Myths, Communication, and Performance: A Cultural Discourse Analysis of Pakistani Diplomatic Cypher

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Abstract

The present study aims to analyze the modes of communication as the categories of cultural discourse analysis, which are loaded with self-constructed stories, ways of communication, and demanding performances. The present study is qualitatively conducted to understand cultural discourse as the mode of communication between Pakistan and the United States. The diplomatic Cypher was sent from the Pakistani Foreign Office in the US, which consisted of the discussion between the Pakistani Ambassador, Asad Majeed Khan, and the US representative, Donald Lu. As the diplomatic Cypher consists of the language of diplomacy, so the Cypher is loaded with different myths and communication modes. The study has adopted the cultural discourse analysis model of Donal Carbaugh (2007), which consists of the five modes of communication as the categories of cultural discourse analysis. The study found that the US believes in its myths and construction of values and direction, so it requires particular performances by its aided and allied countries. The descriptive mode describes the reservations of the US against the Pakistani PM 's actions of visiting Russia during the Russia-Ukraine war. The interpretative mode represents that the US cannot accept Pakistan's neutral stance on the Russia-Ukraine war. At the same time, the interpretative mode of Pakistani officials says that Pakistan is free in foreign policy. The comparative mode describes that Pakistan requires similar importance as India is given by the US while the US stance has a soft corner for India regarding its strategic significance against China. The critical mode is that if Pakistan follows the US directions (remove Imran Khan from the chair of Prime Minister), it will be advantageous for Pakistan. At the same time, Pakistan would not favour its stance compared to India, as India has more significance due because of China.

Key Terms: *Myths, Communication, Performance, Cultural Discourse Analysis*

Introduction

The diplomatic conversation between Pakistan's Foreign Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan and representatives of the State Department, including Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, was captured in a Cypher by the US foreign office. The Intercept website made the secret Cypher public shortly after Pakistan's National Assembly was dissolved on August 9, 2023. On March 7, 2022, this Diplomatic Cypher was delivered to the

Pakistani Foreign Office (Grim & Hussain, 2023). The Cypher consists of diplomatic discussion based on the dominant culture inlaid in it.

The US and the Western countries claim to be champions of human rights and freedom and that their policies are ideal for better state affairs (Kim & Sherman, 2007). Hegemony discourse is evident in the US official letters and the Cyphers. According to Sullivan (2004), the US employs "Liberal Values plantations" and the "Freedom Agenda" to win over leftist parties, internal issues, and the sympathies of marginalized groups in the target nation (Sullivan, 2004). The purpose behind the inlaid culture in Pakistani Diplomatic Cypher is to check Pakistan to be a Russian-ally due to Western interests during the Russia-Ukraine war. The present study is conducted to understand cultural discourse in the Pakistani Diplomatic Cypher sent on March 07, 2022; after that, the regime was changed in Pakistan. The study has adopted the cultural discourse analysis model of Donal Carbaugh (2007), which consists of five modes of communication in which cultural discourse is inlaid.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

The official modes of communication are heavily loaded with the myths of cultural discourse. Modes of communication are embedded in the discourse, which are intentionally practicing the directions, performances, and constructed realities of the world. Exposition of the cultural myths and modes of communication can lead to a better understanding of nation-to-nation communication.

1.2   Research Objectives

- To understand the culture of the discourse loaded in Pakistani Diplomatic Cypher.
- To explore the communicative modes inlaid in the Cypher.

1.3   Research Questions

How is the discourse of the Cypher loaded with culture, myths, and performance?

What type of modes of communication are addressed in the Diplomatic Cypher?

1.4   Significance of the Study

The present study can help to understand the myths, culture, and performances directed through the embedded modes of communication in Pakistani Diplomatic Cypher. The study can explore the loaded cultural constraints between the two powerful nations of the world. This study can also reinforce the researchers' application of the cultural discourse analysis approach to better understand the official cyphers based on the embedded modes of communication.

2   Literature Review

Myths

"Myths are the stories, constructed to interpret reality. It is the story which emphasized to be believed of far past happening" (Jaja, 2014).

