



RESEARCH PAPER

Exploring Image of China in the Diplomatic Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: July 15, 2021</p> <p>Accepted: October 15, 2021</p> <p>Online: October 20, 2021</p> <p>Keywords: CDA China Image, Corpus, Language of Diplomacy, Political Discourse Analysis</p> <p>*Corresponding Author:</p> <p>dr.chishti@sns.nus t.edu.pk</p>	<p>The present study hinges on the major objective of analyzing Pakistani and Indian diplomatic discourses employed in portrayal of image of China. Data comprises the official discourse which is used in diplomatic affairs of both the states. The extensive investigation seeks insights from the fundamentals of Critical Discourse Analysis propounded by van Dijk, Fairclough and Wodak with a special focus on Bhatia's (2006) work. The study reveals that the image of China has always been accorded priority within Indian and Pakistani diplomatic discourse even though nature of bilateral relations among China, India and Pakistan is based on entirely different dynamics; Indian and Pakistani diplomatic discourses are reflective of sensitivities involved within the bilateral relations. Through employment of linguistic techniques of 'positivity', 'evasion' and 'influence and power', Indian diplomats have managed not to compromise over the fundamentals in bilateral relations with China despite Pakistan's already strengthened and deep-rooted relations with China. While Pakistani diplomatic fronts have been equally successful in further deepening their already strengthened relations in the midst of surging controversies on CPEC, BRI and OBOR. Hence, diplomatic fronts of both the countries, through employment of ideologically loaded linguistic choices, leave no stone unturned in consolidation of the diplomatic relations with China.</p>

Introduction

Discourse analytical approaches to political discourse, media discourse, and diplomatic discourse have been predominantly valuable in portrayal of the construction of identity, theorizing an image, and employment of language in negotiating an ideology. Diplomatic press conferences involve political leaders as ministers or representatives of government and provide a primary data to study how an image is constructed, how controversies are addressed, further communicated, and how ideologies are constructed in a positive way. These political figures use such linguistic choices, intentionally or unintentionally, to manifest in subjective judgement, auspicious or uncomplimentary, which shows their linguistic ability to deal with sociolinguistic issues. In the light of the language use, diplomatic discourse plays a significant role in guarding the government's

stance by the diplomats, and public figures of diplomacy. Diplomatic affairs are represented through a particular type of discourse or using linguistic techniques. Scot (2001:153) argues that diplomats use some linguistic strategies in their communications to persuade their speakers to come up with an agreement through the discourse in different expressions. Hofstede (2001) advocates linguistics as a key weapon of diplomacy and grants a favorite choice for linguists to work on diplomacy because of the use of diplomatic linguistic traits in a discourse such as power, uncertainty, rhetoric, ambiguity, and individualism and collectivism.

In the preview of above, this study focuses on the way discursive practice of diplomatic discourse to guarding the government's point of view with neighboring countries. As China has proven herself to be an economic giant of South Asia. China has initiated a mega economic project known as Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to connect China with Middle East, Asia, Europe and Africa for the development of a new economic zone which will no doubts open new avenues for economic progress of regions, countries involved in BRI, and China as well. Pakistani foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, and Indian Foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishank are the perfect examples for the production of contrastive use of diplomatic discourse in projecting governments' stance on China, BRI and their projects pertaining to BRI such as China Pakistan Economic Corridor etc.

Historically, diplomacy started in Italy at renaissance times. Nick (2001) asserts that embassies were first come into existence in the thirteenth century. With the passage of time, the fashion of embassies started spreading Eastern Europe and Russia respectively. The introduction of soft power was also introduced. Nick (2001:39) further explained the concept of the discourse of diplomacy as, "Language of Diplomacy is the technique of expressing of a nation's stances by a specific group and it possesses a particular type, manner, tone or the lexical choices are selected with the proper care and by using linguistic techniques". Afzaal & Chishti (2019) discuss DA as "Discourse Analysis (DA) has been touched upon from various angles in multiple academic settings. However, a consensus can be traced within the scholarly settings that it pertains to analytical, contextual and structural features of a language used in spoken and written manifestations, images and other forms of meaning making'.

