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AMBIGUITY IN THE OSCE MINSK GROUP DOCUMENTS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF NAGORNO–KARABAGH CONFLICT)

Ambiguity in diplomatic discourse constitutes a significant linguistic strategy, allowing diplomats to manage the complexities and sensitivities of international relations. Linguistically, ambiguity involves the use of words or expressions with multiple meanings or interpretations, allowing diplomats to maintain flexibility and avoid confrontation. However, while ambiguity fosters constructive relationships among countries, the potential for multiple interpretations can also lead to misunderstandings.

This study investigates the role of ambiguity in diplomatic discourse, particularly the use of ambiguity as a phenomenon in statements issued by the OSCE Minsk Group on the Nagorno–Karabakh Conflict, to see how different types of ambiguity (lexical, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic) are utilized in those statements and how they functioned. In conclusion, the use of ambiguous language, initially intended to maintain dialogue and avoid intensifying tensions, can also lead to multiple interpretations particularly perceptions of bias or insufficient support.

Keywords: the language of diplomacy, ambiguity, OSCE Minsk Group, statements, diplomatic discourse, pragmatic ambiguity.

Introduction

The OSCE Minsk Group was created in 1992 by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (now the OSCE) to provide a platform for peaceful

negotiations over a complex conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno–Karabakh region. It is co–chaired by three major international powers: France, Russia, and the United States. The OSCE Minsk Group operates under the framework of the OSCE, a regional organization focused on security and cooperation among European and Eurasian countries. The primary function of the Minsk Group is to act as a mediator between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The co–chairs were supposed to facilitate direct negotiations between the two parties and work to promote dialogue and compromise (OSCE Minsk Group).

This paper examines the diplomatic language used in the official statements of the OSCE Minsk Group concerning the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict, specifically analyzing how the ambiguity embedded within this language may contribute to the stagnation of the conflict resolution efforts and potentially sway the perceptions and actions of the involved parties. The documents were analyzed because they represent strategic and significant moments in the history of the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict, providing a comprehensive view of how ambiguity in diplomatic language has been used over different periods of the conflict. Ambiguity in diplomatic language is often seen as a tool (Pehar, 2011). While it can facilitate ongoing dialogue by avoiding overt confrontations, it may also obscure the commitments of the parties involved, potentially prolonging conflicts by allowing multiple interpretations of agreements. By analyzing statements issued during important years of the conflict, this study highlights how ambiguous expressions, while perhaps intended to maintain diplomatic balance, might inadvertently obscure commitments, prolong disputes and perceptions, particularly unfavorable for the Armenian side in this complex conflict.

The purpose of this research is to examine the texts of the statements issued by the OSCE Minsk Group concerning the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict, to find out whether the linguistic units used in the statements created ambiguity, and whether this ambiguity intentionally or unintentionally influenced stakeholder positions and influenced the process and outcome of the conflict's peaceful resolution.

Methods

Our study focuses on the analysis of ambiguity as a phenomenon found in the statements of OSCE Minsk Group issued in specific years like 2009, 2016, 2017, and 2021 as the following years were strategic, particularly 2009 is notable for efforts to intensify negotiations, including the declaration at the G8 summit in L'Aquila, Italy, encouraging Armenia and Azerbaijan to resolve the conflict, 2016 is marked by a significant escalation in conflict which is known as the Four–Day War in April 2016, 2017 which is not marked by a singular dramatic event but represents a continuation of negotiations and could show a pattern in the diplomatic language used across relatively calmer periods and finally 2021 a complicated year following the 2020 war, which resulted in a ceasefire agreement brokered by Russia in November 2020.

Employing qualitative textual analysis, each selected statement was examined

for instances of ambiguous language. Ambiguity was defined and categorized into lexical, syntactic, and semantic types based on linguistic criteria as well as pragmatic ambiguity also was highlighted. Each ambiguous instance was then analyzed in context to understand its potential for multiple interpretations and the implications of these interpretations on the perceptions of the conflict parties.

Results

The analysis of statements issued by the OSCE Minsk Group in the years 2009, 2016, 2017, and 2021 reveals substantial use of ambiguity in diplomatic language. Statements often employed ambiguous expressions to maintain neutrality and avoid direct confrontation. For example, phrases like "comprehensive settlement" and "promote a future of peace, stability, and prosperity" were used without specifying how these goals would be achieved, allowing for multiple interpretations depending on the interests of different parties.

