Syntactico-semantic analysis of Agency and Action in Selected Excerpts from Obama's Speech to the 66th UNGA

Mousa S. Sultan (Corresponding Author)
Faculty of Education, Taiz University, Yemen & School of Language Sciences, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India
mousa.sultan@gmail.com

Lamees, A. Abdulrahman
Faculty of Education, Taiz University, Yemen; & School of Language Sciences, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India
lamees882017@gmail.com

Abstract
This paper traces the representation of Yemen and Syria in President Obama's speech addressed to the 66th session of the UN General Assembly. In particular, the paper focuses on the syntactic selection of agency choices Obama used to ideologically represent the Yemeni and Syrian revolutions and their supporters. We investigate how Obama's speech communicated ideologically interested messages which position the USA vis-à-vis the two revolutions and the people therein. The study arrived at the conclusion that Obama's choices tended to either directly or indirectly represent the two countries and their people in positive light. It was observed that the opponents of the two revolutions were primarily, though indirectly, represented in negative light. We also found out that Obama's use of highly evocative language tended to ideologically position the USA in positive light and as the voice of the voiceless and of the underprivileged. This in turn revealed the USA indirect support and recognition of the legitimacy of the revolutions and revolutionaries in the two countries. The study furthermore shows that language can be a very powerful tool for expressing ideologically interested positions, hegemonic control, as well as manufacturing consent with the target audience.

1. INTRODUCTION

Political discourse is linguistically charged with attitudes, ideologies and self-interests. It uses the power of rhetoric to communicate power and dominance to the target audience. The intention is to win over a specific audience and prime them to adopt a stance, accept politicians' positioning, and take it for granted. This act of manufacturing consent and manipulating minds is, according to Fairclough (1992/2006), a form of hegemony frequently utilized in political speeches. Fairclough (1992/2006) defines hegemony as "a mode of domination which is based upon alliances, the incorporation of subordinate groups, and the generation of consent" (1992/2006, p. 9). This is what exactly happens when politicians use speeches to communicate their power and pass their hegemonic control on to the target audience.

For his part, van Dijk observes that manipulation can occur in three forms: socially, cognitively, and discursively. He argues that social manipulation occurs where there is an

> *illegitimate domination confirming social inequality. Cognitively, manipulation as mind control involves the interference with processes of understanding, the formation of biased mental models and social representations such as knowledge and ideologies. Discursively, manipulation generally involves the usual forms and formats of ideological discourse, such as emphasizing Our good things, and emphasizing Their bad things* (van Dijk, 2006, 359).

Drawing on sophistry and logic fallacies, political speeches use language in order not to impart information but rather to influence attitudes, change minds, acquire loyalty, and or digress the mainstream direction of their relevant audience. In order to achieve such goals, politicians work on the influential function of language more specifically using different means some linguistic, some paralinguistic and many other contextual factors. Fairclough (2001) observes that in discourse, particularly political discourse, power through coercion or consent can be "exercised, sustained, and lost in the course of social struggle" (p. 57). In this paper we focus on the representation of agency in Obama's UN speech at the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly Sept. 21, 2011. In particular, we attend to agency choices made by Obama in two excerpts on Yemen and Syria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In his study of Obama's speeches, Wang (2010), using CDA, explored how the Obama designed his message to win over the target audience. In particular, the study traces how the target audience is primed to provide a favorite response. The study, which draws on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics traces how the transitivity system and modality were used by Obama to influence his audience and to achieve some intended ideological goals. The study claims to have uncovered some of the tactics and strategies generally used by politicians in their speeches to achieve their political ends.

In a related study, Obaid and Fahad (2012) studied the Obama's historical speech in Egypt Cairo, entitled "New Beginning". The study draws on Fairclough's (2001) multi-disciplinary and multi-layered model of CDA. The study found that Obama used the speech to draw a new picture for America globally and in the Islamic world. It communicates the new policy, the new position and identity that America is outlining to the world, particularly the Islamic communities. The study also found that Obama was inaugurating a new era and turning a new leaf with the Islamic world., by communicating a fresh perspective of peace and consent. This new outlook comes in line with Obama's call for change in his Presidential campaign. This ideology communicates Obama's administration's orientation towards establishing a partnership with Muslim words and the world at large, carefully designed to build a so-called full of peace, prosperity, and development.