Whether the case may be, diplomatic press releases are usually dependent on the policies of current government and relationships with the neighboring countries. However, if the government wants to have a deeper relationships and support of people, it will increase the number of press releases to show the interest of government towards bilateral relationships, gaining support, and to revise forging policy. In this article, it is referred to 'diplomatic press conferences' that bring together two political leaders in a ritualized communicative event, with the objective of projecting a united front on crucial global political issues. Through the use of knowledge of socio-cultural norms and diplomatic language, both give a joint statement to their audience of predominantly press journalists, who then incorporate this into media reports which will reach lay members of the public. According to Cornwell, 1960: 389) media conferences has become a 'formalized public institution... a communication vehicle that has provided all political figures to represent the hidden motives and communicate it to laymen.

So, in this context, press releases are included as a subgenre of press conferences. By view of subgenre of press conferences, it can be regarded as diplomatic discourse and media discourse. Because press releases provide true insights, constituents, and elements of media discourses such as who says, what, when and why the discourse is constructed. Diplomatic discourse or press releases has a sequence or sequential pattern; Goffman argues that “much depends on the minutiae of the institutional arrangement within which any particular discourse occurs and on the intention of the speakers . . . routinely ritualize participation frameworks. (Goffman in Burns, 1992: 324–7). Similarly, press releases are the first source to construe a motive to what government or political ministers say, or mediatize of political actions, and to construct a voice to inform rest of the world about the policies, decisions, and relationship of one’s country. Negrine (1994) argues that mass media construct an influential effect on the image of country to ensure the non-adversarial relationship (Negrine, 1994; Muzaffar, et. al, 2018)

The main goal of present study is to identify the construction of image through the diplomatic discourse, it is much interesting to know the trivial, challenging, and effective way to the use of such discourse for the politicians in presenting their viewpoints which Cheng (2002: 310) describes as ‘the tactical usage of rhetoric for diplomatic resolution between both parties’. Through the diplomatic press releases, other countries come to know the strategies, policies, relationships, and way of dealing of host country with other countries. Once press releases are aired, government’s stance becomes public knowledge. Press releases of diplomats involve patterns, lexical manipulations and methods how difficult issues, political differences, and conflicts are projected in positive way. From a past few years, political communication has become more interesting due to the transformation of political figures into a media personal as a result of ‘mediatization’ of politics and government (Fairclough, 2000:4).

Following Bhatia (2004), and Levinson’s (1990) description of press conferences, we can categorize diplomatic discourse as subgenre of political discourse or media discourse. Diplomatic discourse comprises many features like political discourse such as inter-culture communication, media discourse, polite negotiations, manipulative technique, facets of disagreement, turn-taking, constructing trust, political space (Bhatia, 2004) which are practiced with more careful usage in discourse. Brown and Levinson, (1990) regarded ‘diplomatic discourse is a solution to ideologically ridden token agreements. Ideology is a manifestation of societal phenomena, Fairclough (1989) calls it a ‘extending power struggles in society’. These contrasting ideologies occur when political leaders meet and discuss economic, political, or other issues. Foreign ministers represent their country, government, and people, so, it is necessary to analyze in-depth the discourse used in press releases. CDA provides to insights to analyze the hidden motives, linguistic techniques, assertions, and rejections, and how these strategies do are used in discourses to represent their standpoints. The core feature of diplomatic discourse is the way the language is used, and the way political figures present their stance through the diction, which Cheng (2002:310) remarks ‘the tactful usage of rhetoric for diplomatic resolution between parties’.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a strong theoretical underpinning for the analysis of diplomatic discourse to explore the discursive practices of diplomacy. Evasion in political talk (Harris, 1991), political interviews (Atkinson, 1998), a triangular connection between government, political leaders, and media (Fairclough, 2000);