Ambiguity can deter decisive actions or clear support for peace initiatives, potentially weakening one side's position. This was evident in the statements from 2009 and 2016, where the use of vague language allowed parties to claim progress without committing to specific actions or concessions. The 2021 statement showed a reactive use of ambiguity, focusing more on immediate concerns of ceasefire violations and compliance with agreements rather than proactive measures.

Discussion

Ambiguity in diplomatic discourse is an important linguistic strategy that enables diplomats to observe complex and sensitive international relations. Linguistically, ambiguity involves the use of words or expressions with multiple meanings or interpretations, allowing diplomats to maintain flexibility and avoid confrontation. The strategic use of language helps to balance possible conflicting situations conveying necessary information while minimizing the risk of offending or provoking other parties. Though ambiguity is interpreted as a constructive phenomenon to foster constructive relationships among countries, the fact of different or multiple interpretations of the diplomats also leaves room for different understandings leading to conflicts and bias (Crystal, 1988).

Researchers traditionally distinguish between language ambiguity and speech ambiguity. Language ambiguity is the capacity of a word or phrase to have distinct senses, for example, the property of linguistic units. Some languages are notoriously famous for being polysemous and have a much higher potential for ambiguity. Given the fact that most words in natural languages are likely to be polysemous, i.e., having more than one meaning, ambiguity is not a rarity in language and speech. For example*, word "bank" in English can refer to a financial institution or the side of a river.* This inherent property of the word makes it ambiguous. *Example: "He was sitting by the bank." (It could mean either he was sitting by the riverbank or by the financial institution.).* Whereas, spee*ch* ambiguity is the

realization of this property in an utterance. For instance, the sentence *"Can you pass the salt?"* This can be interpreted as a straightforward question about the listener's ability to pass the salt (literal meaning) or as a polite request for the listener to pass the salt (intended meaning) (Boyarskaya, 2019, p. 83).

In contemporary linguistics, several scholars presented their understanding of ambiguity. Particularly according to a theory by Brown and Levinson ambiguities play an essential part in the phenomena of linguistic politeness that combine two conflicting desires: the desire to convey a clear message that, in its authentic form, could insult a human being, and the desire to soften the message to avoid making human being feeling offended or humiliated (Brown, Levinson, 1978, p. 78).

Scholar Munson in his book "The Way of Words" defined ambiguity in the following way: "An expression is ambiguous when it has more than one meaning and it is used in a situation or context in which it can be understood in at least two different ways." (Munson, 1976, p. 74). In other words, ambiguity is one of the most interesting language phenomena used in politics in general, and in diplomacy, in particular. This is because ambiguity allows politicians and diplomats to communicate in ways that are deliberately open to interpretations.

Similarly, Lycan claims that ambiguity can be defined in the following way. 'A sentence S is ambiguous just in case there are at least two distinct propositions P1 and P2, and the single expression S bears the expressing relation to each of P1 and P2 (Lycan, 2000, p. 81).

It is also worth mentioning how Crystal (1988) defines ambiguity as the reference to a word or sentence that expresses more than one meaning. In "A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics", Crystal believes that grammatical or structural ambiguity is the most prevalent in the English language. Crystal (1988) differentiated between phrase structure ambiguity, transformational ambiguity, and lexical ambiguity. "In phrase structure ambiguity, alternative constituent structures can be assigned to a construction" (p.22), as in the example of new houses and shops, where the adjective new can be attributed to either the houses and shops or only to the houses. "*In transformational ambiguity, the sentence may have a similar bracketing on the surface for both reading, but is related to a more than one structure at a more abstract level of representation*" (p.23). The example 'visiting speakers can be awful' can be perceived as either it is awful to visit speakers or speakers who visit are awful. Crystal (1988) defines another type of ambiguity that arises not from the grammatical structure of a sentence but solely from an "alternative meaning of an individual lexical item" (p.23), lexical ambiguity. I found the table fascinating: the table can be a piece of furniture, or table of contents. Crystal (1988) asserts Cruse's perspective that ambiguity must be distinguished from generality and indeterminacy. In the sentence, Mary saw a balloon, no ambiguity is detected, but indeterminacy to where, when, and how she saw it. Such sentences, including generality or indeterminacy, are categorized with vagueness but not with ambiguity.

