

The Pragmatics of Donald Trump's Declaration of Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) On 'X' In 2025

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Abstract

This study examines the pragmatics of Donald Trump's 2025 declaration of Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) on X, to investigate how the statement functions as a political speech act and what effects it generates. The research is anchored in Speech Act Theory, particularly J. L. Austin's distinction between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, and John R. Searle's classification of illocutionary acts into assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarative. A qualitative research design was adopted. The population consists of Trump's tweets on insecurity and international intervention, while two tweets were purposively selected as samples: the CPC declaration tweet and a tweet announcing an air strike in Nigeria. Data were collected directly from X and analysed using both tabular classification and descriptive interpretation to identify the dominant illocutionary forces and possible perlocutionary effects. The findings reveal that the CPC tweet is largely assertive, with one central declarative act that attempts to alter Nigeria's international status, while the air strike tweet is mainly assertive and commissive, with a limited expressive element. The study concludes that political tweets function as powerful performative acts capable of shaping diplomatic relations, influencing public perception and constructing political realities in the digital age.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Donald Trump, Nigeria, Country of Particular Concern (CPC), 'X'

Introduction

Language in political communication is rarely neutral; rather, it functions as a strategic instrument through which political actors frame realities, signal ideological positions, and influence audiences. In the contemporary digital era, this performative dimension of language has become even more pronounced with the emergence of social media platforms as arenas of political discourse. Platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) enable political figures to communicate directly with global audiences, bypassing traditional diplomatic and institutional channels. Consequently, political statements made on such platforms often operate not merely as expressions of opinion but as performative acts capable of shaping public perception, policy interpretation, and international relations.

Within this evolving communicative landscape, Donald Trump's 2025 post on X declaring Nigeria a *Country of Particular Concern (CPC)* represents a significant case of digitally mediated political discourse. The CPC designation originates from the United States *International Religious Freedom Act* of 1998 and is typically issued through formal diplomatic or institutional procedures by the U.S. Secretary of State. When such a designation is articulated through a social media post rather than through official diplomatic documentation, the communicative act acquires additional pragmatic significance. The platform environment introduces immediacy, mass visibility, and interpretive plurality, thereby transforming what might otherwise be a bureaucratic classification into a widely circulated political speech act with potential diplomatic and socio-political repercussions.

Scholarly studies on political communication have increasingly examined how social media reshapes political discourse and audience engagement. Research by Joe (2023), for example, demonstrates that Twitter functions as a hybrid space for policy signalling, political mobilisation, and image management among political actors. Similarly, Egielewa (2021) shows that statements by government officials on social media are frequently interpreted by audiences as strategic communicative acts rather than neutral information. Within the field of pragmatics, studies such as Uche (2019) have applied Speech Act Theory to analyse how political language performs actions such as legitimising authority, mobilising support, or framing crises. These studies collectively note the importance of examining political language as performative action within specific communicative contexts.

Despite these contributions, a notable gap remains in the literature. Existing studies on political tweets and digital political communication have largely focused on domestic political actors, campaign communication, or public engagement strategies, while pragmatic studies grounded in Speech Act Theory have mainly analysed formal speeches, policy statements, or institutional discourse. Consequently, limited scholarly attention has been given to how foreign policy classifications or diplomatic labels are articulated and operationalised through social media posts by transnational political actors, particularly when such statements target another sovereign state. Even less explored is how such posts function simultaneously as assertive, directive, commissive, or declarative speech acts within a digital diplomatic environment, and what perlocutionary consequences they may generate.

