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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: Culture, Media & Film

Language and power: Ahmed Al-Sharaa's discourse analysis in Arab and international media

Rasha Salameh¹ & Ramez Abuhasirah^{2*} ¹Department of Radio and Television, Middle East University, Amman, Jordan²Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Middle East University, Amman, Jordan*Correspondence: ramezmohammad77@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the political discourse of Ahmed Al-Sharaa, the new Syrian president, through his interviews with BBC and Al Arabiya to explore how he adapts his messages to diverse audiences. Utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research examines the linguistic, rhetorical, and persuasive strategies Al-Sharaa employs to reinforce his political legitimacy both domestically and internationally. The findings reveal a strategic shift in discourse: while his domestic rhetoric emphasizes revolutionary legitimacy, national unity, and addressing the consequences of internal conflict, his international discourse portrays him as a statesman committed to democratic principles, international law, and human rights. The article identifies key linguistic features, such as the use of legal terminology ("constitution," "legitimacy," "democratic institutions") and rhetorical devices like emotional framing for domestic audiences and logical argumentation for international contexts. Al-Sharaa's discourse also conveys implicit messages, emphasizing national sovereignty, the need for reconciliation, and a call for lifting international sanctions. This dual strategy demonstrates Al-Sharaa's ability to balance revolutionary ideals with state-building goals, reflecting his pragmatic approach to political leadership. The research contributes to the understanding of how political figures craft narratives to shape public opinion, construct legitimacy, and influence both domestic and international audiences.

KEYWORDS: Ahmed Al-Sharaa, Political Discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis, Syria, Rhetorical Strategies, Legitimacy, Revolutionary Leadership, International Relations

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Introduction

Discourse analysis is considered one of the key research tools for understanding the linguistic and contextual dimensions of political discourse (Tessema, 2019). It helps uncover the deep structure of the messages that political leaders aim to convey. Through the study of word choice, rhetorical techniques, and persuasion strategies, it is possible to infer the implicit meanings and intellectual orientations that shape a political figure's discourse (Aaldering & Vliegenthart, 2016; Qasem, 2025). Discourse analysis gains particular importance in contexts marked by profound political transformations, where political discourse becomes a pivotal tool for shaping public opinion and constructing political legitimacy. This is because it reflects the complex dynamics between power and the public, highlighting how language can be used not merely as a means of communication, but as an instrument for shaping collective consciousness and formulating public policies (Aritz et al., 2017; Salameh & Abuhasirah, 2022).

Syria is currently undergoing a pivotal phase in its history, marked by complex political, social, and economic transformations amid rapidly evolving regional and international dynamics. After more than a decade of conflict, the country is witnessing new developments in governance and both domestic and foreign policies, making the political discourse of its leaders a focal point of interest (Aritz & Walker, 2010). Political speeches are no longer mere official statements or media declarations; they have evolved into strategic tools used to influence public opinion, justify policies, and reshape national identity in the context of multifaceted crises (Anderson & Holloway, 2018; Harrison & Young, 2005). These emerging circumstances compel the Syrian leadership to present clear and convincing visions to both the Syrian people and the international community, with the aim of achieving stability and restoring both domestic and international trust. This involves a focused approach to managing sensitive issues such as reconstruction, national reconciliation, and foreign policy in the face of regional and international interventions.

In this context, Ahmed Al-Sharaa has emerged as the new president of Syria, with his speeches in various media outlets reflecting his political positions and orientations. His discourse represents not only the voice of a new political leader but also a symbol of a transitional phase in Syria's modern history. With his initial television interviews—whether on foreign or Arab channels—it has become essential to analyze the content of these speeches to understand his core messages and how he addresses political, economic, and social issues. President Al-Sharaa's political discourse not only reflects his vision of the current Syrian reality but also reveals the strategies he employs to construct his political image both domestically and internationally. This research will analyze two of his interviews, one on a foreign channel and the other on Al Arabiya TV, to explore the differences in his discourse based on the nature of the target audience and to uncover the key rhetorical and persuasive techniques he relies on to convey his political vision. The focus will be on how he adapts his messages to meet the expectations of two audiences with distinct cultural and political backgrounds.

This article aims to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of Syrian political discourse in the context of contemporary transformations and to offer a critical analysis of how political discourse is shaped and media messages are crafted within a shifting political environment. It also seeks to highlight the role of language as a tool for political influence and how it is utilized to reshape national identity and shape public opinion, both within Syria and on the international stage.

Political speeches are among the most prominent tools used by leaders to influence public opinion, shape political positions, and build both domestic and international legitimacy. However, analyzing these speeches reveals deeper dimensions that go beyond the spoken words to encompass rhetorical strategies, linguistic techniques, and implicit meanings that reflect the political and intellectual orientations of leaders. In the current Syrian context, there is an urgent need to study political discourse amid the complex political and social transformations the country is experiencing. Political speeches have become a primary means for rebuilding trust between the leadership and society and for conveying messages to key regional and international stakeholders (Fairclough, 2004a).

Ahmed Al-Sharaa, as the new president of Syria, is a pivotal figure in this transitional phase the country is undergoing. His official speeches reflect political positions and strategic visions aimed at influencing two distinct audiences: the domestic audience, which aspires to stability and reconstruction, and the international audience, which closely monitors developments in Syria from political and security perspectives. The core problem of this article arises from the need to understand how Ahmed Al-Sharaa employs political discourse as

a tool for influence and persuasion, particularly when addressing audiences with diverse cultural and political backgrounds. Consequently, the central research problem lies in attempting to answer the following key question: “How does Ahmed Al-Sharaa utilize rhetorical and linguistic strategies in his political discourse to achieve his various objectives when addressing a domestic audience through an Arab channel and an international audience through a foreign channel?” This main question branches into several sub-questions:

1. What are the prominent linguistic and rhetorical features in Ahmed Al-Sharaa’s discourse in both interviews?
2. How do persuasion strategies differ between the interview directed at the domestic audience and the one targeting the international audience?
3. What implicit messages does President Al-Sharaa aim to convey through his discourse in both the domestic and international contexts?
4. How does Ahmed Al-Sharaa’s discourse reflect his political orientations and his vision of the Syrian reality and the country’s future?