Communication

"Communication is the process of giving, receiving or exchanging ideas, information, signals or messages through appropriate media, enabling individuals or groups to persuade, to seek information, to give information or to express emotions" (Communication Theory, 2021).

Performance

Performance is the goal attainment process by an organization (Samsonowa, 2012).

Cultural Discourse Analysis

Cultural discourse analysis is the ethnographical investigation of communication (Hymes, 1972). Graham (2007) researched "Narrating Hegemony: Cultural Diplomacy, International Information and the Language of Power in US Foreign Policy, 1936- 1953.". The formulation of American cultural and informational diplomacy policies from 1936 to 1953 is examined in this thesis. The main focus of the investigation is how Washington's cultural and informational strategies were shaped by the language used to discuss and carry out policy initiatives and how these linguistic practices, in turn, shaped Washington's post-World War II posture of global hegemony. It was observed that the rise of the Cold War propaganda war in US grand strategy due to how US officials portrayed their country as the leading informational and cultural force in the post-war world. As it develops this overall thesis, the research highlights the crucial roles of the ideas of liberalism and America (Graham, 2007).

McEntee-Atalianis (2011) studied "The Role of metaphor in shaping the identity and agenda of the United Nations: The imagining of an international community and International Threat." This article examines how the UN is portrayed in speeches by its Secretary-General (SG). It focuses on how metaphor helps to legitimize an international organizational identity and create a shared "imagining" of international diplomacy. Part of the SG's legitimization process is delegitimizing actors, activities, and events perceived as threatening the global community and human welfare. The urge to subdue bad or dangerous forces is said to be what drives the organization and sets its agenda. This is based on a global humanist worldview that emphasizes "working towards the common good" and silences differences. This is used to incite feelings and support the legitimacy of institutional power. Metaphors intended to strengthen positive and negative judgments create polarization and antithesis. The study highlights topical and situationally motivated metaphors' role in speechmaking as constitutive, persuasive, and edifying (McEntee-Atalianis, 2011).

Sajjad et al. (2024) researched "Power, Conflict, and Resistance: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani Diplomatic Cypher (March 07, 2022)". This study objectively examines the Pakistani Diplomatic Cypher made public by the news outlet The Intercept. The conversation between Asad Majeed, the Pakistani Foreign Ambassador, and Donald Lu, the assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, is contained in the Cypher. The research is descriptive and qualitative. The study has adopted Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis approach (1989). The study found clear evidence of resistance, direction, and power exercise in both officials' conversations. In the ongoing crisis between Russia and Ukraine, the US narrative appears to be dominating, as does its exercise of force and control. Threats, aggression, and the predominance of one's viewpoints are all visible in the US-directed Cypher. Asad Majeed, a Pakistani official, opposes US policy in the Cypher at the same time. The current study investigated the power disparities and the existence of unequal relationships between the two nations, as demonstrated and embedded in the vocabulary of Cypher. Ramzan and Khan (2019) have claimed that stereotyped ideology is a construction of discourse. Ramzan et al. (2024) claim the different style of writers varies from place to place in cultural representation. , Ramzan et al.(2021) have indicated that there is a manipulation and exploitation of the public in the hands of politicians and powerful people. Ramzan et al. (2020) suggest that in the digital age, English dominance is visible in technology and the internet. Bhutto and Ramzan (2021) have claimed that

there is a collusive stance and pacifier agenda of media wrapped in the strategy of power. Nawaz et al.(2021) have said that power is striving for negative us and positive us.

Williamson (2019) researched "Diplomatic Letters as Political Literature: Copying Sir Henry Unton's Letters." The research looked at the letter books documenting the correspondence between France's permanent envoy, Sir Henry Unton, and Henry IV in 1591–1592 and 1595–1596. His letter book is preserved in multiple (distinct) copies, which begs concerns concerning their provenance and social, political, and ancient significance. Proof of deliberate editing in one copy, indicating intentional omission of text, lends credence to the idea that diplomatic letters served as more than transient communication conduits. The body of letters an embassy left behind served as its permanent written record, and gathering a few chosen letters into a limited edition was just one of many reputation management strategies available to the weaker contender in the cutthroat political landscape of the late sixteenth century.

