

Critical Discourse Analysis of President Hamid Karzai's Speech

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Abstract: A great deal of studies has been conducted to analyse the speeches of presidents in the world, however, there is a lack of studies as far as the speeches of Afghan presidents are concerned. A critical discourse analysis in terms of modality and transitivity of Systemic Functional Linguistics was employed to analyse the speech of former Afghan president "Hamid Karzai". The results revealed that the president predominantly used material processes, modal auxiliaries, and simple present tense in his speech which show that the president mostly talked about actions, events which are present in the current time.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Speech, Systemic Functional Linguistics

1. Background of the Study

Presidential speeches as source of great information for linguistics have been extensively studied recently in different countries. However, as far as Afghan setting is concerned, to the best of my knowledge, no analysis of Afghan presidents' speeches is available. Consequently, the analysis of former Afghan president Hamid Karzai's one significant speech in 2012 in United Nations' assembly is going to be analysed. This would contribute to the entire body of research and speeches of Afghan presidents in particular.

2. Statement of Problem

Presidential speeches are the great source of rich data in linguistics since their speeches are heard through a large number of general public. Schäffner and Kelly-Holmes (1996) claim that political speeches reflect political activities which relate to different functions. In addition, Van Dijk (1997) believes that political speeches are the reflection of the politician's intentions. United Nations 67th General Assembly held on September 25, 2012 was crucial for Afghanistan's future due to some points. First, the new government of Afghanistan established in 2001, was considerably weak and greatly depended on international community's assistance. In addition, the new government is involved in conflict with opposition groups inside the country which has negatively affected the situation of the country. Problems such as lack of security, low economy, administrative corruption in Hamid Karzai's government and many other have made the situation tense. Therefore, United Nations' assembly which is comprised of 193 member states is one of the influential organs intended for policymaking and representativeness of these countries. The organ provides opportunities for discussions about multilateral and international issues particularly peace and security. Looking at the worse situation of the country, the speech of President Hamid Karzai in 67th general assembly of United Nations was extremely decision-making. It needs great effort and skills to convince these member states of the United Nations to maintain their aid in Afghanistan. On the other hand, if the president cannot manage to persuade them contributing to Afghanistan, the newly-established government faces critical situation and even failure as it is

strongly dependent on international aid. All this requires great demand and great and careful speech skills to gain better and positive outcomes. The speech was also significant for the understanding of President Hamid Karzai's internal and foreign policies. Despite these, there is a lack of research regarding the analysis of the speeches of Afghan presidents exclusively President Hamid Karzai. Consequently, Hamid Karzai's speech was selected to find the intentions of the president for Afghanistan due to the critical and severe situation of the country. In addition, to know about his policies against foreign countries which are tremendously valuable in this assembly for the entire Afghan nation.

2.1 Research Questions

- 1) What are the most frequent themes used in the president Hamid Karzai's speech)?
- 2) How is the experiential meaning understood through participants, processes, and circumstances within the president Hamid Karzai's speech)?
- 3) How are the interpersonal meanings understood through Modality types within president Hamid Karzai's speech)?

2.2 Research Objectives

- To find out about the experiential meanings of Hamid Karzai' speech and unmask the intentions and his beliefs regarding Afghanistan and other world.
- To know about the interpersonal features of the discourse through modality.

2.3 Scope of the Study

SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistics) is going to be used for this analysis. Analysing the experiential meanings of the president's discourse will reveal the issues embodied in this speech. In addition, the analysis of interpersonal meanings will help the researcher find the president's social distance, judgements and opinions of the world in his discourse. Therefore, this study will focus on the Transitivity and Modality as two features of SFL (Systemic-Functional Linguistics).

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3. Literature Review

There have been ample of studies regarding analysis of political speeches through SFG (Systemic Functional Grammar) in the world. However, there have been no studies regarding the analysis of Afghan presidents' speeches to the best of my knowledge. Most of the literature shows that the speeches of U.S presidents and other U.S prominent personalities have been extensively studied. For example, a study by ZHAO and ZHANG where they have analysed Donald Trump's inaugural speech through transitivity analysis. The results show that Trump has used 68.6 % material processes and 15.7 % relational processes. These researchers have reported that the material processes were used to highlight the new actions America was going to take and the relational processes showed the new vision of America. Sharififar and Rahimi (2015) have also analysed the U.S former president Barack Obama and Iranian president Rohani's speech through SFG to look for the ideology and power. The results revealed that both leaders' speeches were highly dominated by material processes which reflected the both governments' actions related to the past and future. They also used widely the modals and personal pronouns. The modals reflected their plans and encouraged audience to trust the government. The personal pronouns particularly "We" showed they are following a common goal. In addition, Farhat (2016) has analysed the speech of U.S former president Barack Obama regarding Islamic issues through SFG. The results show that the most dominated processes were material, relational and verbal.

