

FALLACIES AS IDENTITY MARKERS: A CRITICAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT: *In the perspective of a fallacy investigation, a critical reading of the political autobiographies of the two very prominent personalities of Pakistani politics viz., General Pervez Musharraf and Miss Benazir Bhutto has been carried out to examine the flaws in their arguments. This critical comparative study is intended to observe the manipulation of the informal fallacies and their relevance with the backgrounds and identities of the selected authors. The critical analysis of the selected discourses i.e. the autobiographies, “In the Line of Fire (2006)” and “Daughter of the East (2008)” by General Pervez Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto respectively is done under the eclectic paradigm of critical discourse analysis and its offshoot political discourse analysis keeping in concern the three-dimensional framework developed by Norman Fairclough (2015). The ideas regarding informal fallacies have been adopted from Patrick J. Hurley (2011) who outlined the usage of informal fallacies in various discourses especially the political ones. Under these outlined thoughts, the keen observation and critical analysis point out a clear disparity in the usage of informal fallacies i.e., argument ad baculum and argument ad misericordiam. The usage of these two indicates overt differences between the backgrounds, affiliations and the identities of the selected authors – the martial and the civilian one. This notion indicates and informs that informal fallacies can be seen as identity markers not just from gender perspective but the political associations and standings and covert ideological lookouts are self-evident and palpable in their usage as well.*

Key terms: logical fallacy, critical discourse analysis, political discourse analysis, identity, autobiography

INTRODUCTION

Pakistani history is replete with the shuffling of two types of rulers i.e., military Generals and civilian politicians. The sixty eight years span of time in power corridors has seen their dwindling regimes. Each claimed to do his/her positive and constructive role and share in the development of the country but worsened situations on political, social, geographical and economic arenas can clearly be observed. On the contrary both these rulers – military generals and civilian politicians – always defend themselves in their discourses either oral or written. While doing so, they seem to rely heavily on their rhetoric full of thunderous assertions that cause misdirected arguments. They change their mediums of communication hither and yon to influence the audience in favour of their own agendas deliberately.

The earlier mentioned Pakistani rulers propagate and enforce their ideas and agendas through various types of mediums i.e. media interviews, television talk shows, political speeches and articles etc. The writing of autobiography – self-life history – is significant in this regard too. Serra [1] considers this genre as of more significance as it provides more time and space and liberty for communicating one’s ideas and motives. Besides the descriptions of various life events and experiences, political autobiographies are full of various arguments to rationalize one’s role especially the controversial one [2]. But when it comes of arguments, it can raise the chance of errors especially when one is trying to argue in favour of something wrong or baseless. Such errors are seen as fallacies in the field of logic and sometimes called as logical errors [3]. These fallacies can be divided under two categories i.e. formal and informal ones [4]. Formal fallacies are the flaws in the structure or form of an argument while informal fallacies occur in the contents of some argument [4].

The current study also focuses on logical fallacies in the selected discourses of Pakistani leaders who, while arguing in favour of their rule and role, commit these errors in abundance. These fallacies can be detected under critical analysis of their discourses. Misdirected arguments can be observed from various perspectives but here in this research paper, the researchers have focused only on the role of fallacies as identity markers. Furthermore, the consideration is delimited to only two informal fallacies i.e. argument ad baculum and argument ad misericordiam in the political autobiographies i.e. “In the Line of Fire (2006)” by General Pervez Musharraf [5] and “Daughter of the East (2008)” by Benazir Bhutto [6].

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Political Discourse Analysis (PDA)

The study of political discourse is not new. It has been done right through the ancient Greeks and Romans to medieval times and modern era. In Greek and Roman civilizations, the concern regarding the study of political discourse was mainly and particularly related to rhetoric [7]. The political orators were thought to be the experts of persuasive language on which their careers relied. This tradition is still on and language is manipulated in the political process. Rather language and politics are part and parcel to each other and language can be taken as inherently political [8].