Based on the above-mentioned interpretations we can state that Brown and Levinson (1978) emphasize ambiguity's role in linguistic politeness, which involves balancing clarity with the need to avoid offending. This definition implies a functional aspect of ambiguity in social interactions. Whereas, Munson (1976) focused more on the semantic aspect without considering the social function. Additionally, Lycan (2000) emphasizes the logical structure of ambiguity rather than its social or semantic functions. As compared to these scholars, Crystal provided more details on this. Crystal (1988) classifies ambiguity into structural types (phrase structure, transformational, and lexical), providing a more detailed and categorization-based definition compared to the others. Understanding these perspectives provides a comprehensive view of how ambiguity operates in language, highlighting its complexity and significance in communication.

Linguists have not agreed on a sole classification of ambiguity in language. While most linguists classified ambiguity under two broad categories: lexical and syntactic Chomsky (1965), shed light on another type, pragmatic ambiguity (Zelta, 2014). Later, Cullicover and Jackendoff (2005) introduced semantic ambiguity. Based on the theories of the mentioned scholars we will classify ambiguity into lexical, syntactic, and semantic levels:

Lexical ambiguity: A single word can have more than one meaning; for example, "bank" can refer to both a financial institution and the edge of a river (Katz, Fodor ,1963).

Syntactic ambiguity: When a sentence's structure leaves room for interpretation, its meaning becomes muddled. For example, "Flying planes can be dangerous" could refer to either the act of flying a plane or the danger of flying itself (Chomsky, 1965).

Semantic ambiguity: When words are not related to one another, a sentence's meaning becomes ambiguous (for example, "I saw her duck" can refer to both a bird and a person running from something) (Lyons, 1977).

Apart from the above-mentioned types of ambiguity pragmatic ambiguity also occurs when a sentence has several meanings in the context in which it is uttered. This can be classified as ambiguity in speech acts, ambiguity in presuppositions, and referential ambiguity (Zelta, 2014).

Regarding ambiguity in speech acts, it is important to note that full natural language systems must recognize the speaker's intentions in an utterance. They must know when the speaker is asserting, asking, or making an official or social gesture (Searle 1975, p. 23). Therefore, *can you open the door* can be ambiguous as it might in context represent a question, request, or even an offer. Similarly, *the cops are coming* can be processed as an assertion, a warning, or an expression of relief. Being unable to determine its pragmatic meaning makes this sentence ambiguous. Ambiguity in presuppositions is when speakers mark linguistically the information that is to be taken for granted, and such information can be interpreted in various ways (Zelta, 2014). This can be well demonstrated in the words too.

Bach (1982) states that the expression *I love you too* can be understood as one

of the four interpretations: 1. *I love you just like you love me.* 2. *I love you just like someone else does.* 3. *I love you and love someone else also.*4. *I love you as well as I like you.* Referential ambiguity occurs when an anaphora can take its reference from more than one element each playing the role of an antecedent. Anaphora includes pronouns, definite noun phrases, and some forms of ellipsis (Levinson, 1983). In the example, the trucks shall treat the *roads before they freeze the antecedent to* the anaphora they can be either trucks or roads.

Lexical ambiguity allows diplomats to craft statements that can be interpreted differently by various audiences. This can help avoid confrontation and provide room for maneuvering in negotiations (Dai, 2021). For example, the following statement *"We encourage all parties to engage in meaningful dialogue"* can be interpreted differently by various audiences due to lexical ambiguity. *"Meaningful dialogue"* could mean that all parties should engage in in–depth and substantive discussions addressing core issues. The second interpretation of "*meaningful dialogue*" might be understood as any form of conversation that moves beyond mere formalities, even if it does not tackle core issues directly.

Syntactic ambiguity enables diplomats to construct sentences that can be interpreted in multiple ways, depending on the context. For instance, the sentence "*We are prepared to meet the challenges that lie ahead* " can have a literal interpretation e.g. the diplomat could be stating that their country is ready to face any upcoming difficulties or obstacles and contextual interpretation which depends on the context. This could imply a willingness to engage in negotiations, signaling flexibility and openness without committing to any specific actions or outcomes (Misbah M. D. Al–Sulaimaan & Rahma I.A.K Al–Me'mary, 2016).