Discourse Analysis

The term "Discourse Analysis" was firstly introduced by Zellig "Harris" in 1952 for the purpose of analysing connected written and spoken texts to examine the language beyond the sentence level and to see the connections between linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours. Discourse is a stretch of language that has many sentences which are interrelated to each other in some way (Nunan, 1993). Discourse analysis has received a lot of definitions by scholars. For example McCarthy (1991), claims that discourse analysis is the study of the language and the relationship of language with the context where the language is used. On the other hand, Paltridge (2012) believes that discourse analysis is the study to find out what is beyond the word, phrase, clause and sentence that speakers require for successful communication.

4. Theoretical Framework

SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistics)

Michael Alexander Kikwood Halliday founded the theory of SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistics) in United Kingdom in late 1950s and early 1960s. The critical analysis needs the use of language and grammar to make meanings from the texts as Halliday says "A discourse analysis that is not based on grammar is not an analysis at all, but simply a running commentary on a text". SFL is applied today in teaching and learning and also used as a discourse analysis method. Based on SFL, for Halliday, the language is a meaning. He sees the words as units for meaning making. Thus, Halliday believes that the meaning of language is made through the language's forms. The meaning of language is related with the forms of

language which is the notion of SFG (Systemic Functional Grammar). SFG (Systemic Functional Grammar) is a grammatical and meaning description which is part of the systemic functional linguistics that is a social semiotic approach. Halliday, Matthiessen, and Halliday (2014) state that SFG provides grammatical choices from which the language users can select the choices depending on appropriate contexts. Halliday sees the language as structure (grammar) and words (lexis) which together they are called lexico-grammar by Halliday. According to Coffin (2009), this theory is concerned with the effects of society and culture on language. The theory also focuses on the ways language realizes the three meta-functions of the language. As this study is going to use SFL as an analysis method for analyzing ideational and interpersonal meta-functions of President Hamid Karzai's speech, the parts that are going to be analyzed are described below:

Meta-Functions

Meta-functions are the functions of the language according to Halliday. They are divided into three kinds of ideational, interpersonal and textual meta-functions. Ideational Meta-function is divided into two types of experiential and logical. According to Halliday et al. (2014), the experiential meta-functions shows the goings on, and flow of the events in the world which are embodied in the system of transitivity.

Transitivity

According to Fontaine, Bartlett, and O'Grady (2013), transitivity is a foundational concept in SFL which has a special meaning. It is used in any kind of SFG framework. According to Angermuller, Maingueneau, and Wodak (2014), transitivity is the start of classifying of the various kinds of processes. Transitivity focuses on processes (verbs), participants and circumstances. According to Butt, Fahey, Spinks, and Yallop (2000), participants can be the subject of the clause which can take the role of actor, sayer, carrier, agent or goal of the clause. Based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) the process which is the verbal group can also be broken down into six parts of Material, Relational Verbal, Mental, Behavioural and Existential. The part, circumstance refers to when, where, why, how, with whom and what the clause process is used with.

Interpersonal Meta-Functions

According to (Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the interpersonal meta-function shows the function of the language that is derived from the exchange of language in communication between speaker and audience. Hu, Liu, and Li (1988) believe that interpersonal meta-function shows the personal and social ties between people including the speech situation and the way the speakers carry out a speech act. This meta-function of functional grammar focuses on three components, tenor (the relations among discourse participants), field, and mode (channel of communication). These three facets of the discourse effect the speaker and writer's relations including the personality, social relations and social distance of the speaker and writer. The speaker's persona is related to the place of speaker and writer, attitude and personalization which includes the neutral feelings which the speaker and writer have positive and negative feelings. The social distance here implies whether the speakers are close to each other or do not have strong

relationships. The relative social status shows whether speakers are the same level or different level. Two components show the interpersonal meta-function in a discourse that comprise of Modality and Mood. Modality as part of the mood will be discussed in the current study.