The primary motive of politics is the attainment of power that helps to practice certain political, social, cultural and economic ideologies [9]. Politics can also provide power to change behaviours of certain individuals and groups in favour of some other individuals and groups. Political strategies and actions are arranged, escorted and manipulated by the use of language. Thus language plays a crucial role in all these practices regarding the attainment and sustenance of power

[10]. Teun van Dijk [11] points out the following elements exploited by some politician in the political discourse:

1. to combat one's opponents on various fronts
2. to point out the bad policies and politics of one's rivals
3. to ridicule and degrade one's political enemies and their policies
4. to glorify one's own deeds
5. to justify or rationalize one's own policies and actions
6. to convince the audience of the legitimacy of one's claims

Schaffner [12] calls political discourse as the sub-category of discourse and formulates two types of criteria for it, viz., thematic and functional. On thematic level, it passes around political topics like political ideas, relations and activities etc. As political discourse comes into existence due to the process of politics and is surrounded and determined by cultural and historical underpinnings, it carries out various functions on historical and cultural fronts owing to various political pursuits [13].

While critical discourse analysis observes the manipulation of power under any discourse and of any individual and social group, political discourse analysis observes various dimensions of power, viz., struggle for power, practice of power, inequality, resistance, exploitation, specific and general effects of power on society etc. particularly in some political discourse. It also discerns how power is achieved and sustained through political discourse. Due to a critical approach to political discourse, PDA can also be termed as critical-political discourse analysis [11].

Thus, PDA is significant so far as political discourse is concerned because it can help to point out the following points in some political discourse [11]:

- political domain or organizations and actors
- political actions and processes
- covert ideologies or motives in discourse

METHODOLOGY

Political discourse is analyzed mainly under the umbrella of critical discourse analysis, thus the ideas of its main proponent, Norman Fairclough [10], have been exploited here in the current research paper. Fairclough [10] suggested various points to study some discourse which are generally named as three – dimensional framework that contains the following three stages of the analysis of some discourse.

Description

It is the identification of some particular linguistic or non-linguistic devices under some discourse. The syntactic elements which work for some particular issue or agenda are observed on this stage.

Interpretation

The purpose and meaning of the usage of the linguistic or non-linguistic devices are checked under some discourse on interpretation stage. Syntactic elements are seen in relation with meaning in some particular context.

Explanation

On this stage, the analyst makes his/her concern with the wider social context under some discourse [14]. Here all the other aforementioned elements are combined with larger elements of social, political, psychological or economic contexts of some discourse.

Model for Fallacy Analysis

To unmask the fallacies under the political discourse, a model of informal fallacies is adopted from Patrick J. Hurley [4] who precisely states the presence of various logical fallacies under some discourse. The researchers have delimited it to only two informal fallacies i.e. argument ad baculum and argument ad misericordiam which are described briefly underneath.

1. Argument Ad Baculum (Appeal to Force)

Argument ad Baculum or appeal to force fallacy occurs in some argument when an arguer presents a conclusion to some person or group and asserts that damage may take place if the given conclusion is not acknowledged [4]. In other words the arguer forces others to accept his conclusion as rational and correct. Such threats can be found in an argument at both explicit and implicit levels of some argument. But in the field of logic, such type of threat is considered irrelevant to the topic or theme of some conclusion. The arguments that rely on mere threats, physical or psychological, rather than proper reasoning and genuine evidence are considered fallacious [3]. In Pakistani context where democratic tradition has not yet taken its roots properly, most of the public is illiterate and poor, politicians are influential and powerful people who use every type of strategy, legal or illegal, to gain and sustain power. Their actions are also obvious in their usage of language. Thus, while arguing, they can be witnessed to commit ad baculum fallacy [17].