This study also aims to fill the research gap related to the analysis of the new Syrian president’s political discourse within the context of addressing multiple audiences. By comparing his speeches in local and international media, the research seeks to uncover the similarities and differences in the construction of his discourse and its use as a tool for political influence.

Literature Review

Discourse Analysis and Language

With the passage of time and the advancement of tools and methodologies in modern societies, the study of language has undergone significant development in terms of depth and scope (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). This evolution has led to the diversification of research approaches, the emergence of various linguistic schools of thought, and the expansion of perspectives on language analysis (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Such diversity has enriched linguistic studies and deepened the understanding of language as a complex phenomenon that transcends mere syntactic structures to encompass cognitive and cultural dimensions (Jones & Collins 2006). Moreover, this development has highlighted the importance of integrating language studies with other fields of knowledge, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and other disciplines related to human behavior and social interaction (Dunmire, 2012). This interdisciplinary approach has contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of how language functions within different social and cultural contexts, supporting the idea that language is not only a tool for communication but also a powerful mechanism for shaping identities, constructing realities, and influencing social dynamics (Gee, 2011; Van Dijk, 1997; Al-Zaben & Al Harahsheh, 2025).

The media is considered one of the most prominent fields that relies heavily on language and its mechanisms of use, where language is employed as a strategic tool to influence audiences and shape public opinion (Abuhasirah & Salameh, 2024a). Consequently, researchers in the field of media have given special attention to studying language and analyzing the ways it is utilized across various media contexts to achieve maximum impact and effectiveness (Fairclough, 1995b). Similarly, political discourse holds no less importance than media discourse in this regard, as politicians are acutely aware of the inherent power of language and its ability to influence attitudes and shape decision-making processes (Chilton, 2004; Al Tarawneh & Hmidan, 2021).

In the context of contemporary transformations, the use of language and the formulation of discourse have become central tools in the exercise of power and political influence. The impact of politicians is no longer limited to decisions and policies; it is now clearly manifested in their ability to skillfully employ language to construct persuasive discourse that serves their strategic objectives. Accordingly, it can be said that we live in an era where language has become the most effective weapon for politicians, enabling them to craft messages with profound influence across various sectors and audiences (Nguyen, 2024; Wodak, 2009; Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000).

Discourse Analysis is an interdisciplinary research field that aims to study language in its real-world usage within social, cultural, and political contexts. According to Van Dijk (1997), discourse analysis goes

beyond linguistic structures to encompass the relationship between language, power, and knowledge. He argues that discourse is not merely composed of written or spoken texts but represents a social practice that carries meanings extending beyond words, influencing the formation of identities and the construction of ideologies. Fairclough (1995) further asserts that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) reveals the hidden structures that reinforce cultural and political dominance through language.

From a methodological perspective, discourse analysis focuses on studying how texts are produced and interpreted within specific contexts. Harris (1952) points out that discourse analysis originated within the framework of distributional linguistics, where it was defined as the study of relationships between sentences to form coherent texts. Over time, this concept evolved to encompass the study of social interactions and the implicit meanings that emerge from language use in real-life situations. This shift is largely attributed to the influence of theories such as pragmatics and text linguistics, which emphasize the crucial role of context in understanding meaning (Hulst et al., 2024; Paul, 2009).

Saadia (2014) indicates that discourse analysis in contemporary studies aims to uncover the ideological and cultural dimensions of texts, particularly in political and media discourse. He argues that discourse is studied as a complex linguistic structure that interacts with social and political contexts, necessitating the use of multiple analytical approaches such as content analysis, rhetorical analysis, and critical discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis is not merely a tool for understanding texts; it is a means of comprehending how social reality is constructed through language. Gee (2011) emphasizes that discourse is not only about what is said but also about how and why it is said, reflecting the social dynamics and cultural values embedded within texts. Thus, discourse analysis is considered a vital field for understanding the interactions between language and society, exploring how language is used to shape power, knowledge, and identity across various cultural and political contexts (Orekat, et al., 2023; Abuhasirah & Salameh, 2024b).

Numerous studies have addressed discourse analysis. Jones (2020) explored how discourse is used in the media to reinforce political ideologies. Through a critical analysis of a set of news articles, the researcher revealed the linguistic strategies employed to shape public perceptions of specific issues. Smith's (2019) study focused on political speeches, examining how political leaders construct their identities and strengthen their authority through language. The study demonstrated that the use of specific linguistic strategies can significantly influence the audience's acceptance of political messages. Meanwhile, Lee (2021) investigated the representation of minorities in media discourse, employing critical discourse analysis to uncover underlying biases and ideologies. The findings indicated that the language used in the media can either reinforce or challenge stereotypes.

Martinez (2022) focused on discourse analysis in the context of education, exploring how the language used in curricula influences students' perceptions. The study highlighted that educational discourse can either foster or limit students' critical thinking abilities. Al-Azzam's (2019) study examined the political discourse of King Abdullah II within its cultural contexts, emphasizing the importance of cultural factors in shaping political discourse. The study indicated that political discourse plays a pivotal role in guiding public opinion through the use of linguistic and rhetorical strategies that enhance its impact on the target audience. Additionally, Jaied (2024) discussed the conceptual and methodological challenges in discourse analysis, focusing on the importance of analyzing the intellectual structure of discourse and its pragmatic strategies. The study highlighted the need to understand the active elements within political discourse and how they influence the formation of ideologies and the construction of social perceptions.

A Brief Profile of Ahmed Al-Sharaa

Ahmed Hussein Al-Sharaa is a prominent figure in the contemporary Syrian political landscape. He was born on October 29, 1982, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to a Sunni Muslim Syrian family originally from the town of Fiq in the Golan Heights. He grew up in Damascus under the influence of his father, Hussein Ali Al-Sharaa, a well-known intellectual and researcher. His family's intellectual and political background significantly shaped his character. Al-Sharaa received his early education in Damascus and later studied media at the University of Damascus before embarking on a complex political and military journey (CNN Arabic, 2024).

Al-Sharaa emerged as a revolutionary, military, and political leader during the Syrian conflict. He played a key role in leading opposition forces in 2024 and directed military operations that resulted in the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime and the establishment of the Syrian transitional government in December of the same year.

