempt at manipulation to have them lay down their arms, as the study explain later; and, in general, all states supporting Ukraine, who automatically become his enemies. The most evident intention of the declaration is to announce the start of the war with Ukraine and to justify that decision.

6. The War Discourse as a Tool of Manipulation

A "communicative and interactional practice, in which the manipulator exerts control over other people, generally against their interests" is how the research defines manipulation [9]. The study shares this author's view that "manipulation is generally discursive and involves an abuse of power" [10], and therefore, it must be studied through critical discourse analysis. For this, [11] recommends an interdisciplinary and "triangular" approach that simultaneously accounts for cognitive, social, and discursive aspects.

From a cognitive perspective, the goal is to manipulate the audience's mind by controlling their thoughts, emotions, and actions, since attitudes are composed of these three components. If, in a war discourse, the current study is presented only with the negative characteristics of the opponent ("so that today's neo-Nazis would take power in Ukraine") and the severe consequences of not confronting them ("With a persistent threat coming from the land of contemporary Ukraine, Russia cannot feel comfortable, grow, or survive").

The study thinks of them as monsters, not human beings, which will create a depersonalized view of the enemy. This increases our fear [12] while simultaneously intensifying anger and hatred towards those who "destroy" the homeland. As the previous point, from a social perspective, politicians are interested in generating "a general attitude socially shared, [because] it is much more stable than individual mental models (and opinions) of individual users," and thus "manipulation will aim at the formation or modification of more general shared social representations such as attitudes and ideologies about important social issues" [13].

Finally, for manipulation to be effective, one or more discourses are needed, typically based on deflecting blame to others or external factors, presenting "us" versus "them" in a positive light, and silencing facts that do not align with one's interests, thus generating a biased opinion in the recipients of the messages. The audience can also be manipulated through the creation of a mental conflict known as cognitive dissonance [14] which creates guilt and discomfort due to the mismatch between what the study think (e.g., "I am against the war") and what we are asked to do, that is, protect the homeland from a serious threat, so that not supporting the decision of our leaders would imply that we are not good patriots.

In the specific case of war speeches, their creators often base their construction on the principles that govern "just wars" the well-known Just War Theory [2], [3], [4], [5], a theory that, as the study explained in [1] deals with regulating the moral framework of war in three different temporal

contexts: (1) before the declaration of war (*ius ad bellum*), *Jus ad bellum* is one pillar of just war theory. Just war theory holds that war should be condoned only under 'just' conditions [15] check whether the essential requirements that would justify such a decision are met; (2) during the course of the military conflict (*ius in bello*), to dictate the rules that must be respected during the war; [16], and (3) after its conclusion, including the behaviors expected from those responsible once the conflict ends (*ius post bellum*) [17].

The study shed light on the pre-conflict phase (*ius ad bellum*), in the analysis whose principles should be present in the declarations of "just wars" [18] (1) the military action responds to a just cause; (2) it is used as a last resort, after all peaceful means have been exhausted; (3) a legitimate authority declares it; (4) it is based on the existence of a danger and the need to defend oneself from the enemy; (5) it is made with good intention; (6) there are reasonable expectations of success; (7) the end justifies the means; (8) the final result must be better than the situation before the armed conflict; (9) the use of force must be proportional to the damage previously suffered; and (10) the number of civilian casualties should be minimized as much as possible.

Throughout the following pages, once the methodology of this research is explained, the study reviews whether these principles are present in the speeches of Putin, Obama, and Trump, and whether they employ what is called the "rhetoric of sacrifice" [19], which consists of reminding the citizens of the sacrifices previous generations had to face in past wars, to urge them to sacrifice again for the national good.

7. Methodology

Although the analysis of the three speeches is primarily qualitative, it is supplemented with quantitative data obtained from corpus management and text analysis (The New York Times, The Washington Post, and El Diario) newspapers. This allows the study to detect, for example, the most frequent lexical units and collocations in each speech, as well as their contexts of use. The speeches of the three presidents are sourced from the websites listed in **Table 1**: Obama's and Trumps are in English language, while Putin's speech is based on the English translation of the original Russian version.