Nguyen & Ferguson (2019) researched "A Global Cypher: The Role of Hip Hop in Cultural Identity Construction and Navigation for Southeast Asian American Youth." It was revealed that adolescents and emerging adults who identify as Southeast Asian Americans (SEAAs) use cultural variability to play up and down three cultural identities:

- Their hip-hop cultural identity
- The dominant White culture in their community
- Their Asian/Asian American heritage culture

This helps them navigate a multicultural and global world. The latter is a distinct cultural identity that combines resistance to the prevailing mainstream culture with dancing, art, and music, and it is based on the worldwide hip-hop boom. For young people in Southeast Asia and the Americas, hip-hop represents a significant cultural identity since it is a form of resistance, a way to achieve relationship and identity harmony, and a way to feel like a part of both the local and global society.

3   **Research Methodology**

The present study is qualitative and conducted descriptively. Qualitative studies discuss social and applied research aspects in textual forms (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2008). A descriptive study is one in which the researcher has no control over the widely researched variables from the current perspectives (Manjunatha, 2019).

3.1   **Cultural Discourse Analysis Theory proposed by Donald Carbaugh (2007)**

The Cultural Discourse Analysis Theory proposed by Donald Carbaugh (2007) highlights the framework of cultural discourse and communication analysis. The theory is laid in the research work *Cultural Discourse Analysis: Communication Practices and Intercultural Counters* (2007). Five basic modes of inquiry are described in the research: The theoretical mode, the descriptive mode, the interpretive mode, the comparative mode, and the critical mode (Carbaugh, 2007).

The Theoretical Mode: It explores the questions of perspective and the conceptual problems addressed in the understudy (Carbaugh & Hastings, 1992).

The Descriptive Mode: It responds to questions about what happened during communication.

Interpretive Mode: It describes the importance and significance of the phenomenon for the participants in communications.

The Comparative Mode: It describes the likes and dislikes of the communication between the members of the communities in the communication process.

The Critical Mode: It responds to communication advantages for others or more.

3.2   Sampling Technique and Sample

A sample of the text is selected from the diplomatic Cypher, and the sampling technique is convenient. Convenient sampling chooses the understudy participants or text based on easy accessibility (Golzar & Tajik, 2019).

3.3   Tool of Data Collection and Data Analysis Process

The data is collected through observation and keen selection of the text. The tool of data analysis is the cultural discourse analysis model of Donald Carbaugh (2007).

4   Data Analysis

"At the outset, Don referred to Pakistan's position on the Ukraine crisis and said that "people here and in Europe are quite concerned about why Pakistan is taking such an aggressively neutral position (on Ukraine), if such a position is even possible. It does not seem such a neutral stand to us." He shared that in his discussions with the NSC, "it seems quite clear that this is the Prime Minister's policy." He continued that he was of the view that this was "tied to the current political dramas in Islamabad that he (Prime Minister) needs and is trying to show a public face." I replied that this was not a correct reading of the situation as Pakistan's position on Ukraine was a result of intense interagency consultations. Pakistan had never resorted to conducting diplomacy in public sphere. The Prime Minister's remarks during a political rally were in reaction to the public letter by European Ambassadors in Islamabad which was against diplomatic etiquette and protocol. Any political leader, whether in Pakistan or the U.S., would be constrained to give a public reply in such a situation."