McCarthy, 2002; Wodak 1989) have been the subject of attention, however diplomatic press-conferences have been rarely the subject of study. Therefore, this study primarily fills the gap by analyzing press releases of diplomats of two countries of Pakistan and India to identify the ideological construction, and image of China in their discourses. van Dijk(1993) argues that CDA investigates the pattern through which 'powerful gatekeeper in society influence social beliefs and values, and shape ideologies'; Wodak(1996:17) points that discourses are multi-layered and CDA studies discourses 'distorted by power and ideology' in order to investigate how they are embedded in cultural forms of life, which they co-constitute. As Fairclough (1995: 80) argues that "discoursal democratization is of course linked to political democratization, and to the broad shift from coercion to consent, incorporation and pluralism in the exercise of power. Synthetic personalization is I think a facet of a concomitant process of the breaking down of divisions between public and private, political society and civil society, as the state and its mechanisms (especially ideological) of generating consent expand into private domains."

Material and Methods

Theoretical framework: Corpus-based CDA

This article seeks insights from critical discourse analysis (CDA) while analyzing textual data extracted from within diplomatic press conferences conducted by Pakistani and Indian diplomats speaking on issues directly related to China's image. It is significant to mention that no specific model will be followed within the study rather the significant insights from CDA in its entirety will be exploited to analyze the textual data. The analysis is an endeavor to unveil the hidden motives embedded within diplomatic discourses. Political figures/diplomats while conducting diplomatic press conferences try to negotiate and maintain face work prioritizing their hidden agendas. The analysis section seeks insights from Bhatia's work (2006) in which he has not resorted to any model; instead, relied on the essence of diverse tools employed in different critical discourse analysis studies. The features pertaining to CDA dimensions appropriately fit in the context of this very study. The focuses on the very research questions such as what is China's image in discourses of Pakistani diplomatic discourses? and what image of China is constructed in India's diplomatic discourses?

Data

Data comprises of press releases and press conferences of Pakistan and Indian foreign ministries. Primary data encompasses diplomatic press conferences of Mr. Shah Mehmood Quraishi, foreign minister of Pakistan, and Mr. Subrahmanyam Jaishank serving as the Indian Minister of External Affairs which have been taken from the official website of foreign ministries of Pakistan and India. However, secondary data includes the interviews, statements drawn from official websites of foreign ministries, and spokesperson's views presented through media.

Results and Discussions

Three major themes with their sub-dimensions employed within Bhatia's (2006) analysis have been employed within the study. The facets worth inquiry are given as under:

- i. positivity
- ii. influence and power
- iii. evasion

Positivity acquires significance within the study as it is one of the major attributes of diplomacy employed in political press conferences. Bhatia sounds pragmatic when he views it as one of the pivotal aspects of diplomacy employed “to depict diplomacy, congruity and mutuality between two diametrically opposed countries.” (Bhatia, 2006). Influence and power are another tactic employed by diplomats to “pre-determine one another’s future behaviour.” (Bhatia, 2006). This very feature is exercised by the political speakers to acquire significant control over the audiences. Evasion is a frequently employed tactic by the political speakers who resort to being ambiguous and unclear by not providing the audiences with the exact contextual situation. The ultimate objective behind employing this very diplomatic tactic is to avoid coming up with a stance that may further be exploited by the media leading to any controversial situation.

Positivity

Following Bhatia’s (2006) suggested dimensions of analyzing political press conferences through critical discourse perspective, positivity, which though seems to be a generic term, may further be subcategorized into the following dimensions:

1. to achieve common ground, or mutual understanding between two ideological opposites;
2. to express praise and politically-motivated appreciation;
3. to propose a promising future relationship; and
4. to express differences diplomatically, to ‘cushion the blow’.

While responding to a question pertaining to the Indian diplomat’s stance on words of the spokesperson of Chinese MOFA suggesting that the section of the Sikkim region in India and

China is covered by an old historic convention signed in 1890, Official Spokesperson, Shri

Raveesh Kumar remarked:

“We have seen relevant reports, the comments, negotiations for the settlement of the India-China boundary question are held at the level of special representatives of the two countries based on agreements and understanding reached between them from time to time. The most recent common understanding between the special representatives was reached in 2012. “It is important that these understandings are scrupulously respected by both sides and that each side projects the position of the other side accurately.”