Another contribution to studying Obama's speeches and Rhetoric comes from Stobbs' (2012), who investigated Obama's 1st inaugural speech. The study drew on Fairclough's (2001) and van Dijk's (2001) versions of discourse analysis. In the study, Stobbs traces the means and the lexis that Obama used in his speech s to construe inclusion and unity. The study traces the frequency of occurrence of certain pronouns, particularly when refereeing to the general public and governance. When comparing Obama's speech to those of the later president, the study found that Obama's language appeared more inclusive and considerate of the target audience (the American readership). The study also showed that Obama had drawn on sentence constructions to make his speech more animated and emotive in an attempt to capture the

audience's attention. Using some specific phrases and linguistic formulations, the study could reveal the type of narrative, identity and persona that Obama is communicating to his target audience. The study could also relate the narratives Obama deployed in his speech to establish one unifying mega-narrative of his presidential persona and identity.

In a significant study, Leodora (2013) investigated Obama's speech at the University of Indonesia in 2010. The researcher conducted the study using PDA (political discourse analysis). The study traces how Obama used rhetorical devices to communicate a friendly and fraternal picture of America to the Indonesian and Muslim World. The strategies used, the study revealed, constructed Indonesia importance to America, too. The study, by drawing and political discourse analysis techniques elaborated by van Dijk (1993,1995), claims to have revealed the implicit and hidden messages and meanings that Obama tried to deploy in his speech.

Al-Qaysi and Ahmed (2019) conducted a linguistic analysis of Obama's speech about ending the war in Iraq. The study intended to demonstrate the linguistic choices made by President Obama. In particular, the study traced the phonetic, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects as deployed in the speech under investigation. The study drew on several models to reveal the linguistic organization of Obama's speech, such as Quirk and Baum (1990) model of sentence structure, Cutting's (2005) model for exploring Pragmatic aspects, and Finegan's (2006) model for studying speech acts in the analyzed speech. As for the phonetic and phonological aspects, the researchers followed their own hunches to analyse. The study concluded that Obama tended to use simple sentences and parallelism to communicate his message to the intended audience and to show that he was giving importance to his audience. Mr Obama, the study found, used demonstrative pronouns when referring to the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. Moreover, Obama overused the directive speech to present himself as responsible for the process of American troops' withdrawal from Iraq.

Ningsih (2019) carried out a study to investigate the grammatical cohesion devices of reference and conjunction in Obama's speech. The study drew on Halliday and Hassan's (1973) model of Cohesion. The data of the study comprises four speeches made by President Obama, culled from the website AmericanRhetoric.com. The study demonstrated that the reference device was used to achieve three functions: to recycle the preceding information, to point out a scale of proximity, and to strike a comparison between things and situations. As for conjunction, it was used to achieve five functions: to connect and establish a link between similar words, to relate sentences which have the same context, to provide a cohesive support for the preceding sentences, to contrast with the preceding sentences, to connect the cause to its effect. The general function, the study concludes, was to cement the text together and make the text meaningful.

Almutairi, Al kous, and Zitouni (2022) studied the uses and functions of hedges in selected speeches by President Obama. In the study, the researchers traced hedging strategies and devices deployed in the selected speeches. The study draws and utilizes Salager-Mayer's (1997) taxonomy of hedges to categorize the observed hedges along with their frequency of occurrence and pragmatic functions. This mixed frequency count method and qualitative study of the reasons behind the sections enabled the research to reveal Obama's rhetorical strategies. The study found that the modal verb 'can' was frequently used as a catchword in the selected speech data. This construct, the study finds, Obama's speeches as simple, easily fathomable, and far from being complex to the target audience. Moreover, the frequent occurrence of hedges presented Obama as particularly careful about his word choice and audience design. This enabled Obama to communicate possibility, and persuasiveness to the target audience.