Modality

Modality has been greatly used in linguistic studies in terms of language learning and teaching, discourse analysis and literature. Modality also depicts the speaker’s opinion and judgments of the topics and issues they talk about. According to Fontaine et al. (2013), modality as a meaning can be expressed in modal verbs and adjuncts. Halliday et al. (2014) explain that modality is a good source for speakers for giving them a chance of inserting their view into the discourse. It helps them express their thoughts, beliefs and views about the rights and wrongs of the situations. It provides speakers with the assessment of what is typical, and likely. Modality is one of the important features of interpersonal meta-functions in Halliday’s Grammar. Modality is divided into two categories which are modalization (Epistemic) and modulation (deontic). According to SFL, modalization is the degree of certainty to

which the speaker or writer says something or estimates a probability about what they are saying. Nonetheless, modulation in SFL is used to show obligation and permission, ability, and willingness. Modal auxiliaries, lexical items, and modal adjuncts are used to show both kinds of modality. According to Fontaine et al. (2013) there are nine modals which are might, may, would, will, can, could, shall, must, should and might. According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), when the clause is used for exchanging information through statements and questions, it takes the form of *proposition* and the job of modality is to interpret how valid the information is which is shown through usuality and probability. On the contrary, if the clause is used for exchanging goods and services through commands and offers, it is called *proposal* and the modality signals the degrees of inclination and obligation then. Modality can be used to show both proposition and proposal. The speech in this study will be analyzed for both modulation and modalization. Following are the degrees of modality.

Degrees of Modality

Table 1: Modality Degrees (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 145)

	Low	Median	High
Positive	can, may, could, might, (dare)	will, would, should, is/was to	must, ought to, need, has/had to
Negative	needn’t, doesn’t/didn’t +need to, have to	won’t, wouldn’t, shouldn’t, (isn’t/ wasn’t to)	mustn’t, oughtn’t to, can’t, couldn’t, (mayn’t, mightn’t, hasn’t/hadn’t to)

5. Methodology

SFG (Systemic Functional Grammar) of Halliday was employed in this study to analyse the speech of president Hamid Karzai.

Data

The data for this analysis are the transcription of President Hamid Karzai’s speech delivered at United Nations 67th General Assembly on September 25, 2012.

Data Collection & Instruments

The data’s transcript was obtained from the following address (<http://afghanistan-un.org/2012/09/president-hamid-karzai-speaks-at-the-united-nations-general-assembly/>) of the permanence mission of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations, New York (Refer to Appendix I)

Data Analysis

Transitivity: The speech analysed has 1550 words, 59 sentences and 24 paragraphs. The bar graph below shows the use of each kind of six processes in the speech analysed.

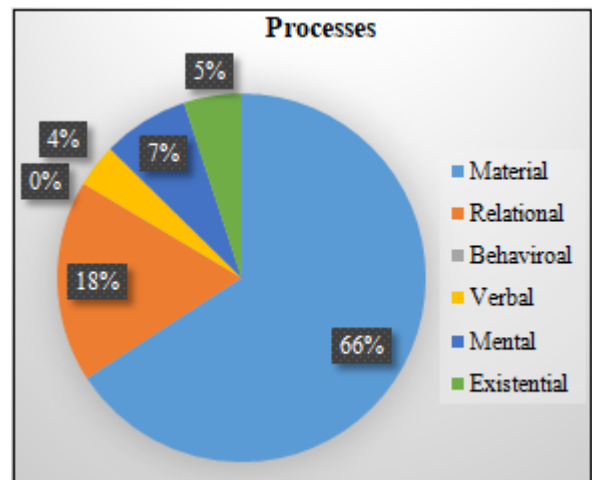


Figure 1: Bar Graph for Processes in the Speech

Recurring Themes

A look at the thematic structure and the ideational meta-functions shows that the most recurring themes discussed in the president Hamid Karzai speech are Afghanistan’s past present and its future challenges and developments, terrorism, peace, and problems in some other Islamic countries like Palestine and Syria.