Due to his leadership role, he was appointed President of the Syrian Arab Republic for the transitional phase in January 2025, becoming one of the most influential political figures in modern Syrian history (Al Jazeera, 2024). His career has been marked by controversial political and military developments. Al-Sharaa began his militant activities by joining Al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2003 during the U.S. invasion, where he participated in armed insurgencies against American forces and the Iraqi government. After being detained by U.S. forces until 2011, he returned to Syria and founded the group “Jabhat al-Nusra,” which became one of the most prominent armed factions during the Syrian civil war. In 2016, Al-Sharaa announced his break with Al-Qaeda and later led the formation of “Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham” in an effort to present a more moderate image (Al-Mustafa & Jazmati, 2021).

Despite his military background and association with armed factions, Ahmed Al-Sharaa sought to rebuild Syria on new foundations during his political leadership. He advocated for national reconciliation and the drafting of an inclusive constitution, pledging to achieve justice and protect the rights of minorities. He also announced the dissolution of military factions, their integration into state institutions, and the abolition of exceptional laws, reflecting his transformation from a military leader to a statesman dedicated to building a new Syria based on justice and the rule of law.

Methodology

This article adopts the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to understand how Ahmed Al-Sharaa, the new president of Syria, employs language in his political discourse. The analysis focuses on two televised interviews: one with BBC News and the other with Al Arabiya TV. This methodology aims to uncover the linguistic and rhetorical structures that reflect underlying ideologies, as well as the strategies of influence and persuasion directed at two distinct audiences.

This article adopts a qualitative approach, which is considered the most suitable methodology for analyzing political discourse by examining linguistic texts within their social and political contexts. The analysis is based on Van Dijk’s (1997) framework, which focuses on the relationship between language, power, and ideology, as well as Fairclough’s (1995) model, which integrates text analysis with social and political context analysis.

Study Population and Sample

The article population consists of the official political speeches of Ahmed Al-Sharaa. However, the article sample is limited to two specific interviews:

- Ahmed Al-Sharaa’s interview with BBC News on December 19, 2024
- Ahmed Al-Sharaa’s interview with Al Arabiya on December 29, 2024

These interviews were selected based on specific criteria:

- Diversity of Target Audiences: One interview targets a domestic audience through Al Arabiya, while the other addresses an international audience through a foreign channel (BBC News).
- Variety in Political Contexts: Each interview reflects a different political context, allowing for an analysis of how the discourse is adapted to various circumstances.

Data Collection Tools

Two primary tools were used for data collection:

- Full Transcripts of the Two Televised Interviews: The speeches were meticulously transcribed to ensure accurate linguistic analysis.
- Contextual Observation: This tool was employed to identify the political and social contexts in which the speeches were delivered, with a focus on the nature of the target audience in each interview.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis of the two interviews was conducted through the following steps:

- Textual Analysis: This involved examining word choice, syntactic structures, and rhetorical techniques such as metaphors, repetition, and argumentative strategies.

- **Contextual Analysis:** This step focused on understanding the political and social contexts surrounding both interviews and how these contexts influenced the construction of the discourse.
- **Ideological Analysis:** This aimed to uncover the implicit messages and political orientations that Ahmed Al-Sharaa sought to convey through his discourse.

Credibility and Reliability of the Study

The credibility of the article was enhanced through the following measures:

- **Verification of Text Accuracy:** The transcripts of both interviews were reviewed multiple times to ensure precision in transcription.
- **Diversity of Analytical Tools:** The article combined textual and contextual analysis to achieve a deeper understanding of the discourse's meanings.
- **Review of Relevant Literature:** The findings were supported by theories and previous studies related to political discourse analysis, ensuring a solid theoretical foundation.

Hypotheses

This study is founded on the following hypothesis:

“Ahmed Al-Sharaa employs diverse linguistic and rhetorical strategies in his political discourse to achieve multiple objectives that align with the nature of the audience and the media context. This reflects differences in messages and orientations between his discourse directed at the domestic audience through Al Arabiya TV and his discourse aimed at the international audience through a foreign channel.”

Discourse Analysis and Discussion

Key terms emphasized by Ahmed Al-Sharaa in his interviews with BBC News and Al Arabiya were extracted to identify recurring linguistic patterns that reflect his political priorities and rhetorical strategies. These terms highlight the focal points of his discourse, providing insights into how he adapts his language to address different audiences.

Table 1. Terms that Al-Sharaa focused on in his interview with BBC and Al-Arabiya News

Terms	BBC Interview	Al Arabiya Interview
Constitution	5	9
Parliament	1	1
Council	3	0
Advisory	2	0
Regime	12	16
Government	1	4
Law	7	6
People	11	14
President	1	2
Army	1	0
Justice	1	0
Revolution	1	11
Opposition	3	3
Elections	0	1
Transitional Authority	0	5
Constitution	0	8
Total	49	80

Through the analysis of the political terms emphasized by Ahmed Al-Sharaa in his interviews with BBC News and Al Arabiya, a noticeable difference in rhetorical priorities emerges, reflecting the distinct target audiences and political contexts of each interview. As shown in Table (1), the term “constitution” appears 9 times and “regime” appears 16 times in the Al Arabiya interview. This focus highlights a clear interest in constitutional

issues and the future of governance in Syria, which is logical given that Al Arabiya's audience is more concerned with Syria's internal affairs and their implications for the Arab world. Al-Sharaa's emphasis on these terms aims to reassure the Arab audience that he is committed to establishing a stable legal system, reinforcing his image as a legitimate leader working towards building strong state institutions. Additionally, the focus on "regime" serves to underscore the collapse of the previous government and the restructuring of the state on new foundations, aligning with the aspirations of Arab viewers who closely follow Syrian political developments.

As shown in Table (1), the term "council" appears 3 times and "advisory" appears 2 times in the BBC interview, while these terms are almost absent in the Al Arabiya interview. This indicates Al-Sharaa's focus on discussing transitional institutional structures when addressing a Western audience, particularly given the West's interest in the existence of temporary governance frameworks to manage the post-conflict phase in Syria. Through this approach, Al-Sharaa seeks to present an image of an organized political project that includes the establishment of an "advisory council" to fill the constitutional and parliamentary vacuum in Syria. This strategy aims to gain the trust of the international audience, which places significant importance on issues of good governance and the development of democratic institutions.

