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**Text and Narrator's Text: An Analysis of Stylistic Profile of  
Narrators in Pakistani Diplomatic Cypher (March 07, 2022)**



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**Abstract**

The paper focuses on the stylistic and linguistic characteristics of the Pakistani Diplomatic Cypher (March 7, 2022). It describes the meeting between Pakistani Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu. Using the Stylistic Profile framework of Wolf Schmid (2010), the analysis splits Narrator's Discourse (Asad Majeed Khan) and Character's Discourse (Donald Lu), which explores how the dominance is encoded in the structure of a narrative. The results indicate that the neutrality of Pakistan and priorities of the region are defended through the restrained and justificatory style by Asad Majeed with compound sentences. Conversely, the assertive discourse of Lu makes use of conditional sentences and complex sentences, as well as instrumental functions, to express U.S dissatisfaction, making it subtle to associate bilateral relations with the political developments in Pakistan. The cypher represents diplomacy and indirectness that does not offend anyone but promotes geopolitical interests. The study has informational value on how narrative power is used in asymmetric diplomacy and can be applied in the work of policymakers who work through cultural and power asymmetry.

**Keywords:** Diplomatic Discourse, Narratology, Relations of Power, Relations Between Pakistan And U.S., Stylistic Profile, Cypher.

**Introduction**

In foreign relations, the use of language and style in diplomatic encrypted messages can mislead the negotiation, in which nuances, tactical motivation, and power relations can be changed (Meerts, 2015; Tempestini, 2024). Diplomatic language is a language of coded and formal expressions and subtle tones, which enables diplomats to send messages that are sensitive without compromising their face (Bandov, 2023).

One of the key attributes of diplomatic cyphering is indirectness (Faizullaev, 2024), which is frequently used to keep relations with other states on the level of politeness and peace and alleviate the words that may sound aggressive (Schubert, 2025). The diplomatic language emphasizing the political ambitions of each country brings about the degree of both the message and the relationship of the two countries (Pokhrel, 2020; Baartman, 2023).

There are major aspects of cypher, which is an identity of the diplomat, is depicted by the eye-catching features of language or the national identity maintained by the diplomacy (Close, 2024). First, the diplomats generally act in such a way that they attract the representative of their country to them and portray themselves as capable and skilled leaders in the profession (Anton & Moise, 2021; Lindsey, 2023). The subtext-laden language, such as the tone, the register, and the modality, tends to reflect more than merely the status of the diplomat (Yu, 2023).

The language of diplomatic codes is linguistically complex because languages also dominate diplomatic discourse figuratively (Bpbeica, 2021; Baartman, 2023). These texts are used to provide their communicative purposes, and are constructed, sophisticated, or formal language (Mandilara et al., 2025). The coded languages of the art of being bland are the cypher words of the diplomats; thus, they are linguistic instruments and signs they apply to give indications of trust or suggestions of threats (Bandov, 2023). The diplomatic cypher (coded message) of the US government was alleged to contain blatant interference and undiplomatic words, a foreign conspiracy against the Pakistani government. This was the position of the Pakistani government under Imran Khan, which was corroborated by the National Security Committee (NSC). It was later said by the government of those days and the NSC that there was no evidence of a foreign conspiracy, and the man was prosecuted as a result of mishandling of the classified document, claiming that he exploited it to have political gain, which amounted to theft and a crime against the state.

The Pakistani diplomatic cypher covered a meeting on March 7, 2022, between Pakistani Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu, in which the leader of the U.S. complained about Pakistan remaining neutral on Ukraine (The Intercept, 2023). The ambassador-narrator intercedes (Narrator's Discourse) by placing U.S. statements (Character's Discourse) within to emphasize suggestions about relations. This creates geo-political discourses: U.S. as hegemonic, Pakistan as neutral but under pressure. The linguistic techniques, hedges, and conditionals soften threats whilst promoting interests, affecting negotiations (Harutyunyan & Baghramyan, 2022).

The framework by Schmid (2010) presents the stylistic profiles of such texts:

the words of the characters are interfered with by the narrator to create a story and highlight the lack of power. By applying Schmid's framework (2010) to the hybrid of diplomatic narratives, it splits the process of oral narrative re-telling as an act of building or destroying the bilateral trust.