Interpersonal Meta-Functions

Modality Types in the Speech

Table 2: Modality Types in the Speech

Relevant Clauses in the Speech	Modulation						Modalization								
	Probability			Usuality			Inclination			Obligation					
	H	M	L	H	M	L	H	M	L	H	M	L			
we must work to defeat the protagonists of the conflict of civilizations, and support the voices of tolerance and understanding													√		
the people of Afghanistan must no longer be made to pay the price and endure the brunt of the war													√		
the campaign against terrorism must be taken to the sources of terrorism and must be result-oriented													√		
we remain hopeful for the critical role that our neighbour, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, has to play													√		
but are aware of the challenges that may strain our efforts at building trust and confidence			√												
the Transition Process will be completed by mid-2013 and NATO and ISAF forces withdrawn from the country by end of 2014									√						
we must grasp to grow and prosper													√		
we will spare no effort to build strong and lasting relations with our neighbors - near and extended.									√						
we cannot negate the fact that this organization is in dire need of a comprehensive reform			√												
achieving a reformed Council that is more inclusive, representative and transparent must remain a priority													√		

Modality Frequency

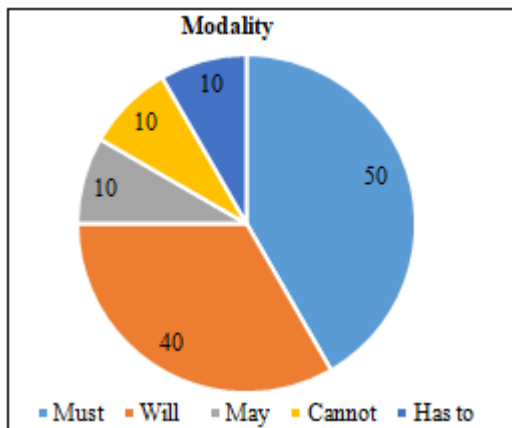


Figure 2: Bar Graph showing Modality in the Speech

Tense

The analysis of tense use in Karzai speech is shown as below frequency.

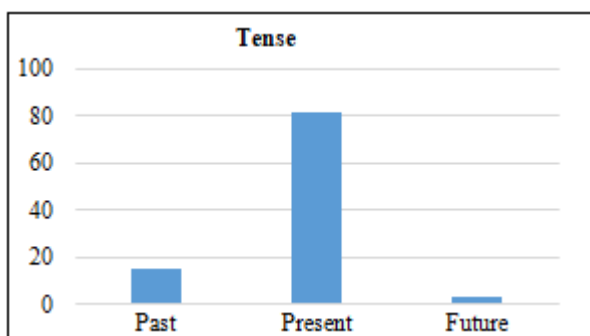


Figure 3: Bar Graph for Tense in the Speech

Personal Pronouns

The analysis of personal pronouns from the speech shows the following results.

Table 3: Frequency of Personal Pronouns in the Speech

Personal pronouns		Frequency		
Possessive pronouns	First Person	I (me)	3	
		We (us)	18	
	Second person	You (you)	0	
		Third person	He (him)	0
			She (her)	0
			It (its)	8
Possessive pronouns	They (them)	1		
	Possessive pronouns	My (mine)	3	
		Our (ours)	1	
		Your (yours)	0	
		His (his)	0	
		Her (hers)	0	
Its (its)		3		
Their (theirs)	3			

6. Results and Discussion

Recurring Themes

A look at the thematic structure and the ideational meta-functions could provide us to answer our first research question regarding recurring themes. This shows that the most recurring themes discussed in the president Hamid Karzai speech are Afghanistan’s past, present and its future challenges and developments, terrorism, peace, problems in other countries like Palestine and Syria.

Processes

Material Processes: Material processes are used to show events, goings-on, and activities (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). Fontaine et al. (2013) believe that material processes are used to show doings, happenings, experiencing, changing and creating. They are used to signal the external experiences of humans. Material processes deal with ‘the doing’ of an entity. The doer (which is called as ‘actor’) should be human or animated object. There are two participants in material processes which are actor and goal. Material processes are used in two cases of active and passive voice. The analysis of Karzai speech shows that it