This study addresses this gap by analysing the pragmatics of Donald Trump's declaration of Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern on X in 2025. Drawing on Speech Act Theory as developed by J. L. Austin (1962) and John R. Searle (1969), the study examines how the tweet operates as a performative linguistic act within contemporary digital political discourse. In particular, the research investigates how the utterance functions in terms of locutionary content, illocutionary force, and potential perlocutionary effects, and how these elements contribute to the construction of political meaning and diplomatic implications. Accordingly, the study is guided by the following objectives: to identify and classify the illocutionary acts present in Donald Trump's CPC declaration tweet on X, to analyse the pragmatic functions of these speech acts within the context of digital political communication, and to examine the potential perlocutionary effects of the declaration on diplomatic discourse, media interpretation, and public perception.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Pragmatics

Pragmatics has long been concerned with the relationship between language, context, and communicative intention. Rather than treating language as a neutral medium of description, pragmatic scholarship emphasises the performative and action-oriented nature of utterances within specific social contexts. Scholars in pragmatics argue that meaning is not solely derived from the linguistic structure of an utterance but also from the context in which it is used and the communicative intentions of speakers (Levinson 21; Yule 3). Consequently, pragmatic analysis

focuses on how speakers use language to perform actions and how listeners interpret those actions within particular social and cultural environments.

Classical pragmatic theory, particularly the work of J. L. Austin and John R. Searle, established the idea that utterances function as actions capable of producing institutional and social consequences. Austin's distinction between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts shifted linguistic analysis away from purely semantic interpretation toward the examination of communicative force and social effect (Austin 94–101). Building upon Austin's work, Searle proposed a systematic classification of illocutionary acts into assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, thereby providing a comprehensive framework for analysing how speakers perform actions through language (Searle 10–16). Through these contributions, Speech Act Theory demonstrated that language is fundamentally a form of social action rather than merely a tool for describing reality.

Although these foundational theories were originally developed in the context of face-to-face interaction, contemporary scholarship has increasingly explored their relevance in digitally mediated communication. The rise of social media platforms has transformed the communicative environment in which political language operates. Scholars in digital pragmatics argue that online discourse introduces new dynamics of audience participation, immediacy, and global circulation that intensify the performative character of language (Herring 5; Androutsopoulos 76). In digital communication environments, the boundaries between private expression and public discourse are often blurred, allowing brief textual statements to acquire wide political and social significance.

Consequently, political utterances on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) function not merely as statements but as public acts capable of shaping political narratives, influencing media agendas, and generating diplomatic reactions (KhosraviNik 54). Within this evolving context, Speech Act Theory remains a useful analytical framework, although its application requires sensitivity to the communicative affordances of digital platforms. Recent studies of digital political discourse suggest that social media statements by political actors frequently combine multiple illocutionary functions, simultaneously asserting facts, signalling policy intentions, and mobilising audiences (Ott 63; Zappavigna 2). Political tweets, therefore, operate as condensed performative acts whose pragmatic force emerges not only from their linguistic structure but also from their visibility within networked communication environments.

Text

The concept of text has undergone significant theoretical development within discourse analysis. Early text-linguistic approaches emphasised structural properties such as cohesion and coherence, viewing texts primarily as organised sequences of linguistic units that achieve unity through grammatical and lexical relationships (Halliday and Hasan 4; Beaugrande and Dressler 3). While these frameworks provided valuable insights into textual organisation, later scholarship has questioned the adequacy of purely structural models for explaining how meaning emerges within broader communicative practices.

Halliday's systemic functional perspective reconceptualised text as language functioning within a social context, emphasising the relationship between linguistic form and communicative purpose (Halliday 10). From this perspective, texts cannot be understood independently of the social situations in which they are produced and interpreted. Language, therefore, operates as a resource for making meaning within particular contexts of use.

Fairclough extends this argument by situating texts within broader discursive events that include processes of production, distribution, and interpretation (Fairclough 71). According to Fairclough, discourse is not simply a linguistic phenomenon but also a social practice through which power relations, ideologies, and institutional structures are reproduced. In contemporary communication environments, these processes are especially visible within digital media, where texts are rapidly reproduced, commented upon, and reframed across multiple platforms.