Table 1: Source of the transcripts of the three speeches

Barack Obama	The New York Times
Donald Trump	The Washington Post
Vladimir Putin	El Diario

Table 2: Date, language, and word count of each corpus

Vladimir Putin (Russia → Ukraine)	Donald Trump (USA _ Syria)	Barack Obama (USA → Libya)
24/02/2022	14/04/2018	18/03/2011
1,693	863	1,251

As shown in **Table 2**, Putin's speech consists of a total of 1,693 words, Obama's of 1,251, and Trump's of 863. The war declarations were issued chronologically in this order: first, Obama's in 2011, followed by Trump's in 2018, and lastly, Putin's in 2022.

8. Critical Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump, Barack Obama, and Vladimir Putin's War Speeches

Below, the results of the critical discourse analysis by [20] of Putin's speech from February 24, 2022, in which he declared war on Ukraine, are compared with Obama's (2011) and Trump's (2018) speeches against Libya and Syria, respectively.

8.1. Contrastive Analysis of Data

The most frequently used words in Putin's speech, as follows: Russia (17 times); force(s) (15); Ukraine (13); people (7); homeland (6); Crimea (5); war (5); future (5); people (4); country (4); Sebastopol (4); Donbas (4); events (4); state (4); right(s) (4); 2014 (3); protect (3); citizens (3); sovereignty (3); regime (3); territories (3); people (3), and residents (3). The terms have been used by Putin, "2014" and "eight years" to highlight how Ukrainians have allegedly been "exposed to terrorization and genocide by the Kiev's regime," with their leaders refusing to work with Russia to prevent war ("For eight years, endlessly long eight years, we have done everything possible to resolve the situation by peaceful and political means").

With this, Putin victimizes himself and presents himself as the savior, not only of the homeland (Russia) but also of the people he declares war on (Ukraine), manipulating its citizens to believe that he is doing them a favor by intervening militarily in the region. His patriotic discourse is reflected in the repetition of words like people, homeland, and citizens, as seen in "They have left us no other opportunity to protect Russia, our people," where he appeals to the hearts of Russian citizens for their support. Furthermore, the word "war" appears five times: four times referring to World War II, and just once for the current conflict ("They, of course, will go against Crimea, just like in Donbas, with a war, to kill"), where he uses the pronoun "they" to refer to NATO countries and Ukraine, accusing them of having provoked the initiation of hostilities with Russia, making it seem like they started the war, not the Russian government.

Among the proper names most repeated in Putin's speech are Ukraine (18 times), Russia (17), Crimea (5), Sebastopol (4), Donbas (4), World War II (3), and USSR (2). Notably, he frequently mentions Crimea and Sebastopol to bring up negative facts about the opponent, intentionally reminding Russian citizens of the stance taken by the United States and Ukraine against the independence of these two territories in 2014, which they deemed illegitimate. This historical event is accompanied by two others that benefit Russia, such as "During 2000-2005, the arms of the Russian forces disallowed terrorists in the Caucasus, defended the integrity of our state, saved Russia," and "In 2015, the Armed Forces placed a reliable barrier to prevent terrorists from Syria from entering Russia." According to [21] classification, Putin engages in "associating the adversary with negative facts," "accusing them of hiding malicious intentions," "making the differences that separate them evident," and "revealing uncomfortable facts."

It is notable that, to declare war on Ukraine, Putin euphemistically uses the phrase "special military operation," but does use the word "war" to accuse NATO and "the extremist neo-Nazis in

Ukraine" of going against Crimea, just like in Donbas, "with a war, to kill, as the Ukrainian nationalist bands, accomplices of Hitler, killed defenseless people during the Great Patriotic War." As seen, the message aims to create a mental image for the audience based on a false analogy that equates the German Nazis of World War II and Hitler with the Ukrainian government, represented by Zelensky, whom he never explicitly names, an intentional and quite typical strategy in such speeches but rather attacks his party as a whole, along with its international allies. Also related to Hitler and World War II, the Nazi root appears six times: Nazis (2 times), neo-Nazis (2), Nazism (1), and denazification (1).

8.2. Presence of the Principles of ius ad bellum in the Analyzed Speeches

As can be seen in **Table 3**, all three speeches explicitly present up to nine of the ten principles of ius ad bellum, with the only exception being principle 10 ("to avoid, as much as possible, civilian casualties"). In all three declarations, there is a greater emphasis on the need to protect the population from the current dangers caused by their own leaders, such as "chemical weapons" (Trump), "genocide" (Putin), and "atrocities" (Obama), rather than on mentioning the negative consequences of war and the collateral damage it will bring, such as the loss of human lives intentionally silenced to avoid panic and adverse reactions from the citizens.