has majority of material processes (66 %) percent. This implies that he is considerably influenced by the events and goings-on that occur in Afghanistan and other countries especially destructive activities and violence since many of the participants (actors) of material processes in his speech are either *I, we, terrorism, violence, and Afghanistan* and majority of the goals of processes are *peaceful world, security, Afghanistan, Muslims* and so forth. In addition, this implies that governmental actions are required to be taken either by U.N or other assembly members to tackle these problems and events which occur in Afghanistan, Palestine and Syria. This is also in line with the study of Liping (2014) who found that material, relational processes were used dominantly in the political speeches. Liping adds further that these two kinds of processes are used commonly in political speeches to show reality and seem more objective. The wide use of present tense in his speech also entails that these activities, goings-on are occurred currently and what Karzai expects is also the governmental or international allies' actions to be taken in the present time. Also, majority of the material processes are used in active voice which shows that the president wants to make it visible who performs any action. To sum, the wide use of material processes assists the presidents show his expressiveness and highlight the challenges and troubles he is faced with. Furthermore, as material processes show "doings", they give power and strength to the audience and this is what Karzai perhaps intended in his speech particularly when he mentioned his promises against eliminating corruption in his administration.

Relational

The second large number of processes (18 %) used in Karzai speech is made up by relational processes. Relational processes are used in two cases of attributive and identifying. The attributive case of relational processes gives an attribute to an entity such as the example of *the campaign must be result-oriented* in Karzai speech. Nonetheless, identifying case is used to give identity and identify something. For example, *Afghanistan is the centre* in Karzai speech. Liping (2014) believes that relational processes are used in political speeches to show abstract concepts. Halliday et al. (2014) assert that to make our inner and outer experiences of the world coherent, we need relational process. Relational are used to describe people or things. They are used to describe the things, and situations in his speech by the president. The current challenges, tense situations, events, actions, such as wars, attacks, assassinations, future hopes, and so forth are all interpreted through relational processes by the president. For example, the issue of peace where he mentions *peace is the utmost desire of Afghans*.

Mental

These processes show thoughts, sentiments and our thinking (Halliday and Matthieson, 2014). They are used to show the awareness of people of the phenomenon. Mental processes are used to help people show their thinking and ideas since people not only perform but they think and make decisions. In president Karzai speech, he has used 7 % of mental processes. This reveals that the president has shared his thinking and decisions with the audience. The use of mental processes also shows that Karzai has shared his condolence,

and sympathy with those assassinated in the on-going wars in Afghanistan and other countries. For instance, *The people of Palestine have suffered immensely for too long*.

Behavioural Processes

They are used to show certain humans' behaviours like breathing, coughing, laughing, particularly those physiological and psychological (Halliday and Matthieson, 2014). As in speeches of politicians, there is not the chance of happening of such activities, so they are used to a limited number as was the case in Hamid Karzai speech.

Verbal Processes

These processes are between material and mental processes. They show the saying and utterances. They are used rarely by the presidents in some cases, particularly for citing other peoples such as scholars' quotes to make their saying and speech more credible. The number of verbal processes in this speech was not significant to study (less than 5 %).

Existential Processes

These processes show the existence of something. There is only one entity which is the existent in existential processes. The analysis of transitivity above helped the study answer the second research question regarding the experiential meaning of the president's speech. The analysis showed that the president has dominantly focused on the activities and actions happening in Afghanistan and some other Islamic countries. Besides this, he has focused on the description of current image of these events, and sharing his sentiments.

Modality

Bar graph (2) reveals that there are four modals (*must, will, cannot* and *has to*) used in president Karzai speech. The modal "*Must*" is the one with most frequent use (50 %) used in the speech. *Must* is used to show the strongest form of obligation. It shows the highest degree of urgency in his speech. This has the implication that the president has strong intention for bringing changes, and he is very willing and interested for those actions he mentioned in the speech to happen. The modal "*Must*" shows that the proposition the president is making is in the highest degree of acceptance. For instance, *we must grasp and prosper the opportunities* where he urges all the audience to make attempts for taking advantage of chances for their benefits. The second most frequented modality "*Will*" which is (40 %). The modal "*Will*" is used to show the intentions and future plans in English. It is used by the president for his future plans and activities he is going to do in future. The repeated use of "*Will*" entails that president is more concerned about future. This may be due to the existence of a vast number of challenges currently in Afghanistan and other Islamic world which he mentioned in his speech. It also shows the promises he is making for bringing changes and developing the country. On the contrary, "*Cannot*" has a negative connotation which shows the highest degree of negative *Can*. The wide range use of negative *Can* has the implication of the president's confidence about the inability or the probability of the events or anything he has used *Cannot* for in his speech. For example, *We cannot give reason for the genuine protests to be used to incite violence and chaos with terrible losses of innocent lives*. Moreover, *cannot* is the highest polite form of the modals. Thus, the president wants

to look politer and more courteous in his speech while talking giving the speech. Other modal used in the speech is *Hasto* which has been used (10) % in the speech. *Hasto* is used to show the high degree of obligation. This reveals that the president is once again focusing on the obligation as he did through the use of *Must*.