3. METHOD

This paper analyzes two extracts from President Obama's speech at the UN General Assembly's 66th session. The excerpts extracted are those on Yemen and Syria to gauge the US reaction to the revolution therein. The two excerpts are analyzed by drawing on van Dijk's (1996. 2015) model for representing ideological positioning using the ideological square. This model involves representing one's favoured position in a positive light while representing the good positions of others in a negative light. It also entails highlighting the bad points of the others while ignoring or averring sight from our bad positions and backgrounding them. That is to say, using such a model, we usually tend to highlight Our good points and present the Other good points in a negative light. Alternatively, we tend to put our bad points in the back seat while spotlighting the others' bad points/ positions/actions. Van Dijk (1996) aptly summarizes the four following statements:

> "*1 Emphasize our good properties/actions*
> *2 Emphasize their bad properties/actions*
> *3 Mitigate our bad properties/actions*
> *4 Mitigate their good properties/actions.*" (1996, p. 33)

Our focus is on political discourse, particularly presidential speech because this kind of discourse "seek[s] out how language choice is manipulated for specific political effect (Wilson, 2001, p. 787). This paper analyses agency and action representations based on van Dijk 's ideological square. However, this study goes a step further by adding another dimension to van Dijk's representation of ideology. It considers the direct and indirect representation of the Self and the Other in positive/ negative lights. We address this by looking into the indirect descriptive language deployed in the selected extracts.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1.Representation Of Agency And Action In Extract A

In the analysis, we use two extracts from President Obama's speech. The First extract (henceforth **Extract A**) describes the situation in Yemen. The second extract (henceforth **Extract B**) describes the situation in Syria. We begin by giving a short overview on the two extracts to show how they handle agency. Then analyze and discuss the agency relations in Extract A and Extract B. We end up sharing some observation about the on the two extracts, drawing on van Dijk ideologic positioning square. Now, consider the following extract on the Yemeni situation. Clauses are numbered and agency is shown in underlined boldface type.

Extract A:
"(1) Throughout the region, *we* will have to respond to the calls for change. (2) In Yemen, *men, women and children* gather by the thousands in towns and city squares every day with the hope (3) that *their determination and spilled blood* will prevail over a corrupt system. (4) *America* supports those aspirations. (5) *We* must work with Yemen's neighbors and our partners around the world to seek a path that allows for a peaceful transition of power from President Saleh and a movement to free and fair elections as soon as possible."

Clause No.	Clause Type	Agency Type	
		Active	Passive
1	Main	✓	X
2	Main	✓	X
3	Sub.	✓	X
4	Main	✓	X
5	Main	✓	X

As the table above shows, the all the clauses in **Extract A** on Yemen are written with active voice agency: three clauses (1, 4, 5) with America as the agent, and three clauses (2, 3),

with Yemeni people and their actions as the agent. It is also noted that all of the America agents occur in the main clauses and using the greatness or inclusive pronoun 'we' and 'America' as the agents of the action. The agents describing Yemenis are generic nouns 'men, women, and children'. The agents can also be the result of the Yemenis' struggle for freedom, 'their determination and spilled blood', which occurs in the subordinate clause, hence presenting them as less significant. The use of generic agents to refer to Yemenis and the use of specific agents to refer to America may suggest that Obama's administration, which has first-hand knowledge about Yemen, has not decided yet about its priority and stance towards Yemen. It may mean that Yemen may not be the priority for America, at least as compared to Syria.

Now let's address the representation of agency in a sentence-wise manner. The five sentences that Obama subscribed about Yemen are given below with some detailed analysis.

(A-1)

"*Throughout the region, we will have to respond to the calls for change.*"

Here 'we', the subject of the clause, is the agent of the intransitive verb phrase 'will have to respond to. Though it does not act, the verb phrase 'will have to respond to" carries some obligation on the part of the American administration. However, the phrase 'will have to ' conveys a less forceful obligation in the future. The verb' respond' also implies that America's act will respond to some external stimulus: America will not take the initiative unless some action takes place. This statement is both too general and too ambiguous. On the face of it, it is an obligation, yet it seems to be an evasive remark, absolving America of its own responsibility. Though the sentence somehow presents America in good light, it indirectly holds the others as reluctant to take action, hence negatively presented.