Social media posts, therefore, represent a distinctive form of text whose meaning is shaped by networked circulation and audience interaction. Unlike traditional institutional communication, which often follows established bureaucratic channels, political communication on social media occurs within a highly visible public arena characterised by immediacy and interpretive plurality (boyd 8; Zappavigna 3). A single post may simultaneously address multiple audiences, including domestic supporters, international observers, and media organisations. For this reason, scholars increasingly conceptualise political tweets as discursive events rather than isolated textual artefacts (KhosraviNik and Unger 114).

Within this framework, the declaration of a country as a Country of Particular Concern through a social media post can be understood as a strategic discursive act that combines linguistic expression, institutional authority, and digital dissemination. Analysing such a post therefore

requires an approach that integrates pragmatic analysis with an understanding of digital political communication.

Empirical Review

Ott (2017), in his study titled “*The Age of Twitter: Donald Trump and the Politics of Debasement*”, investigates how political actors use Twitter as a rhetorical and pragmatic tool in contemporary political communication. The study draws on rhetorical theory and political discourse analysis to examine the linguistic strategies employed in Donald Trump’s tweets during the 2016 United States presidential campaign. Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative discourse analytical approach, analysing a corpus of tweets posted by Trump and examining their rhetorical and pragmatic features. The findings reveal that Twitter enables political actors to deploy simplified and emotionally charged language that amplifies political messaging and shapes public discourse. The study concludes that social media platforms transform political communication by enabling direct, performative and highly visible statements that influence public narratives and media agendas. While Ott’s work highlights the communicative power of political tweets, its focus is primarily rhetorical rather than pragmatic, leaving limited engagement with the classification of speech acts or the analysis of illocutionary force. This limitation suggests the need for studies that examine how tweets function as specific speech acts capable of producing diplomatic or political consequences, which is a concern addressed in the present research.

Manor and Bjola (2018) examine the relationship between social media and diplomatic practice in their work on digital diplomacy. Their study is grounded in communication diplomacy theory, which conceptualises diplomacy as a communicative practice shaped by evolving media technologies. The researchers employ a qualitative methodological approach, analysing digital communication strategies used by diplomats and political leaders across various social media platforms. Their findings demonstrate that social media has transformed diplomatic communication by allowing political leaders to engage directly with international audiences while bypassing traditional diplomatic channels. The authors conclude that digital platforms increasingly function as arenas for symbolic diplomatic acts that influence international perceptions and policy debates. However, their study primarily focuses on institutional diplomatic actors rather than the pragmatic structure of specific utterances made on social media. Consequently, although the research highlights the significance of digital diplomacy, it does not analyse how individual posts operate as performative speech acts. This gap indicates the importance of applying pragmatic

frameworks such as Speech Act Theory to examine how digital statements function as diplomatic or political acts.

Enli (2017) explores the role of social media in political communication in her study on mediated authenticity and populist communication. The research is informed by media discourse theory and political communication theory, focusing on how political leaders construct authenticity through digital platforms. The methodology involves qualitative content analysis of political leaders' social media posts, alongside interpretive analysis of audience engagement and media coverage. The findings indicate that social media enables political actors to construct an image of authenticity and directness that strengthens their connection with supporters. The study concludes that digital platforms encourage a personalised form of political communication that blurs the boundaries between institutional messaging and individual expression. Nevertheless, the study's emphasis on media representation and political identity means that it does not engage extensively with pragmatic theories of language use. In particular, the analysis does not address how specific linguistic structures perform institutional or policy-related actions within digital communication environments. This limitation reinforces the need for pragmatic analyses that focus on the communicative force of political statements in digital contexts.

KhosraviNik (2020) investigates the dynamics of political discourse on social media in his work on digital political communication and critical discourse analysis. The study is guided by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and theories of digital discourse, examining how political narratives are constructed and circulated within social media environments. Methodologically, the research combines digital discourse analysis with qualitative textual interpretation, analysing online political statements and their circulation across digital networks. The findings reveal that social media platforms enable rapid dissemination of political narratives that can influence public perception and shape ideological debates. The study concludes that digital political discourse is characterised by high levels of visibility, rapid circulation and strong interpretive contestation among audiences. However, while the research provides valuable insights into the broader dynamics of digital discourse, it focuses more on ideological framing than on the pragmatic structure of individual utterances. As a result, the role of speech acts in shaping political meaning within digital communication remains underexplored.