Semantic ambiguity helps diplomats phrase their statements in a way that can be understood differently by different parties, allowing for diplomatic flexibility and avoiding confrontations (Zhang Xiao–Hong, 2008). For example, the following statement "*We support efforts to promote peace in the region*" can be understood by one party as a commitment to diplomatic and peaceful resolution. Another party might interpret it as an endorsement of peace through maintaining the status quo, even if it means continued occupation or control over disputed territories

Pragmatic ambiguity allows diplomats to use language that can be interpreted in multiple ways, depending on the context and the audience's perceptions. This is crucial in maintaining politeness and avoiding offense in sensitive international relations (Chen Xuan, 2011). For instance, the statement "*We encourage all parties to engage in meaningful dialogue*" might have several interpretations all parties should engage in in–depth and substantive discussions addressing core issues. And any form of conversation that moves beyond mere formalities, even if it does not tackle core issues directly, is encouraged.

Classifying ambiguity into lexical, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic categories provides a comprehensive understanding of its use in diplomatic discourse (Mohammad, 2017, p. 201). Each type serves a distinct function, offering diplomats tools to enhance communication, gain strategic advantages, avoid conflict, and

improve negotiations. Recognizing and leveraging these ambiguities is crucial for effective and nuanced diplomatic communication.

The ambiguity often inherent in diplomatic discourse serves as a strategic tool, allowing for flexibility in interpretation and helping negotiators achieve consensus without committing to specifics that might hinder agreement. D'Acquisto mentions that one of the features of diplomatic discourse is the ambiguity of speech. Ambiguity occurs unwillingly without any intention. To be flexible politicians do not say everything literally and leave an option for alternative versions. (D'Acquisto, 2017, p. 10). However, ambiguity used in diplomatic discourse constructs dual if not multiple interpretations, as ambiguity prevents a concise understanding or reception of the intended meaning. These can lead to various perceptions, which can create a semantic gap in the documents.

Thus, ambiguity provides important functions in both language and diplomacy, either as a natural feature of communication or as a deliberate strategy. After having discussed the different aspects of ambiguity, as a continuation of our research we are going to provide the analysis of ambiguity with examples of how the latter was utilized in the statements of the OSCE Minsk Group.

Analysis

First let us have a look at the statement issued in 2009: *"Foreign Ministers Lavrov and Kouchner and Deputy Secretary Steinberg reiterated the commitment of their countries, as expressed in the Joint Statement on the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict at the L'Aquila Summit of the Eight on July 10, issued by their three Presidents, to support the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan as they complete work on the Basic Principles and urged that the parties complete this work as soon as possible. They stressed that agreement on the Basic Principles would provide the framework for a comprehensive settlement to promote a future of peace, stability, and prosperity for the entire region. The Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan reported on progress during this year in achieving a common understanding of points of the Basic Principles. They stated the willingness of their countries to complete work on the Basic Principles, as stipulated by the Presidents of the Co–Chair countries at L'Aquila. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to work intensively to resolve the remaining issues, to reach an agreement based, in particular, upon the principles of the Helsinki Final Act of Non–Use of Force or Threat of Force, Territorial Integrity, and the Equal Rights and Self–Determination of Peoples* (OSCE Minsk Group, 2009)*."*

The statement involves multiple parties like Russia, France, the USA, Armenia and Azerbaijan. It references a commitment made in a Joint Statement during the L'Aquila Summit, which is aimed at supporting Armenia and Azerbaijan as they finalize the Basic Principles for resolving the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict. The statement emphasizes urgency ("urged that the parties complete this work as soon as possible") and outlines the ultimate goal ("a future of peace, stability, and prosperity for the entire region"). However, from the point of view of ambiguity,

there are several expressions that according to our analysis are vague and they can be maneuvered and interpreted in a way that corresponds to the national interests and political agendas of the specific negotiating party. Particularly phrases like "*comprehensive settlement*" *a*nd "*promote a future of peace, stability, and prosperity*" are intrinsically ambiguous. These phrases are highly subjective, allowing for multiple interpretations about what "*peace*" and "*prosperity*" actually entail or how they should be achieved. These are just words, but nothing is mentioned about the ways of reaching them.

The statement avoids specifying the exact nature of the "*remaining issues*" or how they will be resolved. This nonspecific language serves as a diplomatic cushion, allowing parties to claim progress without committing to particular actions or concessions.