Table 3: Presence of the Principles of ius ad bellum in the President's Speeches

Phrases	President Obama	USA President Trump	The President of Russia, Putin
Responds to a just cause	"A campaign of fear and oppression started. In light of this unfairness."	"our cause is just"	"By the time World War I ended, over 1 million individuals had died or been hurt by chemical weapons. We never want to witness that horrifying ghost come back."
2. As a last resort (after exhausting peaceful means)	"Many warnings were provided that Qaddafi had to end his oppressive actions. Yet again, Qaddafi decided to disregard the wishes of his people and the global community".	"Creating this deterrent is really important for the national security of the United States".	"This is the red line that people have talked about a lot. They have gone past it".
3. Declared by a legitimate authority	"And that's why the United States has worked with our allies and partners to shape a strong international response at the United Nations."	"So today, the nations of Britain, France, and the United States of America have marshalled their righteous power against barbarism and brutality."	"In this context, following Article 51 of Part 7 of the UN Charter, with the approval of the Federation Council of Russia and in line with the friendship and mutual assistance treaties approved by the Federal Assembly on February 22 of this year with the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, I have chosen to conduct a special military operation".
4. Existence of a danger (to defend against the enemy)	"If we don't do anything, we can be sure that Qaddafi will do terrible things to his own people."	"The goal of what we are doing tonight is to create a powerful warning against making, spreading, and using chemical weapons".	"For our nation, this is really about life or death, and it affects our future as a people historically".
5. Made with good intentions.	"Yesterday, the U.N. Security Council made a strong decision after the Libyan people and	"The United States will be a friend and a partner, but the future of the area is up to its own people".	"We don't plan to take over any Ukrainian lands. We won't force anything on anyone."

	the Arab League asked for help. They passed a resolution that calls for stopping the violence against citizens."		
6. Reasonable expectations of success	"Our aim is clear, our mission is fair, and our group is powerful".	"The united response from America, Britain, and France to these terrible acts will use all parts of our national strength: military, economic, and diplomatic."	"The choices we make will be put into action, the goals we set will be reached, and the safety of our country will be securely ensured".
7. The end justifies the means.	"It allows the use of force while clearly promising to take every action needed to end the killing".	"We are prepared to sustain this response until the Syrian regime stops its use of prohibited chemical agents"	"I want to say again that what we are doing is to protect ourselves from the dangers that are being made against us, and to stop an even bigger disaster than the one we are facing right now."
8. The end result will be better than before the war.	"We have expressed our backing for a group of universal values, and we stand behind the political and economic changes that the people in the area deserve".	"We hope that God will lead everyone in the area to a future filled with respect and peace.	"Even if it's really hard, I need you to get this, and I'm asking everyone to work together so we can get through this sad time quickly".
9. The use of force will be proportional to the damage suffered.	"The United States of America won't just sit back and do nothing when things happen that threaten world peace and safety. That's why I've made this choice, believing that taking action is important.	"I ordered the United States armed forces to launch precision strikes on targets associated with the chemical weapons capabilities of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad"	"Anyone who attempts to obstruct us, and even more so, create threats for our country, for our people, should know that Russia's response will be immediate and will bring consequences never experienced in their history"
10. Civilian casualties must be avoided	(Not referred to avoiding civilian casualties during the war, but rather to Qaddafi's "atrocities" against his own people: "Our focus has been clear: protecting innocent civilians within Libya")	(Not referred to avoiding civilian casualties during the war, but rather to the "massacre" from the "chemical weapons" used by Syrian dictator against his own people)	(Not referred to avoiding civilian casualties during the war, but rather to the supposed "genocide" of Zelensky's government, who "now also aspire to possess nuclear weapons")

***(Ius ad bellum)* Principles in the Three Speeches**

As can be noted in Table 3, they present themselves not only as saviors of their respective homelands but also of the people who are the target of the attack, promising them a better future. This corresponds to principle 8 ("the result must be better than the situation before the armed conflict"), which was presented through the manipulation technique of creating a problem, "exaggerating the prior threat" (principle 4), and then providing a solution. This is observed in Putin "It was necessary to stop this nightmare immediately: the genocide against the millions of people living there"), Obama ("We have every reason to believe that Qaddafi would commit atrocities against his people"), and

Trump ("Last Saturday, the Assad regime again deployed chemical weapons to slaughter innocent civilians"). The study also noticed in their speeches an intentional distortion of reality to make the public believe that the most important decisions are in the hands of the people, combining populism with the technique of expectation [22], as in "I believe in your support, in that invincible force that our love for the homeland gives us," with repeated appeals to the heart of the people ("It was simply impossible to bear all this") and their patriotism ("to protect Russia, our people"), to make it clear that if one disagrees with the war, one is not a true patriot.