Tense

The results from tense reveals that the most dominating tense is present tense (81.63) %. This shows that the president has used the present tense to the maximal point that implies that the issues, events, happenings, and other themes discussed in his speech are mostly related to the current times. This can be also revealed from the current problems in Afghanistan and other Islamic countries. For instance, the gathering of assembly to solve these problems, and the issues Karzai is confronted with nowadays such as the violence, explosions, corruption in the government, the peace building process and so forth which all are current issues. The second-high frequency is for past tense. This shows that the president also has used more past tense than future. This could be due to the achievements of his government for the last couple of years which the president needs to report the progression to the assembly members. In addition, he requires to report the past challenges. Thus, he needs to use simple past tense to refer to his past projects such as building of the schools, roads, universities, bringing security, and reporting generally what the investment from international allies has been spent on. The future tense has been used the less (3.06) % which implies that the issues and topics discussed in the assembly approximately all related to the present time.

Pronouns

According to Flowerdew, Li, and Tran (2002), one of the roles of personal pronouns in discourse is to provide interpersonal relationships between the speaker and listener. Flowerdew et al. (2002) assert that the use of pronouns in a political speech can tell us the amount of responsibility the speakers want to assume for any of their ideas. The table (3) shows that Karzai has used the pronoun "*We*" 18 times which makes (48.64) % in his speech while using the pronoun "*I*" 8 (21.62) % times and other pronouns no more than 3 times respectively. The frequent use of the pronoun "*We*" in his speech clearly shows that he wants to refer the responsibility to someone unknown since "*We*" refers to someone unclear (Jalilifar & Alavi, 2012). Jalilifar and Alavi add further that the pronoun "*We*" at the beginning of speech shows the sharing of interests with the audience. They believe that assuming responsibility can also be revealed through the use of active and passive voices. In his speech, Karzai has used 8 times passivation as well. This suggests that he wanted to conceal the subject of the sentence. For instance, *the transition process will be completed by mid-2013*. In the latter sentence, he does not mention the performer of the process, thus he wants to hedge. As the transition process will be difficult due to the intense situation in Afghanistan, he does not want to assume the responsibility and thus uses the passive voice. According to Charteris-Black (2000), speakers also use the pronoun "*We*" with active voices and sound-bites to show unity with the speakers. From other perspective, the wide use of pronoun "*We*" can be interpreted for the implication of the

inability of the president to tackle all these problems. Hence, he may have used it to show that he cannot deal with all the issues, challenges in Afghanistan and other countries while it is impossible, thus he wants to consider struggling these challenges as a common responsibility. The three times use of the pronoun "*I*" denotes that Karzai does not want to assume responsibility since three times is less in a 24 paragraph speech. According to Jalilifar and Alavi (2012), the first person pronoun "*I*" use in a sentence clearly reveals that the speaker wants to assume the responsibility. This part "*Modality*" can answer the third research question which is the understanding of modality in president Hamid Karzai speech. The second most frequent use of "*I*" which is 21.62 % shows the intensity of the situation because this pronoun is referred to the situation and themes he was going to talk about.