Tagg (2022) examines the pragmatics of digital communication in her study on digital pragmatics and online discourse. The research is grounded in pragmatic theory and discourse analysis, with

particular attention to how context, audience and technological affordances influence meaning in online communication. The methodology involves qualitative analysis of digital texts across various social media platforms, focusing on how communicative intentions are realised in short textual forms. The findings show that digital communication often compresses complex communicative actions into brief textual statements that nonetheless carry significant pragmatic force. The study concludes that digital platforms amplify the performative nature of language because messages are instantly visible to large audiences and may trigger immediate reactions and reinterpretations. Despite these insights, the study examines online communication broadly rather than focusing specifically on political discourse or diplomatic communication. Consequently, the pragmatic implications of politically significant statements on social media remain insufficiently explored.

Taken together, these empirical studies demonstrate that social media has fundamentally transformed political communication by enabling political actors to disseminate highly visible and strategically framed statements to global audiences. Existing research has examined rhetorical strategies, audience engagement and the broader dynamics of digital political discourse. However, much of this scholarship either emphasises media effects or focuses on discourse structures without systematically applying pragmatic frameworks to analyse how political statements perform institutional or diplomatic actions. In particular, limited attention has been given to how political tweets invoking formal policy classifications function as speech acts within international political discourse. The present study therefore builds on the insights of previous research while addressing this gap by applying Speech Act Theory to analyse Donald Trump's declaration of Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern on X, thereby contributing to the growing scholarship on digital pragmatics, political discourse and digital diplomacy.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Speech Act Theory, developed by J. L. Austin (1962) and later refined by John R. Searle (1969), which explains how language performs actions within social and institutional contexts rather than merely conveying information. Austin introduced three dimensions of speech acts: the locutionary act (the production of a meaningful utterance), the illocutionary act (the communicative force such as asserting, requesting, or declaring), and the perlocutionary act (the effects an utterance produces on audiences, such as persuasion or information). Searle expanded the theory by classifying illocutionary acts into assertives,

directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, and by introducing felicity conditions, which refer to the contextual and institutional requirements for a speech act to function effectively. Although Speech Act Theory was initially developed for face-to-face communication, contemporary scholars have extended it to digital communication, where political statements on platforms such as X can quickly reach large audiences and shape political narratives and diplomatic discourse. Studies show that tweets by political leaders often combine several communicative functions, simultaneously asserting information, signalling policy intentions, and mobilising supporters. Consequently, understanding political tweets requires considering both their linguistic structure and their communicative context, including the speaker's authority, the digital platform, and the broader socio-political environment. In this study, Speech Act Theory provides the framework for analysing Donald Trump's declaration of Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern on X, enabling the identification of dominant illocutionary acts and the interpretation of the tweet as a symbolic declarative act with potential perlocutionary effects on diplomatic discourse, media framing, and public perception. By integrating classical speech act theory with insights from digital discourse research, the framework helps explain how political tweets function as performative communicative acts that shape political meaning and international discourse in the digital age.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to analyse political discourse within its socio-pragmatic context. The data consists of Donald Trump's posts on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter) concerning insecurity, religious freedom, and international intervention. The dataset is treated as an open-ended digital corpus due to the dynamic nature of social media communication. Using purposive sampling, two tweets were selected for detailed analysis: the tweet declaring Nigeria a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) and another referring to a United States air strike in Nigeria. These tweets were chosen because they represent significant political discourse events, with the CPC tweet transforming a formal diplomatic classification under the United States International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 into a public social media declaration, while the air strike tweet communicates military action and foreign policy directly to a global audience. Data were collected through direct textual extraction from the X platform to preserve the original wording and stylistic features. The analysis combines tabular classification and qualitative interpretation: first, the tweets were segmented and classified according to Searle's

categories of illocutionary acts: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives, to identify dominant communicative forces; second, a pragmatic interpretation examined how the tweets function within their socio-political context, including their speaker intention, institutional authority, audience orientation, and potential perlocutionary effects in media and diplomatic discourse. Through this approach, the study shows that Trump’s tweets operate as performative political speech acts that shape public perception, diplomatic relations, and international discourse about Nigeria.