It is remarkable here that despite glaring oppositional stances between both Indian and Chinese perspectives on multiple fronts, mutual understanding between two ideologically opposites has not been compromised and an earnest desire and wishful thinking has been projected through diplomatic fronts urging China to respect the signed agreements. Similarly, what has been projected through Ravesh Kumar’s words has

foregrounded Indian goodwill emphasizing that it is India which has always endeavoured to promote negotiations amongst both the nations despite surging conflicts, not the other way round. The tactful employment of words by the Indian diplomat: "It is important that these understandings are scrupulously respected by both sides." are indicative of mutual agreement within all the adversaries. Suntara (2018) argues that "stance can be seen as "an attitudinal dimension and includes features which refer to the ways authors present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions, and commitments".

However, a question was posed to Pakistani spokesman referring to Indian Express where a top Indian official was quoted saying "CPEC is not acceptable to India and it will be a bleeding artery for Pakistan and China"; the journalist added in his question that the subject statement appeared in the wake of arrest of RAW agents from GB recently, and just two days after the statement, terrorist attack happened in Lahore; social media is rife with speculation of Indian involvement. He intended inquiring about the link between India and Lahore incident. The response of Pakistani diplomat characterized all the significant attributes of diplomacy especially the major requisites of 'positivity' were witnessed to be well in place. He responded exhibiting the peculiar norms of diplomacy:

"Government of Punjab and Ministry of Interior are the relevant authorities to speak on Lahore attack. I understand that the investigations are on and, reportedly, some arrests have also been made. Pakistan - China cooperation on CPEC and several other projects is well known and reflects the special relationship between the two countries. Cooperation is better than conflict and we expect other countries to understand this."

In general settings, the journalist's question could have been taken as a 'half-volley' and a desirable question as underlying intent embedded within the question complimented to Pakistani stance on the terrorism issue and entailed all the requisites which went against India, Pakistan's adversary. But the diplomat maneuvered well with the tone and intent of the question and transformed all the negativity embedded in question into a positive stance supplemented with all the diplomatic norms. Even though Pakistan and India are two ideological opposites, common grounds were still tried to be maintained and hardcore differences were diplomatically communicated. The spokesperson could have easily attributed the same terrorism issue to Pakistan's adversary, but he resorted to a very careful approach by referring the case to Punjab government. While talking about the arrest cases, he again employed a meticulous approach, hedging the situation and employing the word 'reportedly'. His stance on CPEC is indicative of the fact he wished to detach all the elements of controversy and clash from CPEC by not speaking volumes on the question which could have otherwise been elaborated a great deal.

Influence and Power

The technique of influence and power is mostly employed at diplomatic fronts to display the exertion of power and this very power is further exerted to maneuver the future action of the opposition to the desired direction. Van Dijk (1993: 249-50) as cited in Bhatia (2006) elaborates the concept a great deal:

". . . the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups . . . process may involve such different 'modes' of discourse – power relations as the more or less direct or

overt support, enactment, representation, legitimation, denial, mitigation or concealment of dominance, among others.”

According to Bhatia (2006), Influence is ensured through the employment of the following three initiatives:

1. By pre-determining the behaviour of the other party to ensure desired action,
2. By justifying one’s own actions and beliefs to persuade the other to act likewise, and
3. By expressing any disagreements diplomatically.