Another statement from the OSCE Minsk Group issued in 2016 is also rich in ambiguous expressions: "*According to information collected from multiple reliable sources, on 15 May, Azerbaijaniarmedforces fired a missile across the Line of Contact, striking military equipment. On the evening of 16 May and continuing into 17 May, Armenian armed forces retaliated with mortar fire of various calibers. These actions by both sides represent significant violations of the ceasefire and are cause for alarm. There are contradictory reports regarding the targets of these recent strikes, as well as about casualties sustained and damages inflicted. The OSCE Minsk Group Co–Chairs and thePersonal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson–in–Office continue to collect further data and analysis to gain more complete and accurate information about the current situation. The Co–Chairs condemn these recentceasefire violations and call upon the sides to take all necessary measures to prevent any further escalation in the conflict zone* (OSCE Minsk Group, 2016)*".*

The statement starts with presenting facts about the actions that were taken by the Armenian and Azerbaijani armed forces, which is followed by these ambiguous expressions "*contradictory reports regarding the targets of these recent strikes*" and "*about casualties sustained and damages inflicted.*" These ambiguous sentences can affect the perception of accountability. Without specifying the target or extent of casualties, the report does not clarify which side may have disproportionately escalated the conflict, leaving room for interpretations that could either facilitate or exaggerate the perceived aggression of either side. The statement that the OSCE's Minsk Group Co–Chairs and the Personal Representative continue to "*collect further data and analysis to gain more complete and accurate information about the current situation*" further intensifies the ambiguity. This suggests an absence of precise data, which can delay any international response or action, potentially allowing ongoing violations without immediate repercussions.

By carefully choosing diplomatic language and remaining neutral ("*call upon the sides to take all necessary measures to prevent any further escalation*"), the intention may ensure fairness and objectivity. However, this can also lead to confusion as it does not explicitly address who usually starts the escalation. This

sentence "*call upon the sides to take all necessary measures to prevent any further escalation*" can be viewed as ambiguous as it does not mention or assign any responsibility for the initiation of hostilities. This broad appeal for peace could be seen as minimizing particular acts of aggression, especially if one side believes it is more about defending than initiating.

We can see a similar perception in the next statement which was issued in 2017: "*In light of the dramatic escalation in violence along the Line of Contact in April, we express concern over continuing armed incidents, including reports on the use of heavy weapons, and strongly condemn the use of force or the threat of the use of force. There is no military solution to this conflict and no justification for the death and injury of civilians. We are also aware of allegations of atrocities committed on the field of battle in April, which we condemn in the strongest terms. We appeal to the sides to confirm their commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict as the only way to bring real reconciliation to the people of the region. We also urge them to adhere strictly to the 1994/95 ceasefire agreements that make up the foundation of the cessation of hostilities in the conflict zone* (OSCE Minsk Group, 2017)."

A general declaration of worry regarding the "*dramatic escalation in violence*" and "*continuing armed incidents,*" including the deployment of heavy weapons, opens the statement. The lack of precision in identifying responsible sides for instigating violence could potentially undermine accountability and be perceived as a protective measure for those who engage in violent atrocities.

The above–mentioned phrases might be interpreted as equal to the behavior of both sides because it does not name the aggressor. If one side is predominantly losing or defending itself, this equivalence might be perceived as unjust. Armenians might interpret such ambiguous language as a defensive reaction to cruelty.

In the following sentence "*allegations of atrocities committed on the field of battle in April, which we condemn in the strongest terms.*" We can also see elements of ambiguity. Particularly, denouncing the crimes but only calling them "*allegations,*" may denote that there isn't enough proof to support the claims made or that a definite position will not be taken until further information is obtained. For victims who are fighting for justice and acknowledgment, this can be discouraging because it doesn't explicitly acknowledge the crimes, which may diminish their suffering. It is possible to interpret the generic appeal for peace as a lack of sufficient international response in the absence of particular actions or direct engagement. Such ambiguity could potentially lead to multiple interpretations that are unfavorable to Armenia's interests.