The present study intended to describe how pseudo-accentuations come together with the help of these languages and how they contribute to international relations negotiations. Composition in international communication is one of the basic discourses in which the directives, softeners, euphemisms, and formal-informal communication parameters influence what is said and how it can be received by the opposite side.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Diplomatic language and its style are sensitive and intentional. The manner in which the discussion is held can either build or ruin the negotiations or relations between states. The style of the language utterances is different between the nations when there is a power imbalance between them. Furthermore, by exploring the style of language, the encoded messages can be explored, which highlight the themes and tones of the communicative strategies existing between the two nations.

### **Objectives**

- To discuss linguistic and stylistic peculiarities of diplomatic discourse in the Pakistani Diplomatic cypher.
- To learn how the stories of Pakistani and U.S. diplomats are made and constructed regarding the power relations and geopolitical interests.
- To understand the role of linguistic strategies in developing the bilateral relations and international negotiations.

### **Research Questions**

- What are the stylistic peculiarities of diplomatic discourse in Pakistani Diplomatic cypher?
- How are the stories of Pakistani and U.S. diplomats made and constructed regarding the power relations and geopolitical interests?

### **Significance of the Study**

The study can make a significant contribution to the knowledge of language

style understanding and international relations, as it examines how language may be used to construct diplomacy. Neither is it to notice that jiggling the languages discussed to acquire knowledge and interaction among them has an impact on power relations, cultural sensitivities, and geopolitical negotiation. This research reflects a mirror to the policymaker and diplomat regarding language style. They list heuristics that diplomats and policymakers can potentially use to build fair and workable international alliances. Moreover, the study opens up subsequent research into the diplomatic dialogue, especially in situations where there is a high degree of power inequality and political tensions.

### **Literature Review**

Wodak (2021) focused on the potency of the discursive construction of diplomatic identity and the cunningness of diplomatic cyphers to mask private-mindedness and even national interest. Wodak (2021) showed how character orientation facets, such as behavioural language tactics, form and shape diplomatic faces that negotiate for power in these plausibly international encounters (Wodak, 2021). However, Biletska, Lastovskyi, and Semchynskyy (2023) looked toward intercultural communication and demonstrated that, if anything, the diplomats of interpersonal cultural holes are cyphers who, in a sense, need to enter and balance the control of the political interactions. Nykyporets (2025) described how misunderstandings and successful communications can also be affected by the cultural and linguistic options taken in the cypher communication using genuine diplomatic discussions as data. On the other hand, Zhang et al. (2023) 's analysis was made from the corpus-based approach, which investigates the evolution in the diplomatic discourse. It concludes that cypher is adapts its language to the political demand.

Diplomatic language has unique linguistic characteristics that are conditioned by formality, ambiguity, and strategizing motives (Baartman, 2023; Bobeica, 2021). It emphasizes the research moderated words, understatement, and epistemic hedges in expressing positions without being offensive (Zhang et al., 2023). The metadiscursive devices in cables (cyphers) divide the analysis and facts in a way that manages uncertainty and authority (Hutchings, 2025). The co-occurring features of corpus-based analyses are that Chinese diplomatic documents are informational and context-

independent, whereas U.S. counterparts are persuasive and involved (Zhang et al., 2023). Some ambiguity is in power, such as in resolutions of UN resolutions, where ambiguity balances conflicting interests (Albuquerque, 2024). Such peculiarities are also present in cables such as WikiLeaks releases, in which ideological embedding of leaders and justification of policies are revealed (Lasa Briz, 2024).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) exposes the ideological embedding of diplomatic text (Afzaal & Chishti, 2021). The in-groups and other people created by pronouns, modality, and intertextuality legitimize the positions (Coyne, 2023). So, in the U.S.-China settings, the tension is manifested in the change from a cooperative to an assertive tone (Afzaal & Chishti, 2021). On cables (cyphers), CDA uncovers exploitative usage in WikiLeaks, where hedges are applied to cushion the judgment, with the interests being promoted (SARA, 2020). Similar strategies are manifested in the reported dialogues in the Pakistan-U.S. relations, which place the emphasis on asymmetries through the quoted words (Grim & Hussain, 2023).