(A-2)

"*In Yemen, men, women and children gather by the thousands in towns and city squares every day with the hope that their determination and spilled blood will prevail over a corrupt system.*"

This long-winded sentence is highly descriptive. Though it includes such verbs as 'gather' and its generic agent 'men, women and children'; the verb 'prevail' and its coordinated 'abstract' and symbolic agent: determination and spilled blood. There is no real action in the true sense of the word. The use of the active voice, the foregrounding of the victims, and the subordination of the corrupt regime make the sentence less specific and more impressionistic rather than action-oriented. It seems that Mr. Obama is more interested in Yemen, the land, not Yemen, the people (compare this with his description of Syrian people). America's interest in Yemen is further enhanced by its attention to Yemen's neighbours- the oil-rich Gulf states. This is easily noticeable when we read further down in the extract that America is working with Yemen's neighbors to ease a peaceful transition of power in Yemen. In other words, America's interest in Yemen is driven by geopolitical facts rather than being humanity-oriented. There is a positive presentation of Yemeni people, hence constructing them in a positive light.

(A-3)
"*America supports those aspirations.*"

This sentence is far too general. Obama uses active voice, and 'America ' is the subject/ agent of the verb 'support. This is perhaps intended to present America in a positive light. It

positions America as seemingly *was*, *is* and *will* be the main sponsor, advocate and patron of human rights. Obama's use of present simple tense renders this sentence a timeless, universal fact, construing an undeniable fact that no two people would ever dispute over. This sentence also carries a positive tone about America, which suggests that others who do not support the aspirations of Yemenis are viewed negatively.

(A-4)
"*We must work with Yemen's neighbors and our partners around the world to seek a path that allows for a peaceful transition of power from President Saleh, a movement to free and fair elections as soon as possible.*"

The agent in this sentence is the inclusive pronoun 'we'. The use of the modal verb 'must' carries a sense of true commitment and obligation on the part of America and Yemen's neighbouring countries. In fact, it seems to be addressed to Yemen neighbours but not Yemeni people. In this sentence, Mr Obama undertakes to muster all the necessary support from partners worldwide to devise or forge a solution that will result in a power transition from America's old ally 'President Saleh'. This commitment indirectly positions America as positively working to end the suffering of the Yemenis, presenting it in a positive light as opposed to those who are hesitant to help the Yemeni people.

Though Obama uses the obligation marker 'must', his use of the verb 'allows' in the subordinate clause makes the so-called act of power transition appear as less significant, being given at the back seat. The use of nominalization in 'transition' and 'movement' is so deliberate that it extracts the force of action, making the obligation seem less binding. The removal of agency (subject) renders the sentence radically compressed and far from being an act of responsibility. However, when it comes to elections, Obama uses the phrase 'as soon as possible' because he wants to register America's stance and to confirm its fundamental principle of promoting true democratic change, hence free and fair elections.

Note the amount of time devoted to Yemen and the number of sentences: two short and two longwinded ones. Short sentences convey America's stance as established facts. So, there is no need for tautology as everything is quite clear, and brevity is the soul of wit. In those short sentences, Mr. Obama presents America in a positive light. He represents America as fighting for and empowering the underprivileged nations to restore their denied rights. These commitments are also presented as universal parts of and as intrinsic to USA's foreign policy.

4.2. Representation of Agency and Action: Extract B

Below is the analysis of the representation of agency and action in Obama's excerpt on Syria. The analysis will begin by incorporating the extract, and present its sentences in a numbered manner. Then the agency sentence numbers are presented in table. After that, the agency relations will be analyzed and discussed sentence-wise.