In response to a question regarding possible cooperation with China on OBOR/BRI, the Indian diplomat said:

“We have seen some media reports alluding to our possible cooperation with China in ‘One Belt One Road’ (OBOR)/‘Belt and Road Initiative’ (BRI). Our position on OBOR/BRI is clear and there is no change. The so-called ‘China-Pakistan Economic Corridor’ violates India’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. No country can accept a project that ignores its core concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity. We are of firm belief that connectivity initiatives must be based on universally recognized international norms, good governance, rule of law, openness, transparency and equality, and must be pursued in a manner that respects sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

Firmness of the stance is oozing out of each, and every word employed in the Indian diplomat’s stance. The evident disagreement/conflict of India with China on CPEC issue is no more a secret which is further diplomatically conveyed through the Indian diplomat in a powerful tone taking a clear-cut stance on the subject issue. By grading CPEC as a ‘so called’ corridor, Indian stance is portrayed with all the resoluteness employed. Influence and power is exercised by declaring Indians as great advocates of ‘universally recognized international norms, good governance, and rule of law, openness, transparency and equality’. By openly declaring Indian stance on OBOR/BRI coming up to the international merits of ‘sovereignty and territorial integrity’, Indian diplomat endeavours to establish fairness in their entire matter employing all the attributes of influence and power.

During a press briefing (2019, Pakistani spokesperson while presenting Pakistan’s unwavering stance on CPEC resorted to the technique of ‘influence and power’ and assertively presented his case:

“The inaugural meeting of the Joint Working Group on International Cooperation and Coordination (JWG-ICC) was held on 9th April in Beijing. The Pakistan side was led by Foreign Secretary, Tehmina Janjua while the Chinese side was led by Vice Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou. Both sides expressed satisfaction at the steady progress being made on various CPEC projects and reaffirmed their resolve to maintain this momentum. They also exchanged views and explored ways of developing joint proposals on international cooperation and coordination under CPEC. They rejected attempts to direct self-serving criticism against CPEC and BRI. It was agreed to counter such moves through joint efforts at various levels and modes.”

Resoluteness of Pakistan's stance on CPEC may well be witnessed through their reaffirmation of the resolve to carrying on with the already-existing pace and momentum on the mega project of CPEC. 'Steady progress' is reflective of discarding any possibility of deterrents and stumbling blocks on the subject issue. Firmness of the stance is again manifest with a conviction to countering any heinous attempts in maligning the mega project with 'self-serving criticism'. This clear-cut stance on CPEC predetermining the mal-intentions of the oppositional stance, guarantees the desired action of an unwavering standpoint on the subject issue. 'Joint efforts at various levels and modes' clearly suggests that Pakistan and China remain undivided on their stance of successful completion of CPEC and BRI project and their being on the same page. Afzaal (2019) argues that "OBOR will bring an incredible transformation in the global relations existing structural power".

Evasion

Evasion is a technique most frequently employed by the diplomats when they are confronted with questions which are undesirable, or which place them in uncomfortable situation or when they think that while answering to any inquiry they may compromise on their interests; those interests may be personal, political or national. In such situation, they often resort to being evasive by evading the blunt questions. Critical Discourse Analysis remains in pursuit of unveiling such evasive approaches.

According to Bhatia (2006), the technique of evasion is mostly employed to achieve the following:

1. To prioritize and lessen the crisis-element of certain events;
2. To minimize negative reactions;
3. To deflect moral and political blame
4. To assert control over laymen and journalists.

Responding to another inquiry about the US Secretary of State and the Defense Secretary's visit to Pakistan and India's efforts to isolate Pakistan, Shri Ravesh Kumar added:

"... of course, we do not agree with this assessment that Tillerson visiting Pakistan and India together means anything. You have been following Secretary Tillerson's comments on Pakistan. We feel that India-US bilateral relations are very comprehensive and stand on their own merits. We do not look at our relationships through the prism of any third country."

Since the question was quite direct and entailed truth in it, the diplomat tried to be evasive by coming up with a diplomatic stance.