Narratology clarifies the concept of diplomatic cables as a form of narration. In his model, Schmid (2010) divides texts into the Narrator Discourse, i.e., mediating the events with selection and pacing, and the Character Discourse, i.e., embedding verbal utterances to subjectivity. Phenomena of interference, such as free indirect discourse and permeable boundaries, give birth to hybrid styles (Schmid, 2010). In international relations (IR), politics is temporalized as narratives are entangled in phenomenological and cosmological time (Franz, 2022). Oral meetings are described by diplomatic cables, where the ambassadors are the narrators, defining events (Narrator Discourse) but quoting diplomats (Character Discourse), building power relations (Cornut & Zamaroczy, 2021).

IR narratives shape identity and policy that is not instrumental (Gozkaman, 2025). The relational identities in character networks are projected through strategic narratives, which allows for analyzing power in a sophisticated way (Holland & Mathieu, 2023). Narrative power is the way politics, which is arranged in East Asia, and lower stories are organized by master narratives (Sutton, 2020). Diplomatic practice entails narrative confrontations, which have been the case with Crimean crisis reporting (Manfredi-Sánchez & Smith, 2023). Cables are seen as internal stories,

drawing on both reporting and advocacy (Ozelkan, 2024).

Fatima et al. (2024) explored the internal themes and external politics of the diplomatic discourse in the diplomatic cypher sent to the Pakistan Foreign Office on March 07, 2022, and examined it in the study. This was a qualitative research of the Pakistani Diplomat Cypher Descriptive Discourse that had been analyzed from the perspective of the Reception Theory by Cécile Laborde (2002), which covered six distinctive areas in the analysis: themes, politics, areas, channels, temporality, and geography. The study showed that Cypher features themes and politics related to local matters through various discussion areas. It was about Imran Khan's resignation from the chair, and the US and Western countries being happy that the map is being redrawn. The study noted that the US representative's contention is time and space-based. The study affirmed that the cadence of the Cypher, along with the flow of the same Cadence, is best grasped with information about the moment, social structure, space, and history of the nations.

Bukhari et al. (2024) researched to understand the Pakistani Diplomatic Cypher exposed by the INTERCEPT news agency. It revealed that High Commissioner Asad Majeed had a conversation with Mr. Donald Lu a few months ago, which should have occurred between an American and a Pakistani with power. This study was qualitative and descriptive. This study was based on the critical discourse analysis model developed by Norman Fairclough (1989). The study found that both officials' exchanges revealed the practice of power, guidance, and resistance. The American side appears to be in good spirits. It has the balance of power in the Russia-Ukraine dispute. The Cypher is driven by the US, which includes elements of violence and threats, and the projection of its perspectives: Asad Majeed, the Pakistani official, is confronting the US in the Cypher. The study was on the widening power imbalance, and the mismatch was reflected and created in Cypher's conversation.

Zhang et al. (2023), by using the theoretical bases of Biber for multi-dimensional (MD) analysis, investigated the linguistic features of Chinese and American diplomatic discourse. The corpus comprises public domain texts collected from official Chinese and US government websites between 2011 and 2020. Results of the study showed that Chinese diplomatic discourse is of the text type learned

exposition, where providing information is the dominant means in conveying the meaning. In contrast, the "involved persuasion" text type is a persuasive and argumentative written text type in the United States' diplomatic rhetoric. In addition, the two-way ANOVA test exhibited only a few differences between spoken and written diplomatic discourses of the same country. Moreover, T-tests showed that the two countries significantly differ in their diplomatic discourse in three dimensions. More importantly, the study deduced that while China's diplomatic language is information-dense, it is not context-sensitive. Conversely, the US style of diplomatic discourse is emotive and interactional, therefore highly context-driven and developed within the limits of time. The study contributes by offering the most organized and specific knowledge of the genre characteristics of diplomatic discourse, which can facilitate the establishment of an effective system of diplomatic discourse.

### **Research Methodology**

The present study is mixed in approach as it quantifies the language utterances of the characters in the cypher as well as the qualitative which is the analysis of the themes and characters' orientations in the cypher. The study adopts Schmid (2010) 's narratological approach, which is also called a stylistic profile, in which the characters' discourse is presented. Schmid's (2010) Stylistic Profile is about the Narrator's Discourse (Narrative of Events), Character's Discourse (Narrative of Words). The study is limited to the narrators and the characters' language style, too.