Data Presentation



Christianity is facing an existential threat in Nigeria. Thousands of Christians are being killed. Radical Islamists are responsible for this mass slaughter. I am hereby making Nigeria a “COUNTRY OF PARTICULAR CONCERN” — But that is the least of it. When Christians, or any such group, is slaughtered like is happening in Nigeria (3,100 versus 4,476 Worldwide), something must be done! I am asking Congressman Riley Moore, together with Chairman Tom Cole and the House Appropriations Committee, to immediately look into this matter, and report back to me. The United States cannot stand by while such atrocities are happening in Nigeria, and numerous other Countries. We stand ready, willing, and able to save our Great Christian population around the World!

DONALD J. TRUMP,
 PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Tonight, at my direction as Commander in Chief, the United States launched a powerful and deadly strike against ISIS Terrorist Scum in Northwest Nigeria, who have been targeting and viciously killing, primarily, innocent Christians, at levels not seen for many years, and even Centuries! I have previously warned these Terrorists that if they did not stop the slaughtering of Christians, there would be hell to pay, and tonight, there was. The Department of War executed numerous perfect strikes, as only the United States is capable of doing. Under my leadership, our Country will not allow Radical Islamic Terrorism to prosper. May God Bless our Military, and MERRY CHRISTMAS to all, including the dead Terrorists, of which there will be many more if their slaughter of Christians continues.

DONALD J. TRUMP
 PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Data Analysis

Table 1: Illocutionary Act Analysis of the CPC Declaration Tweet

S/N	Excerpt	Assertive	Directive	Commissive	Expressive	Declarative
1	“Christianity is facing an existential threat in Nigeria.”	✓	*	*	*	*

2	“Thousands of Christians are being killed.”	✓	*	*	*	*
3	“Radical Islamists are responsible for this mass slaughter.”	✓	*	*	*	*
4	“I am hereby making Nigeria a ‘COUNTRY OF PARTICULAR CONCERN’.”	*	*	*	*	✓
5	“But that is the least of it.”	✓	*	*	*	*
6	“When Christians, or any such group, are slaughtered like is happening in Nigeria (3,100 versus 4,476 Worldwide), something must be done!”	✓	✓	*	*	*
7	“I am asking Congressman Riley Moore, together with Chairman Tom Cole and the House Appropriations Committee, to	*	✓	*	*	*

	immediately look into this matter and report back to me.”					
8	“The United States cannot stand by while such atrocities are happening in Nigeria and numerous other Countries.”	✓	*	✓	*	*
9	“We stand ready, willing, and able to save our Great Christian population around the World!”	*	*	✓	*	*
	Total	6	2	2	0	1

Interpretation of Table 1: CPC Declaration Tweet

The table indicates that the CPC declaration tweet contains a mixture of assertive, directive, commissive and declarative speech acts. However, the pragmatic significance of the tweet becomes clearer when the utterances are examined in their sequential and discursive context. The tweet is structured as a carefully organised rhetorical narrative that progresses from problem construction to policy signalling.

The opening statement, “Christianity is facing an existential threat in Nigeria,” performs an assertive function, but its significance lies in the framing strategy embedded within the utterance. The phrase “existential threat” introduces a highly intensified lexical framing that elevates the situation beyond a routine political or security concern. The term “existential” suggests a danger to the survival of an entire religious community, thereby positioning the issue as a civilisational crisis rather than a localised conflict. Through this framing, the speaker constructs the

communicative context in which subsequent claims and actions become justified. In pragmatic terms, the assertion establishes the presupposition that a severe crisis already exists, thereby inviting the audience to accept the need for urgent intervention.