Table (1) shows that the term "parliament" appears equally—once in each interview. Despite the significance of parliament as a symbol of democracy, its limited mention may suggest that Al-Sharaa does not currently view it as a vital element in his political discourse, or that the transitional phase has not yet progressed to a stage where legislative institutions are a primary focus. This could be an intentional strategy to avoid making direct commitments regarding parliamentary democratic mechanisms, especially as the current emphasis appears to be on state reconstruction. By doing so, Al-Sharaa may be prioritizing discussions on governance structures and constitutional reforms over specific legislative frameworks, reflecting the evolving nature of Syria's political landscape during this transitional period.

In the Al Arabiya interview, the focus on constitutional issues and the political system reflects Al-Sharaa's desire to assert his capability to lead Syria toward internal stability. This aligns with the interests of the Arab audience, which closely observes how power is being reshaped in Syria and the potential impact of these changes on regional relations. In contrast, the BBC interview emphasized international legitimacy and transitional institutions, highlighting Al-Sharaa's efforts to gain Western recognition of his leadership as a transitional figure capable of establishing democratic institutions. Moreover, the focus on the advisory council serves as a reassurance to the international community, signaling the existence of an institutional framework for governance, which is crucial for fostering trust and demonstrating a commitment to democratic principles in Syria's post-conflict phase.

Based on the preceding analysis, it can be concluded that Al-Sharaa strategically adapted his discourse to suit the target audience. In the Al Arabiya interview, his rhetoric was directed toward reinforcing domestic legitimacy and emphasizing state-building. In contrast, his appearance on BBC focused on securing international recognition by highlighting issues related to institutions and good governance. In both interviews, Al-Sharaa sought to present himself as a leader capable of addressing both domestic and international issues in a manner that reflects political maturity and flexibility. However, there were notable differences in priorities. Topics such as "elections" and "revolution" did not receive balanced attention in both interviews, which may indicate a selective strategy in highlighting specific themes based on the interests and expectations of each audience. This approach suggests a deliberate effort to craft tailored messages that resonate with the distinct cultural and political contexts of his domestic and international audiences.

Prominent Linguistic and Rhetorical Features in Ahmed Al-Sharaa's Discourse in Both Interviews

Ahmed Al-Sharaa's discourse in his interviews with BBC and Al Arabiya is characterized by a range of linguistic and rhetorical features that reflect his strategies for conveying political messages in ways that align with the nature of the audience and the political context of each interview.

In terms of linguistic features, Al-Sharaa relies on a formal and direct language marked by clarity and decisiveness, especially when addressing sensitive political issues such as "the constitution" and "the regime." His discourse avoids ambiguity, favoring straightforward and assertive statements to deliver his messages. For example, he states:

- *“The duty of any leader is to implement the law agreed upon by these committees.” (BBC interview)*
- *“We need to rewrite the constitution or abolish the previous one.” (Al Arabiya interview)*

Another notable feature is his frequent use of the plural pronoun “we” which plays a significant role in constructing a collective identity that fosters a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. This is evident in phrases such as:

- *“We made many promises to the people and we fulfilled them,”* which reinforces his image as a leader representing the collective will of the people. In contrast, he uses the pronoun “they” to refer to the former regime or opposing factions, creating a binary discourse that distinguishes between “us” (the revolutionary forces) and “them” (the enemy or the former regime).

Repetition also stands out as a key linguistic device in his discourse, serving to reinforce core ideas and embed them in the audience’s consciousness. This is particularly evident in his repeated use of words such as “people,” “law,” “regime,” and “constitution.” For example, he states:

- *“The constitution must be drafted with great care... the constitution is not just a document; it is a social contract.”* Here, repetition is used deliberately to emphasize the importance of constitutional matters and to highlight the central role of legal frameworks in shaping Syria’s political future.

These linguistic strategies reflect Al-Sharaa’s ability to tailor his discourse effectively, ensuring that his messages resonate with both domestic and international audiences, while reinforcing his image as a decisive, legitimate leader.

In terms of rhetorical features, Ahmed Al-Sharaa employs several strategies to strengthen his arguments and persuade his audience. One of the most prominent techniques is logical reasoning (Logos), where he presents rational and logical justifications to support his political positions. For example, he states:

- *“Any electoral process without accurate statistics on the number of voters will be unreliable,”* using logical reasoning to emphasize the importance of statistical accuracy in ensuring the integrity of elections.

Additionally, he relies on the appeal to authority, citing international resolutions such as UN Resolution 2254 to reinforce the legitimacy of his positions in front of the international community. He asserts:

- *“We have adhered to Resolution 2254... the most important part of it has been implemented,”* which serves to validate his political decisions by referencing widely recognized frameworks of international law.

On the other hand, Al-Sharaa utilizes emotional framing to appeal to the audience’s emotions and foster empathy. This is evident in his depiction of the Syrian people’s suffering:

- *“Half of the population has been displaced outside Syria, and many have drowned in the seas,”* aiming to evoke sympathy for the refugee crisis and position himself as a compassionate leader who deeply cares about the humanitarian dimension of the conflict.

In addition to invoking feelings of compassion, he employs hopeful language to inspire optimism about Syria’s future. Statements such as:

- *“Today we have written a new chapter in the region’s history,”* and
- *“Syria will be a normal country where everyone can live in peace,”* reinforce his image as a leader guiding his country toward a better, more stable future.

Al-Sharaa’s discourse also features the strategic use of metaphors and cultural references, which enhance the emotional and intellectual impact of his rhetoric. For instance, he describes the former regime as:

- “A disease that lasted forty years and was eliminated in eleven days,” creating a powerful mental image of the revolution as a cure for a deeply rooted political illness. Moreover, he incorporates religious and cultural references to strengthen his moral credibility, as seen in his statement:
- “God has entrusted us with serving these people,” which adds an ethical dimension to his leadership and resonates strongly with audiences familiar with such cultural values.

Through these rhetorical strategies, Al-Sharaa effectively balances logical argumentation with emotional appeal, presenting himself as both a rational statesman and a compassionate leader capable of guiding Syria through a critical period of transition.

Ahmed Al-Sharaa’s speech in both his interviews with the BBC and Al-Arabiya channels reflects a clear difference in style and tone according to the target audience and political context. Table (2) illustrates these differences.