Schmid (2010) proposed a framework to analyze the story's discourse called "stylistic profile." It proposes the narrators' text and the characters' text. The proposed framework has eight elements: theme, evaluation, person, tense, orientation system, language functions, lexis, and syntax. The Stylistic Profile model by Wolf Schmid (2010), which is introduced in his book *Narratology: An Introduction*, provides a structural approach to the analysis of stylistic composition of narrative fiction. The model splits the narrative text into two basic discursive layers: The Narrator Discourse (also known as the Narrative of Events or a text of the narrator) and the Character Discourse (the Narrative of Words or a text of the characters). On this bifurcation, the mediating voice of narratives is accurately studied as composites, and not homogeneous wholeness but stratified constructions in which the mediating voice

of the narrator introduces the story world through the prism of his or her voice, and where the expressions of the characters bring their internal voices and polyvocality to bear (Schmid, 2010). Based on the structuralist traditions (e.g., Bakhtin and Genette), Schmid clarifies them by stressing the consequences of style, which is the shift of focalization and voices in the text, as well as hybrid forms, which increase the text's ambiguity and depth (Schmid, 2010).

The Narrator Discourse, or Narrative of events, is the text created by the narrating instance, which is concerned with the description of the actions, settings, and the time-structures within the diegesis. It is a layer that interprets the fabula (temporal sequence of events) into the syuzhet (plot presentation) via such techniques as selection, pacing, and commentary. It deals with descriptions, summaries, progression of events, and may incorporate in terms of an evaluative or interpretive nature, which will reflect the viewpoint of the narrator; either overt (with intrusions) or covert (low presence). More narrowly, stylistically, it determines the overall tone and rhythm, and framing of the narrative, and encloses other discourses within its power: the direct speech, quoted thoughts, interior monologues, and dialogues of the figures of the storyworld (Schmid, 2010). This diegetic layer is a subjectivity of the character and contributes to the story by means of revelations or conflicts.

The key strength of the model by Schmid is that it devotes its attention to the discourse interaction and interference. In phenomena such as FID or narrated perception, boundaries are blurred and result in hybrid styles that have an effect such as irony, immersion, or polyphony. As an example, the figural narration appears when the discourse of characters is predominant, it is moving inward, and such ornamental styles as skaz emulate the voices of the oral characters. The overall effects of the Schmid (2010) Stylistic Profile are that narratology has made a step forward in being able to take a stylistic perspective on analyzing the discourse distribution. It sheds light on the effects of these divisions on reader engagement, thematic complexity, and aesthetic novelty that is vital to the study of prose fiction over time.

### **Data Analysis**

Schmid (2010) proposed a framework to analyze the story's discourse called "stylistic profile." It proposes the narrators' text and the characters' text. The proposed

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framework has eight elements: theme, evaluation, person, tense, orientation system, language functions, lexis, and syntax.

## **Narrator Text (Asad Majeed, Pakistani Ambassador in the US)**

The narrator in the text is Asad Majeed, a character in the story and the foreign ambassador to the US from Pakistan.

### **Themes**

The themes in narrator's discussion as "US not correct perception of PM Imran Khan", "Non—exposition of Diplomatic Resort in Public," "Masco Visit of Imran Khan as Foreign Policy and Diplomacy", "Pakistan 's firm commitment with UN charter", "Pakistan 's high concerns of Peace and Stability in Kashmir, Afghanistan and Ukraine, "Reluctant Behavior of US for Pakistan", "US preferences to India compared to Pakistan", "Neglect of Kashmir Issue by US", "Complex situation and Hard decisions in Russia-Ukraine War", "US No-Objection of Indian stance of Neutrality" and "Continuity of Bilateral Discussion",

### **Evaluation**

The narrator's text fully contains explanations and the Pakistani's requesting intentions. The overall discussion by Asad Majeed describes the Pakistani stance under challenging situations. The discussion is based on the benefits of bilateral discussion, and the US asked that the US give equal significance to Pakistan compared to the US. The priorities shown by Asad Majeed are the freedom of foreign policy, freedom of vote in the UNGA, and high concerns about the Russia-Ukraine War. It can also be observed that Pakistan gives priority to the Kashmir issues, while the US provides high concern for the Ukraine issues. Asad Majeed also claims about the differential priorities of the US and Pakistan in the goal. In the overall scenario, Asad Majeed tries to depend on the national policy of free diplomacy and foreign policy.