We can identify ambiguous expressions in another statement issued by the OSCE Minsk Group in 2021 after the 44 days war: "*The Co–Chair countries call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric and provocative actions and to implement in full the commitments they undertookon9November2 020and reconfirmed on 26 November 2021in statements made by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of theRepublic of Armenia, and President*

*of the Russian Federation and other jointly agreed ceasefire arrangements. The Co–Chair countries call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue their engagement under Co–Chair auspices to make concrete progress on humanitarian issues — including, inter alia, detainees, demining, missing persons, voluntary return of displaced persons, and the protection of historic and cultural sites, and to work constructively to resolve other outstanding issues, such as border delimitation and demarcation and the restoration of economic and transportation links. The Co–Chair countries also note with concern recent incidents on the non–demarcated Armenia–Azerbaijan border and reaffirm that the use or threat of force to resolve border disputes is unacceptable. The Co–Chair countries also remind Armenia and Azerbaijan of their obligation to comply with the requirements of international humanitarian law and urge the sides to lift immediately all restrictions on international humanitarian organizations accessing conflict–affected areas and populations (*OSCE Minsk Group, 2021)*".* The calls to "*refrain from inflammatory rhetoric and provocative actions*" are made to both Azerbaijan and Armenia, but they do not identify any particular provocations. This may be interpreted as denying or neutralizing any claims made by Armenia about provocations by Azerbaijan, which could result in the idea that justifiable complaints or defensive measures are unfairly linked to aggressiveness. The declaration refers to the "*commitments they undertook on 9 November 2020 and reconfirmed on 26 November 2021*" but it does not go into specifics about what these promises entail or how they were fulfilled. When it comes to accountability and progress, this lack of clarity can lead to misunderstandings or irritation, particularly when one side believes the other has not fulfilled its end of the commitments. Although the following statements seem unambiguous "*recent incidents on the non–demarcated Armenia–Azerbaijan border*" and "*the use or threat of force to resolve border disputes is unacceptable*" they exclude important details about the occurrences, such as which party is the initiator of the context. This could be interpreted as a way to avoid going up against the aggressor directly, which could be unfavorable for the victimized (for the Armenian) party if they are constantly being provoked.

Based upon the classification of linguistic ambiguity, which includes the following types linguistic, semantic, and syntactic as well as pragmatic ambiguity, we can state that the lexical ambiguity was demonstrated in the form of separate words like the terms "*commitment*," "*progress*," and the phrase "*comprehensive settlement*" which were vague and open to interpretation, allowing different parties to project their meanings onto these statements. However, semantic and syntactic ambiguities were more notable in the analyzed statements, to be more accurate let us present the outcomes below in the form of a table. The classification was held based on the theoretical data presented in the section of the Discussion.

Table 1 The Classification of the Types of Ambiguity in the
Statements of OSCE Minsk Group Statements

Year	Semantic	Syntactic
2009	• They stressed that agreement on the Basic Principles would provide the framework for a comprehensive settlement. • Urged that the parties complete this work as soon as possible») and outlines the ultimate goal («a future of peace, stability, and prosperity for the entire region.	• The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to work intensively to resolve the remaining issues, and to reach an agreement based, in particular, upon the principles of the Helsinki Final Act of Non–Use of Force or Threat of Force, Territorial Integrity, and the Equal Rights and Self–Determination of Peoples.
2016	• According to information collected from multiple reliable sources, on 15 May, Azerbaijani armed forces fired a missile across the Line of Contact, striking military equipment. • Contradictory reports regarding the targets of these recent strikes» and «about casualties sustained and damages inflicted.	• Call upon the sides to take all necessary measures to prevent any further escalation. • Collect further data and analysis to gain more complete and accurate information about the current situation.
2017	• We are also aware of allegations of atrocities committed on the field of battle in April, which we condemn in the strongest terms.	• We appeal to the sides to confirm their commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict as the only way to bring real reconciliation to the people of the region. • We also urge them to adhere strictly to the 1994/95 ceasefire agreements that make up the foundation of the cessation of hostilities in the conflict zone.
2021	• Implement in full the commitments they undertook.	• The Co–Chair countries call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue their engagement under Co–Chair auspices to make concrete progress on humanitarian issues. • The Co–Chair countries also remind Armenia and Azerbaijan of their obligation to comply with the requirements of international humanitarian law and urge the sides to lift immediately all restrictions on international humanitarian organizations accessing conflict–affected areas and populations.

From the perspective of pragmatic ambiguity, the expressions listed below in the Table 2, taken from the statements of 2009, 2016, 2017, and 2021 bear pragmatic ambiguity.