Table 2. Comparison of the linguistic and rhetorical features of Sharia in its interview on BBC and Al Arabiya channels

Aspect	BBC Interview	Al Arabiya Interview
Tone of Discourse	Formal and diplomatic, with a controlled tone to suit the international audience.	More passionate and emotional, with a direct approach toward the Arab audience.
Political Focus	Emphasis on international legitimacy, building democratic institutions, and adherence to international laws.	Highlighting revolutionary legitimacy and the role of the opposition in toppling the former regime.
Language Used	Legal terms such as “governance,” “transitional justice,” and “international institutions.”	More colloquial and emotional language, focusing on terms like “revolution,” “liberation,” and “people.”
Persuasion Strategies	Use of logical arguments and references to international laws (e.g., Resolution 2254).	Reliance on emotional framing and evoking the suffering of the people to enhance the impact of the discourse.
Key Messages	Reassuring the international community about Syria’s future and its role in regional stability.	Emphasizing Syria’s unity, restoring sovereignty, and calling for national reconciliation.
Values Emphasized	Focus on values such as democracy, human rights, and good governance.	Focus on national values like dignity, freedom, and Arab identity.
Stance on Foreign Powers	Diplomatic caution when discussing international powers, maintaining political neutrality.	More outspoken criticism of foreign interference in Syrian affairs, especially towards Iran and the former regime.
Target Audience	International community, Western policymakers, and human rights organizations.	The Syrian people, Arab audience, and regional political actors.

When comparing Ahmed Al-Sharaa’s discourse in his interviews with BBC and Al Arabiya, a clear contrast emerges in both style and tone due to the differences in target audiences, as illustrated in Table (2). In the BBC interview, the discourse was more reserved and diplomatic, with a focus on legal terminology such as “governance” and “transitional justice”, and the messages were crafted to align with the expectations of a Western audience, particularly those interested in concepts like democracy and human rights.

In contrast, Al-Sharaa’s discourse in the Al Arabiya interview was more emotional and direct, emphasizing national identity and revolutionary legitimacy. He employed more colloquial language that resonated with the average Arab citizen, creating a closer connection with the domestic audience.

In terms of political focus, Al-Sharaa aimed to highlight his international legitimacy in the BBC interview by emphasizing the importance of building democratic institutions and adhering to international legal standards. Meanwhile, in the Al Arabiya interview, he concentrated on reinforcing his legitimacy as a revolutionary leader,

showcasing his role in toppling the former regime and liberating Syria, which strengthens his image as a national symbol.

Ahmed Al-Sharaa's Persuasion Strategies for the Domestic Audience (Al Arabiya) and the International Audience (BBC). The persuasion strategies employed by Ahmed Al-Sharaa in his interviews with Al Arabiya and BBC reflect his deep awareness of the importance of adapting his political messages to suit the nature of the target audience. His discourse demonstrates clear flexibility through the use of diverse methods aimed at influencing the domestic audience on one hand and gaining international recognition on the other.

In his interview with Al Arabiya, Al-Sharaa focused heavily on emotional framing, where he invoked the suffering of the Syrian people under the former regime to generate strong public sympathy. He highlighted the plight of refugees and displaced persons, referencing issues such as chemical attacks and forced displacement. For instance, he stated:

- *"Half of the Syrian population has been displaced outside the country, and many have drowned in the seas."* This type of discourse is designed to evoke strong feelings of national belonging and reinforce a shared identity among Syrians.

Moreover, Al-Sharaa relied on the language of victory and liberation to assert his leadership role in the Syrian revolution. He portrayed himself as an integral part of the Syrian liberation movement, not merely a political leader, stating:

- *"We are the ones who liberated Syria from this criminal regime."* This approach strengthens his image as a symbol of the revolution, thereby enhancing his legitimacy in front of a domestic audience seeking a leader who embodies their national aspirations.

In addition to these strategies, Al-Sharaa's discourse emphasized national unity and reconciliation, assuring the Syrian public that Syria is a country where all people have coexisted peacefully for thousands of years. This narrative aims to reassure different segments of Syrian society after years of division and conflict. He also adopted simple, relatable language that resonates with the average citizen, fostering psychological closeness and making his message more impactful. Through these strategies, Al-Sharaa effectively positioned himself as both a revolutionary leader and a unifying figure, capable of addressing the emotional, social, and political needs of his domestic audience.

In his interview with BBC, Ahmed Al-Sharaa shifted his persuasion strategies to align with the expectations of an international audience, relying heavily on logical argumentation (Logos). He focused on presenting rational and convincing arguments, citing international laws and resolutions such as UN Resolution 2254 to reinforce his credibility. For instance, he stated:

- *"We have adhered to Resolution 2254... the most important part of it has been implemented."* This type of argumentation strengthens his legitimacy in the eyes of the international community, positioning him as a political figure who respects international law.

Al-Sharaa also sought to present himself as a modern leader committed to building a state based on democratic institutions and human rights. In one of his remarks, he asserted:

- *"The duty of any leader is to implement the law agreed upon by these committees."* This statement highlights his effort to project the image of a statesman who prioritizes the rule of law, rather than relying solely on military power. It reflects a deliberate strategy to appeal to Western values that emphasize legal frameworks, governance, and institutional integrity.

Moreover, Al-Sharaa adopted a diplomatic defense strategy when faced with sensitive questions about his past, particularly regarding his previous association with Al-Qaeda. Instead of outright denial, he employed phrases like:

- “*This issue belongs to the past*,” shifting the focus from his controversial history to his current political achievements. This approach aims to mitigate criticism and redirect attention toward his role in Syria’s future, rather than dwelling on his past affiliations. It reflects a strategic effort to reframe his narrative and present himself as a reformed leader focused on reconstruction and governance.

Additionally, Al-Sharaa sought to highlight his moral responsibility towards the Syrian people, emphasizing the importance of justice and adherence to humanitarian values. This narrative serves to enhance his image as a trustworthy and credible figure on the international stage, capable of leading Syria through a transitional period based on principles of justice, human rights, and ethical governance. Through these strategies, Al-Sharaa effectively tailored his discourse to resonate with international audiences, projecting himself as a legitimate leader who is aligned with global expectations of governance, diplomacy, and respect for international norms. When comparing Ahmed Al-Sharaa’s persuasion strategies in his interviews with Al Arabiya and BBC, it becomes evident that he relied on a blend of emotional and logical appeals, adjusting his tone and approach based on the target audience.