### **Person**

The Person is Asad Majeed, Ambassador of Pakistan at the Foreign Office in the US.

### **Tense**

Most of the discussion is in the past tense as justification is given by Asad Majeed. At the same time, the current situation of the US and Pakistani stances on Kashmir, India, and Ukraine is discussed in the present tense. The use of "would" shows that officials

are highly concerned to convey the perspective of the US narrative and policy to high officials of Pakistan.

### **Orientation System**

The orientation system involves face-to-face discussions, while textual forms are received in the foreign office of Pakistan.

### **Language Functions**

At the Cypher's early start, an explanation is given for the heuristic function of the language. At the next stage, Asad Majeed discusses the regularity function when the narrator is justifying the position of Pakistan in the given situation. Then, the instrumental function can be observed when Donald Lu asks about the abstention of Pakistanis from voting in the UNGA. Then, regulatory function can be observed when Asad Majeed was persuading Donald Lu by giving justification and explanation about the Moscow visit of Imran Khan, and also said that the visit of Imran Khan to Moscow should not be justified so much. Similarly, the regulatory function can be seen in the bilateral discussions emphasized by Asad Majeed that Afghanistan would also be given much significance. Then, there is also a regularity function in the language of Asad Majeed Khan, who says that US leadership would also engage the Pakistani officials in bilateral discussions. Then there is the representational function of the language when Asad Majeed showed keen concerns about the Kashmir issue. Then, there is the interactional function of the language when Asad Majeed shows it in surprising ways that the Kashmir issue is neglected. At the same time, the US is highly concerned about Imran Khan's visit to Moscow. Then, there is the personal function when the complex situation is described, and the voting is concerned in the UNGA. There is an instrumental function when Donald Lu says that the US would not have different parameters for Pakistan and India. After that, the instrumental is there when the Moscow visit is not considered a hurdle in Pak-US relationships. At the end of the discussion, there was an interactive discussion on Afghanistan and other issues.

### **Lexis**

There are no such conditions, and the long sentences uttered by Asad Majeed are the least phrases, adverbials, adverbial clauses, and adjective clauses. Asad Majeed makes

a simple discussion in this regard.

### **Syntax**

The sentences are mostly compound and simple, and the fewest are complex sentences, as there are not many conditions in Asad Majeed's discourse.

<b>Simple Sentences</b>	<b>Compound Sentences</b>	<b>Complex Sentences</b>	<b>Total</b>
12	18	8	38
31.58%	47.37%	21.05%	100.00%

### **Character's Text (Donald Lu)**

#### **Themes**

“Western ‘s Concern about Pakistan ‘s neutral stance on Russia-Ukraine War”, “Public Rally by Imran Khan and Pak-US Diplomacy”, “Change of Political Trauma and Observation of US”, “Moscow Visit as Mistake of PM Imran Khan”, “All Forgiven on Regime Change”, “Annoying Pre-Planned Visit of Imran Khan to Russia”, “No Comparison of European and Pakistan ‘s visit to Russia”, “Main Focus on Russia-Ukraine war than others”, “High Concern of US in Political Change in Pakistan”, “Affirmation of Request of Bilateral Discussion”, “Need of India to Encounter China”, “Close Relationship of India and Russia as compared to Pakistan and Russia”, “Threatening in case of unsuccessful of No-Confidence motion”,

#### **Evaluation**

The discussion was loaded with extreme concern about Western policies and their superiority over Eastern countries. Donald Lu focused on self-oriented theology, which discusses the facts of the Western side. It is mentioned that Pakistan's neutral stance is not acceptable to Western countries, and the visit of Imran Khan was a great mistake, as the US was not satisfied. On the other hand, when Western countries started questioning and talking to take the favour, the public rally was addressed by Imran Khan as a violation of diplomatic rules. India and Pakistan have different perspectives. The US views India through the lens of the future regarding China. The discussion also disclosed that US concerns are only related to Ukraine issues, compared to Kashmir and Afghanistan. There is a discussion about the existence of the dent, and the US is looking at regime change in Pakistan so that a future direction can be made. Dissatisfaction is also there with the actions of Pakistan, and if the

regime change becomes successful, then the future can be promising for Pakistan, and neither can the worst consequences for Pakistan.