Upon being sought Indian government's stance on a very direct question raised by one of the journalists: India has raised its concerns regarding CPEC but Iran has welcomed CPEC and also mentioned about participating in it; Official Spokesperson, Shri Raveesh Kumar could not help employing the evasive approach. He responded:

“Regarding CPEC, I would like to say that our position regarding CPEC is well known to you and which is very clear and consistent. We have been saying this since beginning and we have shared it also that it should be based on universal recognized norms, good governance, rule of law, openness, transparency, and quality. More importantly must be pursued in a manner which respects sovereignty and territorial integrity. This is our position, now for us to react to what others think about CPEC, I think this is something which may not be fair for me to answer. There is a stand which Indian government has taken, and this is something which they can answer, I can answer on their behalf.”

The question was direct and very simple and therefore required a simple answer but the Indian diplomat, on the contrary, resorted to complicate the simple question by employing a digressive approach: “. . . we have shared it also that it should be based on universal recognized norms, good governance, rule of law, openness, transparency and quality.” Unnecessarily stuffing his answer with abstract nouns and non-tangible attributive adjectives, he tried to evade the bluntness of the question. His evasive stance could not go unnoticed when he openly surrendered before the question by resorting to a completely evasive approach:

“I think this is something which may not be fair for me to answer. There is a stand which Indian government has taken, and this is something which they can answer, I can answer on their behalf.”

The next question was related to Indian government’s stand on Maldives’ current situation while supplementing to this very question the journalist tactfully inquired about the Indian government’s official stance on the recent deployments by China in East Indian Ocean which could be taken as a direct interference.

The diplomat’s response, once again, was reflective of an evasive approach:

“See, I can tell you what our stand is and which we have articulated very clearly, we have been issuing press release time and again and we have also shared a press release yesterday which is also available on our website. In fact, I will speak in English for the benefit of international media as well that our sincere desire is to see that democracy in Maldives is restored and situation returns to normal. This, we feel, is also the desire of the people of Maldives. We are therefore dismayed that the Maldives Government has extended to emergency for a further period of 30 days. We do not see any valid reason for doing so. We, of course, continue to watch the situation and would continue to urge the government of Maldives to release political prisoners, release Chief Justice, implement the Supreme Court order and restore the normal functioning of the institutions of democracy.”

From the entire excerpt, one can easily trace that the Indian diplomat responded to the section of the question pertaining to Maldives with all the explicit details up-to-the satisfaction of the audiences, but the former part of the question remained entirely unaddressed. He evaded the situation by referring the journalist to consult the website while seeking response to the latter part of the question which was associated with Chinese interference in East Indian Ocean:

“See, I can tell you what our stand is and which we have articulated very clearly, we have been issuing press release time and again and we have also shared a press release yesterday which is also available on our website.”

Then he digresses directly deflecting the question by distracting the audience’s attention:

“In fact, I will speak in English for the benefit of International media as well . . .”

Responding to a question pertaining to the official stance of Pakistan on the talks between Indian Foreign Secretary Jai Shankar and Chinese authorities in China where CPEC and other Pakistan related issues especially the banning of Masood Azhar at UNSC also came under discussions, Pakistani spokesman also came up with the same diplomatic and evasive stance by not responding to the question up to the satisfaction of the journalist:

“I would restrict myself to saying that we do not comment on the bilateral relations of two countries. As far the issues you referred to are concerned, China has already issued its statement in the context of Masood Azhar as well as CPEC. We have also cleared our stance many times in the past regarding CPEC and I don’t think I have anything more to add to it.”

Since Pak-China friendship has always been believed to be stronger than steel, sweeter than honey and higher than Himalayas, Pakistani diplomats are equally mindful of the sensitivities of the relationship and try to be ultra-meticulous while any such question is raised which directly or indirectly relates to Pak-China friendship. In this connection, when a sensitive question pertaining to a controversial personality in international perspective and India-China bilateral talks on grave and sensitive issues was raised, Pakistani diplomat did not contribute a great deal on the subject issue as this was the only way negative or counter reactions and a series of subsidiary questions by the journalists could be avoided.