In the Al Arabiya interview, Al-Sharaa focused primarily on emotional appeals and fostering a sense of national belonging. He emphasized the suffering of the Syrian people under the former regime and highlighted his role in liberating Syria. By invoking the struggles of refugees, the impact of forced displacement, and the legacy of the revolution, he aimed to resonate with the emotional and patriotic sentiments of the Arab audience. This approach was designed to reinforce his legitimacy as a revolutionary leader who embodies the aspirations and values of the Syrian people. Conversely, in the BBC interview, Al-Sharaa adopted a more reserved and diplomatic tone, focusing on logical reasoning and references to international laws and political legitimacy. He strategically highlighted Syria’s commitment to international resolutions, such as UN Resolution 2254, and emphasized the importance of building democratic institutions and adhering to the rule of law. This rational, fact-based approach was aimed at gaining the support of the international community, projecting himself as a credible and responsible statesman aligned with global expectations for governance and diplomacy.

In essence, Al-Sharaa’s discourse reflects a calculated adaptation of persuasion techniques: employing emotional framing and nationalistic rhetoric for the domestic audience, while relying on logical argumentation and legal frameworks to appeal to international stakeholders. This strategic flexibility underscores his political acumen in navigating diverse audiences and contexts effectively.

Table 3. Comparison of Al-Sharaa’s persuasion strategies in his interview with BBC and Al-Arabiya

Aspect	Al Arabiya Interview (Domestic Audience)	BBC Interview (International Audience)
Type of Argument	Emotional (focused on suffering and liberation)	Logical (focused on international laws and state-building)
Primary Goal	Reinforcing revolutionary and national legitimacy	Gaining international recognition and political legitimacy
Language Used	Simple and popular, filled with national emotions	Formal and diplomatic, with an emphasis on legal and political terminology
Defense Strategy	Justifying actions by highlighting the people’s suffering	Defending by denying allegations and focusing on the present, not the past
Trust-Building Strategy	Highlighting his role in the revolution, portraying himself as the people’s savior	Presenting himself as a statesman capable of governing Syria democratically
Values Emphasized	National values such as unity, liberation, and dignity	Universal values like human rights, democracy, and good governance

Based on Table (3), it is evident that Ahmed Al-Sharaa possesses a remarkable ability to adapt his discourse according to the target audience. In his speeches directed at the Arab audience, he focused on national sentiments and revolutionary experiences to consolidate his legitimacy as a revolutionary leader. His use of emotional appeals aimed to strengthen the connection with the domestic audience by emphasizing shared struggles and aspirations. In contrast, when addressing the international audience, Al-Sharaa employed a more rational and diplomatic tone, relying on legal and democratic legitimacy to enhance his image as a statesman. His discourse in this context was characterized by logical arguments, references to international laws, and an emphasis on governance and institutional development.

His dual strategies demonstrate his ability to skillfully blend emotional and logical persuasion, enabling

him to gain support from both domestic and international audiences simultaneously. This adaptability and multi-layered discourse reflect his strategic acumen and reinforce his position as a political leader with a deep understanding of effective political communication. His capacity to tailor his messages to diverse audiences underscores his awareness of the complexities of political discourse and the importance of nuanced messaging in shaping both national and international perceptions.

Implicit Messages Conveyed by Ahmed Al-Sharaa in His Discourse within Domestic and International Contexts

Ahmed Al-Sharaa's discourse in his interviews with Al Arabiya and BBC reflects a set of implicit messages that go beyond direct statements, revealing strategic objectives related to consolidating his political legitimacy both domestically and internationally. Through his discourse, Al-Sharaa aims to construct a comprehensive image of himself as a leader capable of managing Syria's post-conflict phase and presenting a new political project grounded in both revolutionary legitimacy and international acceptance.

In his speech directed at the domestic audience through Al Arabiya, Al-Sharaa seeks to assert his legitimacy as a national leader representing the aspirations of the Syrian people. A clear implicit message highlights his role as a symbol of the Syrian revolution, portraying himself as an active participant in the overthrow of the former regime. This is evident in statements like:

- *"We are the ones who liberated Syria from this criminal regime."* This message is not merely a personal assertion of his leadership role but also aims to link his political legitimacy to the sacrifices made by Syrians during the revolution.

Al-Sharaa also strives to reassure all segments of Syrian society, emphasizing the importance of national unity and rejection of sectarianism. He conveys the idea that the new Syria will be a country for all its citizens, regardless of their religious or ethnic backgrounds. In his words:

- *"Syria is a country where everyone has lived in peace for thousands of years."* Through such statements, he attempts to present an inclusive national project that transcends the divisions left by years of conflict.

Additionally, Al-Sharaa's discourse reveals a clear tendency to depict the Syrian revolution as a reformist movement aimed at building a new state based on justice and equality, rather than as an act of revenge. This message is apparent in his statement:

- *"We should not have a vengeful mindset in managing the state."* Here, he stresses that the revolution's goal was not to seek revenge against the former regime but to liberate Syria from oppression and tyranny and to build a better future.

Another key implicit message in his discourse is the attribution of full responsibility for Syria's crises to the former regime. Without making direct accusations, Al-Sharaa subtly implies that the regime was the primary cause of the Syrian people's suffering, whether through corruption or repressive policies. This narrative positions change as a historical necessity that can no longer be ignored. Through these implicit messages, Al-Sharaa constructs a narrative that not only reinforces his leadership credentials but also unites Syrians around a shared vision of national identity, reform, and hope for a better future. His discourse reflects a strategic blend of revolutionary pride, national reconciliation, and a forward-looking agenda for post-conflict Syria.

In his discourse directed at the international audience through his interview with BBC, Ahmed Al-Sharaa adopts a different strategy that reflects his awareness of the importance of securing international recognition for his political legitimacy. Here, Al-Sharaa aims to present himself as a responsible statesman, moving beyond the image of a revolutionary leader to that of a mature political figure capable of governing the country in a democratic and stable manner. This message is implicitly conveyed in his statement:

- *"The duty of any leader is to implement the law agreed upon by these committees."* Through this, Al-Sharaa highlights his commitment to the rule of law and respect for democratic institutions, signaling

to the international community that he values governance based on legal frameworks and institutional legitimacy rather than revolutionary rhetoric alone.