**Person**

The person is Donald Lu, the Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs.

**Tense**

Most sentences are compound and complex, and interrogative sentences are also present, but in the affirmative form.

**Orientation System**

The orientation system is discussed face-to-face and sent to the Pakistani foreign office as a Cypher.

**Language Functions**

At the early stage of discussion, the representational function is played by telling the emotions of the Western people. Further imaginative function is shown by Donald Lu's guessing about the rigid policy of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Considering the Western narrative, an interactive function was played through language when Donald Lu wanted to engage Pakistani officials. At the next discussion stage, the personal function of language was played as Donald Lu showed that he does not think the Prime Minister will gain the favour of the US or Europeans next. Then, an imaginative function is played by Donald Lu, who states that Imran Khan wanted to meet with the Russian President at the Beijing Olympics. After that, the heuristic function is played by telling that there is a difference between the visit of Imran Khan and Europeans to Russia. At the next stage, the regulatory function is played when future planning on Afghan issues is discussed. After that, the instrumental function is played through language as the directions are set, the no-confidence motions would be passed at any cost, and the relations are based on it. Then, the personal function is present in the language when Donald Lu says that the message of Pakistani concerns will be delivered to high officials. After that, the interactive functions of language are shown when Donald Lu discusses the US and India relationships with Chinese perspectives, and a similar can be observed in the next part of the discussion in which relationships with India are presented. Then, the instrumental function of language

can be observed as Donald Lu directs Asad Majeed to the point that political change can set the future direction of US-Pak relationships. It must be successful to remove the dent in the relationships.

### **Lexis**

The use of phrases, adjective clauses, and adverbial clauses is evident in the text, which shows that further details support themes (experiences of actions).

### **Syntax**

Compound and Complex sentences are frequently used, mostly affirmative sentences, while interrogative sentences are also used when the US is asked to take an equal stance for India and Pakistan.

Simple Sentences	Compound Sentences	Complex Sentences	Total
2	5	11	18
11.11%	27.78%	61.11%	100.00%

The table shows that mostly complex sentences are loaded with conditions, while simple and compound sentences are unclear.

### **Findings**

Applying the Stylistic Profile framework by Schmid (2010) to the Pakistani Diplomatic Cypher of March 7, 2022, the findings are obtained, demonstrating the linguistic and narrative strategies that Pakistan used in the document and which clarify the hidden power relations between the countries in the context of Pakistan-U.S. diplomatic relations:

- The Narrator Discourse by Asad Majeed is the key argument that supports the neutrality of Pakistani foreign policy towards the conflict in the territory
- The Character Discourse by Donald Lu is dominated by the themes of Western dissatisfaction, where the U.S. geopolitical interests (e.g., countering Russia and China through India) are superior, and is written in conditional language stating possible consequences in case they are not met.
- The interruption of the Narrator and Character Discourses underscores the U.S. hegemony; the mediation by Majeed makes Lu less powerful, but reveals concealed threats of regime change.
- The two texts use hedging (e.g., modals such as would) to reduce risks, which is

in line with the diplomatic rules of indirectness, but the conditionals in the text by Lu enhance the coercive intent.