The second statement, “Thousands of Christians are being killed,” reinforces this crisis narrative through the strategic use of quantitative reference. Although the statement functions as an assertive speech act, the invocation of large numbers operates rhetorically as a persuasive device. Statistics in political discourse frequently serve to amplify urgency and credibility, even when the precise sources of the numbers are not specified. By presenting the killings in numerical terms, the speaker strengthens the perception that the situation is both widespread and systematic. This use of quantification contributes to the construction of moral urgency and prepares the ground for policy-related claims later in the tweet.

The third statement, “Radical Islamists are responsible for this mass slaughter,” introduces a significant ideological dimension to the discourse. The phrase “Radical Islamists” identifies a specific out-group as the perpetrators of violence, thereby constructing a clear moral dichotomy between victims and aggressors. The lexical choice “mass slaughter” further intensifies the emotional and moral framing of the situation. Through this language, the tweet establishes a narrative of religious victimhood and assigns explicit responsibility to an ideologically defined adversary. This construction of in-group and out-group identities is a common strategy in political discourse, as it simplifies complex conflicts into morally polarised categories that are easily recognisable to audiences.

The next statement, “I am hereby making Nigeria a ‘Country of Particular Concern,’” represents the central performative moment in the tweet. The presence of the performative marker “hereby” signals that the utterance is intended to function as a declarative speech act. In traditional institutional settings, declarations require specific authority and procedural legitimacy to successfully alter institutional realities. Within this tweet, the speaker invokes the language of formal diplomatic designation while communicating through a social media platform. This creates a hybrid form of performativity in which institutional language is deployed within the informal communicative environment of digital media. The declaration therefore functions symbolically as an attempt to reposition Nigeria within a global human rights discourse.

The statement “But that is the least of it” introduces an important rhetorical transition in the tweet. While the earlier assertions construct a narrative of religious persecution, this sentence signals that

the situation is even more difficult than previously stated. The phrase operates as a discursive intensifier that sustains audience attention and heightens the perception of crisis. Pragmatically, it prepares the audience for further claims and reinforces the sense that the issue demands immediate attention.

The next segment of the tweet states, “When Christians, or any such group, are slaughtered like is happening in Nigeria (3,100 versus 4,476 Worldwide), something must be done.” This statement combines assertive and directive elements while simultaneously employing statistical comparison. The inclusion of the figures “3,100 versus 4,476 worldwide” functions rhetorically as an attempt to contextualise the Nigerian situation within a broader global framework of religious violence. By juxtaposing national and global figures, the speaker suggests that Nigeria represents a disproportionately severe case. This comparative framing strengthens the argument that intervention is justified. The phrase “something must be done” introduces a directive dimension, though the specific action remains undefined. This form of directive allows the speaker to call for action while maintaining strategic ambiguity regarding the exact policy measures.

The subsequent statement, “I am asking Congressman Riley Moore, together with Chairman Tom Cole and the House Appropriations Committee, to immediately look into this matter, and report back to me,” represents a more explicit directive speech act. Here, the speaker addresses specific political actors and institutional bodies, thereby transforming the tweet into a public policy signal. By naming individual officials and committees, the speaker demonstrates institutional awareness and reinforces the perception that the issue is being addressed within formal governmental structures. At the same time, the public nature of the tweet means that the directive is not directed solely at the named recipients but also at a wider audience that observes the interaction with the hope that the institution will come up with a piece to justify the claims in the tweet.

The statement “The United States cannot stand by while such atrocities are happening in Nigeria, and numerous other Countries” combines assertive and commissive elements. On one level, the statement asserts a moral judgement about the situation. On another level, it implicitly commits the speaker and the United States to some form of response. The phrase “cannot stand by” signals moral obligation and positions the United States as a potential protector within the international system. This framing constructs the country as a defender of persecuted religious communities, thereby reinforcing the speaker’s political identity.