7. Conclusion and Suggestions

SFG (Systemic Functional Grammar) in terms of transitivity and modality was used in this study to find the ideology and power of Afghan former president Hamid Karzai in his speech delivered in 67th assembly of United Nations in 2012. The analysis showed that the mostly recurring themes in Hamid Karzai's speech were Afghanistan's past, present and its future challenges and developments, terrorism, peace, problems in other Islamic countries like Palestine and Syria. The president had used 66 % material processes in his speech. This could be implied that he mostly focused on the current events such as violence, explosions, assassinations and destructions happening in Afghanistan and other Islamic countries. The second most frequent process (18 %), relational showed that he also focused on the abstract concepts. It showed that he mostly focused on the description and illustration of this situation in Afghanistan and other Islamic countries in terms of positivism and negativism. The modality analysis showed that "*Must*" was the 50 % used modal in the president's speech. It showed that the issues and topics discussed in the assembly are significant and urgent. They need immediate attention from the audience. The second dominating model used was "*Will*". The extensive use of this model revealed that the president has many plans and promises to fulfil in future. In addition, the analysis of tense showed that the mostly used tense in his speech was present tense (81.63 %). The excessive use of this tense denoted that the topics and issues exchanged between the president and the audience related mostly to the current time particularly the current violence, fights, explosions, and other challenges that the president's government is faced with. In addition to that, the analysis of personal pronouns shows that the widely used (48.64) % pronoun was "*We*" in his speech. It is used widely because for two purposes. First, the president wants not to assume the responsibility personally and refers to someone uncertain. Secondly, he wants to consider the problems and themes discussed as common goals between him and the audience. Another widely used pronoun was "*I*" (21.62) % that refers to the themes and topics discussed in the speech. This entails the immediacy and urgency of the themes that the presidents were going to address. It shows the emphasis he put on the topics security, violence and so forth in particular. Finally, this study suggests that there is complete lack of analysis of Afghan presidents' speeches including

the former and current presidents. The study recommends conducting more studies about the analysis of Afghan president's speeches as this would provide better insight about the ideologies and power these presidents have in their speeches which will help the country to get rid of the critical and severe situation in case these presidents persuade international community towards maintaining their contributions to Afghanistan.

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[18] ZHAO, M., & ZHANG, Y. A Transitivity Analysis of American President Donald J. Trump's Inaugural Address.

Appendix I: Transcription of President Hamid Karzai's Speech

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every year our gathering in this prestigious hall is a manifestation of our faith in the fundamental equality of nations, as well as the continued relevance of the United Nations as the key international forum for achieving a safer, more secure and prosperous world. The General Assembly is a unique opportunity to engage in sincere and result-oriented dialogue with a view to addressing the challenges that confront us all. As we speak today, the world is shaken by the depravity of fanatics who have committed acts of insult against the faith of over 1.5 billion Muslims. We strongly condemn these offensive acts, whether it involves the production of a film, the publication of cartoons, or indeed any other acts of insult and provocation. Such acts can never be justified as freedom of speech or expression. Equally, they cannot give reason for the genuine protests to be used to incite violence and chaos with terrible losses of innocent lives.

It is a matter of grave concern that our world remains strewn by daily occurrence of violence, hatred, and injustice. In particular, the menace of Islamophobia is a worrying phenomenon that threatens peace and co-existence among cultures and civilizations. I call upon leaders in the West, both politicians and the media, to confront Islamophobia in all its many forms and manifestations.

It is incumbent upon us all to advance the cause of dialogue and cooperation, to fight the forces of division and hatred and to fulfill the promise of a better and brighter future for coming generations. We must work to defeat the protagonists of the conflict of civilizations, and support the voices of tolerance and understanding. Mr. President, My country Afghanistan is testament to the benefits of multi-lateral cooperation and international solidarity. It was a little over a decade ago when many countries from across the world joined the Afghan people in our struggle for peace and against the forces of extremism and terrorism.

At the time Afghanistan was a country decimated in all regards. For decades, we had suffered unnoticed from violence, deprivation, and from sinister foreign interference. Long before terrorism struck the world as a common security threat, Afghans were the victims of the atrocity of terrorist networks from different parts of the world that had made Afghanistan their haven.

Looking back to ten years ago, Afghanistan has transformed remarkably. Democracy has taken root; health services are accessible to the majority of the population, in all corners of the country; millions of students - boys and girls - are enrolled in primary and higher education.

Our achievements have not come about easily, and the true aspirations of the Afghan people for peaceful, prosperous lives are yet to be realized. As the world's fight against terrorism continues unabated, the Afghan people continue to pay the biggest price any nation has paid - in both life and treasure.

Terrorism is not rooted in the Afghan villages and towns - it never was. Its sources and its support networks all exist beyond Afghanistan's borders. Therefore, while the international community's security is being safeguarded from the threat of terrorism, the people of Afghanistan must no longer be made to pay the price and endure the brunt of the war.

It is in deference to the immense sacrifices of the Afghan people, and the precious lives lost from the international community, that the campaign against terrorism must be taken to the sources of terrorism and must be result-oriented.

Mr. President,

Today in Afghanistan, we pursue the cause of peace and an end to violence as a matter of great urgency. Peace being the utmost desire of the Afghan people, and convinced that military effort alone is not an adequate strategy to bring security; we have initiated the peace and reconciliation process which aims to bring all elements of the armed opposition to peaceful lives in the society.