Analysis

Carbugh's (2007) theory of cultural discourse analysis presents five modes of analysis. The early first mode is the theoretical mode, which describes the perspectives and the problems discussed in the study. Here, the extract is taken from the Diplomatic Cypher of Pakistan. The perspective in the extract is the "anger of US and Western countries on Pakistani stance of neutrality on Russia-Ukraine war." In contrast, the motif of Pakistani officials is not considered acceptable before the US and Western countries. The problem discussed is that "Pakistani Prime Minister has made the wrong decision and has gone against the US and European foreign policy." The descriptive mode tells about what happened. The actual happenings are the Pakistani rigid neutral stance on the Russia-Ukraine war and not considering the Western policy as an acceptable approach for Pakistan. In the lines, the descriptive mode is threatening and shows the US and Western's reservations against Pakistani diplomatic stamens and foreign affairs. The interpretive mode is that US and Western policy on the Russia-Ukraine war is of high significance, while the Pakistani stance is not acceptable to Westerners. The comparative mode can be that the US and the Western countries do not want such statements and neutral stances on the Ukraine war and do not want Pakistan to put away the elements of the foreign policy of engagement with the US and Europe. Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, should not claim our diplomatic supremacy in public. The critical mode can be observed in the lines that the

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US had the advantage of directing Pakistan, and Pakistan can have the advantage by following the US's directions.

"I asked Don if the reason for a strong U.S. reaction was Pakistan's abstention in the voting in the UNGA. He categorically replied in the negative and said that it was due to the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow. He said that "I think if the no-confidence vote against the Prime Minister succeeds, all will be forgiven in Washington because the Russia visit is being looked at as a decision by the Prime Minister. Otherwise, I think it will be tough going ahead." He paused and then said "I cannot tell how this will be seen by Europe but I suspect their reaction will be similar." He then said that "honestly I think isolation of the Prime Minister will become very strong from Europe and the United States." Don further commented that it seemed that the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow was planned during the Beijing Olympics and there was an attempt by the Prime Minister to meet Putin which was not successful and then this idea was hatched that he would go to Moscow."

Analysis

In the early theoretical mode, it can be said that the Pakistani Prime Minister has visited Russia and presented a diplomatic stance of neutrality in UNGA (United Nations General Assembly" by abstention in voting. Another perspective described in the Cypher is the "deep concern of non-confidence motion against Imran Khan." The problem discussed in the extract is that the US can use a neutral stance as it has supported Pakistan highly. The extract describes that the US wants to punish Imran Khan on a neutral stance and wishes that "no confidence motion would be completed at every cost." The interpretive mode of the text shows that the US kept its significance that a no-confidence motion would be passed against Imran Khan, neither the country had to pay a lot. Political change in Pakistan would be completed, and Imran Khan would be replaced. The US would not want such a ruler in Pakistan who would go against the US and Western diplomacy. The comparative mode is that US nations do not wish such a ruler and only want to win in global politics. The US and Western countries dislike such a ruler of Pakistan, which would go against their policies. In the critical mode, the advantage of the discussion goes in favour of the US and Westerns as their perspectives are presented solidly, while the Pakistani perspective is not so much accepted by the US official.

"I also told Don that we had seen his defense of the Indian position on the Ukraine crisis during the recently held Senate Sub-Committee hearing on U.S.-India relations. It seemed that the U.S. was applying different criteria for India and Pakistan. Don responded that the U.S. lawmakers' strong feelings about India's abstentions in the UNSC and UNGA came out clearly during the hearing. I said that from the hearing, it appeared that the U.S. expected more from India than Pakistan, yet it appeared to be more concerned about Pakistan's position. Don was evasive and responded that Washington looked at the U.S.- India relationship very much through the lens of what was happening in China. He added that while India had a close relationship with Moscow, "I think we will actually see a change in India's policy once all Indian students are out of Ukraine."

Analysis

The early first mode of cultural discourse analysis is the theoretical mode. Through this mode, the text is about complaining about the US policy being different for Pakistan and India. The problem in the line describes that Pakistan is close to the US and gives a high frequency of diplomatic

favour to the US, but in revolt, it is not gifted, while the US shows its deep concern with India as well. In the descriptive mode, the actual happening is that the US takes the Pakistani neutral stance seriously. In contrast, the Indian neutral stance is not taken so seriously. Being a past frontline ally, the Pakistanis have to face the dual perception by the US as compared to India. In the interpretive mode, such a policy's importance goes in India's favour. At the same time, Pakistan has not been permitted to take a stance as neutral in different global crises.