2. Argument Ad Misericordiam (Appeal to Pity)

While committing this fallacy, the arguer tries to support his/her conclusion not with reasoning but by arousing the feelings of pity among listeners or readers. The argument is based on appealing for generosity and mercy instead of reason and logic [4]. Sometimes the conclusion in such fallacy seems psychologically relevant, though it is considered irrelevant logically. Though, all the arguments which invoke compassion will not be considered fallacious if they provide some evidence or information [4]. The fallacy of Argument ad misericordiam also seems relevant so far as the selected political discourses are concerned. The user seems to use such fallacious argument to influence his/her audience psychologically [18].

The above mentioned fallacies have been described (identified), interpreted (their meaning and purpose are sought) and explained (viewed in political, social and historical context) in the light of Fairclough's [10] ideas which have been explained under three – dimensional framework.

ANALYSIS OF INFORMAL FALLACIES

Argument Ad Baculum in "In the Line of Fire"

"Nawaz Sharif's supporters gloated that they had scalped yet another army chief. The more pragmatic counseled caution. They were not sure that the army could stomach yet another insult. They had no idea how much worse was to come."

(Page 119)

The arguer, General Pervez Musharraf, belongs to Pakistan army and represents the military rulers and signifies the martial potency. He took over in 1999 as a result of a military coup after overthrowing the democratically elected government of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. Before this

coup, there arose a tension between the civilian government and military establishment on the Kargil issue. On the difference of opinion on the aforementioned issue, the prime minister used his constitutional position and removed the army chief, General Musharraf, from his position of an army chief [15]. The above mentioned argument is in the background of General Musharraf's removal from the position of army chief and his reaction against the civilian government of Nawaz Sharif. The author implies that his removal not his personal affair rather it was something unacceptable to the whole army as an institution. In this argument, the author conveys a psychological threat in which he implies that the army is something like a "holy cow" that cannot be held accountable by the elected chief executive of the country, the prime minister. And if such an effort is made by anyone, he/she would have to face the dire consequences like that of the Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif (whose government was overthrown on 12th October 1999 after a military coup). The nexus between the premises and the conclusion of the above argument – on the basis of content – is not woven fully on the basis of logic but on a mere threat, thus it would be categorized as fallacious. The power of the army at the General's backing is revealing. In the developing countries like Pakistan, the use of the force in the form of guns and uniforms is frequent. The General's stance reveals his background, the martial one, very explicitly. This argument also brings forth the stereotypical macho traits of intimidation and coercion.

"Armitage added to what Colin Powell had said to me and told the director general not only that we had to decide whether we were with America or with the terrorists, but that if we chose the terrorists, then we should be prepared to be bombed back to the Stone Age."(Page 201)

This is very significant argument in the backdrop of Pakistan's co-operation with the United States of America and her allies against the terrorists after the incidents of 9/11. General Musharraf's policy of supporting the Americans against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and Osama bin Laden is disapproved by many in Pakistan. The General argues in favour of his decision by exhibiting the threat from the American officials that does not seem fully logical. The argument, despite having some signs of rationality, is based on just a threat thus it is fallacious on its content basis. The usage of weapons like bombs and the depiction of dire situation like that of stone – age exhibits the General's military milieu. The discursive strategy to rationalize and justify his position on terrorism policy within and outside the country can also be seen here. Furthermore, the choice given by the US official to Pakistan which seems Hobson's choice actually where Pakistan is shown as having no choice at all in deciding to go into the war against terrorism led by the USA.

"Pakistan's security was gravely threatened. The nation and the military were in quandary. Fortunately for us, the West, led by the United States considered Afghanistan an important arena in which to check the Soviets' ambition."(Page 274)

This argument is in the background of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and America's reaction against it. During the episode, the military establishment always tried to create a fear of Russians in Pakistan (that the Russian communists would destroy and occupy Pakistan as well to

make their access to the warm waters of the Arabian sea) to open a way to collaborate with Americans. In this effort, extremism and terrorism increased in Pakistan (the author also acknowledges the fact on page no. 209 of the same book). Contrary to his early views, the author here intends to create a justification for the American support by Pakistan in Afghan jihad by merely provoking the threats – that have no direct evidence – from the Russians. Again the military background of the author is indicated under the ideology depicted in the argument.

