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In a speech of over 3,000 words, the word "Constitution" never appears, "Congress" appears only in passing ("consulting the bipartisan leadership of Congress"), and the word "war" shows up only once--not, perish the thought! in reference to the ongoing "kinetic military action," but in the context of "sectarian war" as one of the dangers to be avoided as the Arab world liberalizes.

But one word that certainly shows up a lot, is "I." This speech was inordinately heavy on the first-person singular:

I made it clear that Gadhafi had lost the confidence of his people....

I said that he needed to step down from power....

I ordered warships....

I refused to let that happen....

I authorized military action....

I refused to wait....

The task that I assigned our forces....

I will never hesitate....

...and so on.

It's not just that this hits the ear as self-referential and presumptuous--it's that this particular construction shows that other constitutional bodies have no role to play in the president's world view.

Under our Constitution, war is not a first-person affair. As James Wilson, one of the Constitution's architects, put it before the Pennsylvania ratifying convention: "this system will not hurry us into war; it is calculated to guard against it. It will not be in the power of a single man, or a single body of men, to involve us in such distress; for the important power in declaring war is vested in the legislature at large."

That check, it seems, has vanished, despite the role it once played in Obama's worldview (or in his campaign promises, at least).

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