- The text of Majeed uses simple sentences (47.37%) in favor of clarity and restraint, whereas the text of Lu is based on using complex sentences (61.11%) with many conditions to increase persuasive power.
- Justification in the narrative of Majed is done through the use of past and present tense; the use of complex-compound structures in the narrative of Lu is used to show urgency and contingencies in the future.
- Majeed is moving to regulatory and representational functions to focus on regional matters (Kashmir, Afghanistan); Lu is using instrumental and imaginative functions to control the result.
- The agenda of Pakistan (neutrality, Kashmir) becomes secondary in the hybrid account to the U.S. attention being Ukrainian and anti-Russian.
- The model by Schmid brings out blurred boundaries through the use of free indirect discourse, thereby bringing about dramatic tension by dramatizing the subordinate status of Pakistan.
- The U.S. involved persuasion (Pakistan, informational style), worsening cross-cultural misunderstandings.
- Narrative Construction of Identity: Majeed builds Pakistan as a strong, but strained, nation; Lu, the U.S. as an adjudicator of international norms, and builds on Wodak (2021), with its discursive identity formation.
- Linguistic tactics such as understatement and threats destroy trust as visualizations of tense negotiations after the cypher.
- The prominence of U.S. promotion of interests based on forgiveness limits to compliance can be revealed by considering critical discourse elements, as later supported by the 2023 Intercept leak.
- Conditionals and hedges are deceptive and agenda-enhancing, making a difference such as the no-confidence vote against Imran Khan.
- The stylistic profile of the cypher illustrates how narrative mediation of cables can be used to influence views of power imbalance and provide policy analysts of asymmetric relationships with insights, and the history of the situation (e.g., the

acquittal of Khan in the cypher case in 2024) indicates the politicization of the document as opposed to overt conspiracy.

### **Discussion**

The presentation of the Pakistani Diplomatic Cypher of March 7, 2022, in terms of the Stylistic Profile framework by Schmid (2010) provides deep knowledge of the role of linguistic and stylistic means of diplomatic language. This paper sheds some light on the encoding of power dynamics, geopolitical agendas, and political manoeuvres in the relationship between Pakistan and the U.S. by dissecting the Text of Narrator (Asad Majeed, the Pakistani Ambassador) and the Character (Donald Lu, the U.S. Assistant Secretary). The findings answer the research questions with the use of primarily explanatory and justificatory style, as the content of the Narrator's Text reveals the misconceptions that the U.S. had regarding the visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to Moscow, and the neutral stand that Pakistan took between Russia and Ukraine. Such justifications expressed in the past tense and the present tense, underlining the current position, are indicative of a defensive stance, which correlates with the concept of discursive identity development proposed by Wodak (2021), in which diplomats conceal their weaknesses at the expense of declaring national interests. The functions of language changed dynamically, heuristic to give first explanations, regulatory to persuade (e.g., to stress bilateral dialogue in Afghanistan), and representational to be concerned in Kashmir. The lexically basic and predominantly compound sentence structure (47.37%), as well as the indicative style, is conservative and formal. In comparison, the Character of the Text of Majeed features a more mediatorial and non-escalational style with themes of Western displeasure with the Pakistani neutrality and implicit threats to the change of the regime. Complex sentences are prevalent (61.11%), full of adverbial clauses and conditions, which enhance the strategy of ambiguity and authority expression as observed in the sociocognitive analysis of the tone-influencing mental models by Zhang et al. (2023). The use of tense in the form of the compound-complex sentence, which is usually affirmative but tends to reflect the intent of the interrogative, use of tense in those structures presents a sense of urgency and superiority, like asking Pakistan not to vote in the UNGA, and asserting that the U.S. would prefer that India,

rather than China.

The language performances tend towards instrumental (directing results such as no-confidence motions) and imaginative (guessing about Imran Khan being grouchy), and encourage a frame of evaluation to put the U.S. geopolitical interests first. Such is consistent with the intercultural communication insights by Zhang et al. (2023), in which cultural gaps arise in the form of incongruent expectations, which result in the possibility of misinterpretation or intentional imbalance, which answers the second research question. The narration created by Majeed frames Pakistan as a state under pressure with its cultural sensitivities and regional interests (e.g., Kashmir, Afghanistan), whereas the text created by Lu frames the U.S. as hegemonic, with forgiveness corresponding to political acquiescence. This is reflective of Critical Discourse Analysis as presented by Fairclough (1989) where interaction of power is expressed through threats and opposition as demonstrated in Bukhari et al. (2024).