"Here was an opportunity for us to get rid of terrorism in our midst in our own national interest, and we must not falter."(Page 275)

After the incidents of 9/11, General Musharraf decided to cooperate with the Americans and their Allies. At home, the decision faced much criticism. The General justifies his decision of assisting the Americans and her allies in the war against terror by indicating the threat of extremists in Pakistan. But his policies now seem to increase the extremism. The provocation of mere threat rather than solid reasons indicates the fallacious nature of the argument. At the same time, the martial ideology of dealing with any danger directly and forcefully can be detected underneath this statement.

"After 9/11, we were put under immense pressure by the United States regarding our nuclear and missile arsenal."(Page 289)

In this argument, the author implies that if they had not helped America in the war against terror in Afghanistan, there would have been a great danger to their nuclear weapons from America and her Allies. This is actually another example of the rationalization of the General's assistance of the West. Sheer threat instead of proper reasoning makes the argument inaccurate. Such arguments can also be called discursive strategies through which the General is providing justification for his as well as his predecessors' acts and policies [16].

Argument Ad Misericordiam in "Daughter of the East"

"But I do believe my career has been more challenging because I am a woman. Clearly it's not easy for women in modern society, no matter where we live. We still have to go the extra mile to prove that we are equal to men."(Page xii)

Acting as a feminist, the writer talks about the difficulties faced by women generally. She argues that the life of women is hard-hitting and they have to work really hard in the male dominating societies. As a woman, she says concluding that she has to face all those hardships. Such conclusion seems to evoke the emotions of pity for her. For we find contrary circumstances after looking at her biographical sketches. She was born and brought up, without any discrimination of sex, in the most aristocratic family of Pakistan namely the Bhuttos. She was educated at the most prestigious institutions of America and Britain. She was trained by the most experienced and widely renowned politician of Pakistan, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, who was her father and the chairman of the largest political party of Pakistan, Pakistan People's Party, as well as the prime minister of Pakistan. After the death of her father, she took charge of the party and was elected prime minister twice. The difficulties which she faced during her political struggle are common among almost every

Pakistani politician either male or female. Thus, her comparison with the miseries and difficulties with other women does not seem fully logical except evoking the emotions of pity among the readers. However, her identity as a struggling politician against the atrocities of military regime is quite obvious.

"How can they be so besharam, so shameless? It was their Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who brought them back from the camps of India where their Generals had left them to rot. And this is how they repay him by entering his home and violating its sanctity?"(Page 106)

After the military coup in 1977, the soldiers were sent by the martial law administration to the Prime Minister's house. The soldiers entered the house without much esteem. The author shows her deep observations against the incident and provokes the emotions of pity among her audience. While doing so she commits the fallacy of ad misericordiam because there seems no direct and logical connection between the premises of the argument and the conclusion. The premises relate that Mr. Bhutto had helped to bring back the prisoners of war from India after 1971's Pak-India war. It was actually the obligation of his office to take decisions in favour of his country. The conclusion shows that in this perspective the soldiers should not have arrested the Prime Minister because he remained their well-wisher once. The writer ignores the sense of duty of the soldiers who had to act under their seniors' orders. They had no choice of their own. They were helpless to do anything for Mr. Bhutto in their own capacity. Thus the author's argument seems fallacious because it just tries to invoke the feelings of pity rather than conveying rationality.