In comparison, India is more liked by the US. Unlike Pakistan, India has not given much favour in the war of terrors or different UN projects that Pakistan has given. The Pakistani community and its perspectives do not weigh the US, and the US has its dual policies concerning Pakistan and India. The situation favours the US and India rather than Pakistan in the critical mode. Despite so much scarification, Pakistan is not given as much significance as India gains by the US.

5   Conclusion

The Intercept exposed the details and made the entire conversation public. The dialogue between US and Pakistani diplomatic officials that was embedded in the Cypher was confirmed by the US State Department. It explains how Pakistan appears to be an atomic power, but Pakistan's political and administrative systems are weaker. The picture is what the US wishes to convey a message to rest of the world. The message is that the fight in Ukraine is a battle between Russia and the US rather than between Russia and Ukraine, the US will not tolerate aggressive or neutrality by its aided and allied countries. The myths in the Cypher are the US superiority complex and the belief that its policies can only be fruitful for Pakistan when it has to follow the US directions. Pakistan's performance is required to follow the US and European stance on the Russia-Ukraine; so that the consequences must be better for Pakistan.

5.1   Findings
The detailed findings of the research study are as follows:

The Theoretic Mode

- Anger of the US and Western countries is there on Pakistani stance of neutrality on the Russia-Ukraine war.
- The motif of Pakistani officials is unacceptable before the US and Western countries.
- The actual happenings are the Pakistani rigid neutral stance on the Russia-Ukraine war and not considering the Western policy as an acceptable approach for Pakistan.

The Descriptive Mode

- It is threatening and shows the US and Western's reservations against Pakistani diplomatic stamens and foreign affairs.
- The US wants to punish Imran Khan on a neutral stance and wishes that "no confidence motion would be completed at every cost."
- The actual happening is that the Pakistani neutral stance is taken seriously by the US while the Indian neutral stance is not taken so seriously. Being a past frontline ally, the Pakistani has to face the dual perception by the US as compared to India.

Interpretive Mode

- The US and Western policy on the Russia-Ukraine war is of high significance, while the Pakistani stance is not acceptable.

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- The US kept its significance that a no-confidence motion would be passed against Imran Khan, and neither the country had to pay a lot. Political change in Pakistan would be completed, and Imran Khan would be replaced.
- The importance of such a policy (The US revolts) goes in favour of India. At the same time, Pakistan has not been permitted to take a stance as neutral in different global crises.

Comparative Mode

- The US and Western countries do not want such statements and neutral stances on the Ukraine war and do not want Pakistan to put away the elements of the foreign policy of engagement with the US and Europe.
- The US does not wish such a ruler like Imran Khan and only wants to win in global politics. The US and Western countries dislike such a ruler of Pakistan, which would go against their policies
- India is more liked than Pakistan by the US. Unlike Pakistan, India has not given much favour in the war of terrors or different UN projects that Pakistan has given. The Pakistani community and its perspectives do not weigh the US, and the US has its dual policies concerning Pakistan and India.

The Critical Mode

- The US had the advantage of directing Pakistan, and Pakistan had the advantage of following the US's directions.
- The discussion's advantage is that it favours the US and Westerners as their perspectives are presented solidly, while the Pakistani perspective is not accepted as much.
- The situation favours the US and India over Pakistan. Despite so much scarification, Pakistan is not given as much significance as India gains by the US.

5.2   **Recommendations**

- Cultural discourse analysis can help to better understand the modes of communication, myths, and performances in any conversation or story.
- Researchers can better understand the official conversations by applying cultural discourse analysis.
- Cultural discourse analysis not only exposes the imbalance conversations but it also explores the imbalance relationships that are hidden from the rest of the public.

5.3   **Gap for Further Research**

There can be research on the cyphers by applying conversational maxims, pragmatic analysis, syntactic analysis, and semantic analysis. The study can also be further elaborated by applying stylistic and corpus analysis approaches. There can also be research concerning connotative and denotative meanings existing in the cyphers.

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