The final statement, “We stand ready, willing, and able to save our Great Christian population around the World,” functions primarily as a commissive speech act. The phrase “ready, willing, and able” emphasises preparedness and determination, projecting an image of decisive leadership. At the same time, the reference to “our Great Christian population” extends the scope of the discourse beyond Nigeria to a global religious community. This rhetorical move constructs a transnational in-group identity that aligns the speaker with Christians worldwide. Through this strategy, the tweet appeals simultaneously to domestic supporters and international audiences who may identify with the religious framing of the issue.

When considered as a whole, the CPC declaration tweet reveals a carefully structured communicative strategy. The discourse begins with assertive claims that establish a narrative of crisis. These claims are reinforced through statistics, moral language and ideological framing. The tweet then moves towards institutional and political action through declarative and directive speech acts. Finally, it concludes with commissive statements that signal readiness for future intervention. The sequence of these elements demonstrates how the tweet functions as a strategic political performance designed to frame the situation in Nigeria, mobilise institutional attention and reinforce the speaker’s leadership identity.

Table 2. Illocutionary Act Analysis of the Air Strike Tweet

S/N	Excerpt	Assertive	Directive	Commissive	Expressive	Declarative
1	“Tonight, at my direction as Commander in Chief, the United States launched a powerful and deadly strike...”	✓	*	*	*	*
2	“I have previously warned these Terrorists...”	✓	*	*	*	*
3	“If they did not stop... There	✓	*	✓	*	*

	would be hell to pay, and tonight, there was.”					
4	“Under my leadership, our Country will not allow Radical Islamic Terrorism to prosper.”	*	*	✓	*	*
5	“May God Bless our Military...”	*	*	*	✓	*
	Total	3	0	2	1	0

Interpretation of Table 2: Air Strike Tweet

The air strike tweet exhibits a different communicative structure, although it also reflects strategic use of speech acts and rhetorical framing. Whereas the CPC tweet constructs a narrative of crisis that justifies intervention, the air strike tweet focuses on the announcement and legitimisation of military action.

The opening statement, “Tonight, at my direction as Commander in Chief, the United States launched a powerful and deadly strike,” functions as an assertive speech act reporting an action that has already occurred. However, the phrasing of the sentence reveals a strong emphasis on personal authority. The clause “at my direction as Commander in Chief” foregrounds the speaker’s institutional role and establishes a clear connection between leadership authority and the military operation. This formulation positions the speaker as the central decision-maker responsible for the action.

The adjectives “powerful” and “deadly” also contribute to the rhetorical construction of the event. These evaluative descriptors emphasise the effectiveness and strength of the operation. Rather than presenting the strike as a neutral military report, the language highlights its decisive and forceful character. This rhetorical strategy reinforces the image of a leader who is capable of taking strong action against perceived threats.

The statement “I have previously warned these terrorists” introduces a narrative of prior deterrence. By referring to earlier warnings, the speaker constructs a chronological sequence in which military action appears as a justified response rather than an immediate or arbitrary decision. The use of the term “terrorists” also functions ideologically by categorising the adversary within a globally recognised framework of security threats.

The following statement, “If they did not stop... there would be hell to pay, and tonight, there was,” further reinforces this narrative of justified retaliation. The phrase “hell to pay” is a strongly idiomatic expression that conveys severity and inevitability. Within the discourse, it functions as a rhetorical device that emphasises the consequences of defying the warning issued by the speaker. The reference to “tonight” reinforces the immediacy of the action and highlights the fulfilment of the earlier threat.

The next statement, “Under my leadership, our Country will not allow Radical Islamic Terrorism to prosper,” functions primarily as a commissive speech act. The phrase “under my leadership” again foregrounds the personal authority of the speaker, while the commitment to preventing terrorism from prospering signals a long-term policy stance. The ideological framing of “Radical Islamic Terrorism” mirrors the earlier construction of adversaries in the CPC tweet, reinforcing the broader narrative of a global struggle against terrorism.