"You and your army fell at the feet of the Indian Generals. It was my father who gave you back your honour. And you are raising your hands to his daughter."(Page 113)

This statement occurs when the author was detained in her house by the army after the overthrow of her father during the 1977 martial law of General Zia ul Haq. The premises which exclaim that it was her father who brought the soldiers back after their surrender in front of the Indian army does not seem to collaborate soundly with the conclusion that says that now she should be given respect for her father's favours. For the soldiers on duty have no such emotions of esteem as she expects and she might know it too. Thus this argument cannot be called rationally woven. This statement just provokes the emotions of pity towards her miserable condition against the atrocities of the army. Directly or indirectly, she looks like arousing the sentiments of the public against General Zia and the military. Such attempt explicitly shows her identity and ideology as a civilian politician working for the political and democratic process in the country.

"Do you remember this day, General? On this day you surrendered to the Indian army at Dacca and today you have shamed yourself again by shedding my blood. You do not know the word honour, General, only dishonor."(Page 127)

This statement is in the backdrop of a baton charge by the police when the author went to attend a cricket match in Lahore with her mother on the 16th December 1982. Her mother was injured. She went straight to the Martial Law Administrator of the Punjab and gave this statement. The arguer equates the disgrace of the surrender of the Pakistan

army with that of her mother's injury. This comparison does not seem fully logical. Thus there seem no reasonable nexus between the premises and the conclusion of the argument. This might only arouse the feelings of pity for the author and her family against the ruthlessness of the army but its contents are flawed and fallacious. However, the background of the author and her identity as a civilian politician suffering at the hands of military dictator is quite obvious.

AN INFORMAL FALLACIES BASED COMPARISON OF GENERAL MUSHARRAF AND MISS BHUTTO

So far as the illogical and flawed arguments are concerned, the basic difference between Benazir Bhutto's and General Musharraf's discourses is that of the use of ad baculum and ad misericordiam. Both these arguments present the trends, backgrounds, political affiliations and inclinations of the writers. Ms Bhutto's discourse is full of complaints and the descriptions of miseries and atrocities committed on her by the military regimes. Thus to arouse the feelings of pity is common in her writings. However, General Musharraf who has grabbed the power and imposed himself as a dictator is more inclined towards the argument ad baculum which purports to convince readers with the point of view of the author with the force of psychological or physical threat. The other informal fallacies are also detected in their autobiographies and open new dimensions. But keeping in view the selected fallacies, both of them assert the subsequent claims which are unleashed after critical evaluation of their discourses.

- Both the selected authors are overtly or covertly involved in discursive strategies and intend to rationalize their roles while defame the opponents with flawed and misdirected arguments
- They try to stimulate the feelings and emotions of readers towards their bearing and standpoint either with the help of psychological or physical threat or the emotions of pity
- General Musharraf's military background is quite obvious in the misdirected argument based on aggression and threats
- Miss Bhutto's struggle for the civilian rule and democracy are reflected in her melancholic and submissive argumentative discourse that is intended to arouse the feelings of pity among the audience

CONCLUSION

After a close and critical reading of the selected political discourses, it has been observed that the politicians or military dictators argue a lot in favour of their own rule to justify their stance. A critical analysis may help a lot to unearth the flaws under their arguments. General Musharraf, being a military man, more often, seems to threaten physically or psychologically to convince the audience with his standpoint. The use of arms, guns, killings, bombs, military operations etc. is quite abundant in his misdirected arguments. His discourse and arguments clearly present him as a male. On the other side, the critical analysis of Benazir Bhutto's discourse shows flaws in her arguments that seem explicitly directed to arouse feelings and emotions of pity for herself among the audience. The identity of her gender and the afflicted civilian politician can clearly be seen in her

usage of informal fallacies. In the end, it endorses the idea that informal fallacies can be the identity markers of the users. Both civilian and military rulers, in their arguments, try to persuade the audience in favour of their stance and position. Although, it is clearly found out that aggression is the spirit of the General's fallacious discourse while Benazir Bhutto reflects the elements of docility and submissiveness that show her struggling background as a civilian politician against the military regimes. These are clear indications that reinforce the idea that informal fallacies can be the markers of the arguer's identity, background, standpoint and ideology.

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