Additionally, to win the public's favor, they dedicate a large portion of their speech to appealing to citizens' hatred and anger. Putin emphasizes the "nightmare," "the genocide against the millions of people living there," and "the pain of the people," blaming it all on "the extremist neo-Nazis in Ukraine," who want "a war, to kill, like the Ukrainian nationalist bands, accomplices of Hitler, killed defenseless people during the Great Patriotic War," and who "now also aspire to possess nuclear weapons." As seen, he draws on the deaths of other wars to justify the current one and associates the Ukrainian government with Hitler. At the same time, Trump and Obama focus on the terrible acts supposedly committed by their enemies, as when Trump talks about a chemical attack that caused a massacre and left "mothers and fathers, infants and children, thrashing in pain, and gasping for air." Obama, in turn, refers to "terrorism against the American people as well as others," a tactic also used by George Bush when, after the September 11, 2001 attacks, he declared "a global war on terror." Putin also recalls past events related to terrorism, and through the fallacy of false analogy, compares them to the current situation in Ukraine, as when he says, "I want to remind you that from 2000 to 2005, we fought against terrorists in the Caucasus, kept our country safe, and saved Russia," and "In 2015, our Armed Forces created a strong barrier to stop terrorists from Syria from coming into Russia. We had no other choice to keep ourselves safe. The same thing is happening now. We have no other way to protect Russia."

Principles 3 ("declared by a legitimate authority") and 6 ("there are reasonable expectations of success") are based on the emphasis all three presidents place on the military force they have from their allies' support (Obama and Trump) and from all of Russia in Putin's case. This increases the audience's perception that they are sufficiently backed to declare war. They also make use of the authority argument by referencing specific legal documents like "Resolution 1973" (Obama) and "Article 51 of Part 7 of the UN Charter, with the sanction of the Federation Council of Russia and in compliance with the treaties of friendship and mutual assistance ratified by the Federal Assembly on February 22 of this year" (Putin).

Related to principle 6, these positive expectations for the future serve all three leaders to defend, at the same time, principle 7 ("the end justifies the means"), as they argue that war will be the salvation of the people after the grave threat posed by not initiating military actions, which also justifies the principle that "the use of force must be proportional to the damage suffered previously" (principle 9). For example, Putin backs himself on the crossing of the "red line" by Ukraine and the defense of "our historical future as a people," while also victimizing himself ("It was simply impossible to bear all this. It was necessary to stop this nightmare immediately"). Moreover, he insists on the urgency of taking measures (topos of urgency), reinforcing it with the "temporal approach strategy" [23], stating, "It's only a matter of time: they are preparing, waiting for the right

moment.” In fact, of the three leaders, we consider Putin to be the one who threatens his adversary – and its allies – with the most intensity, implicitly appealing to the fear of a possible nuclear war.

The results of the analysis of all three speeches show that the *ius ad bellum* principles are combined with other media manipulation techniques, such as emphasizing facts that benefit them while silencing those that don't. The study noted a clear example on Trump tells the American people everything that the government has done “to protect the American people,” like fighting against ISIS terrorism in Syria and now preventing the massacre that chemical weapons could cause, not only in that country but also in the United States (“Establishing this deterrent is a vital national security interest of the United States”) and the world in general. This appeal to fear serves to convince the public that they are acting for their own good, as it is easier to manipulate people when they are consumed by fear, given its irrational nature [24].