In terms of geopolitics, the cypher narrative chronologizes the events of the Moscow visit of Imran Khan as a mistake and the Indian position on the matter as a non-mistake, as Holland & Mathieu, (2023) consider international relations to be a messaged narrative. The confusion of the discourses of narrator and character, through the hybrid styles of Schmid, brings about polyphony: the mediation of Majeed through the hedging style (e.g., using would in the text) and conditionals (e.g., the threats of Lu) visualizes the results of the negotiations by reducing the risks but promoting agendas. In comparison with the article by Zhang et al. (2023), the U.S. discourse is an aspect of involved persuasion, which is emotive and contextual, and in Pakistan, it is informational and justificatory. Such a difference may contribute to the inability to have a fair conversation, with indirectness keeping civility intact but concealing the realities of conflicts, affecting the results, such as the no-confidence motion against Imran Khan. The study provides heuristics that can be used by policy makers as per the goals to manage the power asymmetries by uncovering how stylistic profiles encode ideologies. As an example, evaluative biases in the discourse of character are supposed to be identified and help to achieve more balanced negotiations that would mitigate misunderstandings in high-stakes scenarios such as Ukraine or South Asia. This also adds to the discourse analysis in international

relations, filling gaps identified in the literature review, including corpus-based developments of diplomatic language.

But there are still weaknesses: the qualitative emphasis on a particular cypher would not be generalizable, and the use of the Schmid model could neglect non-Western narrative paradigms. Further studies might use corpus analysis when more than two cyphers are present or use quantitative methods that would be able to measure sentiment, such as sentiment scoring, to study the patterns of interference even further. This study ultimately confirms that language is a key instrument in diplomacy, in which the nuances in style are indicative, as well as constitutive of geopolitical realities, as a call to be more careful in cultivating long-term alliances.

### **Conclusion**

The Narrator and Character Discourse framework of Schmid (2010) allows a stylistic analysis of the Pakistani Diplomatic Cypher of March 7, 2022, to unearth some important information on how power imbalance (asymmetry) in the relationships between Pakistan and the United States is linguistically constructed. The Narrator Discourse of Asad Majeed is written in a modest, exonerative form, simple sentences, compound sentences, hedging, and a regulative purpose of language to justify the sovereign neutrality of Pakistan, especially in issues concerning the Imran Khan visit to Moscow and regional interests such as Kashmir and Afghanistan. Conversely, the Character Discourse by Donald Lu asserts U.S. hegemony by using complex, conditional sentences and instrumentation to relate bilateral relations to compliance with politics in Pakistan, with covert references to regime change in the context of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak, 2021). The cypher is an example of the diplomatic language between politeness and strategic coercion that is also based on broader geopolitical conflicts: U.S. persuasion through involvement and Pakistan through the control of information (Zhang et al., 2023). Finally, it can be concluded that the analysis has shown that the stylistic decision-making does not simply describe the events, but plays an active role in forming the perception of power, trust, and outcomes of the negotiation that can be included in the interpretation of discourse in asymmetric diplomatic interactions.

### **Recommendations**

- Diplomats are supposed to focus on discourse awareness training to identify and overcome narrative prejudices in encrypted messages.
- The foreign policy apparatus of Pakistan should record and determine the stylistic patterns of language of incoming cyphers to be able to anticipate power imbalances more effectively.
- Pakistani and U.S. bilateral negotiations would include the adoption of a neutral third-party mediation to reduce perceived coercion in delicate negotiations.
- Transparency in diplomatic reporting should also be facilitated by policymakers to minimize the politicization of sensitive cables within the country.
- The teaching of narrative of language in international relations ought to incorporate such narratological instruments as the structure of practical diplomatic education by Schmid.
- Diplomatic procedures that can take place in the future must focus on mutual respect for the concept of neutrality in multilateral wars to create equal partnerships.

### **Gaps for Future Studies**

Although the study contributes to the research, it is restricted to one cypher and cannot be applied to the whole area of Pakistan-U.S. diplomatic interactions. It is based on quantitative and qualitative interpretation of the Schmid model, which may ignore quantitative linguistic measures, e.g., frequency analysis using a corpus. The cultural peculiarities of non-Western approaches to diplomacy are not fully studied, and the influence of the changing geopolitical situation after 2022 (e.g., the shift in U.S.-India relations) is not examined yet. The latter research could be conducted using mixed-methods techniques in the future by comparing two or more leaked cables or by providing comparative studies of other asymmetric relationships (e.g., U.S.-China). The longitudinal research of the shift in the narrative of cyphers with time, or the integration of socio-cognitive perspectives, can provide better insight into how discourse is changing due to global changes. Also, it might be possible to note how such texts are received and domestically interpreted in Pakistan to shed light on their influence on local politics.

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