Extract B
"(1) As **we** meet here today, (2) *men, women and children* are being tortured, detained and murdered by the Syrian regime. (3) *Thousands* have been killed, many during the holy time of Ramadan. (4) *Thousands* more have poured across Syria's borders. (5) *The Syrian people* have shown dignity and courage in their pursuit of justice - protesting peacefully, standing silently in the streets, dying for the same values that this institution is supposed to stand for. (6) *The question* for us is clear: (7) Will *we* stand with the Syrian people, or with their oppressors?
(8) Already, *the United States* has imposed strong sanctions on Syria's leaders. (9) *We* have supported a transfer of power (10) that is responsive to the Syrian people. (11) *Many of our allies* have joined us in this effort. (12) But for the sake of Syria - and the peace and security of the world - *we* must speak with one voice. (13) *There* is no excuse for inaction. (14) *Now* is the time for the United Nations

Security Council to sanction the Syrian regime, and to stand with the Syrian people".

As is clear from the table below, Obama has given more weight (almost threefold: 14: 5) to Syrian situation (two paragraphs containing 14 clauses) compared to the Yemeni situation (one paragraph with five clauses). Out of the 14, only one clause (no. 10) is subordinate. The agency deployed in the extract are as follows. In clauses (2, 3, 4, 5), agency is attributed to Syrian people, with clauses (2, 3) the agency is passive. This makes the Syrian people the receivers of the actions of the Syrian Regime. The agents used are also very generic, 'men, women and children', 'thousands' (twice), and 'the Syrian people'. In clauses (6, 13, 14) the agents are general 'question', existential 'there' and temporal 'now'. This helps Obama to provide a live description of the situation Syria in space and time. In clauses (1, 7, 9, 12) the first-person plural pronoun 'we' was used to construe different meanings. Thus, in clauses (1, 7, 12), Obama uses the inclusive 'we' to refer to all those present at the UN general assembly. This enables Obama to share the responsibility for the Syrian situation with all of the other members of the UN. In clauses (8, 9), Obama referred to the United States once by its name (8) and once by the exclusive 'we' (greatness we). He also referred to USA's allies as agents in clause (11) to show that not only America is closely following the situation in Syria but also its allies.

Clause No.	Clause Type	Agency Type	
		Active	Passive
1	Main	✓	X
2	Main	X	✓
3	Main	X	✓
4	Main	✓	X
5	Main	✓	X
6	Main	✓	X
7	Main	✓	X
8	Main	✓	X
9	Main	✓	X
10	Sub.	✓	X
11	Main	✓	X
12	Main	✓	X
13	Main	✓	X
14	Main	✓	X

(**B-1**)

"*... men, women and children are being tortured, detained and murdered by the Syrian regime*"

In this sentence, 'men, women and children', the subject of the clause, is the agent (or rather the recipient) of the action of the transitive verbs, 'tortured, detained, and murdered. In this passive construction, Mr. Obama holds Syrian regime accountable for the daily genocide. He further referred to the main three violations of human rights: torture: a violation of the right to protection; detention: freedom violation; murder: the right to live. Mr. Obama's strong condemnation of Syrian regime comes in line with his positive presentation of the Syrian people and a negative presentation of the regime. The use of such words as 'murder…, children, women' presents the Syrian people as oppressed and evokes emotional support for their horrific

plight. It also presents Obama as the salvation messenger who sets himself and the American administration as the mouthpiece and the protectors of the Syrian people.

(**B-2**)
"Thousands have been killed, many during the holy time of Ramadan."

The agent of this sentence is 'thousands' (recipient of the action). In the clause, Obama uses the general verb "killed", perhaps to incorporate all types of killing. What is new in this clause is Obama's appeal to religious discourse. That is, by using the phrase 'holy time of Ramadan", Obama is addressing the Muslims around the world. He also indirectly presents the Syrian regime in a very negative light, making his condemnation of the regime even much stronger. Mr. Obama also used the general words "many and thousands" to show that the death toll is huge and on the increase. Therefore, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact number of people killed. Obama's use of the clause "as we meet here today…" presents him and his administration in positive light: that they are closely following the situation in Syria and are preoccupied with what is happening therein.

(**B-3**)
"Thousands more have poured across Syria's borders."

This sentence is in active voice. The subject 'thousands' acts as the agent / the doer of the action: 'poured' across Syria's borders. Here Obama uses the active voice to give explicit information about Syrian people: those who survived death were taken to refugee camps. Mr. Obama thus foregrounds Syrian people's suffering. This indirectly positions Syrian people as suffering the Syrian regime cracking down. The words such as 'thousands, poured, borders' thus presents Syrian regime in negative times.