Table 2 Manifestation of Pragmatic Ambiguity in the OSCE Minsk Group Statements

	Ambiguity in Speech Acts	Ambiguity in Presupposition	Referential Ambiguity
2009	• The phrase «urged that the parties complete this work as soon as possible» could be seen as a request or a command, depending on the interpretation. • "They stressed that agreement on the Basic Principles would provide the framework for a comprehensive settlement» can be understood as an assertion or a suggestion.	• «Agreement on the Basic Principles would provide the framework for a comprehensive settlement» presupposes that there is a common understanding of what these Basic Principles are and that they are agreed upon as beneficial. • The statement «reported on progress during this year in achieving common understanding» presupposes that progress has been made, but it is ambiguous as to the extent and nature of this progress.	The term «their countries» can refer to Armenia and Azerbaijan or to the countries represented by Lavrov, Kouchner, and Steinberg, leading to confusion about who is committing to what.
2016	• Condemn these recent ceasefire violations» can be interpreted as a strong denunciation or merely a formal expression of disapproval. • «Call upon the sides to take all necessary measures» might be a request or a demand, depending on the diplomatic context.	• The statement presupposes that both sides have the capability and willingness to adhere to the ceasefire, which might not be the case. • Contradictory reports regarding the targets of these recent strikes» presuppose that the truth is unclear and open to interpretation.	• These actions by both sides» can refer to the specific instances of missile and mortar fire or to broader patterns of behavior, leading to different interpretations of responsibility
2017	• «Express concern over continuing armed incidents» can be seen as a mild warning or a grave alarm, depending on the audience's perspective. • «Strongly condemn the use of force or the threat of the use of force» might be interpreted as an absolute denouncement or as a situational critique.	• «There is no military solution to this conflict» presupposes that all parties agree on this assessment, which may not be true. • «We are also aware of allegations of atrocities» presupposes that these allegations are significant and credible, but it leaves room for different interpretations of their validity.	• «The sides» can refer to the immediate parties involved in the recent incidents or to the broader entities of Armenia and Azerbaijan.
2021	• «Call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric» can be interpreted as a polite request or a stern warning. • «Work constructively to resolve other outstanding issues» might be a suggestion or an imperative.	• «The commitments they undertook on 9 November 2020» presupposes a shared understanding and agreement on those commitments. • «Concrete progress on humanitarian issues» presupposes that progress is both possible and expected, though it remains undefined.	• «Recent incidents on the non-demarcated Armenia–Azerbaijan border» can refer to specific events or a general pattern of behavior, leading to different interpretations of urgency and scale.

Conclusion

While examining the ambiguity as a phenomenon used in the statements of OSCE Minsk Group on the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict, we have come to the idea that although ambiguity in diplomatic discourse may help to maintain flexibility, it can also have serious negative effects, especially in long–term conflicts where responsibility and clarity are essential. Based upon our analysis of the statements about the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict issued by the OSCE Minsk Group, the ambiguity did not serve its initial purpose. On the contrary, the multiple interpretations caused by ambiguity might have led to misunderstandings and insufficient support for the Armenian side.

In the statements of 2007, 2016, and 2017, ambiguity served to keep the dialogue ongoing, whereas in the statement of 2021 (a year after the 44–day war), it seems to address more immediate concerns of ceasefire violations and compliance with agreements, suggesting a reactive rather than proactive use of ambiguity.

We shall also state that the presence of ambiguity in the statements of the OSCE Minsk Group may also be viewed as a lack of clarity and specificity, as a failure to adequately support the resolution of the conflict by the international observers. This can affect international support dynamics, where ambiguous diplomatic language might deter decisive actions or clear support for peace initiatives, potentially weakening the position of one side and weakening the claims of the Armenian side.

Thus, we can state that the use of ambiguity in the statements, as mentioned earlier, while typical of diplomatic discourse intended to maintain dialogue and avoid exacerbating tensions, can lead to perceptions of insufficient support. These perceptions are influenced by the general demands for peace without specific action, the vagueness of commitments, and the failure to identify aggressors in conflict situations. These kinds of ambiguities, while aiming to preserve diplomatic balance, appear to have hindered substantive progress toward conflict resolution, allowing for the continuation of hostilities and misunderstandings between the involved parties. For Armenians, particularly if they feel they are disproportionately victimized, such ambiguous language could be seen as minimizing their complaints or lessening the severity of the measures taken against them. This illustrates the delicate balance in diplomatic communication where language choices can significantly influence perceptions of justice and support in international conflicts.