Al-Sharaa also seeks to reassure the international community that Syria under his leadership will not pose a regional or global threat. This is explicitly reflected in his statement:

- “*Syria will not be a source of threat to any country in the world.*” This phrase carries an implicit message aimed at alleviating Western concerns about Syria potentially reverting to regional conflicts or becoming a breeding ground for extremism. By positioning himself as a stabilizing force, Al-Sharaa attempts to reshape Syria’s international image as a responsible actor in global affairs.

When questioned about his past affiliation with Al-Qaeda, Al-Sharaa adopts a defensive narrative designed to distance himself from this controversial history, focusing instead on the present and future. In his statement:

- “*This matter belongs to the past,*” he seeks to frame himself as someone who has moved beyond that phase, embarking on a new chapter focused on building a stable state. The implicit message here is that his past should not be viewed as an obstacle to his current political ambitions, and that he should be judged based on his leadership and vision for Syria’s future.

Another critical implicit message in his discourse is his subtle call for lifting international sanctions on Syria. Without directly confronting Western powers, Al-Sharaa suggests that the continuation of these sanctions harms the Syrian people more than it punishes the former regime. The underlying message here is that it is time to abandon punitive policies that are no longer justified in the post-regime-change context. By framing sanctions as a humanitarian issue rather than a political one, he aims to garner sympathy from the international community and build support for easing or removing the restrictions. Through these implicit messages, Al-Sharaa strategically positions himself as a leader who is aligned with international norms, committed to stability, and capable of fostering constructive relationships with the global community. His discourse reflects a deliberate effort to redefine Syria’s international standing while reinforcing his own legitimacy as the country’s transitional leader.

When comparing the implicit messages in both speeches, it is evident that Al-Sharaa adopts different strategies tailored to the nature of the audience. In the domestic context, he focuses on emphasizing his revolutionary legitimacy and the unity of his political project, while in the international context, he seeks to portray himself as a responsible leader who respects international laws and strives to build partnerships with the global community. Table (4) illustrates the comparison of the implicit messages in Al-Sharaa’s discourse during his interviews with BBC and Al Arabiya.

Table 4. Comparison of Al-Sharaa’s Implicit Messages in Interviews with BBC and Al Arabiya

Aspect	Domestic Context (Al Arabiya)	International Context (BBC)
Political Identity	A revolutionary leader representing the aspirations of the people, focusing on the role of the revolution.	A statesman seeking international legitimacy, portrayed as a moderate diplomatic figure.
Source of Legitimacy	Legitimacy derived from the revolution and victory over the former regime.	Legitimacy based on respect for international law and democratic principles.
Source of Threat	Blaming the former regime for Syria’s destruction.	Reducing focus on direct hostility, highlighting the importance of international partnerships.
Message of Stability	Emphasizing Syria’s unity and rejecting sectarianism to promote internal stability.	Reassuring the international community of Syria’s peaceful intentions towards other nations.
Dealing with the Past	Utilizing the revolution’s experience as part of building national identity.	Distancing from extremist ties, focusing on the present and the future.

The implicit messages in Ahmed Al-Sharaa’s discourse reflect his ability to adapt his rhetoric to both the audience and the political context. In his domestic discourse, he seeks to establish himself as a revolutionary leader who embodies the aspirations of the Syrian people for freedom and independence. Conversely, in his international discourse, he aims to present himself as a diplomatic figure capable of governing a stable state that adheres to

international laws.

This balance between the two discourses demonstrates a deep political awareness of the importance of building multi-dimensional legitimacy, combining internal popular recognition with external international support. Al-Sharaa understands that political success in the post-conflict phase does not rely solely on territorial control; it also requires the construction of a compelling political narrative both domestically and internationally. How Ahmed Al-Sharaa's Discourse Reflects His Political Orientations and Vision for Syria's Reality and Future

Ahmed Al-Sharaa's discourse in his interviews with Al Arabiya and BBC reflects his political orientations and vision for Syria with remarkable flexibility and adaptability to different target audiences. His statements reveal a mix of political ambitions aimed at solidifying his legitimacy and strategies for building a new state that transcends the legacy of the former regime, with a strong focus on rebuilding Syria politically, socially, and economically.

Al-Sharaa's discourse embodies a political orientation based on combining revolutionary legitimacy with the construction of a modern state. On one hand, he emphasizes his role as part of the Syrian revolution, portraying himself as a symbol of the struggle against the former regime. He states:

- *"We are the ones who liberated Syria from this criminal regime."* This message aims to reinforce his political legitimacy, derived from his involvement in the popular uprising.

On the other hand, Al-Sharaa attempts to distance himself from traditional revolutionary rhetoric when addressing the post-conflict phase, positioning himself as a statesman capable of managing state institutions. This is evident in his statement:

- *"The duty of any leader is to implement the law agreed upon by these committees."* Here, he underscores his commitment to the principles of rule of law and democracy as key pillars for constructing Syria's new political system. This blend of revolution and statehood reflects a pragmatic political approach that seeks to preserve the symbolic value of the revolution while transitioning towards a more stable political reality rooted in institutions and legal frameworks.
- Al-Sharaa's discourse offers a realistic reading of Syria's situation, clearly diagnosing the challenges the country faces. He speaks candidly about economic devastation, social fragmentation, and the humanitarian crises resulting from years of war. In his words:
- *"Half of the Syrian population has been displaced outside Syria, and many have drowned in the seas."* This statement highlights the magnitude of the humanitarian tragedy affecting Syrians.
- Al-Sharaa also acknowledges the existence of deep political and societal divisions left by the conflict, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach based on national reconciliation and rebuilding trust among Syria's diverse communities. He stresses the importance of:
- *"National unity and rejecting sectarianism,"* seeking to reconstruct Syrian national identity beyond sectarian and political divisions.

His realistic vision extends to addressing the impact of the war on Syria's infrastructure, emphasizing that reconstruction should not be limited to the material aspect but must also involve rebuilding state institutions and restoring social and political stability.