(**B-4**)
"The Syrian people have shown dignity and courage in their pursuit of justice, protesting peacefully, standing silently in the streets, dying for the same values that this institution is supposed to stand for"

'Syrian people' is the agent of the action of the verb phrase 'have shown'. Here Obama shows his admiration of Syrian people courage in their pursuit of freedom and justice. He also welcomes their way of protesting and how they die in the streets in search for freedom, dignity and equality. He maintains that the values that Syrian people are dying for daily are no less important than those for which the UN was established. Mr. Obama also criticizes the UN because of its failure to hold the values of human rights, freedom, fraternity, equality and dignity. This sentence is highly descriptive and provides a positive judgement of Syrian people, holding them in high esteem and indirectly presenting the Syrian regime in bad terms. By using the positive appraisal of Syrian people, Obama appears to be tickling the emotions of Syrian people and indirectly inviting them to the more ceaseless struggle for freedom. It seems that Obama perceives that the age of dictatorship is about to eclipse, which is why he tries to cultivate friendly relationships with Syrian people. The sentence also presents Obama as acting (or rather talking) out of his moral duty.

(**B-5**)
"The question for us is clear: Will we stand with the Syrian people, or with their oppressors?"

Here Mr. Obama makes a rhetorical question whose answer in affirmation is expected in advance. This question which is introduced for confirmation seeks consent form the target

audience (we, members of the UN): yes, we will stand with the Syrian people. Still Obama wants to draw the audience attention to America's stance and to make the impression that America is already in support of the Syrian people. At the same time, he directs an implied rebuke to those inactive members (agents) of UN and those who are still siding with the Syrian regime. In this question, the agent is the inclusive 'we', presenting the UN members as shouldering the responsibility together. The formulations 'Syrian people, their oppressors, stand with' positions Syrian people in dire need of support against the oppressive Syrian region. It also positively positions America as the devoted advocate of human rights against opposing others.

(**B-6**)
"*Already, the United States has imposed strong sanctions on Syria's leaders.*"

This sentence is in the active voice. United States is the agent of the action of the transitive verb 'imposed'. Mr. Obama states how America has translated its commitments into actions on the ground by helping the Syrian people. The implication is that America is serious in its fight for universal human rights. But something is interesting here: why has Obama referred to the Syrian regime as Syrian leaders? Does he still consider the Syrian regime legitimate? Possibly so, probably not? I am inclined to say that Mr. Obama implies that the sanctions imposed by America are operative upon some icons of the Syrian regime, not the Syrian regime as a whole. This gets reinforced by his urging other members of the UN to take part so that more severe sanctions can cripple the Syrian regime in its entirety. Again, the USA is implicitly presented in a positive light as opposed to those inactive members of the UN or those who support the Syrian regime.

(**B-7**)
"*We have supported a transfer of power that is responsive to the Syrian people.*"

Even though this sentence is in active voice and its agent and action are quite crystal-clear, it is highly ambiguous. It carries judgmental and self-praising language. However, the reader/ listener is not quite certain what kind of *support* Obama's administration provided concerning "power transfer that is responsive to Syrian people". This sentence could be falsified if tested against common sense and our knowledge of the Syrian issue. The sentence furthermore contains a subordination where the phrase "responsive to Syrian people" comes in the subordinate clause, thus making it appear less significant, if not unimportant. Obama once again presented America in positive light, being the first and foremost 'sponsor of democracy' in the world

(**B-8**)
"*Many of our allies have joined us in this effort*"

Another area of soft support that America bestows upon Syrian people is its gathering necessary support from its allies thus setting their 'unified' efforts in motion. The sentence is in active voice and the action is quite clear, and the agent is 'our (America's) allies. This could position American and its allies as assuming responsibility for such 'heroic deed' that they proudly shoulder. The use of the pronouns 'our' and 'us' construes positive self-presentation, and indirectly vilifies the silent Others, presenting them in negative light.