Therefore, all matters of enhancing connectivity and economic cooperation will be discussed during the Summit. About CPEC, I have said earlier also, that its initial phase will end when the early harvest projects come to completion. CPEC is a bilateral project of Pakistan and China. The two countries will discuss modalities on the nature of participation of other countries. CPEC is not just an economic project for Pakistan or China, but it will bring benefits for the entire region. It affords Pakistan the opportunity to play a role of bridge between South Asia, West Asia and Central Asia by virtue of its unique geo-strategic location at the crossroads of these regions.”

The inclusion of ECO countries to CPEC requires prolonged thoughtful sessions between China and Pakistan discussing the possible pros and cons of their inclusion, therefore, the spokesperson resorted to a very meticulous and diplomatic approach. It can well be witnessed that he was reluctant responding to a direct answer, therefore, evaded employing a diplomatic stance. Though the entire emphasis seems to be on ‘connectivity’ ‘prosperity’ and ‘economic cooperation’, the final decision is subject to the discussion of ‘modalities on the nature of participation of other countries’ between both Pakistan and China. It can also evidently be witnessed that the second part of the question which pertains

to joining of China in ECO remains unaddressed; the reason being obvious that the question was not directly linked with Pakistan. Careless and thoughtless response to the question could result in undesirable and negative reactions, therefore, the spokesperson being evasive tactfully maneuvered the situation. Since the journalists are running after the breaking news elements, diplomats employ a preemptive and extra-meticulous approach while responding to tricky questions.

While responding to a tricky question as to whether Pakistan raised the issue of the reported involvement of a number of Chinese living in Pakistan in crimes at any official level and upon what basis Pakistani Mission issued visas to them, asked in a post-press briefing on June 14, 2019 pertaining to Pakistan's Prime Minister's bilateral meeting with Chinese President on the sidelines of the SCO Council of Heads of State, the Pakistani spokesperson came up with a very brief and diplomatic answer. He responded:

“A few such incidents have taken place. Our domestic laws take their due course in dealing with such incidents. I will investigate the matter of issuance of visas and revert.”

The employment of an evasive approach is reflective of the sensitivity of strengthened Pak-China relationships. Though the journalist referred to 'several incidents', the spokesperson corrected him by stating that only a few of them took place. The spokesperson seemed to be mindful of the sensitivities involved in Pak-China relationship which is believed to be 'stronger than steel, sweeter than honey and higher than Himalayas'. Only a very brief response was given pertaining to the issuance of visas which clearly indicates that the crisis element and an undesirable situation was evaded which could result in the careless treatment of the subject issue. With a short and crisp answer, a reasonable level of control over the journalists was also endeavored to be acquired evading any possibilities of the negative reactions and crisis element. Any such response from a spokesperson could have been counterproductive, therefore, a meticulous approach was employed in response to the tricky question.

Conclusion

After having discussed all the possible perspectives pertaining to image of China, the researchers evidently witnessed that despite the fact the nature of bilateral relations among China, India and Pakistan is entirely different based on their mutual interests, the image of China has always been accorded priority through Indian and Pakistani diplomatic discourse since both India and Pakistan are equally mindful of sensitivities involved within the bilateral relations.

The extensive investigation seeking insights from Critical Discourse Analysis and especially from Bhatia's (2006) work, facilitated the researchers in reaching the requisite conclusive insights in complete conformity with research pursuits. Pakistani and Indian diplomatic fronts have been very meticulous in terms of employment of verbal/linguistic choices as both can never compromise on their relationship with China. Despite the fact, India's bilateral relation with China is entirely different from Pakistan's strengthened relations with China, through employment of 'positivity' and 'evasive techniques', Indian diplomats have been very successful in not compromising over the fundamentals in bilateral relations, maintaining their idiosyncratic stance through 'influence and power'. On the contrary, Pakistani diplomats have been equally successful in further strengthening

their relationship with China by not going deeper into any surging controversies upon CPEC, BRI and OBOR, Afzaal (2020). Language of diplomacy especially in both India and Pakistan's case entails all the requisites which do not let the bilateral relation among the neighboring countries compromised on both trivial and grave issues. Diplomatic fronts remain proactively engaged in damage control and employ every possible option in consolidation of the already existing relations.

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