Last year this month, my attendance at the UNGA was cut short by the tragic assassination of Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, the then Chairman of the High Peace Council. His life was taken by a terrorist who posed as a peace emissary, and by doing so dealt our peace process a serious blow. This year, however, I am proud that late Professor Rabbani's son, Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, who has stepped up to take the Chair of the HPC, is part of my delegation in New York.

As I have repeated often-times, my hand of peace and reconciliation remains extended not only to the Taliban but also to all other armed opposition groups who wish to return to dignified, peaceful and independent lives in their own homeland. What we ask of them in return is simple: an end to violence, cutting ties with terrorist networks, preserving the valuable gains of the past decade, and respecting our Constitution.

To help facilitate the peace process, I ask of the United Nations Security Council to extend its full support to our efforts. In particular, I urge the 1988 Taliban's Sanctions Committee to take more active measures towards delisting of Taliban leaders as a step to facilitate direct negotiations.

In pursuing the path of peace, we remain hopeful for the critical role that our neighbor, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, has to play. Over the recent years, we have engaged our friends in Pakistan in a close dialogue in support of the Afghan peace process. It is a dialogue that, we believe, is critical for Pakistan's own security, and the security of the wider region and beyond.

We are deeply committed to our brotherly relations with Pakistan, but are aware of the challenges that may strain our

efforts at building trust and confidence. Such incidents as the recent shelling of Afghan villages risk undermining the efforts by both governments to work together in the interest of our common security.

Mr President,

During the past two years, our national priority has been to have Afghanistan's own security forces assume full security responsibility. The Transition Process will be completed by mid 2013 and NATO and ISAF forces withdrawn from the country by end of 2014.

Apart from advancing Transition and pursuing the peace process, the past year has been one of significant progress for consolidating international commitment and partnership.

In Chicago last May, we received the long-term commitment by NATO and other countries for the training, equipping and ensuring the sustainability of Afghanistan's national security forces. In Tokyo this past July, the international community reaffirmed strong commitment to Afghanistan's social and economic development during the Transformation Decade, for which we are grateful.

The "mutual accountability framework," adopted in Tokyo, sets in place a clear structure for a more result oriented partnership and cooperation. We welcome the international community's readiness to align aid with our national priorities and channel assistance through the Afghan budget. On our part, we reiterated our determination to improve governance and to collaborate with our international partners to wipe out the cancer of corruption - whether it is in the Afghan government or the international aid system.

Mr. President

We recognize that Afghanistan's destiny is tied to the region that surrounds it - whether in face of our common threats, such as terrorism, extremism, and narcotics, or the opportunities we must grasp to grow and prosper. In this context, the Istanbul Process presents a new agenda for security, confidence building and cooperation across the region of which Afghanistan is the centre. We will spare no effort to build strong and lasting relations with our neighbors -near and extended.

Mr President,

Turning to the international arena, Afghanistan views the situation in Syria with much concern. For over a year now, the thousands of our Syrian brothers and sisters have lost their lives due to an escalating cycle of violence. We welcome the appointment of the new Joint UN-Arab League Special Envoy for Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi. We know from Mr. Brahimi's well-respected role in Afghanistan, that he brings with him vast experience and a unique ability to the task before him.

The continuing plight of the Palestinian people has been a deep source of distress for Afghanistan and the rest of the international community. The people of Palestine have suffered immensely, for far too long. We remain in full support of the realization of the rights of our brothers and sisters in Palestine, including their right to an independent Palestinian State. The time has come for an end to the

occupation, and for realizing a just, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the conflict, based on the relevant resolutions of the UN General Assembly and Security Council.

And finally, the UN reform remains an important agenda at the international level. Since its inception in 1945, the UN has exercised a key role in promoting a safer and more secure world, improving the lives of citizens worldwide, and safeguarding and promoting human rights. Nevertheless, in view of our ever-changing world, we cannot negate the fact that this organization is in dire need of a comprehensive reform, enabling it to better reflect the new challenges and realities of our time. The reform of the UN Security Council is an issue long overdue. Achieving a reformed Council that is more inclusive, representative and transparent must remain a priority; and we welcome the ongoing progress within the framework of the inter-governmental negotiations (IGN).