(**B-9**)
"*But for the sake of Syria - and the peace and security of the world - we must speak with one voice*"

The agent in this clause is the inclusive pronoun 'we', referring to all members of the UN. From the sentence, can glean that America made this effort not for immediate personal gains. Rather, it was for the sake of Syria (Syria the regime or the people. I do not know!) as well as the peace and security of the world. The world stands primarily for American facilities and allies in the region. It is perhaps for these reasons that America is calling on the *whole world* to speak with *one* voice. Here, by using indirect language, Mr Obama commends the American stance concerning the situation in Syria, but at the same time he calls on those who are reluctant to act to make haste. Through this appeal Obama presents American in positive light while the negatively vilifying the opposing others.

(**B-10**)
"*There is no excuse for inaction*"

In this sentence, Obama uses the existential construction "there + is + noun" to issue a generalization about a constant state of affairs in which he holds the inactive members of UN accountable for the consequences in Syria. This enables him to absolve America and its allies of any ensuing consequences. It is as if Obama was saying that America had already honored its commitment concerning Syria, and he is directing the blame towards the other reluctant members of the UN. Moreover, considering indirect emotive language which permeates the whole extract, we can easily perceive that Obama constructs America in positive light, and vilifies and passes the buck to the inactive. In other words, though indirectly, Obama presents self in good terms and others in bad terms.

(**B-11**)
"*Now is the time for the United Nations Security Council to sanction the Syrian regime, and to stand with the Syrian people*"

This sentence begins with the temporal adverb **'now'**. If we compare it with the sentence (**B-8**) above which begins with **'already'**, we will notice how Obama compares the active America with the inactive others, thus positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. In so doing, Obama makes the shrewd point that America as a sponsor and defender of human rights has **already** shouldered its moral and historical duty concerning the Syrian issue. It has already set the 'good' example to the world, particularly to other members of the UNSC. This indirect positive self-presentation constitutes an American invitation for the UNSC to follow suit and make haste. It is as if Obama was saying, 'as one hand cannot clap, it is right time to take a collective action and decision: to stand with Syrian people and put an end to their suffering'. This remark seems to be addressed to Russia and China who still support the Syrian regime. This use of 'diplomatic' language renders Obama an effective communicator, who presents himself and his country as very much interested in helping the Syrian people and vouchsafing them an assisting hand. This indirectly presents those who are inactive negatively and holds them accountable for the seriously deteriorating situation in Syria.

As we can easy notice, Mr. Obama devoted more time and linguistic energy to Syria than of that devoted to Yemen. He used as many as 14 sentences ranging from short to long. Furthermore, he bestows more praise on Syrian people and inundated the Syrian regime with strong commendations. It is noticeable that in the excerpt, Obama repeated the phrase 'Syrian people' 4 times and as a paraphrase the fifth time. While at the same time, we see Obama level a strong condemnation on the 'Syrian regime' and the 'oppressors'. This tendency reflects a purposeful shift in America's stance towards the current developments in the Arab world: from siding with regimes to siding with the people. Considering the fact that the American pendulum

is currently swinging in favor of the underprivileged Arab nations, we should not forget that America is guided by its self-interested policy. Last but not least, Obama's use of language reflects self-interested and positive self-presentation and other-negative presentations. This suggests that America is promoting the ideology of speaking for the underprivileged, defending their rights, and enacting the-voice-of-the-voiceless ideology.

5. RESULTS

These extracts from Obama's speech reflect fundamental shift, if not a complete transformation in US foreign policy in response to the status quo in the Arab world. Tere is a total positive presentation of the Yemeni/ Syrian people, their agency and actions as against the regimes or the ruling oppressors. This orientation is reflected in Obama's call for a change that responds to people's aspirations. As regards Yemen, Mr. Obama authorizes Yemen's neighbors to take their responsibility and to ease a peaceful power transition therein. Apparently, Mr. Obama is in full support of those legitimate aspirations of Yemeni people. His positive appraisal and good representation of the Yemen people comes as a part of US brand-new foreign policy of siding with the nations against corrupt regimes. Obviously, through the language used in the excerpt, it seems that Obama is very much interested in a 'system reform' rather than overthrowing the 'corrupt system' of President Saleh, as he stated in his speech. However, it was also noticeable that Obama does not condemn the mass killings of Yemenis in freedom squares at the hand of Saleh-affiliated forces. Probably America still considers Saleh as a main partner on war on terror. Therefore, Obama's diplomatic words indirectly call for an acceptable compromise forged through free and fair elections. In a nutshell, the excerpt A above carries Obama's and his administration's positive self-presentation as against negative other-presentation. It is tantamount to explicit and implicit we vs. they, us vs. them, self vs. other.