Our research stresses that while ambiguity can be a helpful diplomatic instrument, using it excessively might cause stakeholders to become disillusioned and stagnate, particularly in delicate geopolitical issues. It is of vital importance to reassess how international mediators, such as the OSCE Minsk Group, use language strategically to improve the effectiveness of peace talks and promote long–term stability in conflict–affected areas.

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Անի Թամազյան
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մանկավարժության ամբիոնի վարիչ, Հայաստանի Եվրոպական համալսարանի
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ԵՐԿԱԿԻՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ԵԱՀԿ ՄԻՆՍԿԻ ԽՄԲԻ ՓԱՍՏԱԹՂԹԵՐՈՒՄ (ԼԵՌՆԱՅԻՆ ՂԱՐԱԲԱՂԻ ՀԱԿԱՄԱՐՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՕՐԻՆԱԿՈՎ)

Դիվանագիտական խոսույթում երկակիությունը մարտավարական գործիք է, որը դիվանագետներին հնարավորություն է տալիս զբաղվել միջազգային հարաբերություններում առկա նրբություններով և զգայունություններով:

Լեզվաբանորեն, երկակիությունը ենթադրում է բազմիմաստ մեկնաբանություններ ունեցող բառերի կամ արտահայտությունների օգտագործում, ինչի շնորհիվ դիվանագետները կարողանում են պահպանել ճկունություն և խուսափել առճակատումից: Այնուամենայնիվ, չնայած երկիմաստությունը խթանում է կառուցողական հարաբերությունները երկրների միջև, բազմակի մեկնաբանությունների հնարավորությունը կարող է նաև հանգեցնել թյուրիմացությունների, հակամարտությունների և կոդմնակալության:

Այս հետազոտությունը ուսումնասիրում է երկակիության դերը դիվանագիտական խոսույթում, մասնավորապես, երկակիության կիրառումը` որպես երևույթ ԵԱՀԿ Մինսկի խմբի կողմից Լեռնային Ղարաբաղի հակամարտության վերաբերյալ արված հայտարարություններում,` պարզելու, թե ինչպես են օգտագործվել երկակիության տարբեր տեսակները (բառագիտական, շարահյուսական, իմաստաբանական և գործաբանական) այդ հայտարարություններում և ինչպես են դրանք գործել:

Եզրափակելով` երկիմաստ լեզվի օգտագործումը, որն ի սկզբանե նախատեսված էր երկխոսությունը պահպանելու և լարվածությունից խուսափելու համար, կարող է նաև հանգեցնել բազմակի մեկնաբանությունների, մասնավորապես` կողմնակալության կամ անբավարար աջակցության ընկալման:

Հիմնաբառեր. դիվանագիտության լեզու, երկակիություն, ԵԱՀԿ Մինսկի խումբ, հայտարարություններ, դիվանագիտական խոսույթ, գործաբանական երկակիություն:

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ДВУСМЫСЛЕННОСТЬ В ДОКУМЕНТАХ МИНСКОЙ ГРУППЫ ОБСЕ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ НАГОРНО–КАРАБАХСКОГО КОНФЛИКТА)

Двусмысленность в дипломатическом дискурсе является тактическим инструментом, который позволяет дипломатам управлять сложностями и тонкостями, присущими международным отношениям. Лингвистически, двусмысленность включает использование слов или выражений с несколькими значениями или интерпретациями, что позволяет дипломатам сохранять гибкость и избегать конфронтации. Однако, несмотря на то что двусмыс-ленность способствует конструктивным отношениям между странами, возможность множественных интерпретаций также может привести к недопониманиям, конфликтам и предвзятости. Это исследование изучает роль двусмысленности в дипломатическом дискурсе, в частности использование двусмысленности как явления в заявлениях, сделанных Минской группой ОБСЕ по Нагорно–Карабахскому конфликту, чтобы выяснить, как разные виды двусмысленности (лексическая, синтаксическая, семантическая и прагмати-ческая) используются в этих заявлениях и как они функционировали. В заключение, использование двусмысленного языка, первоначально предназна-ченного для поддержания диалога и избежания усиления напряженности, также может привести к множественным интерпретациям, особенно к восприятию предвзятости или недостаточной поддержки.

Ключевые слова: язык дипломатии, двусмысленность, Минская группа ОБСЕ, заявления, дипломатический дискурс, прагматическая двусмысленность.