The final statement, “May God Bless our Military,” functions as an expressive speech act. Although brief, the invocation of divine blessing introduces a moral and symbolic dimension to the discourse. By aligning the military action with religious approval, the speaker frames the operation as morally justified and worthy of collective support. This type of expressive statement also strengthens emotional solidarity between the speaker, the military and supportive audiences. Taken together, the air strike tweet performs several communicative functions. It reports a military operation, legitimises the action through references to prior warnings, reinforces ideological opposition to terrorism and expresses moral support for the armed forces. The combination of assertive, commissive and expressive speech acts allows the tweet to simultaneously inform, justify and emotionally reinforce the narrative of decisive leadership. From a broader pragmatic perspective, the tweet functions as a performance of authority that communicates strength, moral legitimacy and continued commitment to security objectives.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the selected tweets shows that political communication on digital platforms operates as a complex form of pragmatic action rather than simple opinion expression. Although the classification of illocutionary acts identified dominant categories, the deeper analysis reveals that the tweets combine narrative framing, ideological positioning, and symbolic policy signalling, indicating that political tweets function as strategic communicative events within wider political and diplomatic contexts. A key finding is the strategic use of assertive speech acts to construct persuasive narratives, particularly through lexical choices such as “existential threat,” “mass slaughter,” and numerical statistics that frame Nigeria’s situation as an urgent moral crisis and legitimise subsequent policy-oriented speech acts. The study also highlights how declarative authority interacts with digital communication, as the declaration of Nigeria as a “Country of Particular Concern” represents a performative diplomatic act carried out through a social media platform, demonstrating how political actors can perform symbolic diplomatic actions outside traditional institutional channels and address international audiences through what may be termed a transnational digital speech act. In addition, the tweets employ ideological framing by constructing a moral dichotomy between an in-group associated with Christianity and an out-group associated with terrorism or radicalism, thereby simplifying complex socio-political realities and mobilising ideological support. Commissive speech acts further reinforce political leadership by projecting commitments to protect Christians and combat terrorism, shaping public perceptions of authority and responsibility. The analysis also shows that the perlocutionary effects of the tweets extend beyond the text itself, as their circulation through media networks contributes to wider narratives about religious persecution, international security, and diplomatic relations. Overall, the findings demonstrate that political tweets function as multifunctional speech acts that simultaneously perform narrative construction, ideological positioning, and symbolic diplomatic action, thereby extending the application of Speech Act Theory to the networked communication environment of social media.

Conclusion

This study examined the pragmatics of Donald Trump’s declaration of Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern on the social media platform X using Speech Act Theory as the analytical framework. The findings show that the tweets function as complex speech acts that combine assertive, directive, commissive, and declarative elements to construct political meaning and signal

policy positions. Rather than merely conveying information, the tweets employ strategic narrative framing, ideological positioning, and symbolic institutional language to influence public interpretation and diplomatic discourse. In particular, the declaration of Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern demonstrates how digital platforms can be used to perform symbolic diplomatic acts that were traditionally carried out through formal institutional channels. The study contributes to scholarship in digital political pragmatics by showing that the analytical categories of Speech Act Theory remain relevant for understanding political discourse in social media environments when considered within the context of networked communication and global audiences. It also contributes to emerging discussions on transnational speech acts by illustrating how political actors use digital platforms to address both domestic and international audiences, thereby shaping global narratives about other states. Overall, the research highlights the importance of analysing political communication on social media from a pragmatic perspective, since digital platforms have transformed the ways political leaders express authority, frame issues, and signal policy intentions. The study therefore recommends that future research examine larger corpora of political tweets or conduct comparative analyses across different political leaders and geopolitical contexts in order to further understand how digital media is reshaping political communication and diplomatic interaction in the contemporary global environment.

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