Ahmed Al-Sharaa's discourse reflects an ambitious vision for Syria's future, based on transitioning from conflict to stability and development. He believes that the new Syria should be a democratic state governed by the rule of law, supported by strong and independent institutions. This is evident in his call for drafting a new constitution:

- *"We need to rewrite the constitution or abolish the previous one."* In his vision for Syria's future, Al-Sharaa emphasizes the importance of comprehensive national dialogue, arguing that state-building cannot result from individual decisions but must be the outcome of an inclusive process that involves all segments of Syrian society. He states:
- *"The decision to dissolve the constitution or parliament should not come from just one person."* This

highlights his commitment to participatory democracy, where collective decision-making shapes Syria's political future.

On the economic front, Al-Sharaa speaks about the urgent need to rebuild Syria's economy based on modern principles, moving away from the socialist model previously adopted. He advocates for:

- Developing economic infrastructure
- Encouraging investments
- Reintegrating Syria into the regional and global economy

Regarding foreign policy, Al-Sharaa's discourse suggests a shift towards positive neutrality, asserting that the new Syria will not be a platform for regional or international conflicts. He reassures the international community by stating:

- *"Syria will not be a source of threat to any country in the world."* This message aims to reassure global actors about Syria's future role, promoting peaceful coexistence and strengthening Syria's relations with regional and international partners.

When comparing Ahmed Al-Sharaa's discourse in the domestic context (Al Arabiya) and the international context (BBC), a clear difference can be observed in the priorities and political orientations he reflects. In his domestic discourse, Al-Sharaa focuses on restoring revolutionary legitimacy, strengthening national unity, and addressing the impacts of internal conflict. Conversely, in his international discourse, he seeks to present himself as a reliable political partner in Syria's reconstruction, emphasizing his commitment to international laws and human rights.

Table 5. Comparison of Al-Sharaa's political orientations in Interviews with BBC and Al Arabiya

Dimension	International Context (BBC)	Domestic Context (Al Arabiya)
Source of Legitimacy	Respect for international law and building stable democratic institutions.	The revolution and the role of the opposition in toppling the former regime.
Political Identity	A statesman seeking international recognition as a reliable political partner.	A national leader representing the aspirations of the Syrian people.
Challenges	Gaining international support, lifting sanctions, and strengthening external partnerships.	Addressing internal divisions and rebuilding society.
Vision for the Future	Ensuring regional stability and openness to international relations.	Rebuilding the state based on national unity and reconciliation.

Ahmed Al-Sharaa's discourse reflects a political orientation based on balancing the spirit of the revolution with the pursuit of building a modern state. He demonstrates the ability to objectively assess Syria's current reality, acknowledging the magnitude of the challenges the country faces. At the same time, he presents an ambitious vision for Syria's future founded on the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and economic development.

His vision integrates a focus on both internal legitimacy, through restoring trust between the people and the state, and external legitimacy, through the establishment of strategic relationships with the international community. This balance between domestic and international priorities reflects a pragmatic political approach aimed at achieving stability and attracting political and economic support for Syria in the post-conflict phase.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of Ahmed Al-Sharaa's discourse in his interviews with BBC and Al Arabiya, several precise scientific conclusions can be drawn that reflect his political orientations and vision for Syria's future. These conclusions are directly linked to the research questions and are consistent with findings from previous studies in the field of political discourse analysis.

Ahmed Al-Sharaa's discourse demonstrates distinctive linguistic and rhetorical features that reflect his ability to use language as a powerful tool for political influence. Linguistically, he relies on a formal and precise language, focusing on legal and political terminology such as "constitution," "legitimacy," and "democratic

institutions.” The repetition of key terms plays a crucial role in reinforcing core messages, particularly emphasizing the importance of national unity and the rule of law. Rhetorically, Al-Sharaa employs diverse strategies, including logical argumentation to justify his political positions and emotional framing to evoke the audience’s emotions, especially when addressing the suffering of the Syrian people. These findings align with Fairclough’s (1995) study on the role of language in constructing political power and Van Dijk’s (1997) research, which highlights how political discourse relies on a mix of rational and emotional appeals to achieve the desired influence.

The persuasion strategies used by Ahmed Al-Sharaa vary significantly between the two interviews, as he adapts his discourse to suit the target audience. In the Al Arabiya interview directed at the domestic audience, Al-Sharaa emphasizes emotional framing and highlights national values such as freedom, dignity, and national unity, reflecting his efforts to strengthen his revolutionary legitimacy. Conversely, in the BBC interview, he focuses on logical reasoning and adopts a diplomatic tone to gain international support, highlighting the importance of building democratic institutions and respecting international law. These results are consistent with Chilton’s (2004) findings on how political discourse is tailored based on audience and context, as well as Wodak’s (2009) study, which confirms that political discourse evolves according to the strategic objectives tied to different situations.

Ahmed Al-Sharaa’s discourse contains multiple implicit messages that go beyond direct statements, aiming to consolidate his political legitimacy and present his vision for Syria’s future. In the domestic context, the messages focus on affirming his leadership role in the Syrian revolution, promoting national unity, and rejecting sectarianism. In the international context, Al-Sharaa seeks to portray himself as a responsible statesman committed to international laws and human rights, with a particular focus on advocating for the lifting of sanctions on Syria. These findings align with Van Dijk’s (1997) research on the role of discourse in constructing political ideologies and Gee’s (2011) work, which highlights that political discourse contains implicit messages designed to shape public perceptions of key issues.

Ahmed Al-Sharaa’s discourse reflects political orientations that blend revolutionary legitimacy with a transition toward building a modern state based on the rule of law and democracy. He appears as a pragmatic leader capable of realistically assessing Syria’s situation while acknowledging the profound challenges the country faces due to the armed conflict and internal divisions. His vision for Syria’s future is embodied in his call for rebuilding the state through national dialogue, drafting a new constitution, and promoting national reconciliation. These conclusions are consistent with studies such as Fairclough (1995) on the relationship between discourse and power construction, and Blommaert (2005), which asserts that political discourse reflects the orientations of political leaders and forms part of their state-building projects.

These conclusions confirm that Ahmed Al-Sharaa’s discourse is not merely a tool for communication with the public but serves as a strategic instrument for shaping political perceptions, constructing legitimacy, and enhancing political influence, both domestically and internationally. The findings of this study are in harmony with previous literature on political discourse analysis, contributing to a deeper understanding of how language is employed to build power and influence public opinion.

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