Putin also uses this same manipulation technique when he reminds the population of everything his government has done for them (“the assistance we provided to Kazakhstan”: “Let me remind you that in 2000-2005 we militarily rejected terrorists in the Caucasus, defended the integrity of our state, saved Russia”; “In 2014, they supported the residents of Crimea and Sebastopol,” and “In 2015, the Armed Forces placed a reliable barrier to prevent terrorists from Syria from entering Russia”). He ends by concluding: “We had no other way to protect ourselves. The same is happening now. We have been left with no other opportunity.” He continues arguing that “Russia cannot feel secure, develop, or exist with a constant threat emanating from the territory of modern Ukraine,” making it necessary to declare war on Ukraine urgently. This accentuates the technique of reciprocity (*quid pro quo*), establishing, through the fallacy of consequence, that the Russians are in debt to them, and that's why they must now unconditionally support their decision to attack Ukraine. Other fallacious arguments are also employed, as in this fragment of Putin's speech, where he tries to manipulate the audience and convince them of his actions in Ukraine: “Dear citizens of Russia, Forces are always needed, always, but force can be of different quality.” At the heart of the politics of the ‘empire of lies,’ which I spoke about at the beginning of my message, lies primarily brute and direct force. In such cases, we say: ‘If there is force, why use intelligence?’ However, we know that true force lies in justice and truth, which are on our side. Moreover, if that is the case, then it is hard to disagree with the fact that force and the willingness to fight are the foundation of independence and sovereignty, the necessary foundation upon which one can reliably build their future, build their home, their family, their homeland.”

In this part of his declaration, where he hopes to win the favor of the public by appealing to their patriotism (“Dear citizens of Russia”), he speaks about two types of “force” of “different quality”. He contrasts “brute and direct force” on the one hand with “true force [...] in justice and truth” on the other. Putin attributes the first to the politics of the “empire of lies,” in a clear allusion to the United States and its allies, and the second to Russia. From this completely subjective assessment and the polarization between the good (“us”) and the bad (“them”), he concludes that the Russian people must agree with him that “force and the willingness to fight are the foundation of independence and sovereignty, the necessary foundation upon which one can reliably build their future, build their home, their family, their homeland.” The study noted this is a clear case of manipulation, as it is based on his own interpretation of force as something positive and the disqualification of the enemy,

whom he accuses of using "brute" force. Moreover, he claims that fighting is the only way to ensure the future of the home, the family, and the homeland.

9. Conclusions

The current paper has had the opportunity to verify that, in the analyzed war speeches. The goal is to make the words gentler so they don't sound harsh and to help show that we are kind and good people. [25], and therefore they respond to political interests that are concealed from the public and disguised with a rhetoric based on sacrifice [26] and the principles of *ius ad bellum*, to convince the audience that these are "just wars" and thus justify their actions.

In all three declarations, it is made clear that (1) the military action responds to a just cause; (2) it is resorted to as a last resort, after the exhaustion of peaceful means; (3) a legitimate authority declares it; (4) it is based on the existence of a danger and the need to defend against the enemy; (5) it is made with good intentions; (6) there are reasonable expectations of success; (7) the end justifies the means; (8) the result improved the situation before the armed conflict; and (9) the use of force proportional to the damage suffered previously. However, at no point do they guarantee that civilian casualties avoided as much as possible (principle 10), but this collateral effect of military intervention is silenced, and what is emphasized is that the war put an end to the suffering of the population and the deaths of civilians at the hands of their current leaders, thus attempting to manipulate the audience with the idea that the initiation of hostilities against the respective countries is helping them.

These principles are developed through a "war" of words against the adversary, in which they attack its credibility, associate it with negative events, and shift the blame, accusing the enemy of causing the war. At the same time, they present themselves as the saviors of the homeland. This contributes to biasing the opinions of the recipients of the messages. They do not hesitate to rely, moreover, on an appeal to fear and cognitive dissonance, to create a mental conflict in the public between what they consider ethically correct (being a pacifist) and what the homeland requires to confront the grave threat posed by the enemy. In fact, a false analogy is drawn between unconditional support for the government and patriotism, based on the idea that if you do not support their decision, you are opposing your country's interests.

As can be seen, this is a manipulation strategy in which political leaders offer us a polarized and incomplete view of the facts, highlighting those that favor them and omitting those that could harm them, to legitimize their actions, as shown in the three analyzed speeches. In these, the study detected the same patterns, with speeches created ad hoc to persuade the audience to accept their country's entry into war. Only a few differences are noticeable in the main reason why each leader decides to initiate hostilities. Putin and Trump insist on chemical weapons. At the same time, Obama focuses more on terrorism and Gaddafi's oppressive regime, and on the type of threat they pose to the enemy: Putin with a possible nuclear war, though not explicitly stating it, and Obama and Trump with the application of joint military force by the U.S. and its allies.

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