As for Syria, Obama declares his full support for the Syrian people and appears so sympathetic towards them. His sympathy ad empathy with them is so clear in the excerpt. This can be clearly seen through his positive representation of the Syrian people, their agency and actions while struggling for freedom. The negative presentation of the Syrian regime's violent crackdown on the Syrian people helped tp draw a negative picture and present the regimes in the very worst possible representation. This was perhaps intended to garner more support particularly from the Muslim world for the Syrian revolution. Obama also commends Syrians for their courage in their pursuit of justice and dignity is another means of explicit and positive representation. He additionally gives examples of how they daily die while protesting peacefully and silently in the streets.

Another area of positive self-presentation is referring to what America has done to help the Syrian people. Mr. Obama also implies that USA has already done its job concerning Syrian people, through imposing strong sanctions on the Syrian leaders. He maintains that America's allies have also followed suit. He feels disappointed as regards the international community's silence, inaction and negligence of the atrocities committed by Syrian regime. He argues that "Syrian people die for the same values this institution is supposed to stand for". Obama strongly condemns and harshly criticizes the allies of the corrupt Syrian regime. He could foreground this issue by putting forward a rhetorical question: will we stand with Syrian people or with their oppressors? He then shows how the USA is helping Syrians by imposing sanctions on Syrian leaders. Obama also invites those UN members to partake in these efforts exerted only for the sake of Syria and for the peace and security of the world. What is more, he argues that America and its allies have already done their best, which is why he passes the buck on to those reluctant to participate. He further accuses them of inaction for which they cannot be excused. He also urges UNSC to impose sanctions on the Syrian leaders, and to stand with Syrian people. There is in other words, a direct and indirect presentation of Syrian people, America, and those who support them against the Syrian regime and those who side with them. Obama thus

promotes for the ideology of we/ us/ our front as against, they/them/ others front. In short positive self-presentation against negative other-presentation.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper attempts to uncover the ideological positioning in two excerpts, taken out of Obama's speech to the 66ᵗʰ UNGA. We have observed how Obama used evocative language to draw a positive picture of Yemeni and Syrian people America and whoever stands with them. By positive representation Obama tried to kill two birds with one stone. First, he sought to gain the loyalty of the so-called revolutionaries of the Arab Spring. Second, he attempted to promote for the USA's new policy of promoting change and siding with the nations, hence manufacturing consent with the target audience. This helps Obama to garner support for the new ideology of siding the underprivileged and for guiding the democratic change in the region. This also guaranteed presenting American in positive terms as against the world of dictatorship and corruption.

Moreover, Obama's use nations-oriented and positively-disposed language in the two excerpts seems to be stemming from America's deep concern about stability in the region. It also comes in harmony with and in fulfillment of America's strong commitment to positive change. The negative representation of the corrupt regimes in Yemen and Syria presents them as complete tyrants and terrifying inhuman monsters, apart from creating and projecting their negative image to the public and target readership. It also presents them as the undesired 'other' that all the good people, nations and leaders should stand against.

As we have seen, Obama sought to create two opposing fronts: the good and it is led by America and its allies and supporters; the bad and it is represented by America's enemies including Yemeni and Syrian regimes. In other words, in the two excerpts above, Obama intended to create and promote two fronts of friendship and animosity. This categorizing ideology of self-promotion and other-vilification and defamation, represents the highest point of polarization. The perilous ideology of 'friendship and hostility' in terms of 'who is with me, is my friend; who is not, is my enemy' stands catastrophic. It is would likely have negative consequences on international peace, security, and stands very conducive world instability.

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